

The Impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on Digital Skills among the Target Groups of the Programme

SAAIC, 2018

Executive Summary

Competences are defined in the *Recommendation of the European parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning*¹ as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. Digital competence is the key competence and it is defined in the mentioned Recommendation as follows: *Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.*

When it comes to knowledge, skills and attitudes related to this competence, as stated in the Recommendation, digital competence requires a sound understanding and knowledge of the nature, role and opportunities of ICT in everyday contexts: in personal and social life as well as at work. Skills needed include the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing the real from the virtual while recognising the links. Use of ICT requires a critical and reflective attitude towards available information and a responsible use of the interactive media. An interest in engaging in communities and networks for cultural, social and/or professional purposes also supports this competence.

To better understanding of digital competence, the European Commission has created The European Digital Competence Framework, also known as DigComp². The Framework can help with self-evaluation, setting learning goals, identifying training opportunities and facilitating job search. It identifies the key components of digital competence in 5 areas which can be summarised as: 1) Information and data literacy, 2) Communication and collaboration, 3) Digital content creation, 4) Safety, and 5) Problem solving.

One of the specific objectives of the **Erasmus+ Programme** in the field of education and training, as defined in its programme guide³, is to improve the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society. Thus the objective of this study was to show how the participation in the Erasmus+ Programme had helped its participants to develop their digital competences and skills. Target groups of the study were institutions/organisations as well as individual

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=SK>

² <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en

participants - staff and learners - involved in the Key Action 1 in the following three sectors: (a) school education, (b) vocational education and training, and (c) adult education.

The sample of the surveyed projects were those submitted, approved and finalised within the Key Action 1 in the above mentioned sectors and all participants` reports submitted by October 28, 2017. The study was realised by the SAAIC - the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme for Education and Training in Slovakia.

The approach and methods applied in the study are the following: The main basis for analysis has been the mobility projects in the mentioned three sectors. The information used in the analysis was: (i) participants` reports submitted by October 28, 2017, (ii) all projects submitted within the Calls 2014 – 2017 with the topic ICT – new technologies – digital competence and (iii) final reports of the mobility projects finalised by the end of October, 2017.

The study consists of two parts combining both the quantitative and qualitative aspects. The first part focuses on the all learning activities realised within the Key Action 1 and the second part on the learning activities that are specifically aimed at development of ICT and digital competences and skills.

Main findings:

- Within the all three sectors, there were 7 005 **participants` reports** submitted to the National Agency by October 28, 2017. 71% participants of the learning activities strongly agreed or agreed that they developed their ICT/digital competences and skills. 18 % of them had presented neutral statements (neither agreed nor disagreed) and 11 % stated that they had developed their ICT/digital competences and skills to a little extent or they had not developed them at all. The improvement is most visible in the sector of vocational education and training. On the contrary, participants involved in the learning activities within the adult education sector had perceived the lower development of the skills and competences in question. All in all, we can present that the Erasmus+ Programme contributes to the development of ICT and digital competences and skills of the participants who went abroad for their learning activities (mobilities).
- The topic ICT – new technologies – digital competence is very popular among **submitted** projects within the Key action 1 in all three sectors. Every fifth project submitted under KA1 has the ambition to develop digital competences. In numerical expression, there were 1 128 projects submitted out of which 224 projects with the topic in question. When it comes to **approved** projects, 22 % of them (134 projects) have been developing the topic to certain extent.
- 85 projects were **finalised** by the end of October, 2017. It should be emphasized that almost all projects with selected ICT topic were not exclusively focused on it but also

included other topics in order to achieve the projects` aims and goals. From the final reports, we have learned that all planned learning outcomes in relation to the ICT topic were achieved in all three sectors. We can conclude that the participants of the learning activities have improved in all five areas defined in The European Digital Competence Framework. The last two areas - safety and problem solving - have been most developed by the employees and learners in the vocational education and training sector. It is due to the nature of study fields (e. g. computer mechanics, ICT technicians).

- Finally, we can conclude that Erasmus+ Programme contributes to the development of the digital competences of the actors involved to a sufficient extent. It should be emphasized that digital competences are cross-sectoral and often overlapping with other competencies (e.g. language and professional competences).