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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**

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Glossary

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

Term or acronym	Meaning or definition
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
EFFE	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:

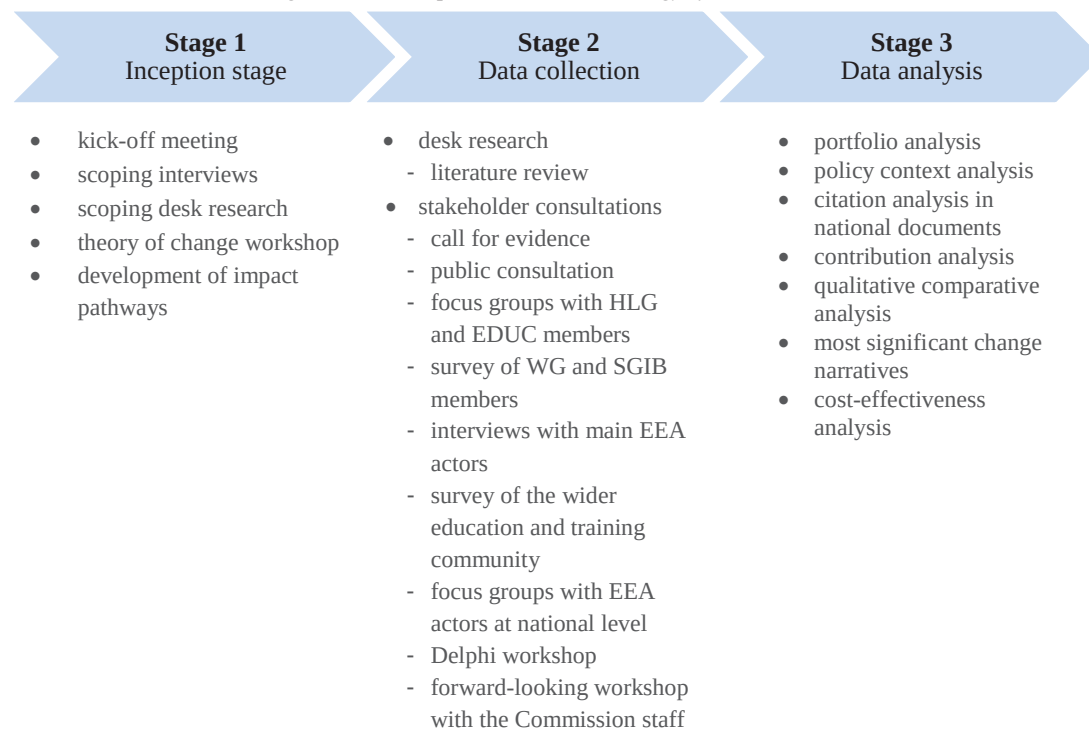
- **call for evidence** on the [Have Your Say](#) portal (16 June-15 September 2023)
- **public consultation** on the [Have your say](#) portal (4 April-27 June 2024)
- **targeted consultations:**
 - **survey** of EEA strategic framework working groups (WG) and Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (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?	Implementation of the strategic EEA initiatives⁴ and EU-level projects and calls⁵ The strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls agreed have been implemented/progressed in a timely manner.	Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ outputs implemented: ○ strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls implemented ○ planned deliverables produced ○ participants engaged and communicated about the outputs/outcomes Quantitative: ▪ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who report progress of selected strategic EEA initiatives (Commission Communications and Council Recommendations) Qualitative: ▪ examples of progress raised by interviewees ▪ challenges encountered ▪ results achieved so far (intended and unintended)	Interviews Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)

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)			
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?	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: ▪ EEA actors (policymakers and practitioners) ▪ organisations ▪ systems and policy. There is a relationship between strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls and achieved results/impacts. 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).	Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ 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 Quantitative: ▪ proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls contribute to progress towards EEA	Contribution analysis Interviews Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
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?	Not applicable.	Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ coverage of SP by activities implemented and the effects observed Qualitative: ▪ 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	Case studies Contribution analysis Interviews
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?	Positive effects are observed in all sectors.	Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ overview of effects per sector	Contribution analysis Interviews

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).	Quantitative: - proportion of surveyed WG members who agree that EEA inspired national reforms in line with EEA SP Qualitative: - nature of references - examples of EEA-inspired reforms shared by interviewees and survey respondents - typology of effects supported by examples Quantitative and qualitative: - 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.	Quantitative and qualitative: - 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 Qualitative: - 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.	Quantitative and qualitative: - coverage of NFIL in strategic EEA initiatives and EU-level projects and calls Qualitative: - perception of NFIL by EEA actors	Interviews Portfolio analysis

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>	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.	Quantitative: - proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that there has been progress Qualitative: - examples of progress identified	Case studies Interviews Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
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>	EEA has had positive effects on cooperation with non-EU countries. The level of cooperation has positively affected participation in learning mobility.	Quantitative and qualitative: - evidence of increased mobilities/cooperation identified linked with concrete efforts made within the EEA implementation instruments Qualitative: - 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	Interviews Portfolio analysis
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>	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.	Quantitative: - 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 Qualitative: - indicative examples of interaction between EEA and education and training from a global perspective in the following areas: - inclusive and equitable quality education (including gender equality) - lifelong learning opportunities for all - promoting learning mobility - digital transition in and through education	Interviews Survey of WG Most significant change narratives
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>	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.	Qualitative: - 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	Case studies Interviews Most significant change narratives Portfolio analysis

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.	Quantitative and qualitative: - level of awareness of the EEA activities Quantitative: - 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)	Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
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?	Positive examples of contribution to achieving SP are identified. EEA actors are satisfied with current governance arrangements / EEA actors identify positive changes concerning governance. Comparison of effectiveness of different EEA implementation instruments with tools and deliverables of the ET2020 (as identified in the literature review / EEA actors' opinions). No significant areas for simplifying the governance are identified.	Quantitative and qualitative: - comparison of effects by different SP - level of participation in governance Qualitative: - testimonies of contribution - synergies between governance bodies - EEA actors' opinions regarding how the governance could be simplified and more effective	Case studies Contribution analysis Interviews Literature review Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Public consultation Survey of WG
EQ14: Has the MS' ownership of the process and priorities increased in comparison to ET2020?	There is strong ownership of priorities among EEA actors at all levels. Comparison with the Assessment on tools and deliverables under the framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020).	Quantitative and qualitative: - 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	Interviews Most significant change narratives Case studies Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)

EQ15: Has the HLG become more strategic and agile?	The HLG is better connected to the other levels of governance and able to adapt rapidly. Representation of MS and of the Commission at appropriate level in HLG is ensured (sufficiently senior level, good understanding of EEA strategic framework processes). 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. HLG/CB have contributed to improving communication between technical and political levels.	Qualitative: - 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?	There is positive effect of reformed governance at an organisational level (MS administrations, EU institutions, and EEA actors organisations). Examples of effective in-country coordination exist.	Quantitative and qualitative: - changes to improve effectiveness of governance are identified: - 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?	Assumptions of the technical governance pathway are confirmed. Understanding of good practices in investment in education infrastructure at MS level has been strengthened. There is evidence of the influence of the EEA.	Quantitative and qualitative: - 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)?	Relevant assumptions in the political and technical levels of governance pathways are confirmed. Mutual learning results in the desired effects at individual, organisational and system level. Mutual learning enabled progress towards the achievement of objectives. Need to further strengthen/adapt mutual learning activities.	Qualitative: - assumptions from the impact pathways confirmed - indicators aligned with final intervention logic - gaps in the coverage of mutual learning activities - barriers to participating 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?	Relevant assumptions from the impact pathway on monitoring are confirmed. There is evidence of positive contribution. Performance monitoring sufficiently covers all aspects linked to EEA SP. There are no gaps in the monitoring. EU-level targets and indicators improve EU-level monitoring of education and training systems, Learning Lab activities improve EU and national/regional level monitoring. Positive effect of EU-level targets on monitoring capabilities and undertaking of monitoring at EU level.	Quantitative and qualitative: - assumptions from the pathway confirmed - mapping of indicators against SP and needs - EEA actors perceive monitoring as useful Qualitative: - examples of improvements and changes	Contribution analysis Interviews Online focus groups Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
EQ20: To what extent has the governance of the EEA strategic framework contributed to strengthened monitoring and education policy evaluation in the EU MS?	MS attribute strengthened education policy evaluation and monitoring to the EEA. Cross-references to EU-level monitoring exist in national strategic documents. Examples of use of the monitoring are identified.	Quantitative and qualitative: - assumptions are validated - degree and nature of cross-referencing to EU monitoring in national strategy documents Qualitative: - examples of influence - examples of use of EU level monitoring	Case studies Citation analysis Contribution analysis Interviews Online focus groups Public consultation
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.	Quantitative and qualitative: - match between the targets and performance to date Qualitative: - perceived need to adjust the targets	Expert Delphi panel Interviews Portfolio analysis
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?	Assumptions of the mobilisation of funds and instruments impact pathway are confirmed. EU funds have been aligned to support the EEA. Countries have used the funds towards EEA objectives. Reforms have been funded in line with the EEA.	Quantitative and qualitative: - assumptions confirmed - mapping of activities funded against the EEA SP Qualitative: - examples of strategic use of funds - perceptions of EEA actors	Contribution analysis Interviews Most significant change National case studies Online focus groups Portfolio analysis

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.	Quantitative and qualitative: - assumptions from different impact pathways confirmed Qualitative: - 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: - nature of costs and benefits - type and nature of activities implemented - nature and degree of effects observed - description of the chains of influence against the assumptions in the theory of change - identified 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: - examples of efficiency gains - EEA actors' perceptions - examples 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: - analysis of processes put in place - examples of inefficiencies - examples of gaps	Portfolio analysis Interviews Cost-effectiveness analysis

Coherence

Evaluation question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Sources
Internal coherence EQ27: To what extent is the EEA internally coherent?	There are strong complementarities between EEA SP in terms of activities and education and training levels covered. There are strong complementarities between different EEA implementation instruments: ▪ 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.	Qualitative and quantitative: ▪ 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: ○ HLG and EDUC and EYCS, Employment Committee, DGV, 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 Qualitative: ▪ examples of complementarities ▪ absence of overlaps	Interviews Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)

Coherence of communication		
EQ28: To what extent is communication about the EEA coherent?	There is a consistency of messages in communication across EEA. The existing communication and dissemination tools are used consistently. Complementarity between EEA and national discourse in education and training.	Qualitative and quantitative: ■ 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 Qualitative: ■ 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?	There are strong complementarities between EEA and other EU level policies: ■ 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.	Quantitative: ■ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree with existence of synergies Qualitative and quantitative: ■ mapping of objectives, target groups and types of activities reveals complementarity Qualitative: ■ absence of contradictions ■ examples of complementarities ■ examples how synergies are proactively fostered and cross-sectoral cooperation enhanced
		Citation analysis Interviews National case studies Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
		Interviews Policy context analysis Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)

EQ30: To what extent is the EEA coherent with initiatives at national level?	There are strong complementarities between EEA and national policies: ▪ 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.	Quantitative: ▪ proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that SP and EEA instruments are complementary with national policy initiatives and reforms Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ 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 Qualitative: ▪ 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	Citation analysis Interviews National case studies Policy context analysis Portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
EQ31: To what extent is the EEA externally coherent with existing initiatives at international level?	There are clear examples of alignment and synergies at the levels of objectives, activities and target groups: ▪ 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.	Quantitative: ▪ proportion of EEA actors and WG members who agree with the existence of synergies Quantitative and qualitative: ▪ mapping of objectives, target groups and types of activities reveals complementarity Qualitative: ▪ absence of contradictions ▪ examples of complementarities ▪ examples how synergies are proactively fostered	Policy context analysis Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community) Interviews Public consultation

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?	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). There is evidence of added value produced outside the EU (non-EU countries). Positive assessment of effectiveness in the area of policy learning. Examples of positive effects of EEA are present. Evidence that reforms/projects would not have taken place if the EEA would not exist. Other factors that influenced the results identified.	Qualitative and quantitative: Nature and type of EU added value, including across: ▪ 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	Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis under effectiveness Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis under

		- beyond nature and type of added value on third countries, including examples of strengthened cooperation Quantitative: - 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 Qualitative: - 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)	effectiveness Interviews Interviews Policy and portfolio analysis Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
Continued added value EQ33: Is it important to continue European cooperation under the EEA strategic framework?	The EU added value and the benefits of the EEA outweigh the costs and go beyond what MS would have achieved on their own. There is evidence that discontinuation of the EEA would have negative effects. The scale and size of such negative effects are proportionate to the costs of the EEA. There is no evidence that other initiatives at different levels could replace the EEA at similar scope and volume.	Quantitative: - proportion of surveyed EEA actors who agree that discontinuation of the EEA would have negative effects Quantitative and qualitative: - 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 Qualitative: - initiatives that could replace the EEA identified (or not identified) - negative effects identified through interviews	Contribution analysis Delphi expert panel Task 4 – analysis of other possible measures Interviews Online focus groups Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
	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?	The EEA currently uses all legal possibilities in terms of EU's competence according to the treaties.	Delphi survey Public consultation Task 4 – analysis of other possible measures

Relevance

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?	The main needs of EEA actors in education and training are addressed by the EEA SP. EEA actors are satisfied with the extent to which the EEA meets their needs. EEA actors have good understanding of the EEA and its SP. 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).	Quantitative: - 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 Qualitative: - 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	Interviews Online focus groups Policy context analysis Portfolio analysis Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)
Continued relevance of the EEA SP	EQ36: To what extent are the SP still relevant, or do they need to be updated?	The current needs (as defined in the updated intervention logic) continue to be addressed by the EEA and its SP. Emerging needs are addressed by the EEA and its SP. EEA actors perceive the SP as covering their needs and emerging challenges.	Quantitative: - 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 Qualitative: - new needs of EEA actors identified - gaps in coverage of existing needs identified - new challenges in education and training emerging	Interviews Literature review Public consultation Surveys (WG and wider education and training community)

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	Main cost-generating items were HLG meetings, especially in-person meetings: 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. 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.	- 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. 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.
EEA strategic framework WG including peer-learning activities	External expertise, covered by dedicated contracts, and physical WG meetings and peer-learning activities were the main cost-generating items: 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.	- 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). 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.

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process	Costs	Benefits
SGIB	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).	- 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	The main cost-generating items were the 16 meetings of the expert group during the period 2021-2022: - 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.	- 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	Contracts on administrative and communication aspects, covering also the costs of meetings, were the main cost-generating item: 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.	- 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: Pathways to School Success Automatic recognition	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. costs included external expert contracts,	- 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 Examples:

EEA implementation instrument/activity or process	Costs	Benefits
- Improving the provision of digital skills - Key enabling factors for successful digital education and training	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.	- 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
EU-level projects and calls Jean Monnet actions (JMA) for schools and VET	Main cost-generating items: - External contract (communication activities linked to the launch of the action) - Commission staff time to prepare project calls	- 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.
Education for Climate Coalition	Main cost-generating items: - platform hosting, - Commission staff time dedicated to the action.	- 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: - external expert contract; - Commission staff time to analyse and draft reports.		- Outputs: annual reports with regular updates on progress towards targets at EU and national levels - An established source of country-specific and thematic information, e.g. teachers' dashboard. Target audience: experts, policymakers and EEA actors - Downloads 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: Commission staff time to prepare for, participate in and follow up on meetings.		- Enhanced information sharing and coordination between the DG EAC and DG EMPL units most closely involved in building the EEA - More 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:		Output: EEA portal serving as a single gateway to various information related to European cooperation towards the EEA
European Education Summits	- External contract covering Summit costs; - Venue and other costs related to the Summit (in-person format);		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	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).		- 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 needs - The 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 society - Summits foster synergies across various SP-related initiatives - Evidence 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 media - Growth 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

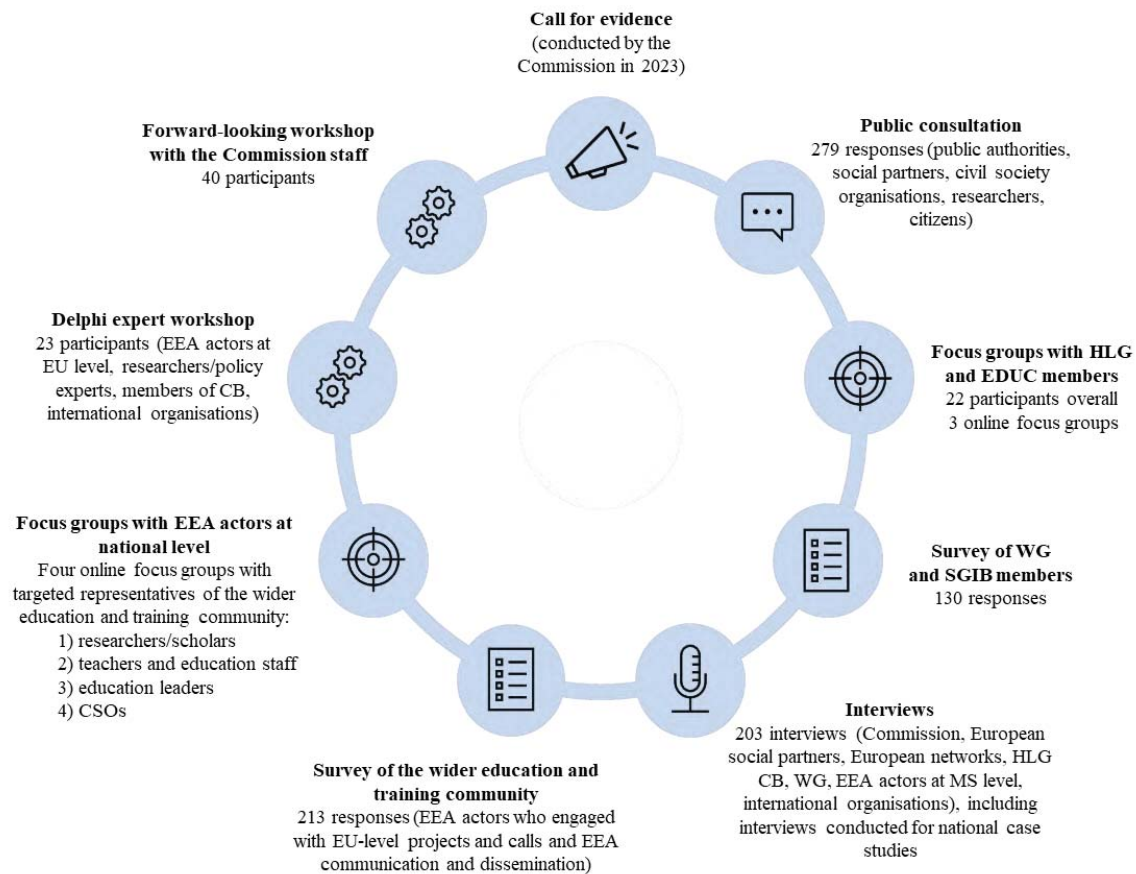
Targeted consultations included relevant EEA actors and the wider education and training community. Specific attention was paid to ensuring diversity of the MS-level EEA actors and to balancing representation of public authorities, social partners and wider education and training community. Respondents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

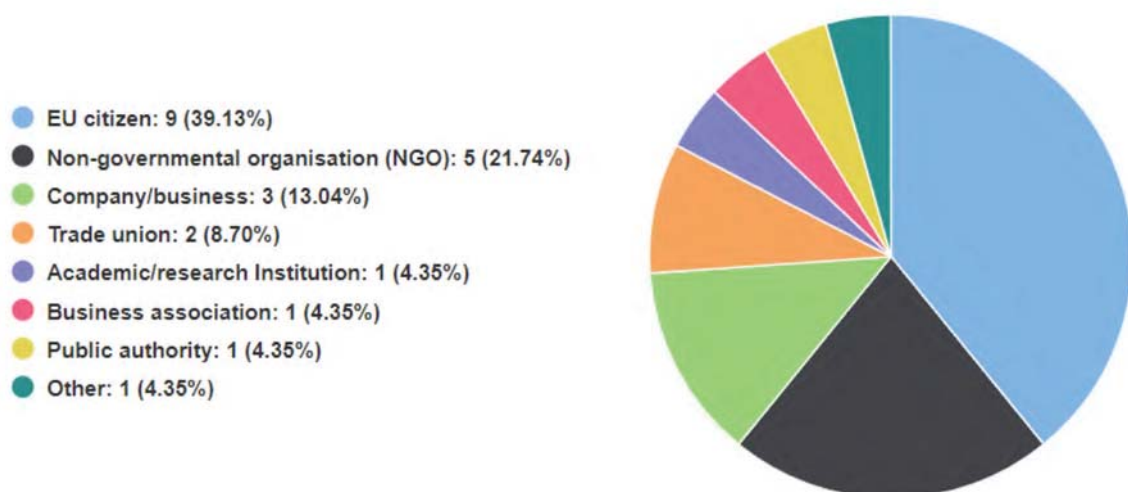
Figure 2. Stakeholders' participation in consultation activities



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.