



Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on learning mobility activities

Main conclusions

1. Context

At the end of April, the European Commission launched a short survey aimed at collecting the views of mobility participants in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps on how the Covid-19 outbreak affected the ordinary course of their Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps mobility activities.

The survey was sent to over 57 000 participants representing all types of mobility supported under the programmes and corresponding to 40% of the estimated number of people in mobility at the time of the Coronavirus outbreak¹.

Close to 11 800 participants in mobility activities under Erasmus+ programme and European Solidarity Corps completed the questionnaire.² The ratio between learners (students, pupils, trainees, young people) and staff (teachers, trainers, youth workers, etc.) amounts to 74% - 26% respectively. This ratio corresponds to the distribution between the two groups in the programme.

2. Main findings

As the COVID-19 outbreak spread gradually across Europe and participating countries introduced social distancing measures at different pace, approximately 25% of the surveyed participants were not (or were only mildly) affected by the situation.

The remaining 75% of the surveyed participants, whose activities were affected by the pandemic, provided the following feedback:

- 42% of respondents **continued their activities with different arrangements** (i.e. distance or online learning) with variations between the sectors; in higher education 55% of students continued their mobility with virtual activities;
- for 22% of respondents, the activity was temporarily **suspended**;

¹ The overall population of Erasmus+ participants registered in Mobility Tool+ and having mobilities overlapping the period of 15 February onwards is 142,801. The respective number for European Solidarity Corps participants is 1 050.

² The number is equivalent to 21% of the survey's population.

- for 36% of respondents the activity was definitely **cancelled** (with variations between the sectors: 17% of Erasmus+ youth and European Solidarity Corps participants and 25% of Erasmus+ students had their mobility cancelled).

75% of the affected participants returned back home, whereas around 25% of the affected participants stayed abroad (more than 50% of the European Solidarity Corps participants stayed abroad, while only 10% of the VET and school education participants).

The following reasons were given for staying abroad:

- preferred to stay (57%)
- initially preferred to stay, but now thinking of going back (9%)
- were asked to stay by their organisation, institution, etc. (7%)
- had/have difficulties in returning home (19%)
- other reasons (8%)

The picture varies for those participants who continued their activities through distance and online learning: among these participants, 51% returned back home, while 49% stayed abroad.

General figures

Based on the survey's sample it can be assumed that:

- more than **107 000** participants in Erasmus+ mobility **were affected by the Covid-19** situation
- close to **45 000** participants **continued their activities with different arrangements** (i.e. distance or online learning)
- for more than **23 500** participants the activity was temporarily **suspended**
- for more than **38 500** participants the activity was definitely **cancelled**

More than **80 000** of these participants **came back home** while **27 000** stayed abroad.

3. Qualitative aspects of virtual activities

When it comes to rating the level of satisfaction regarding virtual activities, **the views of participants** who carried out/are carrying out these activities **are generally positive**.

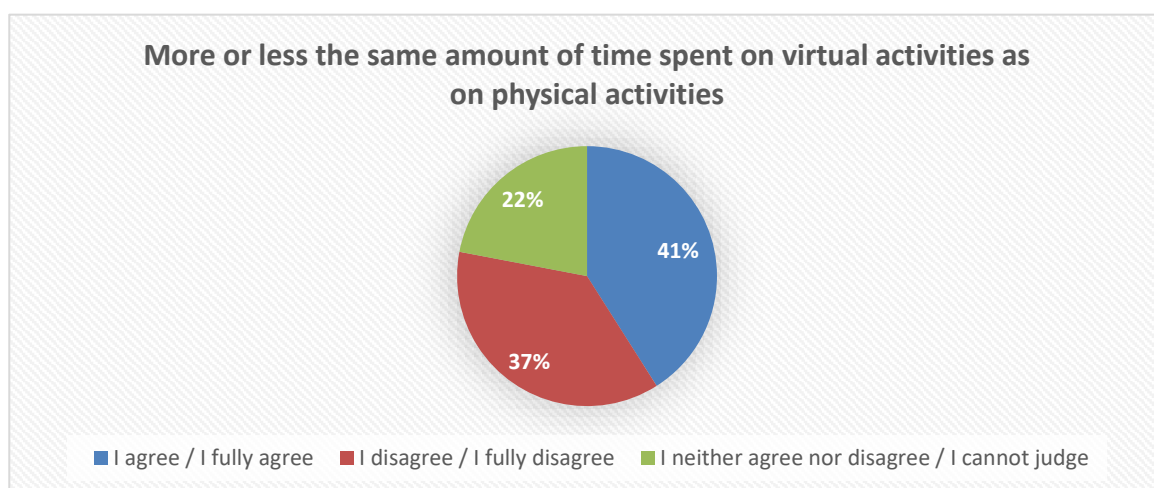
More specifically, the majority of respondents agree or fully agree that:

- The digital learning tools and platforms work very well (71%)³
- Moderators, professors, trainers and organisers run well the activities (71%)
- The quality of activities is good (63%)
- These activities encourage participants to learn (55%)
- The activities are relevant to participant's mobility (71%)⁴
- Sending institutions will formally recognise these activities as part of the participants' study periods, learning experience or professional experience abroad (72%)

However, compared to physical mobility activities, the large majority of **surveyed participants (81%) miss the person-to-person interaction**, as well as the physical access to certain educational facilities, such as libraries (69%).

Finally, as regards the time currently spent on virtual activities in comparison with the previous activities the views expressed by respondents are quite mixed:

- **41%** of the participants replied that they **spend more or less the same amount of time on virtual activities** as they were spending on physical activities,
- whereas **37%** of them expressed exactly the **opposite view** (spending less time in virtual activities than in physical ones).⁵



³ Lower share (60%) for Erasmus+ youth/non-formal learning activities and European Solidarity Corps participants.

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⁵ 41% of the participants selected the options: "I agree" and "I fully agree" (28% and 13% respectively);

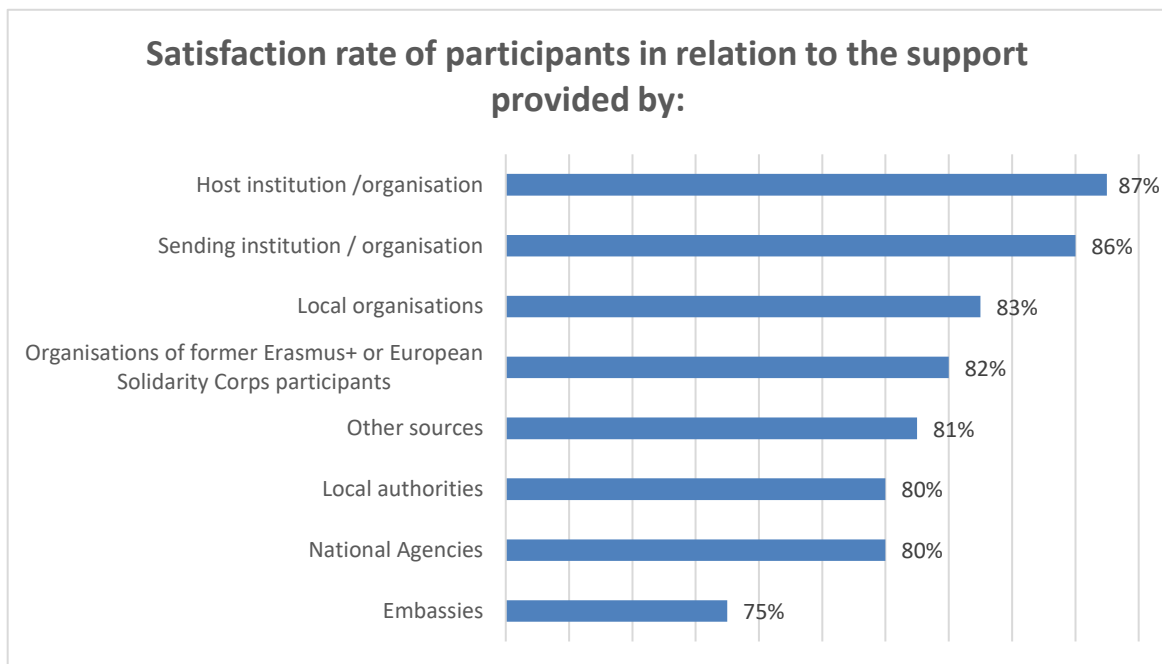
37% of the participants selected the options: "I disagree" and "I fully disagree" (28% and 9% respectively)

22% of the participants selected the options: "I neither agree nor disagree" and "I cannot judge" (17% and 5% respectively)

4. Assistance and support

The survey enquired about the level of satisfaction of participants who asked for information, support and guidance from different bodies, directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the programmes.

The **satisfaction rate**⁶ of participants is **generally positive** as shown in the graph below:



In general terms, European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ youth/non formal learning activities participants seem more satisfied with the information, support, guidance provided to them, especially from organisations of former Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps participants (90%) and local organisations (87%).

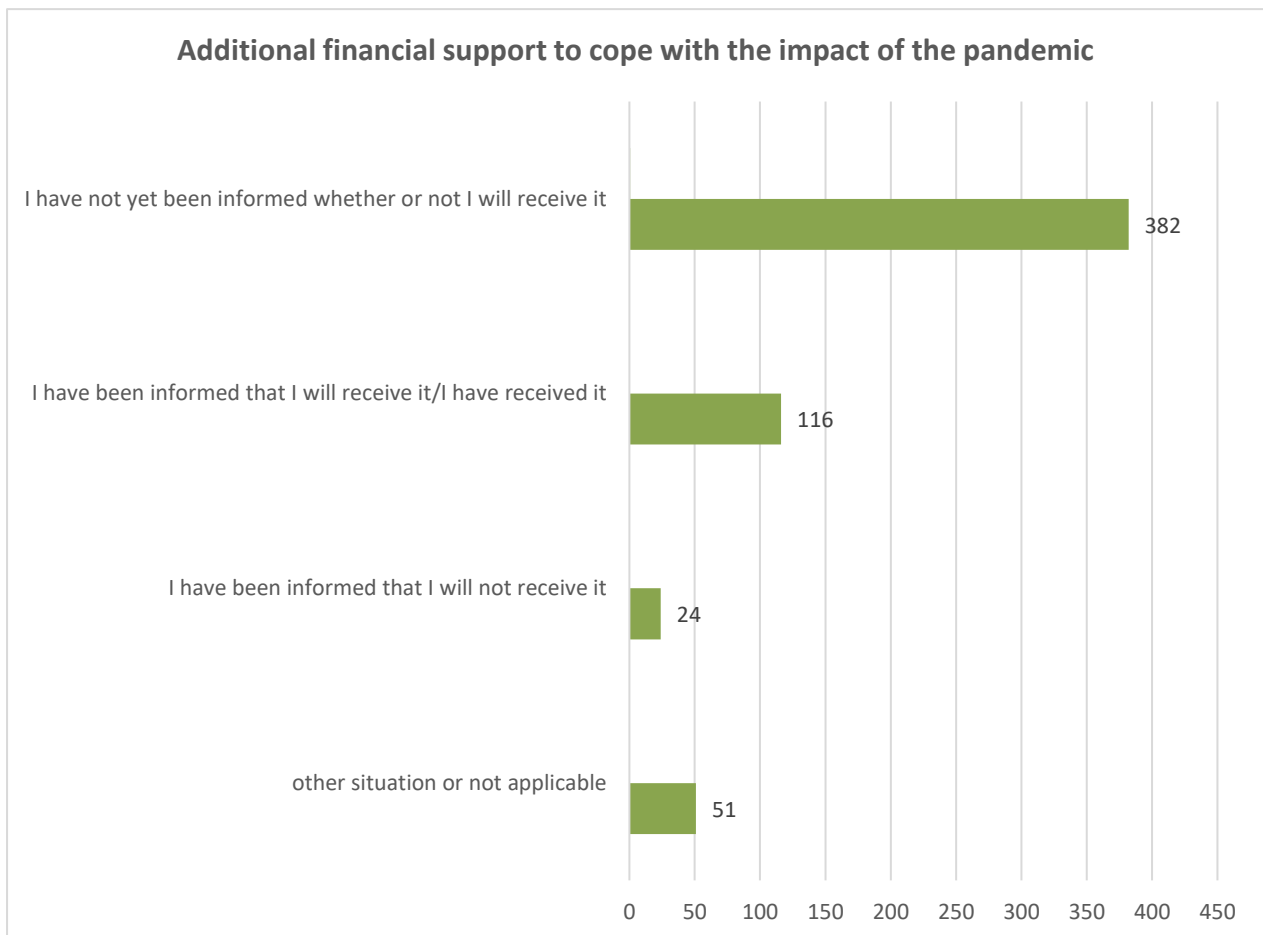
⁶ Responses ranging from “good” to “excellent” (3-5) have been taken into account.

5. Financial support

Regarding the financial support from both programmes, **68%** of respondents - whose activities were affected by the Covid-19 crisis - declared that they **have fully or partially⁷ received the EU grant** to which they are entitled.

12% of the participants have asked (or intend to ask for) **additional financial support** in order to cover extra costs incurred due to this exceptional situation. Out of these participants:

- the majority of them (68%) do not know at this stage whether they will receive the additional support or not;
- 18% of respondents have been informed that they will receive an extra support;
- while for 5% of them the support has not been agreed⁸.



⁷ Fully received a grant (41%). Partially received a grant (43%); for most activities, participants receive the full grant only at the end of their mobility activity.

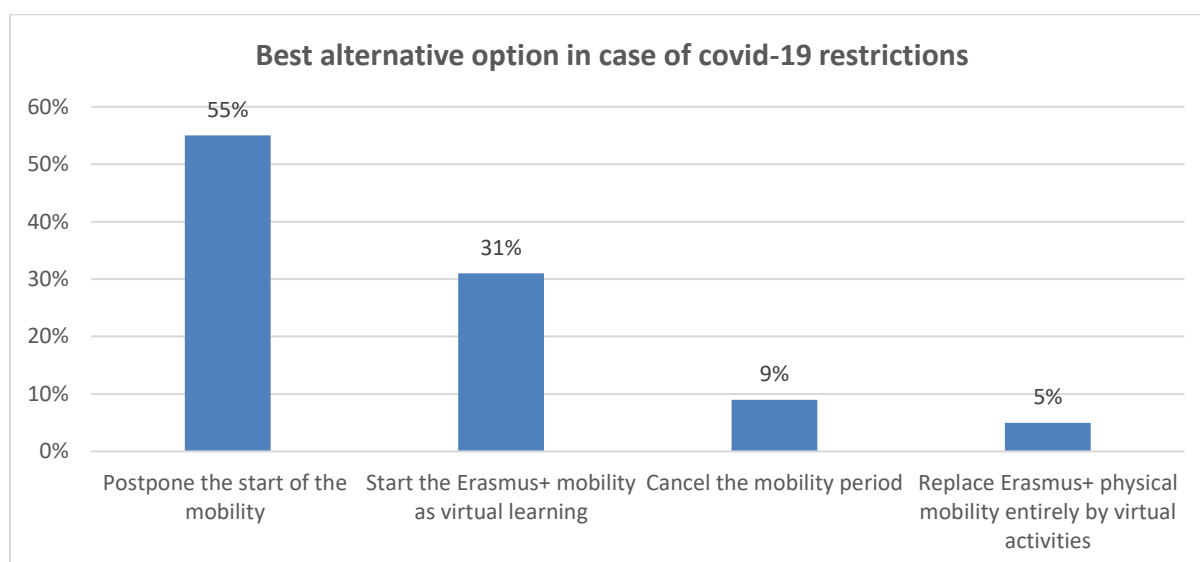
⁸ Other situations or not applicable (9%)

6. Prospects regarding mobility activities in the coming months

Based on their personal experience, surveyed participants were asked to give an “ideal advice” to those people who plan to carry out a mobility in the coming months. They were asked to rank possible alternative options in order of preference.

Regarding their **first preference**:

- 55% of respondents would prefer to postpone the start of the mobility until the situation gets back to normal
- 31% of respondents would prefer to start their mobility as virtual learning and then use the opportunity for an experience abroad
- 9% of participants would opt for cancelling the mobility period
- 5% would be ready to replace physical mobility entirely by virtual activities if there is no other alternative



Participants who have carried out virtual mobility periods are more confident on the validity of the scenario “blended mobility”. In fact, when focussing only on respondents that are continuing/have completed their mobility period in a virtual way (e.g. online courses, virtual meetings, distance learning), the survey shows that starting the mobility as virtual learning has the highest preference (44%).