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EVALUATION

of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic framework

Accompanying the document

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic
framework**

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Glossary

Terms and acronyms are used for both singular and plural forms.

<i>Term or acronym</i>	<i>Meaning or definition</i>
AES	Adult Education Survey
AI	Artificial intelligence
CARE	Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe
CB	High-Level Group on Education and Training Coordination Board
CPD	Continuous professional development
CSR	Country-specific recommendations
DEAP	Digital Education Action Plan
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
DG	Directorate-General
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EDUC	Education Committee
EEA	European Education Area
EENEE	European Expert Network on Economics of Education
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EIT HEI	European Institute of Innovation and Technology Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education
EP	European Parliament
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ET2010	Education and Training 2010
ET2020	Education and Training 2020
ETM	Education and Training Monitor
EU	European Union

EYCS	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HLG	High-Level Group on Education and Training
ICILS	International Computer and Information Literacy Study
ICT	Information and communications technology
ITE	Initial teacher training
LFS	EU Labour Force Survey
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
MS	Member State
NESET	Network of Experts working on the Social Dimension of Education and Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
REACT-EU	Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SGIB	Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks
SP	Strategic priority
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UOE	UNESCO-UIS / OECD / Eurostat joint data collection
VET	Vocational education and training
WG	(EEA strategic framework) working group
WG DELTA	Working Group on Digital Education: learning, teaching and assessment
WG ECEC	Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care
WG Equality and Values	Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training
WG HE	Working Group on Higher Education
WG Schools	Working Group on Schools
WG Schools – Pathways	Working Group on Schools sub-group Pathways to School Success

WG Schools – Learning for Sustainability	Working Group on Schools sub-group Learning for Sustainability
WG VET and the Green Transition	Working Group on Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Green Transition

1. INTRODUCTION

This staff working document describes the purpose and methodology and presents the main findings of the European Commission's interim evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area (EEA) 2021-2030. The EEA strategic framework was set out by the Council Resolution of February 2021¹, and complemented by the Council Resolution on the strategic framework's governance structure of November 2021² and the Council Resolution 'The European Education Area: Looking to 2025 and beyond' of May 2023³.

Purpose, scope and methodology of the evaluation

Purpose

Based on the 2021 Council Resolution establishing the EEA strategic framework, and in line with the European Commission's [Better Regulation Guidelines](#), the purpose was to evaluate the EEA at the midpoint of the 2021-2030 strategic framework, assessing its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value. In line with the Council Resolution, the results of this evaluation will inform reflections on and preparations for European cooperation towards the EEA in the next cycle (2026-2030), with the aim of reinforcing the EEA's contribution to Europe's competitiveness, preparedness and resilience, social cohesion, equity and fairness, as well as democracy and EU values.

Scope

Data was collected in a structured way between 2021, when the Council Resolution on the EEA strategic framework was adopted, and June 2024. The evaluation was discussed and completed with inputs from Member State (MS) representatives at the meetings of the High-Level Group (HLG) on Education and Training held in July and December 2024. The evaluation assesses progress towards building the EEA at EU and MS level. It covers the five EEA strategic priorities (SP) outlined in the Council Resolution of 2021 (see Table 2) and the six EEA implementation instruments (see Table 1). The global perspective of cooperation is also considered.

Methodology

The Commission's interim evaluation has been supported by an external support study, which was carried out between January 2024 and March 2025⁴. It collected evidence through desk research (portfolio analysis, policy context analysis, literature review, citation analysis) and an extensive stakeholder consultation strategy consisting of interviews, surveys and focus groups. The consultation strategy took a fully participatory approach, engaging relevant EEA actors⁵ and the wider education and training community through open and targeted consultation activities, as summarised in Figure 1. An interservice group made up of relevant Commission departments oversaw the evaluation.

¹ [OJ C 66, 26.2.2021](#). This Council Resolution was preceded by the Commission's Communication on achieving the EEA by 2025, ([COM/2020/625 final](#)).

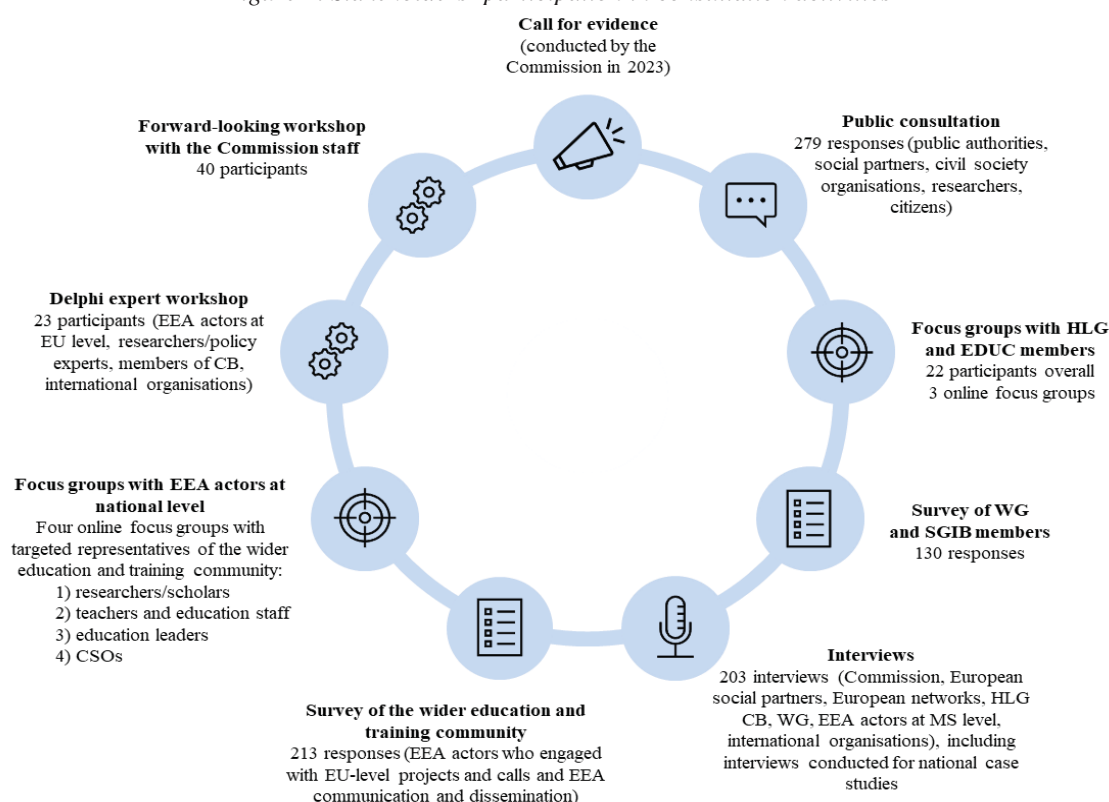
² [OJ C 497, 10.12.2021](#)

³ [OJ C 185, 26.5.2023](#). This Council Resolution was preceded by the Commission's Communication on Progress towards the achievement of the EEA, ([COM/2022/700 final](#)).

⁴ See Support study for the interim evaluation of the EEA (2021-2030) (July 2025).

⁵ EEA actors are the participants (policymakers, practitioners, stakeholder representatives, experts, etc.) participants in activities under the EEA implementation instruments, who act as multipliers towards their organisations and thus help generate impact at the level of education and training systems.

Figure 1. Stakeholders' participation in consultation activities



The data gathered was analysed by applying five main analytical techniques:

- **portfolio analysis** to assess the comprehensiveness and complementarity of the activities under each of the EEA implementation instruments to achieve progress towards the SP;
- **contribution analysis** to assess the extent to which the EEA and its implementation instruments have contributed to the effects observed;
- **qualitative comparative analysis** to identify the conditions required for EEA implementation instruments to support actual reform processes in MS based on an analysis of national case studies;
- **most significant change narratives** to identify EEA actors' understanding of the EEA, and what they value the most about European cooperation towards the EEA;
- **cost-effectiveness analysis** to assess a selected number of illustrative processes and activities under the EEA implementation instruments in terms of costs accrued and benefits generated.

The EU competence as outlined in the Treaties⁶ and the open method of coordination⁷ in the field of education carried certain implications for the intervention logic⁸. The EEA contributes to the development of education policies by encouraging cooperation and supporting and supplementing MS' actions. The impact of the EEA relies largely on MS activities, their interest in exchanging and learning from each other, their use of the instruments available at EU level and committing resources at national, regional and local levels to pursue the common objectives.

⁶ Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

⁷ The open method of coordination in the EU may be described as a form of 'soft' law. It is a form of intergovernmental policymaking that does not result in binding EU legislative measures, and it does not require EU countries to introduce or amend their laws.

⁸ See intervention logic in Figure 2 below.

The evaluation faced several limitations, in particular:

- the broad scope of the EEA limiting the level of detail the evaluation can provide for each activity and making assessment of overarching impacts challenging;
- the results of the European cooperation towards the EEA on national, regional, and local policies being non-linear and also influenced by the EU's broader agenda and other international initiatives;
- the indirect impact of European cooperation towards the EEA on the ground, making quantification of its contribution to results and impacts impossible;
- the short implementation timeframe limiting the ability of the evaluation to comprehensively assess impacts;
- the lack of a clear baseline to measure progress against, as this is the first evaluation of an overarching EU education and training policy framework.

To mitigate these limitations, the data collection tools were designed to capture concrete examples of impact, and contribution analysis was used to validate assumptions that would allow for conclusions on impact to a higher degree of certainty. The methodology, including how it addressed the above limitations, is detailed in Annexes I and II.

Table 1. EEA implementation instruments

EEA implementation instrument	Scope
Governance	Council of the EU (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)) and the Council's Education Committee (EDUC) HLG and its Coordination Board (CB) Directors-General (DG) formations EEA strategic framework working groups (WG), Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) and other Commission expert groups Communities of practice like the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training
Mobilisation of EU funds and instruments for national reforms	Alignment of funding priorities (e.g. European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) including Interreg, Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)) with EEA SP and take-up of structural support for reforms (Technical Support Instrument, TSI)
Strategic EEA initiatives	Initiatives adopted by the Commission and/or the Council, including Commission Communications and Council Recommendations. Evaluation covered 19 of such initiatives (adopted and/or implemented under the first 2021-2025 cycle of the EEA strategic framework). (See Annex III for full list.)
EU-level projects and calls	Projects and calls funded at EU level (primarily through Erasmus+ programme) aimed at learners, practitioners and/or education and training institutions. Evaluation covered 17 of such projects and calls. (See Annex III for full list.)
Reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress	EU-level targets in education and training ⁹ Education and Training Monitor (ETM) Indicators developed by SGIB Country-specific recommendations (CSR) as part of the European Semester DG EAC-DG EMPL EEA Taskforce
Communication and dissemination	EEA portal European Education Summits EU platforms like the European School Education Platform EEA midterm review event EEA communication contract Sector specific events and communication campaigns linked to specific initiatives or projects

⁹ The following seven EU-level targets should be attained to fully realise the EEA: (1) The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, by 2030; (2) The share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030; (3) At least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care, by 2030; (4) The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%, by 2030; (5) The share of 25-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45%, by 2030; (6) The share of recent graduates from VET benefiting from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training should be at least 60%, by 2025; (7) At least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

2.1. Description of the intervention and its objectives

Education and training systems are essential for boosting Europe’s competitiveness, democracy and cohesion, and are the foundation for personal fulfilment, employability, and active and responsible citizenship. The right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning is the first principle of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). The EEA (2021-2030) is a single overarching framework that brings together education and training policies and investments across the EU to deliver high-quality education and training for all, in line with Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It supports MS in developing their national education and training systems in line with shared priorities and strengthens transnational cooperation on education and training, which is voluntary. European cooperation towards the EEA builds on previous cooperation frameworks, notably [Education and Training 2020](#) and [Education and Training 2010](#) (ET2020 and ET2010 respectively). Erasmus+ is the main EU programme in the area of education and training and is a key enabler of the EEA.

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the EEA sets out five SP.

Table 2. EEA SP as set out in the 2021 Council Resolution

SP1	Improving quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training
SP2	Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all
SP3	Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession (teachers and trainers)
SP4	Reinforcing European higher education
SP5	Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training

European cooperation towards the EEA supports MS in their efforts to build more resilient, high-quality inclusive education that covers all learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal learning) across all levels – from early childhood education and schools to higher education, vocational education and training, and adult learning. It acknowledges the role of a global perspective in cooperation on education and training, which has become an essential component of EU external policies, grounded in European values and the principles of cooperation and solidarity.

The EEA provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation that can help bridge the innovation gap and equip learners with the digital, green and cross-cutting skills that are essential for creating a resilient and competitive economy. Robust education and training systems are a necessary condition for a thriving single market, which is critical for fostering research and development, driving digital and green innovation, and securing strategic autonomy^{10, 11}. Furthermore, European cooperation towards the EEA contributes to the development of a more inclusive and participatory democracy by promoting democratic values and by empowering individuals to participate actively in Europe’s democratic processes. By enhancing access to lifelong learning and facilitating mobility across borders, the EEA strategic framework reinforces social cohesion and ensures that Europe’s knowledge and skills base is future-ready.

¹⁰ [Letta, Enrico. \(2024\). Much more than a market](#)

¹¹ [Draghi, Mario. \(2024\). The future of European competitiveness](#)

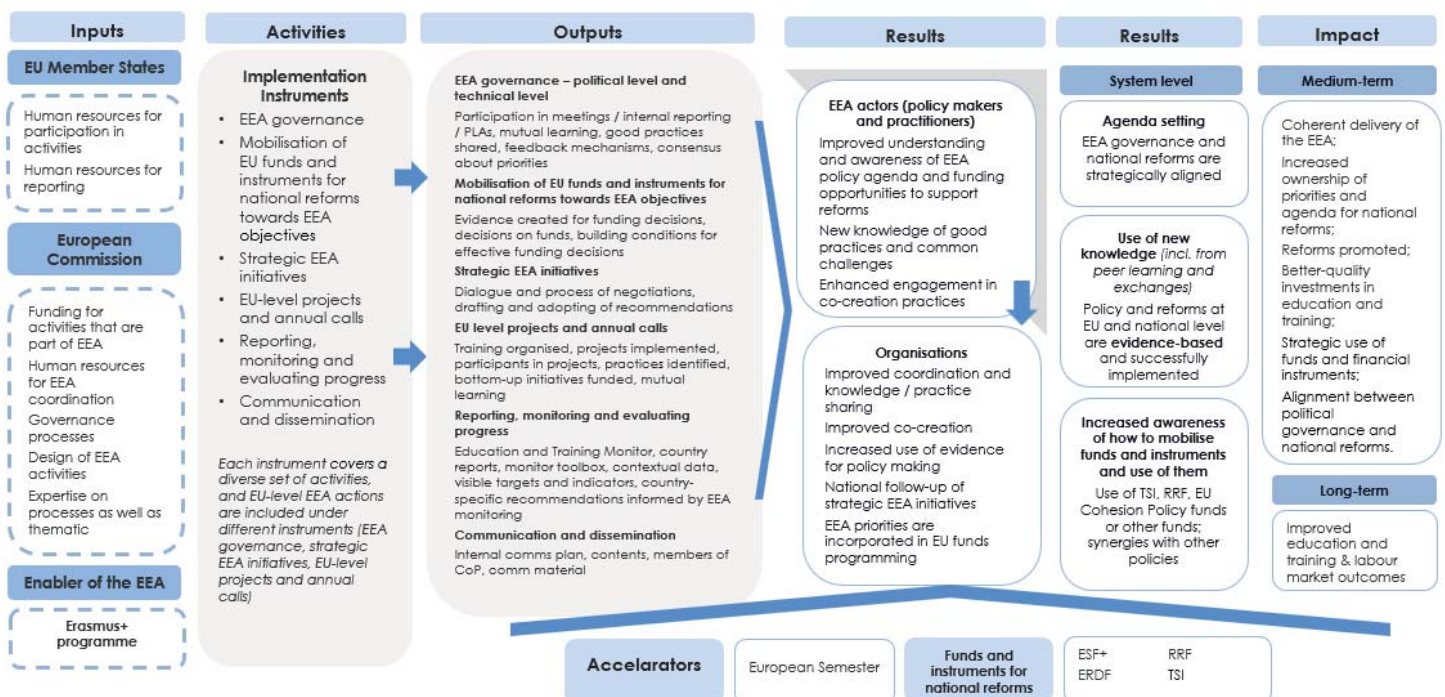
Intervention logic of the EEA 2021-2030

The EEA supports MS in their efforts to develop, reform and evaluate policies and practices, and strengthens transnational cooperation in education and training. The impact of the EEA on policy debates and decision-making processes can range from agenda setting to direct contributions on shaping new strategies or measures. The EEA also enables more effective cooperation between policymakers, civil society organisations, social partners, practitioners, and academic and policy researchers in the areas related to EEA SP. At operational level this means that European cooperation towards the EEA seeks to:

- build synergies between different levels of governance;
- enable and support co-creation and mutual learning;
- ensure alignment between funding and policy priorities;
- carry out dissemination and communication activities;
- encourage an evidence-informed approach to policy design and investment;
- improve performance monitoring and analysis of progress towards EU-level targets.

These general and operational objectives are pursued through six EEA implementation instruments. Each objective can be addressed through one or several instruments. Each instrument is associated with a set of unique activities and outputs (see Section 3).

Figure 2. Intervention logic of the EEA



2.2. Point(s) of comparison

Points of comparison between ET2020 and the EEA strategic framework

There is a high level of connection and continuity between the activities carried out under ET2020 and those carried out under the EEA. The 2019 assessment of ET2020's tools and deliverables highlighted the potential of the initiative to further strengthen European cooperation in education and training¹². Although the ET2020 strategic objectives were considered broad and flexible, the need to streamline them was highlighted, as this would help make the framework a strong and consistent driving force for change across education and training systems. The governance structure of ET2020 included a High-level group, whose informal nature was highly appreciated, but it was felt that the group needed a stronger role on steering strategic issues. The working groups were assessed as adequate for addressing ET2020 objectives and priorities and considered an important forum for cooperation on sectoral and cross-cutting issues related to education and training.

As such, the EEA strategic framework was designed to build upon previous cooperation frameworks, with some adjustments.

Points of comparison between the intended impacts of the EEA strategic framework

The long-term impacts of the EEA are expected to include improved education and training and better labour market outcomes. To establish a baseline with points for comparison, three groups of indicators were considered as appropriate for measuring the long-term impact of European cooperation towards the EEA, namely: (i) participation in education and training (including attainment of qualifications); (ii) the achievement of skills; and (iii) labour market outcomes. The points of comparison focused on trends – wherever possible – prior to the launch of the EEA strategic framework.

Crises occurring during the period in the focus of this evaluation (such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) have had a considerable impact on education and training systems and the labour market. It should be noted that the EEA is only one of the contributing initiatives (at various levels) that seek to promote the aims of the SP and the EU-level targets. These trends should therefore not be regarded as illustrating the impact (or lack thereof) of European cooperation towards the EEA, but rather the context in which such cooperation takes place.

Participation in education and training, and attainment of qualifications

Several EU-level indicators relate to the levels of participation in education and training and to obtaining qualifications¹³. On average in the EU, participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) stood at 92.5% in 2021, demonstrating good progress towards the target of at least 96% of children starting ECEC from the age of 3 by 2030. Early school leaving rates have dropped over the past few years, with an EU average of 9.8% in 2021, slightly above the 2030 target of less than 9%. Progress has also been made in tertiary educational attainment, with 41.5% of 25-34-year-olds having completed a short-cycle tertiary, bachelor, master, doctoral or equivalent level of education in 2021 (EU target: at least 45% by 2030). Finally, participation rates in adult learning (excluding guided on-the-job training) steadily increased from 34.4% to 37.4% between 2011 and 2016 (latest available data for establishing a baseline). However, this is still significantly below the

¹² [Assessment of tools and deliverables under the framework for European cooperation in education and training \(ET2020\)](#), European Commission, 2019.

¹³ 2021 is the baseline for the EEA. More recent data are included in Table 6.

EU-level targets of at least 47% by 2025 and the European Pillar of Social Rights headline target of 60% by 2030.

Achievement of skills

Education and training systems play a crucial role in skills acquisition, and therefore in ensuring learners' prospects for future success. According to PISA data¹⁴, underachievement among 15-year-olds is on the rise in reading, mathematics and science, and well above the EU-level target of an underachievement share below 15%. In 2018, the share of low achieving students stood at 22.9% in mathematics, 22.5% in reading and 22.3% in science. There was also a significant equity gap of 19.3 percentage points on average across the EU, with students of low socio-economic status 5.6 times more likely to underachieve in basic skills than students of high socio-economic status. There was no comparative data available to establish a suitable baseline for the level of digital skills¹⁵ or for work-based learning for VET graduates¹⁶. The target for reducing underachievement in digital skills has been set at below 15% by 2030 and the target for participation in work-based learning has been set at 60% by 2025.

Labour market outcomes

Obtaining higher levels of qualifications tends to be associated with higher rates of employment, as reflected by the EU-average rates of employment by level of education attained. In 2021, the rate of employment for 20-64-year-olds with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education was 55.0%, while the rate for those with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education was 72.7% (within this category 62.4% for general education and 76.4% for vocational education) and the rate for those with tertiary education was 85.0%.

¹⁴ European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PISA 2018 and the EU – [Striving for social fairness through education](#), Publications Office, 2019.

¹⁵ Only seven EU countries (Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Finland) participated in the 2018 International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), rendering the data unsuitable for establishing a baseline for comparison. 22 EU countries participated in the 2023 ICILS study, including Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (North Rhine Westphalia), Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. This broad participation marks a significant step forward, offering a much more comprehensive view of EU students' digital skills proficiency.

¹⁶ There is no available data for establishing a suitable baseline, with the earliest data available dating to 2021. However, participation in work-based learning by VET graduates has surpassed the EU-level target of 60%, with an EU average of 60.5 in 2021, 60.3% in 2022 and of 64.6% in 2023.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

Current state of play

Implementation of the EEA strategic framework 2021-2024

The first cycle of the implementation of the EEA began with the Council Resolution of 2021 setting out the SP and direction for the work. Several activities have been implemented since then. This section provides an overview of these activities under each of the implementation instruments to support progress towards the EEA SP and EU-level targets. Progress towards the seven EU-level targets has been mixed, with one target reached, several on track to being reached and others still requiring significant efforts. Trends in the progress towards these targets since the EEA's launch are discussed in Section 5.1 (see Table 6).

Governance

The **EEA governance bodies** provided a political steer and coordinated approaches on shared priorities and challenges. They have demonstrated a high level of flexibility in responding to crises such as COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The **EEA WG** supported mutual learning and exchange of best practices through regular meetings, peer-learning activities and webinars. WG provided opportunities for EEA actors (from MS, non-EU countries, EU agencies, international organisations and stakeholder organisations) to participate in knowledge exchange and co-creation (i.e. setting priorities and developing policies with the input of all actors). The **SGIB** supported the Commission in work towards building supplementary indicators in the areas of equity, teachers and learning for sustainability. Several EU-led initiatives also promoted mutual learning through **expert groups** focused on supportive learning environments and quality investment in education and training, the community of practice of the **Learning Lab**, policy dialogue and Team Europe approaches, and through European guidance for the development of national school education career frameworks.

Mobilisation of EU funds and instruments

Commission departments have worked together and with MS to support **alignment between the EEA SP and the use of the relevant EU funds**, taking into account the respective scope of their support and their management modes. EU funds and instruments, including ESF+, ERDF, RRF and TSI, facilitated reforms at national and regional levels towards the EEA SP. The ESF+ prioritised skills and workforce resilience, while the ERDF supported infrastructure and equipment for quality and inclusive education as well as skills for smart specialisation and cooperation in education and training in the Interreg context. The RRF supported national reforms and investments in broad policy areas relevant to EEA SP. The TSI provided technical support for related reform projects (72 interventions in 23 MS over 2021-2024). Over EUR 150 bn (EUR 75 bn from RRF¹⁷, 40.4 bn from

¹⁷ Estimated expenditure based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and corresponds to the measures allocated to the policy areas 'Adult Learning, Including Continuous Vocational Education And Training; Recognition And Validation Of Skills', 'Early childhood education and care: accessibility, affordability, quality and inclusiveness, including digitalisation and infrastructure', 'General, vocational and higher education: accessibility, affordability, quality and inclusiveness, including digitalisation and infrastructure', 'Human capital in digitalisation' and 'Green skills and jobs', as primary or secondary policy area. Source: European Commission's own calculation. The data was retrieved on 11 February 2025.

ESF+, 8.7 bn from ERDF and over 26 bn from Erasmus+ in 2021-2027.) have been invested in education, skills and infrastructure, promoting progress towards the EEA SP.¹⁸

Strategic EEA initiatives

Nineteen **strategic initiatives** (mainly Council Recommendations, and some Commission Communications) **were launched or advanced**¹⁹, guided by extensive consultation and co-creation including in the WG, followed by Commission proposals negotiated in Council. These initiatives provide a structured framework and strategic guidance to drive changes in national policies, supporting progress towards the EEA SP. Council Recommendations addressed all areas of relevance to the EEA SP, such as promoting school success, enhancing mobility, supporting learning for sustainability, improving digital education and skills, or enhancing European higher education. Several initiatives launched before 2021, such as those on inclusive education and language learning and on automatic recognition of qualifications, continued to be supported under the current strategic framework.

EU-level projects and calls

Seventeen **EU-level projects and calls** (most funded under Erasmus+) **supported education and training institutions and practitioners** under the EEA strategic framework.²⁰ The majority of these projects and calls provided concrete opportunities for beneficiaries to exchange information and experiences and co-create scalable practices, and to develop concrete skills through project-based activities. Projects and calls, such as [Erasmus+ Teacher Academies](#) and [Centres of Vocational Excellence](#), addressed key education priorities, including teacher training and vocational excellence. Tools for facilitating education and training have also been developed as part of this implementation instrument (e.g. the [European Student Card initiative](#), [European Digital Credentials for Learning](#)).

Reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress

The **ETM** tracked progress towards EU-level targets and provided information on the reforms under way in the MS. At the request of the Council, **new indicators** were developed in areas like equity, the teaching profession and sustainability. The ETM country reports were used to inform CSR under the European Semester. In 2024, CSR linked to education and training topics were issued to 18 MS.

Communication and dissemination

Activities to **communicate and disseminate EEA activities** included the [EEA portal](#), European Education Summits, the EEA communication contract, the EEA midterm review event and targeted campaigns. Between 2021 and 2023, the EEA portal, which provides information on resources and funding opportunities, attracted 4.5 million unique visitors and generated 10.2 million page views. The European Education Summits provided stakeholders with a forum to discuss progress and opportunities for collaboration, while social media campaigns amplified the reach of EEA initiatives, including outside the EU.

¹⁸ An additional 2.6 bn from the external funds has supported international mobilities of EU students, staff, youth and youth workers towards partner countries, as well as partnerships between EU and third countries' higher education and VET institutions.

¹⁹ See Annex III for the list of strategic EEA initiatives.

²⁰ See Annex III for the 17 EU-level projects and calls that were included in the scope of this evaluation (given their link the EEA strategic framework).

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS (ANALYTICAL PART)

4.1. To what extent was the intervention successful and why?

In the absence of regulatory power, the EEA's ability to drive impact is indirect and stems from **combining different instruments and support mechanisms**, setting quantified targets, establishing EU policy frameworks, providing policy guidance, supporting cooperation, allocating EU funds, monitoring progress and supporting evaluation of relevant reforms. The first subsection on overall effectiveness summarises main findings in two respects: Firstly, results that participation in the EEA strategic framework (and engagement with its EEA implementation instruments) brought for individual EEA actors (who act as potential multipliers), organisations, and education and training systems. Secondly, it zooms in on the EEA actors who drive the overall governance and are therefore key to the generation of results and impacts. Subsequent sections present an overview of evaluation results on the effectiveness of the six EEA implementation instruments, on progress under the five SP, and on promoting education and training from a global perspective. The chapter concludes by an assessment of the efficiency of EEA implementation instruments and of the coherence of the EEA strategic framework.

4.1.1. Overall effectiveness

Key findings on results at the level of EEA actors, organisations and systems

The evaluation assessed results at three interconnected levels:

- **EEA actors:** participants in activities under the EEA implementation instruments (policymakers, practitioners, stakeholder representatives, experts, etc.)
- **organisations:** ministries and stakeholder bodies where follow-up actions towards EEA SP are taken
- **education and training systems** at national/regional level.

The analysis highlighted specific achievements at all three levels, though their extent varies. The **most significant direct results** of the EEA were in the areas of **mutual learning, knowledge generation and structured coordination mechanisms** through various EEA governance bodies. Results were most visible at the level of EEA actors. At **organisational level**, the biggest results were observed for those organisations that take a more **systematic approach to sharing information and organisational learning**. **System-level results** were best achieved when countries were proactive in making the best combined and **coordinated use of several EEA implementation instruments**. An overview of results at the three levels identified with evidence of the contribution of specific EEA implementation instruments is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Findings on results at different levels

Results achieved	Evidence of contribution made by the EEA implementation instruments
At individual level among EEA actors	
Improved understanding and awareness of the EEA policy agenda and of the funds that can be used to support reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved awareness was enabled by EEA governance that engaged EEA actors continuously and enabled the reiteration and internalisation of EEA's SP (to varying degrees among the EEA actors involved in the HLG and WG). EEA governance also contributed to increased awareness on the use of EU funds. Communication and dissemination, especially at European Education Summits, also helped raise awareness on key EEA SP and EU-level initiatives and projects, including among those EEA actors who were not directly involved in the governance bodies.
Increased knowledge of good practices and common challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EEA governance, through regular meetings and exchanges, allowed EEA actors to build knowledge on good practices and common challenges. EU-level projects and calls provided a foundation for improving the knowledge of those EEA actors not involved directly in governance on good practices and common challenges. Activities that were part of the EEA implementation instrument reporting, monitoring and evaluation were used by EEA actors (e.g. the ETM comparative and country reports) to inform their discussions in the HLG/CB and WG, as well as (to some extent) within organisations at national level.
Enhanced engagement in co-creation practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement in co-creation practices was enabled through EEA governance, including the WG (e.g. through the development of thematic outputs and contribution to strategic EEA initiatives). EU-level projects and calls involved EEA actors in the exchange and co-creation of practices. Many EU-level projects and calls showed positive trends in participation, reflecting enhanced engagement. In some cases (VET), tasks attributed to the WG could have been attributed to other bodies instead (Advisory Committee on Vocational Training).
At organisation level	
Coordination and knowledge/sharing of practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results were mixed on improved coordination and knowledge / sharing of practices via EEA governance and EU-level projects and calls. In some cases, the coordination and dissemination of knowledge within organisations (gained via EEA actors in WG) was very well established; in other cases, it was limited and not systematic.
Co-creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU-level projects and calls enabled co-creation between participating organisations (e.g. EIT's Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education initiative (EIT HEI)), but the extent of the results was not always clear.
Use of evidence for policymaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs associated with reporting, monitoring and evaluation of progress (e.g. ETM, Learning Lab) and EEA governance (knowledge gained by EEA actors via WG, thematic outputs) were taken up to a varying extent by the MS in informing their policies. Examples of success were identified, yet they were not applied systematically across MS.
Follow-up on strategic EEA initiatives by EEA actors at MS level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of further operationalisation of strategic EEA initiatives by EEA actors at national level varied, and the nature of national follow-up was unclear, due to a lack of national reporting.
At system level	
Agenda setting, innovation and policy development at national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS are pursuing reforms that contribute to building the EEA. In some cases, these were directly inspired by involvement in the EEA governance. Alignment between the policies of MS and the EEA SP was observed.²¹ However, because the SP are broad, and given the voluntary nature of European cooperation in education and training and its 'soft' instruments, causality (direct influence of the EEA) could not be confirmed. EU-level projects and calls drove policy progress in MS (e.g. the European Universities initiative in relation to facilitating transnational cooperation, recognition, micro-credentials, joint programmes and degrees, etc.).
Use of new knowledge (including evidence-informed policymaking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instrument for reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress contributed to the use of new knowledge, but the systematisation of knowledge was not yet evident. Information produced within the EEA remained to be processed and synthesised into accessible resources. Knowledge transfer within EEA governance requires a more systematic approach – not simply by sharing the growing volume of information, but by organising and distilling the wealth of information into actionable insights. Currently, the sheer quantity of documentation makes navigation challenging for EEA actors. This hinders synergies between governance bodies, as well as across other implementation instruments. The EEA's Learning Lab holds significant potential in this regard, especially for strengthening national capacity to conduct impact evaluations in education and training.
Increased awareness of EU funds and instruments and their use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU funds and instruments were used by the MS to support reforms that were in line with the EEA SP. EU funds and instruments appear to be crucial in ensuring that MS have the capacity to pursue reforms that align with the EEA SP.

²¹ In the area of adult learning, the impact has been limited, in particular on interplay and impact with labour market policy and structures.

Key findings on the effectiveness of EEA governance

The evaluation results showed that the reformed governance of the EEA has contributed to **a better understanding of shared priorities and challenges** in education and training **and increased ownership** among participants in the various governance bodies.

The reformed governance, driven at informal level by the HLG, has contributed to strengthening the political steer on shared priorities and challenges. The shift towards a more strategic agenda setting and greater continuity in the work of the HLG was attributed to the HLG CB. The efforts to implement the 18-month policy agenda could provide a further boost to strategic agenda setting. However, limitations were seen in various degrees of commitment among Council Presidencies to steer European cooperation on common priorities and challenges. Furthermore, the HLG is still to take up its role in providing steering on the key topics in the two Council Recommendations on digital education and skills of November 2023.

Mutual learning and the exchange of good practices in the WG are among the EEA activities that have been the most effective in helping to build the EEA. The WG contributed to the development of strategic EEA initiatives and supported their national follow-up, by providing a valuable forum for information sharing, co-creation, peer learning and exchange on national policy developments. However, these exchanges were not always consistently translated into concrete policy actions at MS level. There is potential to optimise the WG' working methods to strengthen their effectiveness, by exploring different formats and approaches. Further opportunities to provide peer-counselling support to MS for implementing evidence-informed reforms, including for small groups of countries facing similar challenges, could also be explored.

The SGIB has made progress in promoting the systematic collection of data and has contributed to the development of new types of indicators and to evidence-informed policy discussions. At the same time, there were gaps in information across governance bodies on the status of implementing key strategic EEA initiatives. According to stakeholder consultations, systematic reporting would help to increase consistency and regularity in the way the evidence is used.

The evaluation concluded that the effectiveness of the EEA strategic framework governance was somewhat limited by an **inconsistent flow of information between WG, DG formations, HLG and EDUC**. In addition, EEA actors did not always clearly understand the specific roles of and the lines of cooperation between some of these governance bodies. Efforts by the HLG CB to streamline activities and links between the WG, the HLG and EDUC still need to be strengthened (see Section 5.2.).

4.1.2. Effectiveness by EEA implementation instruments

The **delivery and combination of EEA implementation instruments** were given a positive assessment for enabling collaboration, flexibility in crisis response, mutual learning and other ways of supporting national reforms. Table 4 summarises the main findings regarding the most important identified **strengths**, as well as **areas for possible improvement** with a view to improving the instruments' effectiveness.

Table 4. Key results and areas of improvement for the effectiveness of EEA implementation instruments

Strengths	Areas for improvement
Governance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of shared priorities & challenges • Stronger political steering & more strategic agenda setting • Highly appreciated mutual learning & knowledge exchange • Co-creation of strategic EEA initiatives & support for national follow-up • Flexibility of EEA governance enabled effective EU-level coordinated response to tackle the education impact of crises (COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify roles of different EEA governance bodies • Reinforce systematic feedback loop and linkages between the various bodies • Optimise WG' working methods and boost dissemination of outputs to facilitate further organisational learning at national level, leading to system improvement • Improve synergies with governance in other sectors (such as employment)
Strategic EEA initiatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a longer-term comprehensive policy framework & guidance for further work by policymakers and practitioners • Co-creation of initiatives increases ownership by MS & other EEA actors • Impact reinforced where there is complementary support for national follow-up through other EEA implementation instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase focus on and limit the number of strategic EEA initiatives, in view of MS' limited capacity for follow-up • Launch evaluations of flagship strategic EEA initiatives (recency of initiatives & lack of MS reporting on implementation limit the evidence base on results & impacts)
Mobilisation of EU funds & instruments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of EU funds & instruments align with EEA SP • Increasing awareness & knowledge of available EU funds & technical support in MS • Structured discussions on funding priorities between Commission departments responsible for EU funds and policies help contribution to EEA SP • The European Semester and the CSR serve as channel through which the EEA strategic framework informs programming of EU funds for national reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task of assessing the quality of investments could be supported through more systematic reporting and capacity building support, including at the national and regional level, on the outcomes/results of investments linked to the EEA SP and by embedding EEA SP in impact evaluations of EU funds. These measures could help improve the evidence base.
EU-level projects & annual calls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some actions (e.g. EIT HEI initiative, European Universities initiative, European Student Card initiative) achieved high visibility & already demonstrated impact confirmed by external evaluation studies • Enabling internalisation of EEA SP at practitioner level, potential to promote them at learner level • Contribution to system-level change stronger, when clear links with strategic EEA initiatives • Erasmus+ funded activities support progress towards EEA (e.g. increased capacity of organisations, contribution to policy development, promotion of inclusion & diversity, digital & green transitions, participation in democratic life & civic engagement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication on EU-level projects and calls to use EEA brand and be embedded in renewed EEA narrative • Evidence on the effectiveness of EU-level projects & calls, and their links to EEA SP to be reinforced
Reporting, monitoring & evaluating progress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU-level targets provide a direction for reforms • ETM serves as an important flagship publication providing useful, high-quality quantitative and qualitative evidence that can support policymaking • Under the EEA strategic framework, ETM extended its scope to new indicators fields (some of which can support target-setting) • SGIB & Learning Lab contribute to building a culture of evidence-informed policymaking in education and training, and help guide policy monitoring and evaluation practices, considering especially the identified need for support at national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of effectiveness & national impact of EEA implementation instruments (especially follow-up of strategic EEA initiatives) is hampered by lack of engagement of MS in data collection for EU-level monitoring & evaluation. This is a challenge for evidence-informed policymaking through open method of coordination. • ETM could be further used to stimulate policy dialogue at national level • Available channels of data collection on education & training systems (e.g. Eurydice, independent expert networks such as EENEE, NESET) to be better connected with EEA SP and synthesised to inform the EEA
Communication & dissemination	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a community of education & training stakeholders who have an aligned view of EEA SP • Better visibility and understanding of EEA activities (e.g. through EEA portal, European Education summit) • Essential in supporting effectiveness of other instruments • Information shared can support national policy design & implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew and reinforce EEA 'brand' to ensure distinctiveness & recognition among stakeholders who do not participate in EEA activities • Renewed EEA narrative to drive overarching communication strategy ensuring alignment of all EU-level education & training activities

- **Improvement of ECEC.** This included efforts to improve quality standards through strategic EEA initiatives (the European quality framework for ECEC), supported by mutual learning in WG ECEC, participation of ECEC institutions in Erasmus+ projects, and through mobilisation of EU funds and instruments (RRF, Cohesion Policy funds, TSI).²²
- **Support for disadvantaged learners.** This included the Pathways to School Success (strategic EEA initiative), policy guidance developed in WG Schools, WG Equality and Values and the Expert Group on supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school, mobilisation of EU funds and instruments, and monitoring under ETM.²³
- **Boosting digital skills of learners.** European cooperation towards the EEA, alongside actions under the Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP), provided guidance for enhancing digital skills across all education levels (strategic EEA initiatives), and mobilised substantial EU funding and technical support. They were supported by EU-level projects and calls (European Universities initiative) and mutual learning in WG (including WG DELTA and WG HE).²⁴
- **Acceleration of the Bologna Process in higher education.** European cooperation towards the EEA (EEA strategic initiatives, mutual learning under WGs, EU-level projects and calls) accelerated the Bologna Process, which would otherwise have been likely to progress more slowly (or in certain cases not at all). This speeded up the alignment of higher education systems, enhanced mobility, and improved the recognition of qualifications across countries.²⁵

²² E.g. in Lithuania ESF+ and RRF supported the implementation of the reform to increase inclusiveness and quality in ECEC through renewed curriculum guidelines, established quality assurance mechanism and improved teacher training. In Bulgaria the introduction of a national quality framework was supported under RRF and TSI. (Evidence from national case studies, see evaluation support study, July 2025).

²³ E.g. in Romania implementation of education reform to address equity gaps, attendance, learning outcomes, progression to HE and employment was supported by strategic EEA initiatives (such as the Council Recommendations on Pathways to School Success, and on promoting common values, inclusive education and European dimension of teaching), as well as EU funding (RRF, TSI, ESF+). In Portugal implementation of reforms on inclusive education and school autonomy were influenced by discussions in EEA governance bodies (EYCS, WG Schools), with measures supported by Erasmus+, ESF+, technical support and RRF. CSRs and ETM have been used to inform monitoring progress. (Evidence from national case studies, see evaluation support study, July 2025).

²⁴ E.g. in Austria reform to digitalise higher education has been supported through EU-level projects and calls (e.g. European Universities initiative), RRF, TSI, Reform is in line with relevant CSRs. In Czechia a comprehensive reform to support digital transition was informed by discussions in WG DELTA, aligned with DigComp, and supported by EU-level projects and calls (European Universities initiative), RRF and TSI. (Evidence from national case studies, see evaluation support study, July 2025).

²⁵ E.g. in Croatia reform of quality assurance in higher education were supported by mutual learning in WG HE, informed by EEA strategic initiatives, and supported under RRF, ESF+, TSI. In Italy the reform on automatic recognition of qualifications was initiated in reaction to the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition and was supported under Erasmus+. In Slovakia peer learning under WG HE contributed to amendments of the Higher Education Quality Assurance act, and Erasmus+ and RRF supported implementation. (Evidence from national case studies, see evaluation support study, July 2025).

4.1.3. Effectiveness by EEA strategic priorities

EEA implementation instruments facilitated progress towards the achievement of the five EEA SP. Notable progress towards the EEA SP was made at EU level, but this was not consistently translated into progress in each MS at regional and national levels (see Section 5.5.).

The current design of SP, which combines horizontal and sectoral priorities, ensures **comprehensive coverage of education sectors**. Though not every SP is relevant to all education levels, the activities carried out under the EEA strategic framework and complementary framework strategies in education and training (such as the European Skills Agenda) covered all education and training sectors.

Intensity of support for various SP through different types of EEA implementation instruments varied: from high coverage (SP1, SP4, SP5 – digital), through medium (SP2, SP5 – green), to low (SP3).

In addition to the EEA implementation instruments, the achievement of progress towards the EEA SP was also influenced by the existence of **other policy frameworks** in education and training.

In particular, **SP3 (teachers and trainers) received a low focus** as, unlike all other SP, it was not supported by a dedicated strategic EEA initiative and there were no other complementary EU policy frameworks that focused on the education profession. The breadth of challenges across all EU MS in this area (teacher shortages, attractiveness of the profession, working conditions etc.) suggests there is a need to strengthen efforts.

Table 5 summarises key evaluation findings regarding the effectiveness (and relevance) of efforts by EEA SP, highlighting:

- **coverage of education and training levels;**
- **coverage by (support through) EEA implementation instruments;**
- **support by other complementary frameworks** in education and training (contributing to impact);
- **the most important results;**
- **persisting challenges** that remain to be addressed.

Table 5. Key findings on SP

SP	Education levels covered	Coverage by EEA implementation instruments	Complementary frameworks	Key results	Key remaining challenges
SP1: quality, equity, inclusion	ECEC: high School: high HE: high VET: high AL: high Non-formal: medium	OVERALL: high Governance: high Mobilisation of EU funds: high Strategic initiatives: high EU-level projects: high Monitoring: high Communication: high	EU Youth Strategy, <u>Child Guarantee</u> ; <u>Council Recommendation on vocational education & training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness & resilience</u>	Sharing good practices & fostering mutual learning (WG Schools-Pathways, WG ECEC, WG Equality and Values, other expert groups); Evidence of progress in implementing strategic EEA initiatives (Pathways to School Success, ECEC quality framework); Establishment of common targets & indicators; progress in reducing early school leaving; Inclusion of the equity in education indicator in the 2022 EEA progress report & ETM; Support for learners with fewer opportunities through Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps	High underachievement & low top performance in basic skills; Persisting equity & inclusion gaps across and within MS; Structural challenges highlighted by COVID-19; Inclusion & support needs of refugees & displaced persons from Ukraine
SP2: lifelong learning & mobility	ECEC: low School: medium HE: high VET: high AL: high Non-formal: high	OVERALL: medium/high Governance: high Mobilisation of EU funds: high Strategic initiatives: high EU-level projects: covered ²⁶ Monitoring: medium Communication: medium	<u>European Skills Agenda</u> ; <u>Council Recommendation on vocational education & training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness & resilience</u> ; <u>Council Resolution on a European Agenda for Adult Learning</u> ; <u>Osnabrück Declaration</u> ; <u>EU Youth Strategy</u> ;	Lifelong learning Implementation of micro-credentials & automatic recognition facilitated by referencing NQF to the EQF, digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement via Europass, launch of DEQAR by the EQAR; Mutual learning facilitated by WG Adult Learning. Mobility Virtual & blended mobility initiatives integrated into regular programmes & courses; European inter-university campuses developed by the European Universities initiative; Increased inclusiveness & flexibility for all types of learners; Enhanced learners' experiences; Progress in learning mobility enabled by Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps	Lifelong learning Low participation in adult learning; Limited visibility of non-formal lifelong learning (all levels); Structural challenges in integrating Ukrainian refugees into education and labour market; Measures for integration and inclusion of refugees remain primarily short-term Learning mobility Inclusivity issues, particularly for disadvantaged learners; Inconsistent implementation of automatic recognition – only 12 MS with fully compliant national legislation for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications Teacher shortages, especially in STEM & ICT and in remote & disadvantaged regions; Challenges related to attracting, upskilling and retaining talents across the MS; Unsatisfactory working conditions, including well-being at work, level of pay, recognition of the teaching profession; Lack of diversity & inclusion training or measures to ensure the participation of teachers in such training; No strategic EEA initiatives primarily targeting teachers
SP3: teachers & trainers	ECEC: high School: high HE: high VET: high AL: high Non-formal: high	OVERALL: medium/low Governance: medium Mobilisation of EU funds: medium Strategic initiatives: none EU-level projects: medium Monitoring: medium Communication: medium	<u>Council Recommendation on vocational education & training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness & resilience</u> (for VET teachers & trainers)	Teacher Academies & the European Innovative Teaching Award enabled by Erasmus+ funding; European guidance for the development of national career frameworks; Introduction of teacher-related indicators in 2023 ETM; Recognition of progress achieved by EU-level projects & calls supporting SP3 among EEA actors at national level	

²⁶ While EU projects and calls specifically attributed to EEA as part of this evaluation did not address SP2 as their primary thematic focus, the nature of this instrument and its support through Erasmus + is enabling mobility and lifelong learning as the core of its design, and therefore contributes to the progress of SP2.

SP	Education levels covered	Coverage by EEA implementation instruments	Complementary frameworks	Key results	Key remaining challenges
SP4: European higher education	ECEC: none School: low HE: high VET: high AL: low Non-formal: none	OVERALL: high Governance: high Mobilisation of EU funds: medium Strategic initiatives: high EU-level projects: high Monitoring: medium Communication: high	European Higher Education Area / Bologna Process	Recognised progress among different EEA actors; EU-level target on HE attainment is likely to be achieved; Visibility & recognition of European Degree package, European Universities initiative (65 European University alliances) and HEI initiative (in cooperation with EIT) at institutional level; Mutual learning facilitated by WG HE; EEA-informed reforms in higher education across MS (largely driven by the European Universities initiative); European Student Card initiative scaling up and enabling digital exchanges of student data between HEIs across the EEA; Simplified management of student mobility & cross-border validation of student status through European Student Card initiative	Legal obstacles in MS prevent more effective transnational cooperation; Long-term sustainability of European Universities alliances; Involvement of further European HEIs in digital exchange of data through the Erasmus Without Paper network
SP5: green & digital	ECEC: high School: high HE: high VET: high AL: high Non-formal: high	OVERALL: high Governance: high Mobilisation of EU funds: high Strategic initiatives: high EU-level projects: high Monitoring: medium Communication: high	Digital Education Action Plan EU Youth Strategy ; Council Recommendation on vocational education & training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness & resilience	Initiatives to enhance digital competences & digital readiness of EEA actors; Mutual learning facilitated by WG DELTA; DEAP contributing directly to the EEA; Adoption of Council Recommendations on the key enabling factors for successful digital education & training, and on improving the provision of digital skills & competences in education & training	Tensions between the digital and green transitions due to resource- and energy-intensive nature of digital technologies; Perception of insufficient mainstreaming of achieving green & digital transitions together; Longer legacy of prioritising the digital transition under ET2020 contributing to perception of disparity in focus; Need for greater visibility of activities related to sustainability within the EEA; Room for greater exploitation of innovation in education to advance the green & digital transitions
SP5: green & digital	ECEC: high School: high HE: high VET: high AL: high Non-formal: high	OVERALL: Medium Governance: medium Mobilisation of EU funds: medium Strategic initiatives: medium EU-level projects: high Monitoring: high Communication: high	Green Deal ; EU Youth Strategy ; Council Recommendation on vocational education & training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness & resilience	Adoption of Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development; GreenComp; Mutual learning facilitated by WG Schools and WG VET and the Green Transition; Dedicated community of practice around GreenComp embedded in the Education for Climate Coalition mobilising EEA actors to collaborate on the green transition; Gradual integration of sustainability topics into curricula across all MS; Greener Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps providing fundamental support through dedicated calls for forward-looking and policy-experimentation projects; Sustainability as a focus topic in several Erasmus+ Teacher Academies; Researchers at Schools initiative	SP5 - Digital Disparities in infrastructure and access to digital tools; Scepticism of certain MS towards the use of digital tools in education; Advances in AI and concerns linked to AI (ethics, capacity, infrastructure) SP5 – Green Practical implementation of Learning for Sustainability hampered by educators' lack of capacity to design, facilitate & assess transformative learning experiences; Gap between attitudes & actions towards sustainability

4.1.4. Promoting education and training from a global perspective

Cooperation under the EEA strategic framework contributed to advancing education and training from a global perspective. This was achieved through the EEA implementation instruments that allow for participation of some non-EU countries. **EU candidate and European Economic Area / EFTA countries participated in some parts of the EEA governance** (in particular in HLG, WG and SGIB), benefited from mutual learning and exchange, and aligned closely with EEA SP. In particular, for EU candidate countries, this participation in the EEA governance and peer learning significantly supported the process of modernisation of their education and training systems, facilitating alignment in view of enlargement.

Several EU-level projects and calls under the Erasmus+ programme open to some non-EU countries proved effective in advancing the EEA SP and promoting the global perspective of European cooperation in education and training. One notable example is the European Universities initiative, which brought progress towards the strategic objectives of the Bologna Process by enabling higher education institutions in other Bologna countries to take part in alliances as associated partners. The opening of the European Universities alliances to the Western Balkans helped extend the benefits of this initiative to close partners and potential future EU members. Other examples include EIT HEI initiative, or activities that increasingly emphasise digitalisation, sustainability and international reach through the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

The **Global Gateway Strategy** and the 2021 **Western Balkans Agenda** reinforced the EU's commitment to supporting non-EU countries' educational advancement, contributing to regional integration and alignment with the EEA SP.

The **EEA served as an inspirational framework for international cooperation**, particularly in the Eastern Neighbourhood, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, through initiatives like Erasmus Mundus and Jean Monnet actions that promoted high-level international joint degrees and EU values outside the EU, and people-to-people dialogue. Cooperation projects under the **international dimension of Erasmus+** met specific needs in non-EU regions, strengthening educational ties and supporting capacity building in higher education and vocational education and training. From the point of view of skills development, these projects supported the modernisation of education systems in partner countries (e.g. looking at curricula and recognition of diplomas), which in turn helps deliver a pool of skilled people the EU MS could tap into in the future.

The **mobilisation of EEA governance allowed for effective reaction to global crises**, playing an important role in particular in ensuring continuation of education and training of Ukrainian refugees following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Enhancing visibility and communication about the EEA's contributions globally could foster a better understanding and stronger partnerships with non-EU actors, as well as an increased attractiveness worldwide of European education and training systems.

Streamlining the global perspective across all SP of the EEA strategic framework would ensure a more consistent approach, leveraging the strengths of international partnerships in education for mutual benefit, strengthening EU's competitiveness and democracy, allowing essential know-how exchanges with partner countries that could support, among others, developments in innovation, STEM and AI-related fields in the EU, strengthen the competitiveness of European universities and attract talent to the EU (see also Sections 4.3., 5.1.).

4.1.5. Efficiency

Measuring the cost-effectiveness of efforts under the strategic framework to build the EEA is complex and **constrained by several major limitations**.

A major challenge is that European cooperation towards the EEA comprises a wide and varied range of processes and activities and is influenced by the EU's broader agenda and other international initiatives. Improvements cannot be solely attributed to the EEA, and it is difficult to isolate the EEA's specific impacts as the strategic framework builds on previous cooperation frameworks (ET2020 and ET2010). Furthermore, there is no baseline data.

In view of this, for the analysis information was collected on the costs and benefits of selected illustrative examples of processes and activities under the EEA implementation instruments. This approach was taken to minimise the response burden on the providers of such information and to keep the costs of producing the necessary data in proportion to the importance of the results sought. Due to the **incremental nature of the EEA**, it was not possible to quantify the additional monetary and time inputs due to the EEA (as compared to the previous period under ET2020). **These constraints therefore limit the possibility to generalise the findings and to draw comparative conclusions with regard to cost-effectiveness.**

The **processes and activities covered by the analysis** were the following:

EEA governance

HLG and its CB. The main cost-generating items were HLG meetings, especially those organised in person²⁷. Costs relate to time spent by participants (EU MS, European Economic Area / EFTA countries, Commission) preparing for meetings, attending them and doing follow-up work; and, for in person meetings, to costs for the meeting venue, accommodation and travel. The costs of the CB, with most meetings taking place online, were very low. Main benefits included strategic agenda setting and steering, enhanced ownership of EEA priorities by the EU MS, responsiveness and agility of the EEA strategic framework governance in addressing crises (for example, to ensure continuity of education and training for refugees from Ukraine following Russia's war of aggression), and mutual learning. Consulted members of the HLG mostly agreed that the benefits of their participation outweigh the resources invested.

WG. External expertise, covered by dedicated contracts, and physical WG meetings and peer-learning activities were the main cost-generating items. Clear benefits include supporting the design of and follow-up to strategic EEA initiatives and advancing the European dimension in education and training. The WG were found to represent an important regular and structured forum for co-creation, mutual learning and dissemination of good practices, with contributions also from social partners, EU-level stakeholder organisations and agencies. The various activities of the WG resulted in almost 80 deliverables – including input papers, reports, factsheets, key policy messages and briefs. The mutual learning and deliverables fed policy development and supported reforms in several MS. For example, they contributed to the reform of ECEC in Bulgaria and Lithuania, the Higher Education and Science Act and the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Croatia, improved governance and modernisation of the VET system in Cyprus, the digital education reform in Czechia, citizenship education reform in Spain, legislation on inclusive education and curriculum flexibility in Portugal, or the integration

²⁷ One HLG meeting per Council Presidency took place in person, in the country of the Presidency.

of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. Furthermore, WG supported the global dimension of the EEA by facilitating exchanges and mutual learning with EU candidate and European Economic Area / EFTA countries. They also helped ensure that the EEA strategic framework was aligned with the work of international organisations such as UN agencies or the OECD, who are regular participants in most WG. The survey of WG members revealed that they had favourable perceptions of the cost-benefit ratio²⁸. Knowledge gained informed national policymaking and promoted institutional knowledge-sharing, albeit with varying results across countries linked to their level of engagement.

SGIB. The twice-yearly SGIB meetings were the main cost-generating items. Benefits included technical advice for DG EAC on data usage and indicator development, covering topics such as equity and inclusion, the teaching profession, learning for sustainability, civic knowledge and learning mobility. Such technical advice contributed to proposals to revise EU-level targets and work on the online Monitor Toolbox (from 2022), which allowed more detailed and transparent monitoring of progress towards existing EU-level targets.

Expert Group on Quality Investment in Education and Training. The main cost-generating items were the 16 meetings of the expert group in 2021-2022. Benefits included contribution to EU policy discussions (published a key report on quality investment) and laying the foundations for the establishment of the Learning Lab.

Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training. Contracts on administrative and communication aspects, which also cover the costs of meetings, were the main cost-generating item. The Lab helps to develop a culture of education policy evaluation across the EU to improve the effectiveness of education and training policy and the efficiency of education spending.

Strategic EEA initiatives

Council Recommendations. Four Council Recommendations were included in the analysis²⁹. The costs for developing and following up on each recommendation vary widely depending on the nature of each recommendation, and implementation costs at MS level are difficult to estimate.

Regarding benefits, the Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition acted as a strong enabler of European cooperation in education and training by facilitating transnational cooperation and mobility. Progress in implementing the recommendation was made in several MS, with the benefits of the automatic recognition of qualifications being especially important for students moving across borders and for higher education institutions seeking to attract such students. Cost savings are also possible in the qualification recognition process itself, given its expected simplification, although much depends on what institutional solutions are finally adopted. While some progress was made, the ultimate objective of the recommendation is yet to be achieved.

The Recommendation on pathways to school success contributed to a common understanding of school success and of the impact of well-being on educational outcomes.

²⁸ Most of the respondents who answered this question considered that the benefits outweighed the time invested by participants (55%; n=130); more than one third (36%; n=130) considered that the benefits were proportional to the time invested; and only 8% had a negative view on the cost-benefit ratio.

²⁹ The selected Council Recommendations were: Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad adopted in 2018; the Pathways to School Success Council Recommendation (2022); and the 2023 Council Recommendations on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training and on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training.

It also provided guidance on improving equity and quality in education. The recommendation significantly influenced the inclusive education reforms e.g. in Romania, with the aim to address equity gaps, attendance, learning outcomes, progression to HE and employment.

The Recommendations on digital education and skills brought to light inter alia a lack of availability of high-quality digital education content and pedagogical approaches for teaching computer science. This prompted the establishment of relevant Commission expert groups in 2024 to draw up guidelines to support teachers and school leaders.

Mobilisation of EU funds for national reform

This implementation instrument invited **MS to make use of EU funds to support national and regional reforms in line with EEA objectives**, e.g. TSI technical support and RRF funds for the VET reform to support the green transition in Denmark and ESF+ funds and technical support for reforms in Estonia to improve the competences and motivation of teachers. There appeared to be only negligible costs involved in promoting the use of these funds to achieve objectives in line with the EEA SP. Such costs would also be very difficult to separate from costs already calculated (e.g. for the functioning of the WG) as raising awareness of EU funds often takes place as part of other activities (e.g. during meetings at different governance levels). Regarding the benefits, the mobilisation of EU funds for national reforms contributed effectively to mainstreaming the EEA SP into MS' policymaking. Evaluating the extent to which this will result in mature reforms and a positive impact on the performance of education and training systems will be possible only in the coming years.

EU-level projects and calls

Jean Monnet actions for schools and VET. The main cost-generating items were an external contract (communication activities linked to the launch of the action) and Commission staff time to prepare project calls. Outputs included over 100 teacher training events and school networks and projects under the Learning EU initiative with a total budget of EUR 21.1 million, contributing to the promotion of European values.

Education for Climate Coalition. The main cost-generating items were platform hosting and Commission staff time dedicated to the action. The benefits were 166 online and 8 in-person events, with combined audience of around 5,650 persons between 2021 and mid-2024. The Coalition led to the consolidation of a participatory community of practice that supports teaching and learning for the green transition, with over 8,000 registered users of the online platform. It also led to the mobilisation of EEA actors to collaborate and work towards the green transition and sustainable development. The community is growing, so benefits are expected to rise.

Reporting and monitoring

ETM (comparative and country reports). An external-expert contract and Commission staff time to analyse and draft reports were the main cost-generating items. On the benefits side, the ETM provided regular updates on progress towards targets at EU and national level and was an important source of country-specific and thematic information. In addition to its growing visibility among education experts and policymakers, the ETM's analysis was used internally in the Commission to inform country-specific analysis and recommendations under the European Semester and to guide funding priorities for national reforms, investments and projects across various EU funds and instruments.

DG EAC-DG EMPL EEA Taskforce. The main cost-generating item was Commission staff time to prepare for, participate in and follow up on meetings. The Taskforce ensured coordination between DG EAC and DG EMPL units most closely involved in building the EEA. The Taskforce played an important role in monitoring and reporting progress towards the EEA (including the 2022 EEA progress report and this evaluation). There are grounds for concluding that the associated benefits outweighed the costs associated with the time invested.

Communication and dissemination

The main communication and dissemination activities related to the **EEA portal, European Education Summits, and social media campaigns**. The main cost-generating items were the external contract covering Summit costs, venue costs and other costs related to the Summit (in-person format), and the communication contract. On the benefits side, the portal attracted around 1.5 million users annually, facilitating access to funding opportunities. The summits brought together all key actors in education and training, helped raise awareness on key EEA-related topics and fostered synergies across EEA EU-level actions. The social media campaigns achieved increased engagement and their performance was cost-effective. The communication activities raised awareness and made selected information more accessible for EEA actors and to some extent for the wider education and training community.

More detailed information is provided in Annex IV *Overview of benefits and costs*.

4.1.6. Coherence

Overall, the EEA was delivered in a coherent way. Efforts to build the EEA under the strategic framework were fully **consistent with the priorities of the European Commission (2019-2024)** and of the **EU Strategic Agenda**³⁰.

Complementarity between the EEA strategic framework and other EU-level strategies and frameworks was observed, including those directly linked to education and training (DEAP, European Higher Education Area, European Skills Agenda, European Qualifications Framework, European Research Area, EU Youth Strategy, New European Innovation Agenda) and in other fields more broadly³¹.

The analysis nevertheless found that the **links between the EEA and other frameworks in education and training were not always clear** for EEA actors, leading to varying interpretations of what the EEA is. It was challenging to build a common understanding of the EEA, delineating it from other complementary frameworks. This requires: (i) a better integration of policies with clearer division of responsibilities relating to skills, VET and adult learning under the EEA; and (ii) improved communication on the links between the EEA and other frameworks in education and training (such as the European Higher Education Area, EU Youth Strategy, European Skills Agenda or the New European Innovation Agenda).

The EEA SP were found to be consistent with the priorities pursued by the MS. MS have carried out reforms that complemented the EEA SP (given the broad and consensual

³⁰ [EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#) and [2024-2029](#).

³¹ European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, New European Innovation Agenda, European Child Guarantee, European Strategy on the Rights of the Child, Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025, EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, EU Anti-racism Action Plan, European Democracy Action Plan, European Media Literacy actions, Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life 2021-2030, EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030, LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

nature of the SP, there was no great risk of misalignment). **Some reforms in the MS were directly inspired by the European cooperation**, such as Austria's Universities and Digital Transformation 2030 framework, reform of ECEC in Lithuania, or the Higher Education and Science Act in Croatia³².

Furthermore, there was **strong complementarity between the EEA strategic framework and initiatives by other international organisations** like the OECD, UNESCO, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Council of Europe or the World Bank. This was achieved through complementary objectives, the participation of several international organisations in the EEA WG, and active collaboration in delivering joint initiatives.

The **EEA implementation instruments were largely delivered in an internally coherent way**. Synergies were sought and exploited between instruments to ensure more impactful results. The analysis concluded that closely linking different instruments can be a useful strategy for maximising effectiveness.

For example, the **WG** had strong links with several strategic EEA initiatives, helping to shape their development and supporting their implementation. Some EU-level projects and calls also showed clear links with the working groups, for instance the link between Erasmus+ Teacher Academies and the European Innovative Teaching Award with the WG Schools. Since 2021, there has been some attempt to exploit synergies between the WG. This included holding several joint meetings (e.g. joint sessions between WG Schools – Pathways and WG Equality and Values; joint meetings between WG DELTA and WG Schools, and between WG Schools – Learning for Sustainability and WG VET and the Green Transition). The synergies established to date were mostly assessed positively by the WG' members. Nevertheless, there is still potential for more synergies between the WG. Additionally, better integration of the WG' activities and political governance is needed to maximise their contributions to the EEA SP.

Many interviewees noted a strong synergy between the **European Universities initiative** and other EEA implementation instruments. The initiative drove implementation of other EEA activities under various EEA implementation instruments, including the Blueprint for a European Degree, the European Recognition and Quality Assurance System, a possible legal status for alliances of HEIs, or the European Student Card initiative, and at the same time benefits from them. This mutual support enhances the progress and effectiveness of the initiative.

More broadly, however, the evaluation found **evidence gaps regarding the results and impacts of the key strategic EEA initiatives** and EU-level projects and calls (with some exceptions like the European Universities initiative, the Council Recommendation on automatic recognition, or the EIT HEI initiative). Efforts to assess progress with their implementation were often scattered and lacked robust assessment (partly linked to the recency of several initiatives).

Strong complementarity was established through contributions made to the European Semester, which in turn was linked to RRF and other funding and actual reforms that were financed and implemented. For instance, the recovery and resilience plans of MS were assessed also based on their capacity to address the CSR advanced in the framework of the Semester. The negotiations for the current cohesion policy programming period (2021-2027) were informed by the challenges and investment priorities in the field of education and training outlined in the European Semester 2019 country reports. MS were invited to prioritise ERDF and ESF+ investments in line with

³² See national case studies in annex of external evaluation support study (July 2025).

the CSR falling within the scope of the respective funds. The possibility of using EU funds is also mentioned in several strategic EEA initiatives. The ETM also included information on the use of EU funds, including EU cohesion policy funds, RRF and TSI, in the country reports.

While **EU funds** and instruments contributed to the EEA SP, the ability to assess their impact was hindered by a **lack of consistency in how these investments were monitored and evaluated**.

Moreover, there was **not always clear understanding among EEA actors about the full range of activities entailed by the EEA**. This can hinder internal coherence of the EEA and support for it.

4.2. How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom?

The primary added value recognised by EEA actors and the wider education and training community consulted was that the EEA strategic framework establishes shared priorities, enables **coordination of policy discussions and mutual learning on how to tackle common challenges across EU MS**. The contribution analysis conducted as part of the external evaluation support study suggested that the EEA strategic framework helped to maintain **political attention** on education and training policies. It offered an internally **cohesive set of implementation instruments**, in addition to those at national level, **to foster improvements in national and regional education and training systems**, and **promoted the European dimension** of education and training. **Significant EU funding was mobilised** to invest in education, skills and infrastructure in Member States, supporting the green and digital transitions, higher education reforms, inclusion and innovation³³.

Box 2. Examples of the added value provided by the EEA strategic framework

- **Improvement of ECEC:**
 - ECEC reform in **Lithuania** to improve access to ECEC for all children, especially children with disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds. Connected to SP1 and SP3. The reform was inspired by the 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality ECEC systems and supported by knowledge shared through the WG ECEC and through ESF+ and RRF funds.
- **Enhancing inclusion and equity:**
 - Adoption of policies in **Romania** to establish a more equitable pre-university education system, promoting student-centred practices and ensuring resources for quality education. Connected to SP1 and SP4. The policies were linked to the CSR and aligned with several Council Recommendations (including the 2022 Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success, the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching) in strategic documents. They were supported by the TSI, and funding from RRF and ESF+ funds.
 - Reforms in **Portugal** to enhance inclusion, autonomy and curriculum flexibility by creating a structure that gives schools flexibility to adjust pupils' learning path in order to boost inclusion, also leading to a reduction in early school leaving. Connected to SP1. The reforms were informed by the work in different WG and ETM country reports, EU-level targets and CSR to track progress on policy reforms. They received technical support as well as funding from ESF+, RRF, and Erasmus+.
- **Boosting digital skills:**
 - Digital education reform in **Czechia** to modernise the content of education, equipping schools with digital technologies and supporting the digital literacy of teachers. Connected to SP5. This reform was informed by discussions in WG DELTA, including through peer-learning activities, and supported by RRF and Erasmus+ funding and the TSI.

³³ Mobilisation of EUR 75 billion under the RRF, EUR 40.4 billion under ESF+ and EUR 8.7 billion from ERDF (2021-27).

- In **France**, recent school reforms to improve the digitalisation of education and digital skills have been influenced by European cooperation and EEA SP and has benefitted from RRF funding and technical support through the TSI.
- School reform in **Greece** aiming to support the development of skills and competences needed for various societal and labour market transformations, including green and digital skills, was inspired by common European priorities. Aligned with CSR and ETM findings, the reform received ESF+ and Erasmus+ funding, as well as technical support.
- **Improvement of VET:**
 - A series of reforms to improve and modernise the VET system in **Cyprus** have been influenced by European cooperation, including the Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. Funding from the RRF and Just Transition Fund been instrumental in designing and implementing the national reform.
- **Strengthening higher education:**
 - The adoption of the Universities and Digital Transformation 2030 strategic framework in **Austria** aims to address universities' digitalisation issues, including learning and teaching, as well as research, supporting organisation and infrastructure in terms of digital transformation. Connected to SP4 and SP5. The framework was informed by the work in the WG HE and aligned with CSR, and received RRF and Erasmus+ funding and technical support through the TSI.
 - Reform in **Italy** to establish an institutional framework for the recognition of qualifications which has led to a simplified recognition of the qualifications process and improved international mobility. Connected to SP4. The framework was aligned with the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting the automatic mutual recognition and benefitted from Erasmus+ funding to support the recognition of qualifications and to establish an international database of higher education entry qualifications.
 - In **Slovakia**, the adoption of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Act led to the development of new accreditation standards and a more university-led approach to quality assurance. The reform was informed by peer learning opportunities in WG HE and received technical support, as well as Erasmus+ and RRF funding.

In terms of mutual learning and knowledge-sharing, added value was most visible at the level of individual EEA actors (i.e. policymakers and practitioners, who participated in various activities under the EEA implementation instruments); and at organisational level, for those organisations that had a more systematic approach to sharing information and organisational learning. **At system level, added value was best achieved when countries were proactive in making the best combined and coordinated use of several of the EEA implementation instruments.**

For small EU countries and those with limited resources, the added value of participating in mutual learning activities under the EEA strategic framework was particularly pronounced. These countries were also more likely to see the benefit of using EU-level guidance to open up to transnational cooperation and to access EU funds to support educational reforms.

All countries, regardless of their size and level of advancement on certain topics, **can benefit from support under the EEA strategic framework**, including the variety of instruments and funds available, which might not yet be fully utilised.

For EU candidate countries, the participation in the EEA governance and peer learning supported **modernisation of their education and training systems**, facilitating alignment in view of enlargement.

The consultations carried out show that most countries acknowledge that **it was much easier for some challenges to be addressed at EU level.** For instance, challenges relating to **digitalisation and AI in education and training**, including data protection and security, can be addressed more efficiently through cooperation at EU level.

Such structured cooperation was particularly beneficial at times of crises, such as the **COVID-19 pandemic** and **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**³⁴, when coordinated response and mobilisation of EU support were crucial to maintaining the continuity and quality of education and training.

Strengthening European cooperation in education and training served as a clear indicator of added value. The EEA strategic framework facilitated the development of advanced structural cooperation structures that extend beyond individual MS, such as the European Universities initiative or the Centres of Vocational Excellence.

Continued added value

The importance of continuing European cooperation in education and training towards the EEA was widely recognised by the EEA actors consulted.

According to the consulted actors, the **main risks associated with discontinuing European cooperation towards the EEA** are as follows.

- **For individual EEA actors: reduced opportunities for knowledge creation and sharing.** According to members of the WG and SGIB surveyed (83 %; n=130), the discontinuation of the EEA would disrupt connections between policymakers across the EU. Moreover, individual EEA actors may also have **potentially reduced mobility opportunities**.
- **For organisations: reduced opportunities for policy learning.** Organisations would also be most negatively affected by the loss of European dimension of education and training, focused on enabling advanced structures for cooperation that go beyond individual MS. The **progress towards internationalisation of organisations, especially in higher education, and its possible transfer to other areas, would be hindered**. Organisations would have **reduced project opportunities** and would face an **increased burden** in terms of time, human and financial resources to tackle education issues on their own.
- **At system-level:** loss of coordinated approaches and reduced access to EU guidance could **widen gaps between MS. Progress on pressing issues would likely slow down, in particular on digital education, quality and equity across educational levels or higher education** as these areas have advanced significantly through the activities under various EEA implementation instruments. Discontinuing the EEA would **hinder the implementation of national reforms** according to 73% (n=130) of respondents to the WG and SGIB survey. Furthermore, for half of the policymakers surveyed (n=107), ending the EEA would **negatively affect education policy development in their country**.

Discontinuing European cooperation towards the EEA would have a likely negative impact beyond the education and training field.

³⁴ For example, 25 MS participated in a joint data collection on the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education systems, organised by the Council Presidency and the European Commission. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/224f94b0-32a8-11ef-a61b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

4.3. Is the intervention still relevant?

The various analyses conducted as part of the external evaluation study³⁵ strongly indicated that the **thematic focus of the EEA strategic framework is considered highly relevant** by the EEA actors and the wider education and training community consulted. The EEA SP are **highly pertinent** and **well-aligned with national priorities and issues within national education systems**, including teacher shortages, declining basic skills, low levels of digital skills, and widening equity gaps. National representatives that were interviewed (including members of the WG) pointed out that while country-specific challenges exist, the activities under the EEA strategic framework cover a wide spectrum of issues that matter to them.

While all SP were considered relevant, with no significant differences in the perceived importance of one over another, respondents considered the EEA particularly significant in **tackling low levels of digital skills and competences**, with 72% (n=130) of respondents agreeing on this. This was followed by the contribution of the EEA to **raising the quality of education and training provision** (68%; n=130) and to **reducing inequalities** in education and training (66%; n=130). Two thirds of respondents believed that the EEA could help **address teacher shortages and the lack of attractiveness of the teaching profession**, while 53% agreed that it can help to **tackle skills mismatches** between the supply of skills and labour market demand.

The EEA remains **relevant even when faced with crises** such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine³⁶. The EEA strategic framework mobilises EU funds and cooperation efforts to support national education systems, in line with the EEA SP on promoting quality, equity and inclusion. In fact, EEA actors further confirmed that the EEA SP are even more relevant during these crises, as collaborative efforts are instrumental in addressing immediate needs, adopting responsive strategies and upholding a consistent approach to these common challenges.

The continued relevance of the EEA SP

The EEA's **flexibility and focus on long-term, overarching priorities ensure its continued relevance**. Consulted EEA actors provided examples of issues of continued high relevance for EEA SP to emphasise, in light of the new EU priorities and persistent challenges:

- The EEA strategic framework needs to ensure continued and reinforced focus on **diversity, mental health, well-being, and resilience**, at all levels of education and training. Tackling underachievement and **building basic skills** should be further prioritised in light of decreasing performance.
- **Inclusiveness** should remain a priority for access to lifelong learning and cross-border mobility, targeting especially learners with disabilities, students from migrant backgrounds and students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. In addition to SP1, equity should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting objective under all EEA SP.
- More attention should be given to improving the **working conditions of teachers** and the **attractiveness of the teaching profession**.

³⁵ See external evaluation support study for details on the analyses (July 2025).

³⁶ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, '[Progress towards the achievement of the EEA](#) – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions', Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

- Priority should be given to **sustaining the transnational cooperation** necessary to boost the EU's competitiveness globally, while increasing inclusivity and equal access for vulnerable students.
- A sustained focus on digital skills is needed, with more attention also given to **developments in AI**. Synergies between **digital education and learning for sustainability** should be further enhanced. There should also be more focus on **innovation in and through education**.

While the current SP were seen as broadly relevant, the EEA actors consulted mentioned a need to further streamline the EEA SP to address common and national challenges more effectively. The evaluation identified **three potential pathways** to ensure the EEA's continued relevance and effectiveness in its upcoming 2026-2030 cycle.

Pathway A: Maintain the agreed broad SP with strengthened focus on relevant (re)emerging and persistent challenges under each of the current SP.

The EEA actors consulted considered that the long-term SP should remain sufficiently broad to accommodate emerging issues. Nevertheless, respondents suggested that the strategic framework could benefit from identifying a limited set of priority issues to be addressed (e.g. basic skills, innovation, STEM, teachers, etc.).

Pathway B: Introduce cross-cutting objectives across the current SP, and revise them to improve their clarity

EEA actors saw the benefit of introducing cross-cutting objectives (such as lifelong learning and skills development; socio-economic, regional/territorial, and gender equality; innovation in and through education, and the global perspective) across current SP to address cross-cutting issues. These objectives can create a cohesive framework, allowing for targeted initiatives while maintaining a general framework that addresses a range of challenges.

At the same time, overarching objectives aligning with the new EU political priorities – such as boosting Europe's competitiveness, preparedness and resilience, social cohesion and fairness, and promoting democracy and EU values – could drive progress towards the SP.

Pathway C: Consider introducing a new SP (namely, in the area of citizenship education).

The increased importance of citizenship education was highlighted throughout the consultations, as well as in numerous recent EU documents (for example, the [EP's 2024 resolution on the Commission's 2023 Rule of Law Report](#), the [2023 Issue Paper on Citizenship Education of the WG on Equality and Values](#), the [2023 Council conclusions](#), and [Conference on the Future of Europe report](#)). The EEA actors consulted also stressed the importance of continuing efforts to improve the implementation of citizenship education, calling for the development of a common citizenship education framework and for action to enhance its role and improve its quality across MS.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN AND LESSONS LEARNT?

The evaluation found that the EEA in its first cycle (2021-2025) proved its strong added value by reinforcing agreement on shared priorities across the wider education and training community, boosting EU resilience in the face of crises, and mobilising support for structural reforms. The EEA strategic framework provides an overarching strategy for quality education and training in all contexts, at all levels and in all forms, underpinned by lifelong learning across borders. Since 2021, the building blocks of a comprehensive approach towards developing the EEA, serving as a solid basis for further work, have been gradually put in place. In recent years this comprehensive approach has brought together education and training actors at different levels to share experiences, cooperate and co-create the EEA. The overall assessment of European cooperation in education and training is positive.

The strategic framework will continue to be relevant beyond 2025, by offering a platform for mutual learning, knowledge creation, and policy and funding support to address common challenges and opportunities shared by education and training systems across the EU. EEA actors and the wider education and training community consider the EEA as a framework that helps Member States build high-quality and inclusive education and training systems, and which advances the European dimension of education and training by enabling structured cooperation and promoting mobility, citizenship education and EU values. At the same time, the evaluation identified some room for improvement to further boost results and impacts. Six key conclusions were formulated, each paired with lessons learnt. This chapter concludes with a table providing a structure for operationalising work under EEA SP.

5.1. EEA SP and EU-level targets

There was progress on the five EEA SP, supported by European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework. European cooperation towards the EEA contributed to an increased ownership and understanding of common priorities in education and training across EEA actors and stakeholders in the wider education and training community. MS pursued reforms that are aligned with EEA SP (see Section 5.5. below).

Coverage of both SP and education sectors was varied, with some priorities supported more than others in the first cycle (2021-2025) of the EEA strategic framework (see Table 5). Addressing persisting and (re)emerging challenges will require even greater efforts and the prioritisation of issues that have not made sufficient progress during the first cycle of implementation (see column on priority themes in Table 7, section 5.7.).

EU-level targets and supporting indicators provided a valuable tool for both driving and tracking progress. At the same time, EU-level targets were not fully aligned with the EEA SP (see Table 6 below), as some priorities (and related education challenges) do not lend themselves for being measured quantitatively via a single target domain. While SP1 has several targets that can be associated with it, no targets cover SP3 (teachers and trainers) or learning for sustainability (under SP5). But the Commission has developed indicator areas for both (as well as equity), with the support of the SGIB, at the request of the Council.

Trends towards meeting the EU-level targets show a mixed picture. On the plus side: we see a **trend of positive upward convergence** (since 2020) with EU-average progressing towards the achievement of several long-standing 2030 targets (early school leaving, tertiary attainment and participation in ECEC). Moreover, the 2025 target on VET has been exceeded. Despite some progress, significant efforts are needed on adult learning. There are significant warning signs of a persistent and even growing level of **underachievement in basic and digital skills**, hitting disadvantaged students especially hard.

Table 6. Progress towards EU-level targets and need for adjustments

EEA SP	EU-level target ³⁷	Current value	Progress & need for adjustment
SP1 – quality, equity, inclusion and success for all	Early childhood education and care: ‘By 2030, at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in ECEC’	94.6% (UOE 2023)	Progress towards achieving the target. Further efforts needed to achieve target by 2030 ³⁸ . Target remains relevant (together with the second Barcelona target for under 3-year-olds), also because increased provision of ECEC is seen as a key contributor to the European Pillar of Social Rights EU target linked to employment for 2030 ³⁹ . Increase in the 2030 target value would be unrealistic.
	Early school leaving: ‘By 2030, the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%’	9.3% (LFS 2024)	Progress towards achieving the target. Reducing early school leaving is also seen as a key contributor to the European Pillar of Social Rights EU target linked to adult participation in training for 2030 ⁴⁰ . It is also one of the headline targets on the Social Scoreboard ⁴¹ . Target level could be made more ambitious.
	Basic skills: ‘By 2030, the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%’	26.2% in reading 29.5% in maths 24.2% in science (PISA 2022)	Falling even further short of the target. Significant effort needed to fully explore the reasons and achieve the target. The target remains highly relevant for helping to improve equity and the quality of education and training and thus boosting EU competitiveness, social cohesion and fairness. More ambitious target value would be unrealistic.
	Work-based learning in VET: ‘By 2025, at least 60% of recent VET graduates should have experienced work-based learning as part of their VET programme’	65.3% (LFS, 2024)	2025 target has been exceeded. Decisions on VET targets will be taken as part of the forthcoming European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training.
SP2 – Lifelong learning & mobility	‘By 2025, at least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months’ ⁴²	39.5% (AES 2022)	Progressing towards achieving the target. Significant effort needed to achieve the target. EU level target for 2030 (as taken forward in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan) remains relevant.
	‘By 2030, at least 60% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months’ (<i>European Pillar of Social Rights</i>)		
SP 4 – Higher education	The share of 25 to 34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45% by 2030	44.2% (LFS 2024)	Progressing towards achieving the target. Target remains relevant. Target level could be made more ambitious.
SP5 – Digital	Digital skills: ‘By 2030, the share of underachievement in digital skills should be less than 15%’	42.5% ⁴³ (ICILS 2023)	Significant gap between the target value and the level of achievement. Given the rapidly changing technological landscape and the future needs of the labour market this target will continue to be highly relevant for contributing to the EU’s preparedness and competitiveness.

³⁷ EU-level targets as set under the 2021 EEA strategic framework resolution, see Annex II. Except the 2030 AL target.

³⁸ European Commission: *Employment and social developments in Europe 2024*, 2024.

³⁹ *Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030* (2022/C 484/01). European Commission, *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*, 2021.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Eurostat, *Social Scoreboard*.

⁴² Target also adopted by *2021 Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030* (Annex II).

⁴³ Share of eighth-graders were below Level 2 proficiency. IEA, ‘*IEA Releases Latest Results of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study, ICILS 2023*’, 2024.

Lessons learnt

- While current SP were recognised as providing a good basis for further work, there is room for increasing impact by focusing work-strands on **issues related to the most pressing challenges** (see Table 5 on SP).
- Systematically tackling **cross-cutting objectives** (e.g. innovation in and through education; socio-economic, regional/territorial or gender equality, or the global perspective) across all SP could increase their impact. In addition, promoting lifelong learning and skills development might be more effective as a horizontal priority to increase its coverage across all sectors of education and training.
- Introducing a new **SP on citizenship education** would enhance the EU's democracy and preparedness, and help address calls from the European Parliament, the Council and the Conference on the Future of Europe⁴⁴.

5.2. EEA design

The overall design of the EEA strategic framework was found to be appropriate and fit for achieving strategic priorities. In the absence of regulatory power, the ability of the EEA strategic framework to create impact arises from its combination of various 'soft' implementation instruments. These include: (i) setting quantified targets; (ii) providing concrete policy guidance (on the implementation of strategic EEA initiatives); (iii) fostering mutual learning and exchange; (iv) supporting transnational cooperation between policymakers, practitioners and education and training institutions; (v) mobilising relevant EU funds and instruments for national reforms; (vi) monitoring progress; and (vii) supporting the evaluation of relevant reforms.

While **EEA implementation instruments, their combination and delivery were overall positively assessed**, further **prioritisation** (of most relevant challenges to tackle and strategic EEA initiatives to implement) and a more **systematic combination of several EEA implementation instruments could lead to stronger results** and national impacts. As highlighted by some EEA actors consulted for this evaluation, the strategic framework risks becoming overly ambitious, by aiming to deliver on too many strategic EEA initiatives. Given limited resources, pursuing SP through a high number of diverse activities could result in dispersed efforts (at EU level) and constraints on implementation capacity (at national level). This could hinder effectiveness and coherence. **Prioritising through more concentrated efforts a smaller number of strategic EEA initiatives, supported by a systematic combination of other EEA implementation instruments and periodic evaluation** of their implementation, would also help fill evidence gaps, feeding into policy reviews and increasing impact (for new flagship initiatives that could be prioritised see bold in column 'strategic initiatives' in Table 7, see also section 5.3. below on filling evidence gaps).

EEA governance bodies proved suitable for supporting collaboration on SP, enabling mutual learning, and allowing flexibility in reacting to crises. At the same time, the EEA governance architecture would profit from further reform, including **clarification of the specific roles and responsibilities of governance bodies and ensuring more systematic feedback loops between them and stronger linkages with governance bodies in other relevant policy areas.**

⁴⁴ [European Parliament Resolution on the implementation of citizenship education actions](#) (2022); Conference on the Future of Europe (April 2021-March 2022) [final report](#); [Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship](#) (2023).

Lessons learnt

- **A more focused approach with key strategic EEA initiatives supported by a systematic combination of EEA implementation instruments** could lead to stronger outcomes and impact, and open the door to **exploring targeted approaches for supporting and tracking progress**. This could include identifying under each SP one or two flagship initiatives as framework strategies setting out work and mobilisation of EEA implementation instruments.
- Further governance reforms setting out clear roles for various governance levels, ensuring a **continuous feedback loop between political steering, implementation and monitoring of progress** towards the EEA and reinforced connection with business and other relevant stakeholders (social partners, labour market and civil society actors), could foster a **whole-of-government approach** driving further development of the EEA. A reinforced governance with improved cross-sectoral linkages could also ensure synergies across education and skills and employment policies.

5.3. EEA reporting, monitoring and evaluation

Reporting and monitoring under the EEA focused on assessing the effectiveness of education and training systems using EU-level targets and supporting indicators, such as participation, attainment and quality of education. This approach helped focus attention on and drive national reforms and contributed to building a more systematic and coherent body of evidence, supported by the work of the SGIB. Tools like the ETM informed policymaking but could be further used to stimulate policy dialogue at the national level.

While the **EEA strategic framework** has developed a regular monitoring practice around the EU-level targets and a growing number of supporting indicators, it **lacks a mechanism for systematically building and collecting evidence on national reforms aimed at achieving EEA SP** (including the national implementation of strategic EEA initiatives and the impact of EU funding on progress towards EU-level targets), or on outcomes and impacts of activities carried out under EEA implementation instruments⁴⁵. The **absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation** to track progress on achieving EEA SP, reforms in line with strategic EEA initiatives and the use of other EEA implementation instruments, **hinders learning about the impact of strategic EEA initiatives, and creates a knowledge gap** weakening its potential to drive evidence-informed policymaking.

Importantly, it makes it difficult to identify and support with robust evidence how national governments are following up on strategic EEA initiatives and translating them into concrete policies and practices. It also hinders the assessment of the effectiveness of other EEA implementation instruments, such as EU-level projects and calls, to support meaningful change within MS (or at EU level). While some strategic EEA initiatives have been evaluated, this is not true of all, and evaluations are not repeated regularly. Without systematic and targeted monitoring and evaluation, it is **not possible to identify implementation gaps and barriers** (such as regulatory mismatches, resource constraints or lack of political will), which could impede the realisation of the EEA SP.

⁴⁵ There have been efforts to track the EEA's delivery at the output level, including the 2022 EEA progress report, the present evaluation, and internal reporting to track progress of activities under EEA implementation instruments.

Lessons learnt

- A limited number of EU-level education and training targets should be maintained to ensure that they are effective in mobilising action. A **layered system of targets and indicators** that differentiates between thematic targets (e.g. on basic skills, including citizenship education and digital skills, as well as STEM or equity), sectoral targets (on attainment and participation in different levels of education and training) and relevant supporting indicators. As the EEA strategic framework ultimately seeks to promote progress towards the SP, each SP could be linked to indicators/targets.
- A **more comprehensive EEA monitoring and evaluation scheme**⁴⁶ could consist of:
 - regular impact evaluations of national reforms in line with EEA priorities or of the follow-up of flagship strategic EEA initiatives;
 - periodic impact evaluations and monitoring of the use of EU funds, with embedded focus on EEA SP;
 - light but consistent reporting by MS (e.g. national implementation plans on specific strategic EEA initiatives or overall follow-up on Union of Skills / EEA) to enhance comparability and feed mutual learning;
 - enhanced synthesis and analysis of data — with a focus on progress towards EEA SP and implementation of strategic EEA initiatives — collected from various sources and European Commission knowledge providers⁴⁷ to create a cohesive understanding of progress and impact.

5.4. EEA communication and dissemination

Strengthening the shared understanding of the EEA strategic framework and its benefits is essential for further progress. The success of the EEA in supporting improvements to national education and training systems, and fostering effective transnational collaboration, depends on two key factors: (i) a clear understanding by national-level actors of the benefits of cooperation and active engagement in EEA governance bodies (for stronger multiplier effects at the organisational and system levels); and (ii) ownership by these actors of the activities supported through the EEA implementation instruments. Communication activities directed at EEA actors and stakeholders at the EU-level, and their active engagement disseminating knowledge and outputs of EEA governance processes (such as WG deliverables) could therefore have a significant impact on the overall effectiveness of the EEA strategic framework.

According to the consultation carried out for this evaluation, the precise scope of the EEA remains somewhat unclear to some stakeholders, leading to varying interpretations of the EEA strategic framework and its instruments. The **lack of a comprehensive communication strategy at EU level driven by a strong EEA narrative** was a barrier to reaching a consistent and shared understanding. Enhancing the EEA's branding and visibility is therefore essential both for achieving a stronger impact at national level and for reinforcing transnational collaboration. The communication strategy could draw on activities that have proven effective such as the EEA portal, European Education Summits and other participatory events (under the Learning Lab, Jean Monnet actions or linked to a SP, such as the Digital Education Dialogues). Due to their participatory formats, such events were found to help participants gain a deeper insight into EEA activities and achievements, fostering greater visibility of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects, and increasing co-creation and networking within the education and training community.

⁴⁶ Such comprehensive monitoring and evaluation would require additional resources and analytical capabilities.

⁴⁷ Such as European Semester Country Reports, Eurydice, ENESET network, independent expert network, EACEA Feedback-to-policy reports.

Lessons learnt

- **An overarching EU education and skills communication strategy, driven by a renewed EEA narrative with a strong focus on branding** (ensuring consistent visual identity across activities under all EEA implementation instruments) with clearly defined target groups and communication channels could support the effectiveness of EEA implementation instruments. Communication to EEA actors and the wider education community should provide clarity on the overall design of the EEA strategic framework (what is included in it, how the EEA and the Union of Skills will interact, etc.).
- Communication on specific EEA implementation instruments should **systematically use the EEA brand** and its central messages to boost the visibility of the EEA. National/regional/local events that mobilise the education and training community could be encouraged to cover EEA topics, share results of the strategic EEA initiatives / EU-level projects and calls and their contribution to the EEA. The EEA portal's user-friendliness and attractiveness could be further enhanced by reviewing the search functionality, creating mobile-friendly designs and interactive content (e.g. success stories, case studies, progress dashboards, etc.).

5.5. Results at Member State level

European cooperation towards achieving the EEA laid an important foundation for improving education and training systems in Europe. One of the key objectives of the EEA strategic framework was to support reforms in MS. It did so by engaging EEA actors (policymakers, practitioners, education and training institutions and other education and training stakeholders) in cooperation and co-creation focusing on the EEA SP, supported by various EEA implementation instruments.

MS pursued reforms that were aligned with and contributed to the achievement of the EEA SP. Progress varies by MS and depends on several factors. This is partly due to the nature of European cooperation (i.e. voluntary cooperation and no regulatory power at the EU level). Box 3 shows selected examples at various education levels from ECEC, through primary and compulsory secondary to VET and higher education.

Box 3. Examples of national reforms that aligned with and contributed to the achievement of EEA SP

- Adoption of the National **ECEC Quality Framework in Bulgaria** (as a direct follow-up of the 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality ECEC systems, informed by WG ECEC, supported by TSI, linked to a CSR under the European Semester). The implemented reforms aligned with SP1 (improving quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training) led to improvements in quality standards in ECEC through their institutionalisation, professional development of staff and the creation of monitoring instruments.
- In **Spain**, educational reforms have made **citizenship education** a compulsory subject since 2021, contributing to SP1. The reform outlines the basic and specific competences for citizenship education in **primary and compulsory secondary** education. The Spanish EU Presidency prioritised citizenship education, and, ahead of its presidency, hosted a peer-learning activity under WG Equality and Values in 2023, followed by a discussion in the HLG. These discussions informed the 2023 Council Conclusions on the Contribution of Education and Training to Strengthening Common European Values and Democratic Citizenship, connecting the technical and the political levels of the EEA strategic framework.
- In **Germany** **inclusion of refugee learners in schools and VET and employment opportunities to teachers from Ukraine** was supported by mutual learning and policy transfer through WG, and funding opportunities (for integration efforts, language support, education infrastructure, teacher training) from ESF+, CARE and REACT-EU, as well as Erasmus+ Horizon Europe projects.
- The **higher education** reform in **Croatia** (including new legislation on governance) aims to strengthen quality assurance, accreditation, and enable joint programmes thus supporting the European dimension, internationalisation. The new legal framework directly incorporates core aspects of strategic EEA initiatives in higher education. Regular participation of Ministry representatives and experts in the EEA governance structures (WG HE) ensured policy consistency between the national reforms and strategic EEA initiatives. Significant EU funding (RRF, ESF+, Erasmus+) as well as TSI support has been mobilised to support the implementation of the reforms, and the broader digitalisation of higher education.
- The reforms in the **Netherlands** to address the pressing challenges facing teachers, aims to enhance the **competences and motivation of teachers**. Having used WG Schools as a knowledge-exchange forum, the reform is fully aligned with SP3.

The evaluation identified the following **EEA pathways of influence on national reforms**:

Contributing to agenda setting through building consensus on the shared priorities (including guiding policy development in line with Council Recommendations)	→	EEA SP are reflective of the needs of the MS, as they are agreed by consensus. When specific national needs closely align (become salient), political will is more likely to facilitate the translation of priorities into concrete actions.
Providing opportunities for mutual learning	→	EEA impact is greater if national policymakers actively participate in meetings of different governance bodies. WG and their peer-learning activities serve as crucial fora for discussing policy issues. These policymakers play a key role in disseminating the knowledge gained and promoting EEA SP within their institutions and broader national contexts. When the guidance developed and the good practices discussed are systematically shared at the national level, they inspire reforms and foster policy innovation.
Ensuring complementary use of different EEA implementation instruments	→	EEA impact is greater if the EEA implementation instruments are used in synergy . For instance, using strategic EEA initiatives to guide ongoing policy reforms and addressing CSR can help identify which challenges to act upon, including through a collaborative search for solutions.
Aligning use of EU funding to support national reforms on EEA SP and providing project-based funding opportunities	→	The evaluation found that strong complementarity has been established between the EEA and the European Semester, which in turn is linked to the RRF, TSI, and Cohesion Policy funding and the actual reforms financed, supported and implemented. The use of EU funding and technical support to design and implement national reforms is instrumental in supporting the implementation of EEA SP.

Lessons learnt

In the light of the evaluation findings and considering the ‘soft’ nature of the EEA strategic framework, more impact at national level could be achieved by:

- ensuring **better sharing of results by national EEA actors** participating in EEA governance with their counterparts in the respective education systems (e.g. disseminating outputs across their administrations, feeding into national reforms and the follow-up of strategic EEA initiatives) to enhance multiplier effects, and build a more solid evidence base to develop the EEA;
- further supporting MS’ reform processes and **inclusive dialogue at national level** (e.g. use annual recovery and resilience plans meetings to discuss progress, present selected EEA initiatives, bring together education authorities, practitioners, and national level stakeholder organisations; build on national ETM launch events to engage the education community);
- further supporting MS in **building a culture of evaluation** and evidence-informed policymaking on education and training at national level through the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training.

5.6. Results at European level

While the EEA strategic framework aims to support MS in achieving their educational objectives, its ambition extends beyond this role. The framework creates a European dimension by facilitating a transnational exchange of experiences, mutual learning and co-creation among policymakers and other education and training stakeholders and by promoting transnational cooperation between education and training institutions and learning mobility.

While the EEA strategic framework builds on the legacy of the earlier frameworks that promoted transnational cooperation and mobility, this objective was further strengthened through efforts to **consolidate sustainable structures of European cooperation**, embodied in activities under EEA implementation instruments. Such activities include the European Universities initiative, Centres of Vocational Excellence, the European Degree and the European Student Card initiative.

In its first cycle, the EEA demonstrated its potential to foster more sustainable and structured transnational cooperation in education and training, by making significant progress in promoting mobility, innovation and shared standards. Several initiatives (including those on learning mobility, micro-credentials and recognition) already demonstrated significant benefits (documented by evaluations)⁴⁸, such as boosting mobility, fostering more flexible learning pathways and enhancing recognition of qualifications. This facilitated smoother collaboration, especially at the level of HEIs, which would probably not have been achieved without European cooperation. These activities also contributed to new knowledge and practices being developed through transnational cooperation, and to increased mobility and the reduction of legal obstacles to further cooperation. At the same time, hurdles related to regulatory diversity and legislative alignment might impede full implementation and the broader goal of fostering transnational collaboration.

Under the first cycle of the EEA strategic framework, **work supporting the promotion of a European dimension of education and training through the work on citizenship education, learning about the EU, its values and democracy also intensified** (e.g. through WG Equality and Values and the Jean Monnet Actions - Learning EU initiatives). Platforms like the European School Education Platform which provides the Toolkit for Schools, the Digital Education Hub, EPAL communities for adult learning and VET, and the EEA portal contributed to **creating a common European knowledge space for educators and policymakers**. Frameworks like the European Quality Framework on ECEC, Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, DigComp and GreenComp advanced **shared standards**, contributing to **building a European approach to education**. Finally, initiatives such as the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies strengthened collaboration and **professional development across borders**.

The EEA strategic framework has also proven instrumental in **responding to crises**, such as COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, where a **coordinated EU response** helped limit disruption and ensure continuity in education and training.

Lessons learnt

- European cooperation in education and training is particularly strong under the SP focused on (i) reinforcing European higher education; and (ii) making lifelong learning and mobility a reality. Work towards these priorities goes beyond cooperation and includes **transnational measures**. Expanding such efforts to other areas, such as school education, digital skills and green competences, would embed an even stronger European dimension throughout the EEA. This is especially relevant when fostering common approaches to skills development.
- The EEA's ability to ensure effective coordinated response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine illustrates its **potential to act as a unifying force** for addressing common challenges faced by European education systems. Any further reforms of the EEA governance should aim to safeguard and reinforce the EEA strategic framework's flexibility and agility to boost preparedness and resilience.

⁴⁸ See evaluations of individual Council Recommendations such as that on automatic recognition, or selected EU-level projects and calls such as the EIT HEI initiative, as well as the RRF or Erasmus+ evaluations.

5.7. EEA priorities, action strands and monitoring

Based on the above findings of this evaluation, table 7 sets out a structure that could inform the Council's review and guide work on EEA priorities (themes to focus on), action strands (flagship strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls) and target/indicator domains for monitoring progress.

Table 7. EEA priorities, action strands and monitoring

SP	Priority themes	Strategic initiatives (to be proposed or implementation)	Flagship projects / calls	Relevant M&E target/indicator areas
1. Quality, equity, inclusion	Basic skills & top performance; Quality and inclusiveness (diversity, gender, well-being at school)	Action Plan on Basic Skills with Basic Skills Guarantee; Pathways to School success, ECEC quality framework	Girls and women's participation in STEM studies and careers (also under SP5)	UNDERACHIEVEMENT & TOP PERFORMANCE in literacy, mathematics and science EQUITY (learners from a disadvantaged socio-economic background with good achievement in at least one domain) STEM enrolment by sex
2. Mobility	Learning mobility & inclusiveness	Europe on the Move EU Talent Magnet framework	EU Talent Pool & Talent Partnerships; M. Skłodowska-Curie Action 'Choose Europe' pilot project	INTERNATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS (inward degree mobile tertiary graduates from outside the EU) Learning mobility indicators (outward credit and degree mobile tertiary graduates)
3. Education profession (teachers and trainers)	Teacher shortages; Working conditions; Attractiveness of the profession; ITE, CPD	EU Teachers Agenda with European competence framework for academic staff	Erasmus+ Teacher Academies; European Innovative Teaching award; Erasmus+ pilot on European School Alliances	Teaching profession indicator area (online Monitor Toolbox)
4. European higher education	Reducing obstacles to cooperation; Inclusiveness and accessibility	European degree : Action plan on accessibility of higher education; European Quality Assurance and Recognition System; Attractive & sustainable careers in higher education, European Strategy for Universities	European Universities alliances EIT HEI initiative	Tertiary attainment Enrolment in STEM at tertiary level <i>See also learning mobility indicators under mobility above.</i>
5. Green and digital	STEM; AI; Digital skills; Enhanced links between learning for sustainability and digital skills, gender and digital equity	Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills ; STEM education strategic plan ; STEM competence framework, European Degree for engineers, Council Recommendation on AI in education; Council Recommendations on digital (with DigComp) and on learning for the green transition and sustainable development (with GreenComp)	Girls and women's participation in STEM studies and careers (Girls Go STEM and STEM Futures and Fellowships); STEM education centres; STEM skills foundries, STEM Tech Talent Induction, European Advanced Digital Skills Competitions, International Partnerships on STEM; Education for Climate Coalition	DIGITAL SKILLS (underachievement) Enrolment in STEM (VET & tertiary), ICT (PhD) Learning for sustainability indicators (online Monitor Toolbox)
6. Citizenship education	Teaching and learning through, about and for democracy; European dimension of teaching and promotion of EU values	Competence framework for active and democratic citizenship education , adapted to the EU; Guidelines to improve the supply and quality of democratic citizenship education; Strategic guide for EU VET policymakers and providers to effectively promote citizenship competences in initial VET; Guiding principles on protecting fundamental academic values	Jean Monnet actions for Schools and VET; Erasmus+ Teacher Academies; Erasmus+ School / Culture Collaborations for Civic Engagement and Critical Citizenship Education project; EU citizenship module for Erasmus; Eurydice study: Citizenship education at school	CIVIC KNOWLEDGE (adequate performance in civic knowledge)
HORIZONTAL PRIORITY: LIFELONG LEARNING & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT				
	Lifelong learning mindset; Skills & qualifications; recognition	European framework for the automatic recognition of study qualifications and learning periods abroad at school, VET & HE levels ; European Qualifications Framework ; Individual learning accounts; Micro-credentials; Skills Portability Initiative ; VET strategy	European Digital Credentials for learning; Erasmus+ pilots on university-business partnerships and on a European VET diploma; European Centres of Vocational Excellence Skills Academies; Pact for Skills	ECEC participation; early school leaving; <i>(VET)</i> ; tertiary attainment; adult participation in learning



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PART 2/2

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic framework

Accompanying the document

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic
framework**

{COM(2025) 340 final}

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Glossary

Terms and acronyms are used for both singular and plural forms.

<i>Term or acronym</i>	<i>Meaning or definition</i>
AI	Artificial intelligence
CB	Coordination Board (of the High-Level Group)
CSR	Country-specific recommendations
DG	Directorate-General
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG CNECT	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG ECFIN	Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG HE	Directors-General for Higher Education
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG JUST	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG REFORM	Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DGVT	Directors-General for Vocational Education and Training
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EDUC	Education Committee
EEA	European Education Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFEE	European Federation of Education Employers
EFEE	European Forum for Freedom in Education

EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EP	European Parliament
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESU	European Students Union
ET2010	Education and Training 2010
ET2020	Education and Training 2020
ETM	Education and Training Monitor
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
EU	European Union
EYCS	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council
HLG	High-Level Group on Education and Training
JMA	Jean Monnet actions
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MS	Member States
NFIL	Non-formal and informal learning
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SG	Secretariat-General (of the European Commission)
SG.RECOVER	Reform and Investment Task Force
SGIB	Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks
SJ	Legal Service (of the European Commission)
SP	Strategic priority
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SWD	Staff working document
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations agency for children
VET	Vocational education and training

WG	Working groups (EEA strategic framework working groups)
WG AL	Working Group on Adult Learning: opening up opportunities for all
WG DELTA	Working Group on Digital Education: learning, teaching and assessment
WG ECEC	Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care
WG Equality and Values	Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training
WG HE	Working group on Higher Education
WG Schools	Working Group on Schools
WG Schools – Pathways	Working Group on Schools sub-group Pathways to School Success
WG Schools – Learning for Sustainability	Working Group on Schools sub-group Learning for Sustainability
WG VET and the Green Transition	Working Group on Vocational Education and Training and the Green Transition

ANNEX I: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead Directorate-General: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)

Agenda planning reference: PLAN/2023/264

Organisation: The preparatory work for the evaluation started in February 2023. Key steps in this inception phase included setting-up an interservice group (ISG), publication of a call for evidence, and drafting of technical specifications for the evaluation support contract. The contract was awarded under the framework contract EAC/2021/OP/0004 for the provision of services in evaluation to the consortium led by PPMI (the external contractor). The contract started in December 2023.

The external evaluation assignment included a public and targeted consultations and provided the main evidence base for this staff working document. The draft external evaluation support study has been submitted on 3 February 2025. The synopsis report on all consultation activities was published on the [Have your say](#) portal. It is also annexed to the staff working document.

Timing (key steps of the evaluation):

Date	Step
17 February 2023	Evaluation launched in DECIDE (PLAN/2023/264)
26 April 2023	Note Ares(2023)2956155 sent to relevant DGs on setting-up the ISG
22 May 2023	First ISG meeting: call for evidence, intervention logic, evaluation questions
16 June-15 September 2023	Call for evidence open on the Have your say portal
mid-July to September 2023	Written consultation of the ISG: technical specifications for the evaluation support contract
6 December 2023	Signature of the evaluation support contract
15 December 2023	Kick-off meeting with the external contractor
1 February 2024	Theory of Change workshop with the Commission staff
29 February 2024	Second ISG meeting: inception report
4 April-27 June 2024	Public consultation open on the Have your say portal
Q1-Q4 2024	Targeted consultations
11 July 2024	Third ISG meeting: interim report
25 November 2024	Fourth ISG meeting: draft final report
January 2025	Drafting of the evaluation SWD and obligatory annexes
3 to 19 February 2025	Written consultation of the ISG: external evaluation support study
5 to 12 February 2025	Written consultation of the ISG: draft SWD on evaluation
25 April-12 May 2025	Inter-service consultation
July 2025	Publication of the evaluation report (and the support study)

Interservice group: The ISG oversaw the evaluation and met regularly throughout the evaluation process. The ISG was composed of representatives of 18 Commission departments¹. It was involved in all the key steps of the evaluation process, including preparation of the call for evidence, intervention logic, evaluation questions, technical specifications, public consultation and other questionnaires, monitoring progress and steering the evaluation, providing comments to and ensuring quality of deliverables produced by the external contractor. The ISG meetings were held in a hybrid format, while the written consultations were done online through a dedicated Teams/SharePoint space.

Work carried out by the external contractor: The evaluation was supported by an external contractor, who conducted an evaluation support study from December 2023 to Q1 2025. In line with the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines, the contractor analysed the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, added value and relevance of the European cooperation towards the European Education Area (EEA) in the period 2021-2024.

The consultation strategy was based on a stakeholder mapping. Specific attention was paid to ensuring the inclusion and diversity of the EEA actors at Member State (MS) level, as well as balancing the representation of public authorities, social partners, and the wider education and training community. Respondents were selected in a way to ensure representation of all MS and all education levels. Data was mainly gathered through the following consultation activities:

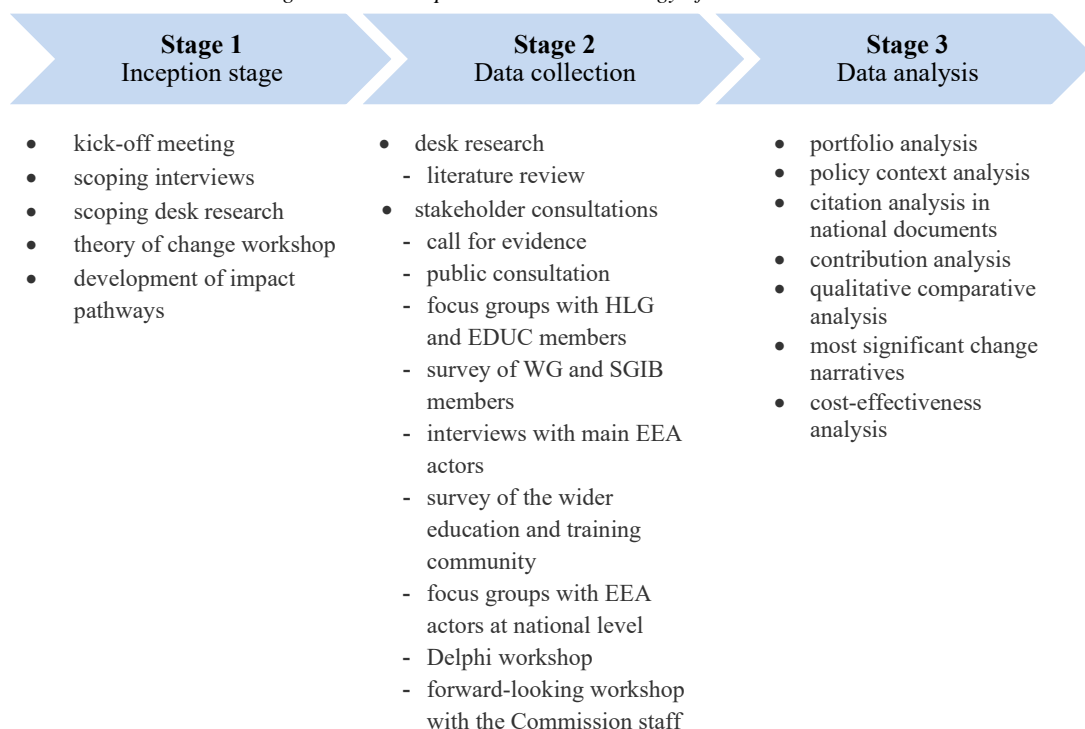
- **call for evidence** on the [Have Your Say](#) portal (16 June-15 September 2023)
- **public consultation** on the [Have your say](#) portal (4 April-27 June 2024)
- **targeted consultations:**
 - **survey** of EEA strategic framework working groups (WG) and Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) members (16 May-7 June 2024), and of wider education and training community (19 July-23 August 2024)
 - **interviews** with EU institutions, MS and European Economic Area / EFTA authorities, international organisations, social partners, European and national stakeholders (Q1-Q4 2024)
 - **focus groups** involving High-Level Group on Education and Training (HLG) and Education Committee (EDUC) members (22, 25, 29 April 2024), and EEA actors at national level (30 September; 1, 2, 4 October 2024)
 - **workshops** involving experts (8 October 2024), and Commission staff (14 October 2024).

¹ BUDG, CLIMA, CNECT, EAC, EACEA, ECFIN, EMPL, ENV, HOME, INTPA, JRC, JUST, NEAR, REFORM, REGIO, RTD, SG & SG.RECOVER, SJ

ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

The external evaluation assignment encompassed several tasks organised in three distinct stages, all contributing to a comprehensive interim evaluation of the EEA. The methodology mostly followed a qualitative approach, collecting evidence through desk-based research and an extensive stakeholder consultation strategy. The evaluation adopted a fully participatory approach, engaging relevant EEA actors and wider education and training community into open and targeted consultation activities. Such involvement of EEA actors, along with the guidance by the ISG and the DG EAC-EMPL EEA Taskforce, ensured triangulation and quality assurance of data.

Figure 1. Overall process and methodology of the evaluation



Limitations

The evaluation faced several limitations, which influenced the methods used to address them.

- The broad scope of the EEA limits the level of detail the evaluation can provide for each activity and makes assessing overarching impacts challenging. To address this, the evaluation focused on high-level interconnections (e.g. among implementation instruments) and used examples to illustrate activity-level interplay. The cost-effectiveness analysis covered selected illustrative processes and activities under each implementation instrument.
- The results of the European cooperation towards the EEA on national, regional, and local policies are non-linear and influenced by the EU's broader agenda and other international initiatives. Improvements cannot be solely attributed to the EEA, and it is difficult to isolate its specific impacts, as its strategic framework

builds on previous cooperation (ET2020 and ET2010). Data collection was designed with these limitations in mind, and the contribution analysis was used to draw more robust conclusions.

- Due to the indirect impact of the European cooperation towards the EEA on the ground, quantifying its contribution to results and impacts is not possible. Analytical techniques, including qualitative comparative analysis, were used to complement contribution analysis findings.
- The short implementation time frame limits the ability of the evaluation to comprehensively assess impacts, as many activities are still relatively new or ongoing. To address this limitation, the evaluation focused on completed activities and early indicators of progress.
- The lack of baseline was an additional limitation.

1. Inception stage

The inception stage of the evaluation process started with a **kick-off meeting** involving the Commission and the external contractor held on 15 December 2023. The meeting discussed the overall evaluation process, including the methodology and the timeline.

In total, 20 **scoping interviews** were conducted with the Commission staff and a representative of the Life-Long Learning Platform. **Scoping desk research** was conducted to review key background documents related to the European cooperation in education and training towards the EEA. The Commission provided an overview of such documents to the external contractor for the purposes of the evaluation support study. The scoping desk research also allowed to identify and address some of the data gaps. Throughout the data collection activities, different data needs and collection methods were identified and then used to inform answers to the evaluation questions.

The **theory of change workshop** with the Commission staff took place on 1 February 2024. The purpose of the workshop was twofold: i) to refine the draft intervention logic and associated theory of change, and ii) to develop detailed impact pathways for the EEA implementation instruments and associated assumptions. The workshop helped to collect information on success factors for every EEA implementation instrument. That information impacted the final operationalisation of the evaluation questions and the list of assessment criteria for responses to the evaluation questions.

The theory of change workshop enabled the development of detailed **impact pathways** for the EEA implementation instruments, as well as associated assumptions outlining the conditions under which changes are expected to occur. The impact pathways were designed to trace connections between the strategic EEA initiatives and the expected results and impacts, highlighting how different implementation instruments contribute to overarching EEA objectives. The impact pathways formed the basis for the contribution analysis.

2. Data collection stage

The data collection stage included desk research and various stakeholder consultation activities.

The **desk research** helped further development of the evidence base for the evaluation. The literature review focused on academic literature, past evaluations, and studies conducted to identify the results and impacts of the EEA strategic framework and its predecessors (ET2010 and ET2020).

The **stakeholder consultations** were based on a stakeholder mapping and the stakeholder consultation strategy. The strategy included open public and targeted consultation activities. Targeted consultations included relevant EEA actors and the wider education and training community. Specific attention was paid to ensuring diversity of MS-level EEA actors, and to balancing representation of public authorities, social partners and wider education and training community. Respondents were selected to ensure representation of all MS and all education levels. The synopsis report (see Annex V) provides a summary of all consultation activities.

Table 1. Stakeholder consultations activities

Activity	Timing
Call for evidence (Have your say portal)	16 June-15 September 2023
Public consultation (Have your say portal)	4 April-27 June 2024
Interviews with the main EEA actors	Q1-Q4 2024
Focus groups with HLG and EDUC members	22, 25, 29 April 2024
Survey of WG and SGIB members	16 May-7 June 2024
Survey of the wider education and training community	19 July-23 August 2024
Focus groups with EEA actors at national level	30 September 2024; 1, 2, 4 October 2024
Delphi workshop	8 October 2024
Forward-looking workshop with the Commission staff	14 October 2024

3. Data analysis stage

The collected data was analysed by combining several analytical techniques.

- The **portfolio analysis** was used to assess the comprehensiveness and complementarity of the activities under each EEA implementation instrument² to achieve progress towards the EEA strategic priorities (SP)³.
- The **policy context analysis** explored the complementarity of European cooperation towards the EEA with other education and training initiatives at both European and international levels.
- The **citation analysis** examined explicit references to the EEA and its strategic initiatives in national strategic documents.

² 1. EEA governance; 2. Mobilisation of EU funds and instruments for national reforms; 3. Strategic EEA initiatives; 4. EU-level projects and calls; 5. Reporting, monitoring, and evaluating progress; 6. Communication and dissemination

³ SP1. Improving quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training; SP2. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all; SP3. Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession (teachers and trainers); SP4. Reinforcing European higher education; SP5. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training

- Based on the impact pathways and associated assumptions, the **contribution analysis** was used to assess the extent to which the EEA and its implementation instruments contributed to the observed effects. Fieldwork data was used to assess how the impact pathways materialised and to validate the assumptions. The contribution analysis helped to identify the role and contribution of each EEA implementation instrument and supported the evaluation of their effectiveness.
- The **qualitative comparative analysis** examined the conditions for EEA implementation instruments to support actual reform processes in MS. The analysis was based on the national case study reports (forthcoming as part of the evaluation support study in July 2025), and involved mapping the contribution of the EEA implementation instruments to the development or amendment of the reforms. The mapping enabled a comparative analysis of the drivers of influence and the EEA's role in supporting or disseminating reforms. The insights from this analysis provided valuable input into evaluating the effectiveness of the European cooperation towards the EEA.
- The **most significant change narratives** analysis was used to explore EEA actors' understanding of the European cooperation towards the EEA and to identify what they value the most about it. This analytical technique relied on qualitative data collection methods, mainly in-depth interviews and focus groups with EEA actors at all levels. During these consultations, participants shared their views on the main benefits of the EEA and its activities. The findings from the most significant change narratives analysis informed the evaluation of effectiveness, efficiency (in terms of benefits), and added value, and provided inputs to the contribution analysis.
- Regarding the **cost-effectiveness analysis**, an important challenge was that European cooperation towards the EEA comprises a wide and varied range of processes and activities and is influenced by the EU's broader agenda and other international initiatives. The analysis therefore adopted an approach whereby information was systematically collected on the costs and benefits of selected illustrative examples of processes and activities under the EEA implementation instruments. Improvements could not be solely attributed to the EEA, and it was difficult to isolate the EEA's specific impacts as the strategic framework builds on previous cooperation frameworks (ET2020 and ET2010). Due to the incremental nature of the EEA, it was not possible to quantify the monetary and time inputs. **These constraints therefore limit the possibility to generalise the findings and to draw comparative conclusions with regard to cost-effectiveness.** More details on the cost-effectiveness analysis can be found in Annex IV.

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX

The evaluation matrix presents the operationalisation of the evaluation questions as developed during the inception phase of the evaluation process. The matrix addresses all the evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value, and relevance.

Effectiveness

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
Implementation of the strategic EEA initiatives EQ1: To what extent have the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls been implemented?	The strategic EEA initiatives ⁴ and EU-level projects and calls agreed have been implemented/progressed in a timely manner.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outputs implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls implemented planned deliverables produced participants engaged and communicated about the outputs/outcomes <p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of surveyed EEA actors who report progress of selected strategic EEA initiatives (Commission Communications and Council Recommendations) <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of progress raised by interviewees challenges encountered results achieved so far (intended and unintended) 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>

⁴ The evaluation focused on 19 strategic EEA initiatives: 1) Support for language teaching and learning; 2) Inclusive, equitable and gender equal education; 3) Mobility of young volunteers across the EU; 4) Making Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes more inclusive; 5) Pathways to school success; 6) High quality early childhood education and care (ECEC); 7) Europe on the Move – learning mobility opportunities for everyone; 8) Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability; 9) Automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad; 10) European strategy for universities; 11) Building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation; 12) European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education; 13) European degree; 14) Attractive and sustainable careers in higher education; 15) European graduate tracking initiative; 16) Blended learning; 17) Learning for sustainability; 18) Key enabling factors for successful digital education and training; 19) Improving the provision of digital skills.

⁵ The evaluation focused on 17 EU-level projects and calls: 1) Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions for schools and VET; 2) Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence; 3) Erasmus+ Teacher Academies; 4) European Innovative Teaching Award; 5) Teacher mobility framework; 6) Erasmus+ European Universities; 7) European Student Card Initiative; 8) European Digital Credentials for Learning; 9) Erasmus+ policy experimentation on the European degree (label) and institutionalised cooperation by alliances of universities; 10) EIT Innovation Capacity Building for Higher Education; 11) Researchers at Schools; 12) Education for Climate Coalition; 13) Making Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes greener; 14) Women's participation in STEM studies and careers; 15) Making Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes more digital; 16) International dimension of Erasmus and the European Solidarity Corps; 17) Association of the Western Balkans.

Effects of the EEA by SP			
Effects of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls (by SP)			
<p>EQ2: To what extent current strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls contribute effectively to the achievement of each SP? How could strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls contribute further?</p>	<p>The strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls produce the expected effects (results/impacts) at EU-level and in MS at the level of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EEA actors (policymakers and practitioners) ▪ organisations ▪ systems and policy. <p>There is a relationship between strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and achieved results/impacts.</p> <p>The assumptions about the effectiveness of the EEA are validated and confirm the contribution of the EEA (strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls) to the positive effects observed (as defined in the impact pathways of the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls).</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ results/impacts achieved by SP (intended and unintended) ▪ distribution of effects across target groups ▪ assumptions about effectiveness and related indicators ▪ presence or absence of EEA related indicators (success factors) ▪ coverage of SP within strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls ▪ identification of level of progress by SP across the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls ▪ presence or absence of desired effects at different levels across the EEA SP and different EEA implementation instruments <p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls contribute to progress towards EEA 	<p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
<p>EQ3: Why have certain objectives (SP) not (yet) been (fully) achieved? What kind of expected results and impacts, in relation to the objectives set out in the SP are likely to require a longer time to show? What are the main barriers, if any, hindering the effectiveness of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls supporting the MS with regard to each SP?</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ coverage of SP by activities implemented and the effects observed <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ barriers identified by interviewees ▪ description of mechanisms to address barriers ▪ nature of expected results and impacts compared to the nature of activities implemented ▪ prevalence of barriers 	<p>Case studies</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p>
<p>EQ4: How has effectiveness of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and the achievement of objectives set out in the SP varied between various sectors of education and training?</p>	<p>Positive effects are observed in all sectors.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ overview of effects per sector 	<p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p>

Effects of national reforms (by SP)			
EQ5: How has the European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework contributed to inspiring policy reforms in education and training at national and regional levels? What are effects of national reforms inspired by the EEA? To what extent are the effects of national reforms in line with the intended results and impacts of each SP?	EEA objectives (SP) reflected in national (regional/sub-national, as appropriate) education strategies (policy documents and legislation) and/or policy reforms – evidence that EEA outputs are used in strategic documents at national level. European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework has an impact on setting and influencing policy agenda and development at national level, and has inspired national policy reforms. National reforms that are aligned with the EEA have been positively evaluated in that they contributed to changing the expected impact indicators at national level. Effects at national level have been observed at individual, organisational and system/policy levels (and are in line with the results and impacts as defined in the EEA intervention logic).	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that EEA inspired national reforms in line with EEA SP <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nature of references examples of EEA-inspired reforms shared by interviewees and survey respondents typology of effects supported by examples <p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> existence of references coverage of EEA SP in the references links between national reforms and SP assumptions of impact pathways of EEA implementation instruments are validated regarding national policy reforms case studies confirm effects at national level, and those effects are in line with the results and impacts as defined in the EEA intervention logic 	Case studies Citation analysis Contribution analysis Interviews Most significant change narratives Portfolio analysis Qualitative comparative analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
EQ6: To what extent do the EEA implementation instruments support the efforts of MS to address country-specific recommendations (CSR) received in the context of the European Semester, and to what extent do they influence the programming of EU funds and instruments in line with EEA objectives?	The EEA implementation instruments contribute to the formulation of CSR in the context of the European Semester (assumption in relevant impact pathways confirmed). The EEA implementation instruments contribute to the definition of priorities of the EU funds and instruments (assumption in relevant impact pathways confirmed). The EEA implementation instruments are useful for countries to address CSR. Examples of use of EEA implementation instruments by countries in addressing CSR exist.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions concerning contribution to development of CSR confirmed assumptions concerning contribution to definition of EU fund priorities in line with the EEA SP confirmed distribution of CSR per each SP <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> links between the European Semester and EEA implementation instruments 	Case studies Interviews Portfolio analysis
Questions specific to certain SP			
EQ7: To what extent do current strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls give visibility to specific areas of education (including the role of non-formal and informal learning)? SP: <i>Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all</i>	There is a positive relationship between strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and priorities and the role of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL), including youth work and volunteering, in the development of personal and professional skills and competences of learners, including intercultural understanding and active citizenship. NFIL is valorised by EEA actors.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> coverage of NFIL in strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception of NFIL by EEA actors 	Interviews Portfolio analysis

<p>EQ8: Have the European strategy for universities and the associated Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation provided relevant support to MS in adapting their higher education systems for deeper transnational cooperation in Europe? <i>SP: Reinforcing European higher education</i></p>	<p>The European strategy for universities and the associated Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation are positively viewed by EEA actors. EEA actors agree that progress was achieved. Evidence regarding achieved progress is identified.</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that there has been progress <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of progress identified 	<p>Case studies Interviews Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
<p>EQ9: To what extent has the EEA – including through the international dimension of Erasmus+ – encouraged closer cooperation with non-EU countries, and what has been the impact in terms of mobilities/cooperation actions in the various sectors of education? <i>Education and training from a global perspective</i></p>	<p>EEA has had positive effects on cooperation with non-EU countries. The level of cooperation has positively affected participation in learning mobility.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of increased mobilities/cooperation identified linked with concrete efforts made within the EEA implementation instruments <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EEA actors provide examples of how EEA enabled closer cooperation with non-EU countries examples of changes which were facilitated by the EEA in non-EU countries or to allow incoming students from partner countries 	<p>Interviews Portfolio analysis</p>
<p>EQ10: How significant is the combined impact of EU and its MS – “Team Europe” – in terms of educational engagement with the rest of the world? <i>Education and training from a global perspective</i></p>	<p>The EEA has effects on education and training from a global perspective. The EEA is known to EEA actors working on education and training from a global perspective.</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception of the contribution of EEA in this field (of the surveyed EEA actors) proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that EEA contributed to the global perspective <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicative examples of interaction between EEA and education and training from a global perspective in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inclusive and equitable quality education (including gender equality) lifelong learning opportunities for all promoting learning mobility digital transition in and through education 	<p>Interviews Survey of WG Most significant change narratives</p>
<p>EQ11: To what extent have strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and the EEA strategic framework governance and co-creation processes (under the EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine) contributed to addressing the impact of the war in Ukraine on education and training? <i>Education and training from a global perspective</i></p>	<p>There are examples of positive contribution of the work under EEA in this field. EEA actors concerned are able to describe examples of significant contributions to addressing the education impact of the war in Ukraine.</p>	<p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nature and type of activities implemented EEA actors’ opinions on EEA contribution to addressing the education impact of the war in Ukraine examples of effects 	<p>Case studies Interviews Most significant change narratives Portfolio analysis</p>

Communication			
EQ12: Have the EEA portal and online communities of practice and the European Education Summits contributed to promoting access to information, collaboration, and exchanges in relation to the EEA? Is there a need for further development of these? If so, how?	EEA actors are aware of the SP, different strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls. There is strong user satisfaction with these tools. Users are able to navigate easily these tools. The trends of accessing the tools and engagement with content are positive.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> level of awareness of the EEA activities <p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of surveyed EEA actors and WG members who are aware of different EEA activities proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that they have a clear overall understanding of the EEA strategic framework website statistics and trends proportion of EEA actors and wider education and training community who agree that EEA communication efforts have been good or excellent proportion of surveyed EEA actors and wider education and training community who agree that communication has been overall successful, had clear message in place level of satisfaction with the EEA portal and online communities of practice (surveyed wider education and training community) 	<p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
Effects of reformed governance			
EQ13: To what extent has the reformed governance contributed to achieving progress under the SP? What changes, if any, are needed to improve effectiveness?	<p>Positive examples of contribution to achieving SP are identified.</p> <p>EEA actors are satisfied with current governance arrangements / EEA actors identify positive changes concerning governance.</p> <p>Comparison of effectiveness of different EEA implementation instruments with tools and deliverables of the ET2020 (as identified in the literature review / EEA actors' opinions).</p> <p>No significant areas for simplifying the governance are identified.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comparison of effects by different SP level of participation in governance <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> testimonies of contribution synergies between governance bodies EEA actors' opinions regarding how the governance could be simplified and more effective 	<p>Case studies</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Survey of WG</p>
EQ14: Has the MS' ownership of the process and priorities increased in comparison to ET2020?	<p>There is strong ownership of priorities among EEA actors at all levels.</p> <p>Comparison with the Assessment on tools and deliverables under the framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020).</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception of the EEA and cooperation process awareness of EEA activities (MS policymakers compared with other EEA actors' groups) commitment to priorities and strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls level of participation level of engagement of participants 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Most significant change narratives</p> <p>Case studies</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>

EQ15: Has the HLG become more strategic and agile?	<p>The HLG is better connected to the other levels of governance and able to adapt rapidly.</p> <p>Representation of MS and of the Commission at appropriate level in HLG is ensured (sufficiently senior level, good understanding of EEA strategic framework processes).</p> <p>The Coordination Board (CB) has helped better prepare HLG meetings and make the HLG discussions more strategic, also by ensuring better continuity between Council Presidencies.</p> <p>HLG/CB have contributed to improving communication between technical and political levels.</p>	<p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feedback on the process of governance examples of synergies and agility perception of EEA actors regarding HLG being more strategic and agile 	Interviews Portfolio analysis
EQ16: What is the effect of the reformed governance under the strategic framework at the organisational level in the administrations of MS, EU institutions and EEA actors organisations?	<p>There is positive effect of reformed governance at an organisational level (MS administrations, EU institutions, and EEA actors organisations).</p> <p>Examples of effective in-country coordination exist.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes to improve effectiveness of governance are identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changed working arrangements (structures and processes) inter-institutional and inter-sectoral cooperation increased impact on agenda-setting, planning and strategic decision-making 	Interviews Survey of WG
Effects of mutual learning (sub-group of the reformed governance)			
EQ17: To what extent has European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework facilitated the mutual learning, analysis, and sharing of good practices on quality investment in education and training?	<p>Assumptions of the technical governance pathway are confirmed.</p> <p>Understanding of good practices in investment in education infrastructure at MS level has been strengthened.</p> <p>There is evidence of the influence of the EEA.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions from the impact pathways confirmed examples of influence 	Case studies Contribution analysis Interviews Online focus groups
EQ18: Have the mutual learning arrangements enabled progress towards the achievement of objectives (SP)?	<p>Relevant assumptions in the political and technical levels of governance pathways are confirmed.</p> <p>Mutual learning results in the desired effects at individual, organisational and system level.</p> <p>Mutual learning enabled progress towards the achievement of objectives.</p> <p>Need to further strengthen/adapt mutual learning activities.</p>	<p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions from the impact pathways confirmed indicators aligned with final intervention logic gaps in the coverage of mutual learning activities barriers to participation and sharing best practices areas for adapting mutual learning activities identified types of improvements for mutual learning activities identified 	Case studies Most significant change narratives Interviews Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Public consultation Survey of WG

EU-level targets and indicators			
EQ19: To what extent has European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework contributed to improved data collection and analysis with a view to fostering evidence-based policymaking in education?	<p>Relevant assumptions from the impact pathway on monitoring are confirmed.</p> <p>There is evidence of positive contribution.</p> <p>Performance monitoring sufficiently covers all aspects linked to EEA SP.</p> <p>There are no gaps in the monitoring.</p> <p>EU-level targets and indicators improve EU-level monitoring of education and training systems,</p> <p>Learning Lab activities improve EU and national/regional level monitoring.</p> <p>Positive effect of EU-level targets on monitoring capabilities and undertaking of monitoring at EU level.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions from the pathway confirmed mapping of indicators against SP and needs EEA actors perceive monitoring as useful <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of improvements and changes 	<p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
EQ20: To what extent has the governance of the EEA strategic framework contributed to strengthened monitoring and education policy evaluation in the EU MS?	<p>MS attribute strengthened education policy evaluation and monitoring to the EEA.</p> <p>Cross-references to EU-level monitoring exist in national strategic documents.</p> <p>Examples of use of the monitoring are identified.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions are validated degree and nature of cross-referencing to EU monitoring in national strategy documents <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of influence examples of use of EU level monitoring 	<p>Case studies</p> <p>Citation analysis</p> <p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Public consultation</p>
EQ21: Based on the trends so far, is any adjustment/resetting of any EU-level targets warranted? If so, how? Is there a need for any new targets? If so, what are they?	Not applicable.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> match between the targets and performance to date <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceived need to adjust the targets 	<p>Expert Delphi panel</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p>
Mobilisation of EU funds and instruments			
EQ22: How has European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework contributed to mobilising and using EU funds and instruments effectively to support policy reform at national and regional level?	<p>Assumptions of the mobilisation of funds and instruments impact pathway are confirmed.</p> <p>EU funds have been aligned to support the EEA.</p> <p>Countries have used the funds towards EEA objectives.</p> <p>Reforms have been funded in line with the EEA.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions confirmed mapping of activities funded against the EEA SP <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of strategic use of funds perceptions of EEA actors 	<p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Most significant change</p> <p>National case studies</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p>

EQ23: To what extent have the EEA implementation instruments contributed to supporting MS' design and implementation of EU-funded and supported reforms and projects? And beyond the EEA, through the international cooperation policies of the EU and its MS?	EEA instruments have contributed to achieve change at the level of national policies. EEA-relevant reforms were supported by EU funds and instruments.	<p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumptions from different impact pathways confirmed <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of contributions identified 	Case studies Contribution analysis Interviews Most significant change Portfolio analysis
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Efficiency

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
Costs and benefits of the EEA implementation instruments			
EQ24: What are the costs and benefits of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework during the period 2021-June 2024?	The costs of EEA activities under its instruments are proportionate to the benefits. There is a balance between activities implemented (where available) and the effects observed. The strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls are confirmed to be effective. There is no identified need to change the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls.	Qualitative: <ul style="list-style-type: none">nature of costs and benefitstype and nature of activities implementednature and degree of effects observeddescription of the chains of influence against the assumptions in the theory of changeidentified need to streamline the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls	Cost-effectiveness analysis Portfolio analysis Case studies Interviews Surveys (WG and wider education and training community) Contribution analysis Public consultation
Efficiency of the EEA governance			
EQ25: To what extent reforms under the EEA (including strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls, governance, mobilisation of EU funds and instruments, and monitoring) contributed to making European cooperation and national implementation/reforms more efficient compared with the previous ET2020 framework?	Comparison of efficiency of strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls, governance, and mobilisation of EU funds and instruments (including across the education and training sectors).	Qualitative: <ul style="list-style-type: none">examples of efficiency gainsEEA actors' perceptionsexamples from other open methods of coordination	Interviews Survey of WG Online focus groups Cost-effectiveness analysis
EQ26: Are governance structures designed and organised efficiently to support MS and promote European cooperation and co-creation? Is there a need for further simplification?	Absence of inefficiencies. Satisfaction is high among participants involved in governance at political and technical levels. Clarity over roles and responsibilities as well as efficient communication.	Qualitative: <ul style="list-style-type: none">analysis of processes put in placeexamples of inefficienciesexamples of gaps	Portfolio analysis Interviews Cost-effectiveness analysis

Coherence

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
<p>Internal coherence</p> <p>EQ27: To what extent is the EEA internally coherent?</p>	<p>There are strong complementarities between EEA SP in terms of activities and education and training levels covered.</p> <p>There are strong complementarities between different EEA implementation instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ different instruments complement each other (in terms of SP, education and training levels and target groups), ▪ technical and political governance levels are linked (feedback mechanisms exist between the two), and this link has improved compared to previous periods, ▪ feedback mechanisms between different instruments exist, ▪ no overlaps have been identified, ▪ the strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls are complementary and there is no need for simplification, ▪ the internal coherence is consistent across the education and training sectors. 	<p>Qualitative and quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mapping of activities in terms of SP covered, number of activities that cover multiple SP, most common SP pairings covered by one activity identified (by EEA instrument) ▪ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that the EEA activities and SP are internally complementary ▪ extent of overlaps and need for streamlining strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls ▪ feedback mechanisms identified between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HLG and EDUC and EYCS, Employment Committee, DGVT, DG Schools, DG HE ○ WG and HLG ○ across WG ○ technical and political governance, and strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls (in terms of objectives) ○ monitoring, evaluation and progress tracking and mobilisation of funds (in terms of programming priorities and funding decisions) ○ other links identified <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ examples of complementarities ▪ absence of overlaps 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>

Coherence of communication		
EQ28: To what extent is communication about the EEA coherent?	<p>There is a consistency of messages in communication across EEA. The existing communication and dissemination tools are used consistently.</p> <p>Complementarity between EEA and national discourse in education and training.</p>	<p>Qualitative and quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ extent to which communication and dissemination activities cover all SP and education and training levels ■ gaps identified in the use of existing communication tools (e.g. in terms of SP, education and training levels covered, information provided on communication tools) ■ EEA is mentioned (in an aligned way with the Council Resolution) in context of national reforms and strategic documents <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ examples of coverage of EEA ■ examples of communication messages ■ examples of internal coordination to deliver EEA messages (feedback mechanisms between other instruments and communication and dissemination) ■ absence of contradictory or not aligned messages
External coherence		
EQ29: To what extent are the approach and efforts to achieve the EEA coherent with other EU policies, programmes, and processes?	<p>There are strong complementarities between EEA and other EU level policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the objectives, education and training levels and target groups are complementary, ■ synergies are actively fostered (e.g. through WG agenda, participants, preparation of strategic initiatives), ■ SP lifelong learning and mobility specific: complementarity between strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and Skills Agenda and European Qualifications Framework, ■ synergies exist for external coherence concerning different SPs, ■ EEA actors perceive EEA as complementary to other initiatives at EU level, ■ external coherence is consistent across the different education and training sectors. 	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree with existence of synergies <p>Qualitative and quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ mapping of objectives, target groups and types of activities reveals complementarity <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ absence of contradictions ■ examples of complementarities ■ examples how synergies are proactively fostered and cross-sectoral cooperation enhanced
		<p>Citation analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>National case studies</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
		<p>Interviews</p> <p>Policy context analysis</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>

EQ30: To what extent is the EEA coherent with initiatives at national level?	<p>There are strong complementarities between EEA and national policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EEA SP and instruments are aligned with national policy agenda and ongoing reforms, ▪ EU-level targets feature in national strategic documents, synergies are actively fostered (e.g. through WG agenda, participants, preparation of strategic initiatives), ▪ synergies exist for external coherence concerning different SP, EEA actors perceive EEA as complementary to other initiatives at national level, ▪ external coherence is consistent across the different education and training sectors. 	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that SP and EEA instruments are complementary with national policy initiatives and reforms <p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ national reforms funded through RRF, ESF+ and TSI (separately) are linked with the SP ▪ mapping reveals that EU-level targets are cited in national documents ▪ differences across education and training sectors identified <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ national reforms linked with the EEA (part of case studies) complement other ongoing national efforts based on the opinion of EEA actors ▪ examples of complementarities 	<p>Citation analysis</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>National case studies</p> <p>Policy context analysis</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
EQ31: To what extent is the EEA externally coherent with existing initiatives at international level?	<p>There are clear examples of alignment and synergies at the levels of objectives, activities and target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the objectives, education and training levels and target groups are complementary, ▪ synergies are actively fostered (e.g. through WG agenda, participants, preparation of strategic initiatives), ▪ EEA actors perceive EEA as complementary to other initiatives at international level, ▪ external coherence is consistent across the different education and training sectors. 	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proportion of EEA actors and WG members who agree with the existence of synergies <p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mapping of objectives, target groups and types of activities reveals complementarity <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ absence of contradictions ▪ examples of complementarities ▪ examples how synergies are proactively fostered 	<p>Policy context analysis</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Public consultation</p>

EU added value

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
Added value during the evaluation period			
EQ32: To what extent did European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework achieve added value?	<p>Added value was produced for different groups, in different education and training sectors, and for different types of challenges (shared by all/most MS and transnational/EU).</p> <p>There is evidence of added value produced outside the EU (non-EU countries).</p> <p>Positive assessment of effectiveness in the area of policy learning.</p> <p>Examples of positive effects of EEA are present.</p> <p>Evidence that reforms/projects would not have taken place if the EEA would not exist.</p> <p>Other factors that influenced the results identified.</p>	<p>Qualitative and quantitative:</p> <p>Nature and type of EU added value, including across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ different education and training sectors▪ SP▪ different types of challenges (inequality of access to high quality education, green skills, digital skills / learning mobility, cross-border cooperation)▪ groups that the EEA benefited the most▪ comparison with costs and benefits▪ degree and scale of policy learning that can be considered to be linked to EEA within EU and	<p>Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis under effectiveness</p> <p>Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis under</p>

		<p>beyond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ nature and type of added value on third countries, including examples of strengthened cooperation <p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proportion of EEA actors who agree that similar effects would not have been achieved without EEA ▪ proportion of EEA actors who agree that EEA provides added value <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ conclusions stemming from a combined analysis of other evaluation criteria ▪ list of factors affecting the results EEA contributes to identified (facilitating and hindering added value) 	<p>effectiveness</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Policy and portfolio analysis</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
Continued added value			
EQ33: Is it important to continue European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework?	<p>The EU added value and the benefits of the EEA outweigh the costs and go beyond what MS would have achieved on their own.</p> <p>There is evidence that discontinuation of the EEA would have negative effects.</p> <p>The scale and size of such negative effects are proportionate to the costs of the EEA.</p> <p>There is no evidence that other initiatives at different levels could replace the EEA at similar scope and volume.</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that discontinuation of the EEA would have negative effects <p>Quantitative and qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ examples and nature of effects of discontinuation of EEA ▪ progress along the SP ▪ comparison of potential scope of the negative effects to the costs of the EEA <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ initiatives that could replace the EEA identified (or not identified) ▪ negative effects identified through interviews 	<p>Contribution analysis</p> <p>Delphi expert panel</p> <p>Task 4 – analysis of other possible measures</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
EQ34: Have the competences granted to the EU in the field of education under the treaties been used to the full? If not, what more could be done at EU-level to achieve the European Education Area and the SP?	<p>The EEA currently uses all legal possibilities in terms of EU's competence according to the treaties.</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of legal provisions ▪ mapping of measures in other open methods of coordination ▪ suggestions of EEA actors on what more could be done at EU level to promote achievement of the EEA and SP 	<p>Delphi survey</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Task 4 – analysis of other possible measures</p>

Relevance

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
Relevance of the EEA SP during the evaluation period EQ35: To what extent do the SP for European cooperation and reform (as set out in the 2021 EEA strategic framework Resolution) meet the shared needs of the education and training systems in EU MS?	<p>The main needs of EEA actors in education and training are addressed by the EEA SP.</p> <p>EEA actors are satisfied with the extent to which the EEA meets their needs.</p> <p>EEA actors have good understanding of the EEA and its SP.</p> <p>The SP and governance framework are flexible enough to adapt to emerging shared unexpected challenges (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine).</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of surveyed EEA actors and wider education and training community who agree that EU faced challenges that are addressed by EEA SP proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that the WG activities and outcomes have been useful for their work proportion of surveyed EEA actors and wider education and training community who agree that the EEA was flexible enough to respond to the unexpected education challenges <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of how the SP meet the needs of EEA actors identified through interviews examples of what is not clear in the EEA strategic framework and SPs EEA actors (including WG members) perceive the SP as flexible enough EEA actors (including WG members) perceive the WG as flexible enough examples of flexibility in activities 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Online focus groups</p> <p>Policy context analysis</p> <p>Portfolio analysis</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>
Continued relevance of the EEA SP EQ36: To what extent are the SP still relevant, or do they need to be updated?	<p>The current needs (as defined in the updated intervention logic) continue to be addressed by the EEA and its SP.</p> <p>Emerging needs are addressed by the EEA and its SP.</p> <p>EEA actors perceive the SP as covering their needs and emerging challenges.</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of EEA actors who agree that it is important to continue to support European cooperation in the areas of EEA SP proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that the current cooperation framework is flexible enough to address (re)emerging challenges <p>Qualitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new needs of EEA actors identified gaps in coverage of existing needs identified new challenges in education and training emerging 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)</p>

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS

This annex summarises information on the benefits and costs associated with selected activities and processes under the various EEA implementation instruments. As explained in the main document, measuring the cost-effectiveness of efforts under the strategic framework to build the EEA is constrained by several major limitations. European cooperation towards the EEA comprises a wide and varied range of processes and activities and is influenced by the EU's broader agenda and other international initiatives. Improvements cannot be solely attributed to the EEA, and it is difficult to isolate its specific impacts as its strategic framework builds on previous cooperation frameworks (ET2020 and ET2010). Furthermore, there is no baseline data.

The analysis therefore adopted an approach whereby information was collected on the costs and benefits of selected illustrative examples of processes and activities under the EEA implementation instruments. This was in part motivated by considerations related to minimising the burden of response on the providers of such information and ensuring that the costs of producing the necessary data were in proportion to the importance of the results sought. Due to the incremental nature of the EEA, it was not possible to quantify the additional monetary and time inputs linked to the EEA (as compared to the previous period under ET2020). **These constraints therefore limit the possibility to generalise the findings and to draw comparative conclusions with regard to cost-effectiveness.**

The data related to the costs predominantly come from the Commission staff and from the survey of WG and SGIB members. EEA actors from the MS were not burdened with additional requests for data. Data on benefits are drawn from a broad variety of methodological approaches applied in the evaluation – in particular desk research, consultation activities and national case studies. The EEA helped make European cooperation in education and training more strategic and agile in addressing crises, such as through providing an effective coordinated response at EU level to ensure the continuation of education and training of Ukrainian refugees. Mutual learning supported policy development and reforms in several EU MS and candidate countries. The EEA facilitated transnational cooperation and mobility, promoted European values, and helped address pressing challenges that are easier to tackle at EU level than by individual countries, such as in relation to digitalisation in education and training. The EEA also contributed to building a culture of education policy evaluation across the EU to improve the effectiveness of education and training policies and the efficiency of education spending.

The analysis has not identified measurable potential for simplification and burden reduction, hence no table summarising this aspect is provided in this annex.

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process	Costs	Benefits
Governance HLG and its CB	<p>Main cost-generating items were HLG meetings, especially in-person meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3-5 HLG meetings took place annually, of which 2 in-person except in 2021, when all meetings were in an online format; ■ costs related to participants' time for preparation, participation and follow up of meetings; and for in-person meetings to costs for the meeting venue, accommodation and travel of participants. <p>The costs of the CB (5-6 HLG CB meetings annually since its establishment in March 2022), with most meetings taking place online, were very low.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ HLG CB contributed to bigger continuity of work between Council Presidencies and to making the HLG more strategic and agile. ■ Enhanced understanding and visibility of the EEA policy agenda among national policy makers and other EEA actors through strengthened role of HLG in strategic agenda setting. ■ Responsiveness and agility of the EEA governance in addressing crises: the HLG played an important role in identifying the needs and support required to ensure an effective coordinated response at EU-level to support the integration in education and training of Ukrainian refugee learners in the EU MS, including through providing guidance for related WG activities. It also helped to support the continuity of education in Ukraine (e.g. 1.5 million textbooks were printed and delivered to Ukraine). The HLG and CB facilitated the organisation of a survey on education of displaced children from Ukraine in EU MS. The survey provided a comprehensive picture of the situation of displaced children from Ukraine in schools in the EU, of the key challenges that MS face in their integration and what support the host countries need. ■ Intertwining EEA priorities with national policy agendas in education and training, as well as mutual learning, to better respond to the challenges faced by education and training systems in Europe, and to anticipate future challenges. <p>Evidence on cost-benefits balance: the prevailing view of the HLG members consulted who expressed their opinions on this matter is that the benefits outweigh the total time invested in participating in the HLG.</p>
EEA strategic framework WG including peer-learning activities	<p>External expertise, covered by dedicated contracts, and physical WG meetings and peer-learning activities were the main cost-generating items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 32 WG meetings (of which 8 in-person meetings) were held on average annually since 2022 ■ 11 peer-learning activities took place on average per year ■ 9 seminars/webinars were organised on average annually ■ Costs for in person meetings and peer-learning activities related to travel and accommodation. For all WG activities, costs related to participants' time for preparation, participation and follow up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The WG were found to represent an important regular and structured forum for co-creation, mutual learning and dissemination of good practices, with contributions also from social partners, EU-level stakeholder organisations and agencies. ■ The various WG activities resulted in almost 80 deliverables during the period covered by the evaluation, including input papers, reports, factsheets, key policy messages and briefs. ■ The mutual learning and deliverables fed policy development and supported reforms in several MS. For example, they contributed to the reform of ECEC in Bulgaria and Lithuania, the Higher Education and Science Act and the Act on Quality Assurance in HE in Croatia, improved governance and modernisation of the VET system in Cyprus, the digital education reform in Czechia, citizenship education reform in Spain, legislation on inclusive education and curriculum flexibility in Portugal, or the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. ■ WG activities supported the design and follow-up of strategic EEA initiatives (e.g. WG Schools – Pathways, WG Schools - Learning for Sustainability, or WG HE). ■ Supporting the advancement of the European dimension in education and training (e.g. work of the WG Equality and Values supporting Spanish presidency on the Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship, or WG HE). ■ Supporting the global dimension of the EEA by facilitating exchanges and mutual learning with the EU candidate and European Economic Area / EFTA countries. ■ Facilitating coherence of the EEA strategic framework with the work of international organisations (UN agencies, OECD), who are regular participants of most WG and active contributors to the discussions (including bringing new evidence). <p>Evidence on cost-benefits balance: The WG survey shows favourable perceptions of the cost-benefit ratio among participants in the WG. Most of those respondents who answered this question believed that the benefits outweighed the required time input for participants (55 %, n=130); more than one-third (36 %, n=130) indicated that the benefits were proportional to the time invested; 8 % indicated having a negative view on the cost-benefit ratio.</p>

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process	Costs	Benefits
SGIB	<p>The twice-yearly SGIB meetings were the main cost-generating item (costs of travel, accommodation and venue logistics, as well as time for preparation, participation and follow up by participants).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the use of data and generating evidence feeding into evidence-informed discussions on education and training policies. Developing supporting indicators in three domains: equity and inclusion, the teaching profession, and learning for sustainability to facilitate tracking progress on specific issues under the EEA SP. Contributing to the proposals on the revisions of the EU-level targets and developing online Monitor Toolbox (from 2022), which allows more detailed and transparent monitoring of progress towards existing EU-level targets. Facilitating exchange of information and practices and engaging members in co-creation of indicators that support annual monitoring within the frames of the Education and Training Monitor (ETM).
Expert Group on Quality Investment in Education and Training	<p>The main cost-generating items were the 16 meetings of the expert group during the period 2021-2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out of these 16 meetings, 3 took place in physical format. Costs related to travel, accommodation and venue logistics, and time for preparation, participation and follow up by the Commission and other participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output: report on Investing in our future – Quality investment in education and training published in 2022 The report mobilised discussions and was cited in other work Following discussion in the Council of the European Union under the French Presidency, the report supported (as a reflection paper) the drafting of the intergovernmental declaration to build a shared vision of effective, efficient and equitable investment in education, which was signed by most EU MS The report's recommendations were used to design and launch another EEA flagship initiative, the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training
Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training	<p>Contracts on administrative and communication aspects, covering also the costs of meetings, were the main cost-generating item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 in-person meetings took place in 2023, and 11 in the first half of 2024. For on-line meetings, the numbers were 48 and 31, respectively. Costs related to travel, accommodation and venue (for in person meetings), and to time for preparation, participation and follow-up of meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for policymakers through training courses, mutual learning and capacity building on counterfactual impact evaluation Support for building a culture of education policy evaluation across the EU to improve the effectiveness of education and training policy and the efficiency of education spending Providing a platform/community of practice for EEA actors to exchange knowledge, experiences, and good practices. This peer learning fosters collaboration and enables countries to learn from each other's successes and challenges Supporting with designing and conducting counterfactual impact evaluation studies of education policies in EU countries, as well as providing customised support on education policy impact evaluation for local, regional, and national authorities
Strategic EEA Initiatives Four Council Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways to School Success Automatic recognition 	<p>The costs for the development and follow up to each Council Recommendation vary widely depending on the nature of each recommendation. Implementation costs at MS level are difficult to estimate, without posing administrative burden to MS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> costs included external expert contracts, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits are heterogeneous, given the different focus areas of the Recommendations and progress achieved in their implementation Contributions to shaping the direction of interventions in education and training and to building the political momentum for reforms in several MS Council Recommendation on automatic recognition of qualifications is a strong enabler of the European cooperation in education and training, specifically by facilitating transnational cooperation and mobility <p>Examples:</p>

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process	Costs	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the provision of digital skills Key enabling factors for successful digital education and training 	<p>EU-level projects linked to the preparation and follow up to the Recommendations, time by Commission staff for preparing the related Commission proposals and by MS and Commission for negotiating the Recommendation texts, time by the Commission and MS for participation in related meetings etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in implementing the Automatic recognition Recommendation in some but not all countries (e.g. 9 countries adopted legislation to comply with the Recommendation: AT, BE, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV), with the benefits of the automatic recognition of qualifications being especially important for students moving across borders and for higher education institutions seeking to attract such students⁶ Costs savings for the automatic recognition Recommendation are also possible in the qualification recognition process itself, given its expected simplification. However, much depends on the specific institutional solutions adopted. There is evidence of some progress, but the ultimate objective of the Recommendation is yet to be achieved The benefits of Recommendations can take more nuanced forms. For example, the Recommendation can be seen as an awareness raising instrument or an encouragement for national follow-up at policy level. This can be seen e.g. in the case of the Automatic recognition of qualifications Recommendation Contributions to a common understanding of school success and the key impact of well-being on educational outcomes, providing guidance and inspiration on improving equity and quality in education through Roadmap (linked to the Pathways Recommendation) The Recommendations on digital education and skills brought to light a lack of availability of high-quality digital education content and pedagogical approaches for teaching computer science. This prompted the establishment of relevant Commission expert groups in 2024 that will elaborate guidelines to support teachers and school leaders
<p>EU-level projects and calls</p> <p>Jean Monnet actions (JMA) for schools and VET</p>	<p>Main cost-generating items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External contract (communication activities linked to the launch of the action) Commission staff time to prepare project calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs: more than 100 teacher training events, school networks, and projects under the Learning EU initiative were funded, with a total budget of EUR 21.1 million, contributing to the promotion of European values The ratio between the operational costs of the JMA and the value of project funds awarded suggests high cost-efficiency Too early for aggregated evidence on the benefits of projects to be available. Online focus groups with the respondents to the survey of the wider education and training community suggest that the action has the potential to achieve results. Respondents to the survey of wider education and training community reported benefits from teacher training (n=15), as well as benefits from Learning EU Initiatives (n=15). However, the number of responses is too low to draw overarching conclusions.
<p>Education for Climate Coalition</p>	<p>Main cost-generating items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> platform hosting, Commission staff time dedicated to the action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs: 166 online events and 8 in-person events of diverse character, with combined audience of around 5,650 persons between 2021 and mid-2024 Consolidation of a participatory community of practice that supports teaching and learning for the green transition: 8,000+ registered users of the online platform Successful mobilisation of EEA actors to collaborate and work towards the green transition and sustainable development. Promotion of education communities' contributions to these areas In its 2022 Annual Report, the Coalition highlighted its role in enriching the Council's recommendations on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, as well as contributing to the European sustainability competence framework (GreenComp)

⁶ Evaluation Report | Implementation of the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications, doi: 10.2766/904563

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process		Costs	Benefits
Reporting, monitoring and evaluation of progress			
ETM – comparative and country reports	Main cost-generating items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">external expert contract;Commission staff time to analyse and draft reports.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Outputs: annual reports with regular updates on progress towards targets at EU and national levelsAn established source of country-specific and thematic information, e.g. teachers' dashboard. Target audience: experts, policymakers and EEA actorsDownloads of ETM country reports: 1023 (in 2021); 1553 (in 2022), 1721 (in 2023); total page views: 9172 (in 2022), 14707 (in 2023)Internal benefits to the Commission: a reliable source of evidence informing broader country-specific work in support of the EEA SP. Examples: support for analysis used in the European Semester country reports; formulation and monitoring of country-specific recommendations; setting funding priorities and programming under Cohesion Policy funds, the RRF and the TSI; monitoring of implementation under these funds; responding to <i>ad hoc</i> country-specific requests
DG EAC – DG EMPL EEA Taskforce	Main cost-generating item: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Commission staff time to prepare for, participate in and follow up on meetings.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhanced information sharing and coordination between the DG EAC and DG EMPL units most closely involved in building the EEAMore effective monitoring and reporting on progress towards the EEA and the identification of challenges that remain to be addressed
Communication and dissemination			
EEA portal	Main cost-generating items:		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Output: EEA portal serving as a single gateway to various information related to European cooperation towards the EEA
European Education Summits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External contract covering Summit costs;Venue and other costs related to the Summit (in-person format);		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence consistent with potential benefits: high popularity of the portal, with around 1.5 million unique visitors annually during the period 2021-2024
Social media campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication contract (the contract covers diverse activities ranging from general coordination of the communication campaigns, to creating the communication strategy and producing audiovisual and multimedia content).		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Broad recognition of the portal within the wider education and training community, with 74 % (n=213) of survey participants declaring their familiarity with it. Favourable views on the portal's content: it is seen as relevant (87 %; n=142), clear (85 %; n=142), and up-to-date (85 %; n=142)Information on the portal making access to funding opportunities easier: 84 % (n=142) of representatives of the wider education and training community who were surveyed found the portal useful for identifying funding opportunities aligned with community needsThe European Education Summits help to raise awareness on key EEA-related topics, foster synergy across EEA EU-level actions and bring together all key actors in education and training, including policymakers, practitioners, researchers, social partners and civil societySummits foster synergies across various SP-related initiativesEvidence on reach: The 2022 Summit, organised in hybrid format, attracted 240 on-site participants and almost 1 million online participants. The 2023 Summit attracted 500 online participants, more than 24,000 views online, and reached nearly 600,000 people on social mediaGrowth in reach, visibility, and engagement with social media campaigns: from monthly averages of 147,374 in reach, 220,533 impressions, and 2,575 engagements (January 2021 – August 2023) to 3.5 million unique users in reach, 6.6 million impressions, and 31,529 clicks (since September 2023)The social media campaigns achieved an average cost-per-thousand impressions (CPM) of EUR 0.76, and a cost-per-click (CPC) of EUR 0.16, indicating that performance was cost-effective

ANNEX V. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

This synopsis report summarises all consultation activities undertaken for the interim evaluation of the EEA. It also presents an analytical overview of the main results following the five evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value, and relevance).

Consultation strategy

The consultation strategy consisted of open public and targeted consultation activities as summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Stakeholder consultations activities

Activity	Timing
Call for evidence (Have your say portal)	16 June-15 September 2023
Public consultation (Have your say portal)	4 April-27 June 2024
Interviews with the main EEA actors	Q1-Q4 2024
Focus groups with HLG and EDUC members	22, 25, 29 April 2024
Survey of WG and SGIB members	16 May-7 June 2024
Survey of the wider education and training community	19 July-23 August 2024
Focus groups with EEA actors at national level	30 September 2024; 1, 2, 4 October 2024
Delphi workshop	8 October 2024
Forward-looking workshop with the Commission staff	14 October 2024

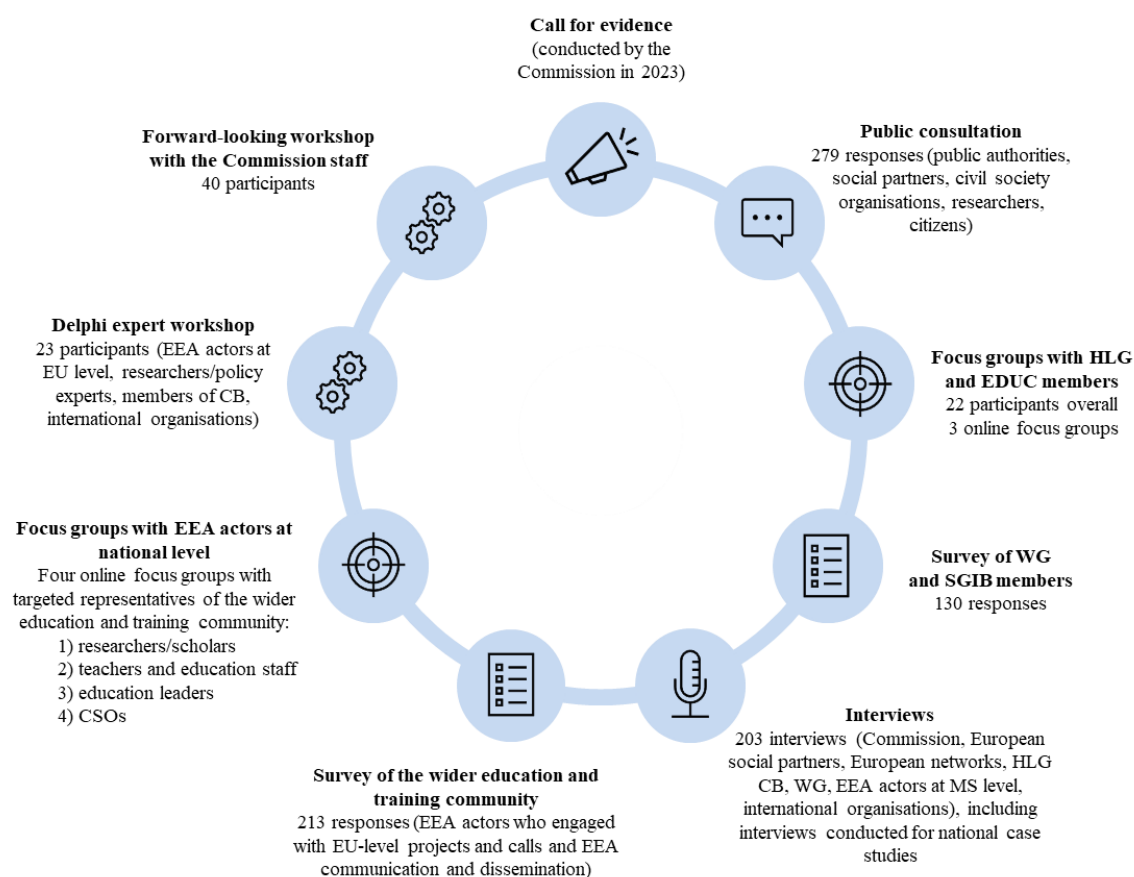
Targeted consultations included relevant EEA actors and the wider education and training community. Specific attention was paid to ensuring diversity of the MS-level EEA actors and to balancing representation of public authorities, social partners and wider education and training community. Respondents were selected to ensure representation of all MS and all education levels.

Table 3. Types of stakeholders consulted

Stakeholder group	Interviews	Online surveys	Public consultation	Focus groups
EU institutions/bodies	✓	✓		✓
EU-level social partners and associations	✓	✓	✓	
International organisations	✓	✓		
MS-level public authorities	✓	✓	✓	✓
MS-level social partners	✓		✓	✓
Researchers in education and training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wider education and training community (teachers, parents, students)	✓	✓	✓	✓

The overall stakeholders' participation in consultation activities is summarised in Figure 2 below.

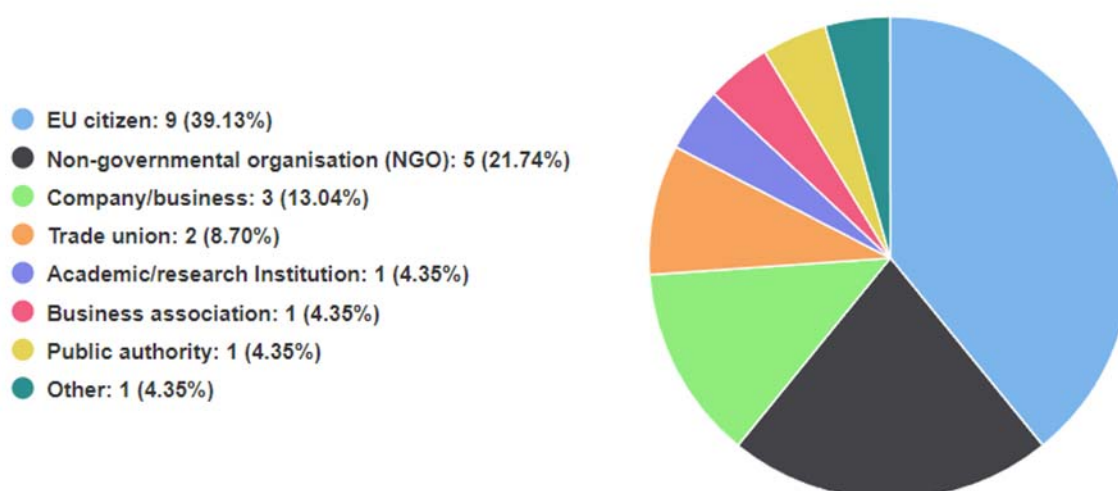
Figure 2. Stakeholders' participation in consultation activities



1. Call for evidence

The call for evidence was open from 16 June to 15 September 2023 on the [Have your say](#) portal. In total, 23 responses and positions came in, most being from EU citizens and non-governmental organisations. Most of the responses were received from Belgium (8), Slovakia and Finland (3 responses for each).

Figure 3. Type of respondents in the call for evidence



Source: Have Your Say portal statistics for this call for evidence

The call for evidence gathered feedback on the performance of the EEA. The overall feedback was positive and welcomed the progress made towards building the EEA. The EEA SP were confirmed as still being very relevant and requiring even more focus in the future. In general, there was a strong message on the need for continued development of the EEA, also beyond 2025.

The received feedback also included suggestions for further improvement:

- **on SP:**
 - further promote equity and inclusion, active citizenship and democracy education, digital education, learning for sustainability
 - increase focus on teachers, basic skills, teacher and student mobility, higher education, VET, adult learning and lifelong learning
- **on governance and co-creation:** further extend the co-creation processes and promote participatory approaches
- **on mobilising funding:** ensure quality and sustainable investment, and more visibility of investment and funds, simplify procedures.

2. Public consultation

The public consultation was open from 4 April to 27 June 2024 on the [Have your say](#) portal. The dissemination was done through various channels. The purpose of the public consultation was to collect inputs from EEA actors, the wider education and training community and EU citizens to inform future policies.

In total, 279 responses were received. Most respondents (82 %, or 230; n=279⁷) came from 26 different EU MS. The highest number of responses came from Spain and Belgium (each comprising 11 % of total responses, or 32; n=279), followed by Italy (7 %, or 20 responses; n=279). A further 18 % of responses were received from 21 different non-EU countries, seven of which are EU candidate or potential candidate countries. The non-EU country with the most responses was Ukraine, with 3.6 % (10, n=279) respondents.

Table 4. Distribution of public consultation respondents across types of organisations

Type of respondent ⁸	Count	%
Academic/research institution	117	42 %
EU citizen	49	17 %
Civil society organisations	41	15 %
Public authority	17	6 %
Trade union	11	4 %
Non-EU citizen	10	3 %
Company/business and business association	6	2 %
Other	28	10 %
Total	279	

⁷ The basis for each question presented in this factual summary varies, as not all questions were relevant to all of the respondents and not all questions were compulsory.

⁸ The table contains data for the public consultation question “I am giving my contribution as:”. Based on the question “What best describes you”, the distribution is as follows: educators (teachers, trainers, educational support staff and education institution leaders), 93 (33 %); researchers, 69 (25 %); civil society organisations, 32 (11 %); learners, 23 (8 %); and others, 65 (23 %).

Effectiveness

A large majority of the respondents familiar with the European cooperation in education and training (n=273) perceive higher education as the level where most cooperation takes place, with 69 % (189, n=273) rating it as 'very successful' or 'successful'. This was followed by vocational education and training with 47 % (128, n=273) sharing this view. Other education levels were considered effective by less than half of the sample, with adult learning (31 %, 84, n=273) and non-formal education (29 %, 78, n=273) perceived as the least effective. The remaining results showed mixed opinions, with an overall trend leaning towards positive assessment of cooperation.

Most respondents had participated in or made use of the Erasmus+ programme (80 %, 213, n=265), and mutual learning and exchange of good practices (70 %, 184, n=262). Participation in other activities showed mixed results, with nearly equal proportions of participants and non-participants. For instance, 48 % had engaged in delivering evidence relevant to education and training reforms, compared to 45 % who had not. Similarly, 47 % attended events organised by the Commission on education and training, while 48 % had not. Participation in communities of practice was reported by 44 %, with 49 % not participating. Lastly, 43 % reported making use of the adoption of Council Recommendations in the field of education and training, compared with 48 % who had not.

Among those respondents who had participated in at least one activity, 88 % (214; n=243) reported gaining new knowledge from others' experiences in addressing common challenges. In addition, 84 % (203; n=242) reported an improved understanding of common European priorities in education and training. Other outcomes included a better understanding of funds to support reforms and investments in education and training (73 %, 174; n=240), and increased awareness about new evidence to inform policymaking (71 %, 172; n=242).

When asked to what extent the activities listed in relation to European cooperation in education and training had been successful in building the EEA, the majority of respondents indicated that they believed all of them had contributed positively. The activities regarded as most successful were mobility and cooperation opportunities under Erasmus+ (seen as "to some/significant extent" successful by 92 % of respondents, or 237; n=259); mutual learning and the exchange of good practices (88 %, or 230; n=260); and the setting of common European priorities in education and training.

Of the 263 respondents familiar with at least one activity relating to European cooperation in education and training, 46 % (121; n=263) believed that progress had been achieved towards the EEA priorities; 47 % (124; n=263) did not know whether progress had been achieved; only 7 % (18, n=263) thought no progress had been achieved. Among those who reported seeing progress (121), the most significant advances were perceived in strengthening European higher education (79 %, 95; n=121), addressing the geopolitical dimension of education and training (78 %, 94; n=121), and making learning mobility accessible to all (78 %, 94; n=121).

Efficiency

When asked about the alignment between resources and results in the European cooperation in education and training, 19 % of respondents (49; n=262) believed there was correspondence “to a great extent”, and 58 % (152; n=262) “to some extent”. Only 6 % (17; n=262) felt there was no correspondence, while 17 % (44; n=262) were unsure or unable to answer.

Coherence

When asked how coherent the EEA is with various funds and instruments, on average 70 % of respondents considered the EEA to be either “coherent” or “somewhat coherent” across all three categories of funds and instruments mentioned in the public consultation: initiatives and funding at EU level, at international level and at national/regional/local level. Respondents believed that the EEA is most coherent with EU initiatives and funding, with 39 % of respondents (61; n=261) viewing it as “coherent” and 44 % (110; n=261) as “somewhat coherent”. Only 2 % (6; n=264) said the EEA was not coherent with EU initiatives and funding, while 16 % (41; n=264) said they did not know. In relation to national/regional/local-level initiatives and funding, 16 % of respondents (42; n=262) believed the EEA to be ‘coherent’ with these, and 47 % (123; n=262) “somewhat coherent”. However, 17 % (42; n=262) viewed it as not being coherent. Moreover, 23 % of respondents (61; n=261) regarded the EEA as being “coherent” and 42 % (110; n=261) as “somewhat coherent” with international initiatives and funding. However, over a quarter of respondents (27 %, or 71; n=261) said that they did not know.

EU added value

Respondents were asked how successful they think the European cooperation towards the EEA has been in achieving various effects beyond what MS could accomplish individually. Participants believed that the EEA provided the greatest EU added value in triggering the use of available EU funding to support national/regional/local and cross-border measures and reforms, with 62 % of respondents seeing it as successful overall. Additionally, 61% viewed it as successful in exchanging experiences and effective practices to support national reforms (61 % seeing it as successful overall). Respondents perceived relatively less EU added value in putting education and training at the top of the policy agenda at EU and national levels, with an absolute majority (56 %) of respondents still perceiving it as successful overall.

Relevance

Of the 273 respondents familiar with the European cooperation in education and training, the majority considered continued support for all education and training priorities to be important. The priorities that received the most positive responses (“highly important” and “somewhat important”) were making lifelong learning available for all (97 %, 265; n=273) and making learning mobility in another country available for all (96 %, or 261; n=273). The priority rated as highly important by the greatest number of respondents was “quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training” (79 %, or 217;

n=273). This was followed closely by “enhancement of competences and motivation in the education profession” (74 %, or 203; n=273) and “making lifelong learning available for all” (73 %, or 198; n=273).

Out of the 242 respondents who were familiar with the European cooperation in education and training and responded to a non-compulsory question on whether there were any other areas in which the EU should support cooperation in education and training, 54 % (130; n=242) felt there were no additional areas. Those who believed there were other areas that could be considered (46 %, 112; n=242) mentioned citizenship education; VET; teacher support and development; inclusion and diversity; digital education and innovation; lifelong learning and skills development; international cooperation and mobility; and research and innovation.

Additional written contributions

A total of 24 respondents provided additional written contributions to the public consultation. Most of these were engaged with the sectors of higher education, VET and lifelong learning. Written contributions emphasised the significance of the EEA in enhancing the teaching profession, improving digital and green skills, and fostering lifelong learning and mobility. Advances in digital education tools and the increasing recognition of micro-credentials were highlighted as key achievements of the EEA. EEA actors further stressed the crucial role of the Digital Education Action Plan and the European Digital Education Hub. Written contributions highlighted the role of the EEA in addressing challenges in the education and training sector, in particular the shortage of teachers, the low attractiveness of jobs in the education and training sector, and disparities in the quality of education. Recommendations for future cooperation in education and training emphasised increasing the awareness of and access to public funding for education, enhancing teacher training, and fostering lifelong learning opportunities. There were strong calls to address underachievement in basic skills, align curricula with labour market needs, and expand mobility programmes. Respondents also stressed the importance of facilitating exchange of good practices between EU countries, as well as increasing the visibility of non-formal and adult learning, and maintaining the involvement of EU actors.

3. Interviews with the main EEA actors

A total of 203 interviews with EU-level, international and MS-level EEA actors were conducted between March and October 2024.

Interviews were conducted using an interview guide that focused on the five evaluation criteria, adapted to the profile of interviewee and their level of awareness of various topics. The primary objective of these interviews was to gain better understanding of the evaluation criteria by validating the findings previously generated through desk research.

After all the interviews had been concluded, the data was assessed to identify insights, patterns and trends, including similarities and differences among the opinions of different types of interviewees. The inputs of diverse categories of EEA actors informed different

parts of the evaluation. Qualitative inputs were primarily used to inform the effectiveness section and to triangulate data from the surveys and the public consultation that was used in other sections.

Table 5. Types of stakeholders interviewed

Type	Number	Additional comments
EU bodies	30	Interviewees included staff from European institutions: DG EAC: 19 DG EMPL: 3 DG REFORM: 2 DG INTPA: 2 SG: 3 DG REGIO, DG NEAR, EEAS, Eurofound: 1 each
European social partners and associations	5	EFEE, ETUCE, European Parents Association, ESU, EASNIE – 1 each
International organizations	6	Interviewees included representatives from OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, and the Council of Europe
HLG CB members	7	HLG CB: BE, CZ, ES, FR, SE, SI HLG: IE
WG	35	WG AL: LV, LU, PL, TR WG DELTA: CZ, MT, RO, TR WG ECEC: BG, DE, IE, LT, IS WG Equality and Values: ES, LV, FI, SE, IS WG HE: HR, IT, AT, SK, NO WG Schools – Learning for Sustainability: EL, FR, PT WG Schools – Pathways: BE, NL, SI WG VET and the Green Transition: DK, EE, CY, PT, SE, AL Missing countries: HU. Hungarian representatives from all WG were contacted but no interviews were arranged.
MS (including as part of case studies; excluding HLG CB, HLG and WG members)	118	Public authorities (including state, regional or municipal ministries and agencies): 53 (BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, MT, NL, AT, IE, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE) Social partners – education provider associations: 16 (DK, ES, IE, EL, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, PT, FI, SE) Social partners – teacher trade unions: 14 (CZ, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO) Researchers (including research bodies, academics and independent researchers): 21 (BE, DK, IE, EE, EL, ES, IT, LT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SK, SE) Educators: 8 (BG, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, SI) Parent organisations: 2 (IE, CY) Student bodies: 1 (IE) Civil society organisations: 2 (PL)
European Economic Area / EFTA countries	2	Norway and Iceland

Effectiveness

EEA actors viewed the EEA as a flexible framework that facilitates cooperation, fosters strategic discussions, and inspires national reforms – particularly regarding digital skills and the green transition. Interviewees generally valued the EEA instruments. EU funds and financial instruments are regarded as pivotal in supporting projects relating to digitalisation, as well as in VET and higher education. The governance of the EEA,

notably through Council Recommendations, and its monitoring via the European Semester and country-specific recommendations, provide a valuable framework for aligning national reforms with EU priorities. The EEA was seen by interviewees as a clear and useful concept. It was regarded as a valuable framework that holds relevance beyond the EU MS, serving as a model for international educational collaboration and reform.

However, the respondents also identified several remaining challenges. These include inconsistent communication between different levels of governance, unclear decision-making processes, and the voluntary nature of implementation. These factors can hinder alignment and effective adoption across MS. Respondents expressed the view that a limited capacity for applying EU policies to local contexts, along with administrative burdens, further complicated implementation. Interviewees emphasised that a more targeted communication strategy could enhance the awareness and use of EEA tools, ensuring more sustainable outcomes.

Efficiency

The most informed responses in relation to this evaluation criterion were received from the European Commission and from WG representatives. Most WG members considered EEA activities to be highly beneficial, facilitating professional development and networking. They appreciated the WG as more agile and inclusive compared with those under ET2020, fostering better cooperation, broader participation and enhanced coordination. While the EEA strategic framework was seen by interviewees as generally effective and well structured, they suggested that simplifying access to information and strengthening connections between the WG could improve its clarity and efficiency. According to EEA actors, despite the EEA introducing additional administrative burdens, the time spent in WG is proportionate to the benefits, as these offer a valuable forum for dialogue across education levels and actors. Regarding efficiency of the HLG, the prevailing view of the HLG/EDUC members interviewed, who expressed their opinion on this matter, was that the benefits outweigh the total time invested in preparation for and participation in the HLG.

Coherence

EEA actors from the Commission, international organisations and at MS level acknowledged the coherence of the EEA framework. They noted that the EEA SP aligned with national policies, particularly in the areas defined by SP1 (equity, equality, inclusion). The respondents recognised the synergies between the EEA and international organisations, such as the OECD, UN agencies, the World Bank and the Council of Europe, which help to ensure consistent progress and avoid duplications. However, interviewees identified a gap in communication, with a limited awareness of the EEA beyond education experts, including at the level of schools and even ministries.

EU added value

The EEA actors interviewed regarded the EEA as a valuable platform for fostering cooperation, mutual learning and sharing of best practices among MS, driving collective improvements in education systems and aligning national reforms with European priorities. They warned that discontinuing the EEA would dismantle valuable collaborative platforms, leading to a fragmented approach to policymaking and hindering progress in areas such as equity, inclusion, quality and the digital transformation. Nevertheless, some challenges remain: differences in national structures, limited opportunities for formal exchange, and the need for better dissemination of the EEA's benefits at local and institutional levels to ensure its impact.

Relevance

The respondents generally viewed the EEA SP as highly relevant and beneficial, addressing common issues. These priorities aligned well with national and regional efforts, providing a flexible framework for MS to tailor to their unique contexts while fostering cooperation, knowledge exchange and coordinated policy development. However, the framework has yet to fully address variations between MS. The EEA actors interviewed believed that more focus should be given to areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), mental health and demographic challenges in order to meet evolving educational needs.

4. Focus groups with HLG and EDUC members

A total of four focus groups were organised throughout April 2024 to facilitate discussions with HLG and EDUC members from 21 countries (CZ, DK, DE (2 representatives), EE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE). Their input notably informed the assessment of effectiveness of the EEA implementation instruments and of the efficiency criterion.

Effectiveness of the EEA implementation instruments

Reformed governance

- Countries suggested that no significant changes to governance were needed. Positive opinions of governance included seeing it as being action-oriented, strategic and agile (e.g. this was demonstrated in the context of external crises). Some participants did not perceive any major changes in governance compared with ET2020 (although they noted that it now appears more agile) and suggested that there is room to enhance the strategic dimension of the HLG.
- There is a need for improved balance within the agenda between the priorities set by each Presidency and more long-term SP on topics of common interest. There is still scope for improvement, and the goal was to have a comprehensive 18-month policy agenda in place.
- The creation of the HLG CB was highlighted as an improvement to ensure the continuity of work and to better link the political and technical levels. However,

participants felt that synergies between levels could still be further improved. Some participants reported a lack of clear information on what was happening in the HLG CB. Those who had been involved in the HLG CB were mostly positive about its benefits (this also concurs with interviews carried out).

- There was an increased interest and participation from national governments in HLG meetings, leading to a more HLG strategic agenda.
- In general, participants perceived a need to improve information flows between different levels of governance (HLG, EDUC, WG, the Commission DG). Participants reported a lack of clear information on what was taking place at different levels.
- Participants expressed the opinion that it would be important for MS to nominate ‘high-level’ representatives from the ministries to the HLG, which they perceived mainly as a space for informal exchange between national governments (e.g. currently, the composition also includes nominated education attachés).
- Participants noted that HLG covered a broad range of topics across educational sectors, which can hinder in-depth discussions.
- Alignment of EU political priorities with national agendas was confirmed. Participants reported that discussions were transferred to the national level. However, some noted that it is sometimes difficult to communicate about the EEA at national level, as it was not a well-known ‘brand’.
- Examples of support to national reforms have been noted.
- Cooperation in the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine was highlighted as a positive example.
- Mutual learning and transnational cooperation and exchange was noted as the greatest added value provided by the EEA strategic framework (its governance implementation instrument).

Strategic EEA initiatives

- Some participants raised concerns about the number of Council Recommendations issued, and the capacity of MS to follow upon them (these included providing an example of two digital recommendations adopted at the same time). A few participants also noted that some recommendations appeared to lack any genuinely new elements.
- Challenges were reported in relation to monitoring and administrative burden at both national and EU levels. Participants were against any additional monitoring.

EEA SP

- Greater focus on digital and green issues was needed, alongside building more resilient education and training systems in response to recent shocks.
- Equality, digitalisation and vocational education, including adult learning, were emphasised by participants as being key to future skills development.
- Participants supported focusing on a limited number of core priorities, with no increase in the current priorities.

- AI was highlighted as a key topic for the next cycle under the green and digital priority.
- Concerns were raised about mobility becoming less visible under the lifelong learning priority.

EU-Level targets and indicators

- Participants had experienced mismatches between data from the ETM and Eurostat, and difficulties in consistent interpretation due to technical language used by ETM. They also shared positive experiences of getting in touch with the Commission for clarifications.
- The need for better use of data and the adoption of targets with clear methodologies was noted.
- Participants reported gaps in the links between targets/indicators and EEA SP.

Efficiency

- The benefits of HLG participation, including preparation and travel, were seen as outweighing the amount of time invested.
- Clear scheduling, timely sharing of documents and options for online participation were highlighted as important.
- The blended format, which combines in-person events with online meetings on specific topics, received positive feedback.

5. Survey of WG and SGIB members

The survey was open from 16 May to 7 June 2024 to the WG and SGIB members. In total, 130 responses were received: 122 from WG members and 14 from SGIB members. Their distribution by type of organisation and WG/SGIB membership is shown in the tables below. The survey collected inputs from the members regarding their work, satisfaction with activities, processes and results, as well as their views on European cooperation towards the EEA.

Table 6. Distribution of WG and SGIB survey respondents across types of organisations

Type of organisation	Count	%
Public authority, other public entities	107	82 %
EU body/office/agency	4	3 %
International organisation	4	3 %
European social partner organisation	3	2 %
European civil society/stakeholder association	6	5 %
Academia/research institution	3	2 %
Other	3	2 %
Total	130	

Table 7. Distribution of WG and SGIB survey respondents

WG/SGIB	Count	%
Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	22	17 %
Working Group on Digital Education: learning, teaching and assessment (DELTA)	20	15 %
Working Group on Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Green Transition	20	15 %
Working Group on Higher Education (HE)	18	14 %
SGIB	14	11 %
Working Group on Schools – Pathways to School Success	13	10 %
Working Group on Schools – Learning for Sustainability	10	8 %
Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training	11	8 %
Working group on Adult Learning: opening up opportunities for all (AL)	8	6 %
Total	136 ⁹	

Effectiveness

WG activities and results. The activities and outcomes of the WG and SGIB are generally considered highly beneficial to the work of their members and their organisations. This was agreed by 84 % of WG members (102; n=122) and 79 % of SGIB members (11; n=14). WG members were particularly satisfied with the facilitation and moderation of WG events (95 %, 117; n=122); the discussions and joint decisions on thematic priorities and the focus of WG activities (93 %; n=122); and WG plenary meetings (92 %; n=122). Overall, respondents expressed broad satisfaction with other aspects of WG activities, including the agenda setting, preparatory materials, seminars, peer learning activities, and general communication and engagement with other members. SGIB respondents reported similar levels of satisfaction.

Participation in WG activities led to increased knowledge of practices in other countries (93 %, 113; n=122); improved understanding and awareness of the EEA policy agenda (91 %, 111; n=122); and enhanced understanding of common policy needs within the thematic scope of the WG (90 %, 109; n=122). For SGIB members, the main outcomes of their participation in SGIB activities included applied knowledge gained from SGIB in their work (100 %, 14; n=14); improved knowledge in the field of measuring the performance of education and training systems (100 %, 14; n=14); and insights into different experiences and good practices in measuring the performance of education and training systems (93 %, 13; n=14). WG members found EEA governance to be somewhat clear. Clarity at the political level was evident to half of respondents (50 %, 65; n=130), while clarity at the technical level was slightly lower (47 %, 61; n=130).

Familiarity with EEA tools. Respondents showed strong awareness of the activities and tools associated with the EEA. Most widely recognised are the mobility and cooperation under Erasmus+ (98 %, 128; n=130); Council Recommendations (96 %, 124; n=130); and

⁹ In some cases, the same individual responded to questions relating to different WG. As result, the actual number of respondents was 130, but their inputs were distributed across WG and SGIB specific questions. Thus, the number of contributions for WG was 122 and for SGIB, was 14.

EU-level targets in education and training (94 %, 124; n=130). These were also considered the most successful in building the EEA.

Progress towards SP. According to respondents, progress towards the EEA was made at all educational levels, with general education perceived as the most advanced (60 %, 78; n=130). The EEA strategic framework and its activities have inspired national reforms, particularly those supporting digital transition (71 %, 76; n=107), learning mobility (66 %, 71; n=107), and enhancement of competences and motivation in the education profession (65 %, 70; n=107). Regarding Council Recommendations, respondents believed that progress has been made in implementing high-quality early childhood education and care systems (73 %, 16; n=22), building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (67 %, 12; n=18), and improving the provision of digital skills in education and training (58 %, 75; n=130). Less progress was perceived in the mobility of young volunteers across the EU (26 %, 34; n=130).

Coherence

Respondents believed that the EEA activities were well aligned with the EEA SP (78 %, 101; n=130) and were complementary with key international initiatives (73 %, 95; n=130) as well as with one another (68 %, 88; n=130). They also saw synergies between the EEA and the broader EU policy agenda, particularly in the areas of skills development and employment (63 %, 82; n=130), green transition (60 %, 78, n=130), and a Europe fit for the digital age (55 %, 71; n=130). SP1 – “quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training” was considered especially well aligned with existing national, regional and local programmes (81 %, 87; n=107), followed closely by the part of SP5 regarding “support for the digital transition in and through education and training” (79 %, 85; n=107).

EU added value

Most respondents agreed that the EEA strategic framework provided significant added value in its priority areas, with an average of 69 % (90; n=130) affirming this benefit. The areas in which there was most widespread agreement regarding the added value of the EEA framework were in SP1 – “quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training” (overall, 78 %, 101 agree; n=130), part of SP5 – “support for the digital transition in and through education and training” (74 %, 96; n=130), and part of SP2 – “making learning mobility in another country available for all” (72 %, 94; n=130).

Relevance

The EEA’s importance across all SP was widely recognised, with SP1 – “quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training” being seen as the most relevant (88 %, 114; n=130). Respondents believed the EEA was especially effective in addressing issues such as low levels of digital skills and competences (72 %, 93; n=130), low quality of education and training provision (68 %, 89; n=130), and inequalities in education and training (66 %, 86; n=130).

6. Survey of the wider education and training community

The survey was open from 19 July to 23 August 2024. The survey primarily targeted education and training actors at regional and local level (including researchers, practitioners and learners).

Potential respondents were identified through a desk review of the websites of national organisations across EU MS, candidate countries, and European Economic Area / EFTA countries, as well as by using publicly available databases, including the beneficiaries of JMA calls. The stakeholders identified were then reached out to via an e-mail campaign and invited to take part in the survey.

In total, 213 individual responses were received. Types of respondents were diverse, coming from various education and training levels: 68 % from higher education (144; n=213); 16 % from vocational education and training (34; n=213); 15 % from adult learning (32; n=213); 14 % general education (30; n=213); non-formal education (11 %, 24; n=213). Respondents to the survey mainly came from Ukraine (21 %, 43; n=213), Italy (12 %, 25; n=206) and Spain (11 %, 23; n=206), followed by Belgium (6 %, 12; n=206), the Czech Republic (5 %, 11; n=206) and Albania (4 %, 8; n=206).

Table 8. Distribution of wider education and training community survey respondents across types of organisations

Type of respondent	Count	%
Researcher/scholar	79	37 %
Teacher	35	16.4 %
Educational institution leader	18	8.4 %
NGO	18	8.4 %
Learner in higher education	17	7.9 %
Educational support staff	11	5.1 %
Other	9	4.2 %
Policymaker	9	4.2 %
Educator	8	3.7 %
Learner (in adult education, secondary education or VET)	5	2.3 %
Social partner (employers and employees)	3	1.4 %
International organisation	1	0.4 %
Total	213	

Respondents were asked to share their opinions and evidence on the achievements, impacts and potential challenges of selected EEA activities and tools. The inputs particularly informed the evaluation criteria on effectiveness and relevance.

Familiarity with EEA activities and tools is high. Respondents are especially familiar with JMA in other fields of education and training (89 %, 190 said they had heard about these calls; n=213); the EEA portal (74 %, 158; n=213); the Commission's social media posts about the EEA (64 %, 137; n=213); the European Education Summit or other events organised by the Commission (61 %, 130; n=213); the ETM (54 %, 114; n=213);

and Education for Climate Coalition events, activities or community groups (91 %, 194; n=213).

Effectiveness of selected activities

EEA portal. The most common reasons cited for consulting the EEA portal related to funding and EU projects. A significant 57 % of respondents (81; n=142) said they visited the portal to explore funding opportunities, while 55 % (78; n=142) said they do so to access information on EU-funded projects. Accessing documents is another key reason, with 43 % (61; n=142) of respondents consulting the portal for this purpose, while 40 % (57; n=142) said they visit to keep up to date on the latest news and events. Online learning resources attracted 30 % (42; n=142) of respondents, and 27 % (39; n=142) said they came to access statistics.

Respondents provided positive feedback about the EEA portal, with the majority of respondents finding its information effective and relevant. Overall, 87 % (123; n=142) considered the information relevant to their needs and interests, while 85 % (121; n=142) found it clear and understandable. A significant 85 % (121; n=142) also felt the information was up to date. 83 % (118; n=142) used the information to inform policies in their own countries, and 78 % (111; n=142) used it to inform their teaching practices. In addition, 77 % (109; n=142) found the information complete and indicated that it answered their questions, while 71 % (101; n=142) found the information easy to locate.

Respondents acknowledged positive results from using the EEA portal. The vast majority (89 %, 126; n=142) said it enhanced their understanding of the EEA and its SP. Furthermore, 84 % (119; n=142) found it helpful in identifying funding opportunities relevant to their needs. Meanwhile, 82 % (116; n=142) reported an increased interest in EU initiatives in education and training, and 78 % (111; n=142) had gained inspiration from good practices in other countries. More than three-quarters of respondents (77 %, 109; n=142) had increased their knowledge of common challenges in education and training, and 74 % (105; n=142) became more engaged with events in the field, such as the European Education Summit and webinars. Lastly, 61 % of respondents (87; n=142) were motivated to join a community of practice such as DigComp, EPALe or the European School Education Platform.

Events. Respondents who declared having participated in the events (n=99) reported several positive outcomes from their engagement: 82 % (81; n=17) learnt about common challenges in education and training and 76 % (75; n=17) gained new knowledge about EU policies in the relevant field and good practices in education and training in other countries. Moreover, 65 % (64; n=17) felt motivated to become more involved in EU events, and 59 % (58; n=17) were introduced to new resources such as research and funding opportunities. In addition, 59 % (58; n=17) improved their skills, and 54 % (53; n=17) were able to use these in their work. Lastly, 47 % (47; n=17) had networked with peers, demonstrating the impact of these events on professional growth, knowledge acquisition and networking.

ETM. Among respondents who reported having consulted the resources of the ETM (n=114), 52 % (30; n=57) had used the country reports on policy development in education and training, while 33 % (19; n=57) had referred to the comparative report on progress towards EU-level targets.

The most common reason for consulting the ETM was to use and download data for research purposes, with 30 % (25; n=83) of respondents selecting this option. In addition, 24 % (20; n=83) indicated they had used it to keep up to date on EU progress in education and training, and 23 % (19; n=83) had consulted it to learn about their country's performance against EU-level targets. Other reasons included comparing their country's performance with that of other EU countries (16 %, 13; n=83) and using the ETM for policy development or advocacy purposes (2 % each).

JMA. Respondents who had participated in JMA calls (n=34) reported high levels of satisfaction with several aspects of the application process. The highest levels of satisfaction were reported in relation to the clarity and transparency of award criteria (94 %, 30; n=32) and the time required to submit the application (94 %, 30; n=32). In addition, 88 % (28; n=32) reported being satisfied with the general clarity of instructions for applications, access to application materials, and the clarity of the eligibility criteria. Satisfaction with the time to award was also high, at 84 % (28, n=32).

Relevance

In total, 96 % (204; n=213) of respondents believed that education and training foster global connections and equitable access to quality, inclusive education. Moreover, 95 % (202; n=213) said they were in favour of learning opportunities being available to everyone, and for educators to be skilled, supported and motivated. The same percentage agreed on the importance of the digital transition. Furthermore, 93 % (198; n=213) felt that learning mobility in another country is available to everyone and that European higher education has been strengthened, indicating a high level of satisfaction with these initiatives. Lastly, 87 % (185, n=213) of respondents agreed that the green transition is supported in and through education and training, demonstrating broad recognition of the importance of sustainability in educational contexts.

7. Focus groups with EEA actors at national level

Following the survey of the wider education and training community, a series of focus groups was organised involving the wider education and training community at national level who had expressed interest in further discussion. The focus groups took place online on 30 September, and on 1, 2 and 4 October 2024, involving altogether 11 participants.

Participants were invited to elaborate on their perceptions of EEA activities (in particular the EEA portal, JMA calls, Education for Climate coalition, events and ETM) to assess their effectiveness, their usefulness to the participants' work, and areas for potential improvement. This follow-up offered a deeper understanding of how EEA initiatives are

perceived, and provided constructive insights into how they might better support the needs of the education and training sector.

Table 9. Distribution of national EEA actors focus group respondents across types of organisations

Focus group / interview	Number of participants
Civil society organisations	5
Researchers/scholars	3
Educational institution leaders	2
Educational support staff / teacher	1
Total	11

General awareness and perceptions about the EEA

- The EEA is seen as a crucial part of European integration, fostering European identity and offering valuable opportunities for exchanging practices (researchers and scholars).
- Civil society organisations appreciate the inclusive, cooperative nature of the EEA but some expressed concerns about the timeline for implementing EEA initiatives, need for clearer pathways for collaboration among different types of EEA actor.
- Some civil society organisations also mentioned the need for clearer communication strategy.

EEA portal

- Participants expressed satisfaction with the portal, particularly its user-friendly interface.
- The EEA portal is used for accessing information relating to Erasmus+ projects, materials for courses, workshops and conferences.
- Suggestions for improvement include making the portal more accessible to non-experts and offering more visuals.

ETM

- The ETM is appreciated by researchers and scholars for its usefulness in comparing data between different MS. They see it as providing useful material for courses, as well as data and insights that enhance learning and research.
- Education leaders use the ETM as a source of information to prepare courses. They consider it user-friendly and effective in supporting their work.
- Civil society organisations are very satisfied with the ETM, using it for advocacy, policy coordination and detailed country-by-country analysis. They suggest offering simpler data visualisation options for a broader audience.

Events (e.g. the European Education Summit)

- EEA actors are generally aware of the events and show a positive attitude towards them. Participation and follow-up remain limited, mainly due to time constraints.

civil society organisations mentioned the 2023 EEA midterm review event as a positive experience.

- Suggestions for improvement concerned the introduction of more collaborative formats and increasing both participation of education policy officers and engagement of EEA actors in the European Education Summits.

JMA calls

- JMA calls are recognised as being highly relevant opportunities, but not yet fully known or explored by teachers.
- Some suggestions for improvement included addressing the complexity of the JMA application process, and creating a more detailed, grassroots-level communication.