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THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS

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Supervisor
Ch. Prof. Antonio Trampus

Assistant supervisor
Fadia Khraisat

Graduand

Laura Strati

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PREFACE

My interest in the practice of European Project Management arose a few years ago, when I was a neo-graduate without a precise idea of who I would have become in the future.

The only thing I knew was that I wanted to work in an international environment, where I could practice the foreign languages that I had been studying all my life.

When I was told that the most important social cooperative in my home town was looking for volunteers willing to participate in a big international project, I submitted my application and waited for an answer. I did not know yet that soon I would have become a lot more familiar with application forms...

Since then, I have been working in different European projects and with many partners from all over Europe, but 2016 has been so far the most important year for my professional career: I took part in the master course on European Project Management offered by Ca' Foscari Unit of International Research and I performed an Erasmus+ traineeship at the EU Desk of the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Spain in Madrid. These two experiences have helped me build a clearer image of where I would like to work in the future.

Working as a manager of European projects means many good things: turning project ideas into reality, helping local communities, building up multicultural partnerships that demolish cultural barriers, travelling, fostering a shared European dimension...

But it also means facing the challenge of really changing society by making one's good actions durable over the years.

The aim of this final dissertation is providing an overview of the existing literature concerning those actions and measures that allow European projects to live even without the external support of the European Commission.

To show that good changes can be sustainable, but required a joint and shared effort.

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INTRODUCTION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union step by step[1]

On the 9th of May every year Europe celebrates the so-called "Europe Day", a day dedicated to the European project that stemmed from the ruins of the Second World War.

After 1945 among the priorities of more than one of the political agendas of western Europe governments there was ensuring a long-lasting peace among European countries, as the events of the 9th of May of 1950 showed: that day the French Prime Minister Robert Schuman presented a plan for European cooperation that received the immediate support from the Italian Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer[2]. In his declaration, inspired by French political and adviser Jean Monnet, Schuman was advocating for the "elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany" - concerning the possession of the strategic energy resources in Ruhr and Saar regions - by pooling German and French coal and steal production under "a common High Authority, within the framework of an organisation open to participation of the other countries of Europe". He believed that the establishment of such a productive unit open to all countries was the first step towards economic development and peaceful economic unification for Europe, since it would have provided all member countries and the world with industrial production supplies. The prompt support that his plan received from the Italian government, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and later from other western Europe leaders, showed that Schuman was not the only one believing that the union of economic forces and resources was essential in order to recover after the war and ensure peace in Europe.

Schuman's plan thus paved the way to the 1951 foundation of the European Union's first ancestor, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The six founding countries who signed the Steel and Coal Treaty were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. After the signing, the member states attempted at enlarging the competences of the Community by creating a political and a defensive union – the European Political Community and the European Defense Community respectively - but failed. On the contrary, Jean Monnet-inspired projects of a custom-free union and of a binding High Authority were given practical effect in 1957, when the

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1 A chronology of the history of the European Union is available among the annexes at the end of this final dissertation.
2 P. Mengozzi, *Istituzioni di diritto comunitario e dell'Unione Europea*, Padova, CEDAM, 2006, 2nd edition, p. 1

founding countries signed the Treaties of Rome for the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), otherwise known as "common market", and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or EURATOM). The aims were to start eliminating economic barriers and restrictions to international trade among the member states, in order to "progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States"[3] and to let people, goods, services and money start circulating freely. A further push towards freedom of people's mobility within the Community would come in 1985, through the Schengen Agreement, which would establish common regulation regarding visas and border control and would allow people, besides goods and services, to move freely from one member state to the other in the so-called Schengen area – consisting of only 5 countries at the time.

In 1962, despite the internal division in Europe caused by the Cold War, once again the underlying mechanism that fostered further the process of integration was the economic union of production and resources: a common agricultural policy was launched to ensure joint control over food production and equal wages to farmers. A few years later, in 1968, custom duties on goods circulating among the six founding countries were abolished. During the early 1970s the six became 9, thanks to the entrance of Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom, and in 1981 Greece joined them.

However, it was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communism that the European project entered its most flourishing era. The Maastricht Treaty on European Union, signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1993, established a Union with a central banking system and a common currency – the Euro -, where the citizens of the member states could receive European citizenship and all signatory governments committed themselves to adopt common foreign and security policies. According to Paolo Mengozzi, lawyer at the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Maastricht Treaty flattened the disagreement between the two different movements existing within the Union at the time, namely the federalist and the less federalist one, since it established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)[4].

Towards the end of the 1990s negotiations started to allow 10 eastern Europe countries to enter the Union, together with the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus, and in 1999 the Euro became the national currency in 11 member states. 2002 was the year that marked the end of

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3 Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (1957), Art. 2
4 P. Mengozzi, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 5-6

ECSC as planned[5], and since that year all operations regarding coal and steel production passed under the control of the European Community. In 2004 the 25 member states of the Community attempted at creating a common European Constitution, with the aim of replacing the previous treaties, but the Constitution was not ratified, due to French and Dutch voters' lack of support.

Nonetheless, in those years the Union kept expanding and the need for new reforms to European Institutions and a more democratic voting process was compelling. The Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007 as Treaty of the European Community and then renamed as Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2009) amended previous regulation concerning the composition of the main European Institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee – and brought European citizens closer to European Institutions by introducing the *citizens' initiative* – made operational only in 2012 -, t.i. European citizens' right to invite the Commission to submit a proposal on issues that they feel the Union should regulate.

These last years have been quite challenging for the European Union, mainly due to the economic crisis that broke out in 2008, the flows of immigrants coming from neighbouring countries and the terrorist attacks recently carried out in many European capitals.

Furthermore, a few years ago, the movement of the "Eurosceptic" started to take shape and its main achievement so far has been the results of the Brexit referendum, which took place in the United Kingdom on the 23rd of June 2016 and showed the desire of most British voters to withdraw from the European Union.

The main issues that the European Union is dealing with at the moment are related with enhancing security measures on its borders, fighting the threat of terrorism, regulating immigration flows caused by conflicts in the Middle East and in northern Africa, and taking measures to stop climate change.

In the meantime, the expansion process of the European Union is still ongoing with Croatia being the 28th country joining in 2013 and a waiting list of 5 potential candidates to be evaluated.

EU institutions and bodies

The European Union is based on the principle of the rule of law, meaning that all decisions

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5 Article 97 of the Treaty constituting the European Coal and Steel Community said that its expiration was planned for 50 years later.

and laws coming from the European Union are based on treaties among its state members, who agree voluntarily and democratically on the contents of such treaties. To ensure their voice is heard at Union level, European citizens are directly represented in the European Parliament, while member states are represented in both the European Council and the Council of the European Union. The most important institutions for EU legislation are the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The European Parliament is directly elected every 5 years by European citizens and has legislative, supervisory and budgetary responsibilities. The Members of the European Parliament are in charge of passing EU laws based on European Commission proposals, deciding on EU international agreements and enlargements, review the Commission's work programme[6], conducting a scrutiny of all EU institutions, electing the President of the EU Commission, establishing the EU budget with the Council and approving the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework[7], examining citizens' petitions and launching inquiries, discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank and questioning both Commission and Council when needed.

The Council of the European Union, which is not to be confused with the European Council, flanks the EU Parliament in its daily legislative routine. One of the differences between the Council of the European Union and the European Council is that, while the members of the former are government ministers from each EU country, in the latter the members are top leaders - heads of state or government - of all EU countries, who meet quarterly and define the EU's political priorities, but do not pass laws.

Finally, the European Commission is the politically independent executive body of the European Union. It normally proposes new laws to be examined by both the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, sets EU spending priorities and allocates EU funding, ensures the application of EU laws in the member states together with the Court of Justice and represents EU in international organisations. It is divided into Departments or Directorates-General (DGs), each one dedicated to a different EU policy. To further contribute to the implementation of EU policies, the Commission can also set up temporary or permanent decentralised agencies across Europe, each one dealing with a different topic (training, research, health&safety, etc).

To complete the list of the 7 EU's official institutions, contained in the article 13 of the Treaty on European Union, one has to mention the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Central Bank and the European Court of Auditors.

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6 The Commission work programme shows how the Commission plans to give practical effect to the political priorities set out by the President.
7 The Multiannual Financial Framework is the EU's long-term budget.

The Court of Justice ensures that EU laws are applied in the same way in all EU countries and settles disputes between national governments and EU institutions. However, also individuals, businesses or organisations can appeal to the Court if they feel that one EU institution has violated their rights.

The Court of Auditors is an independent external auditor whose role is checking that EU funds are collected and allocated correctly, which means that it conducts regular checks to any person or organisation handling EU funds, including EU institutions and countries.

The European Central Bank is responsible for the EU monetary policy. It controls money supply in the EU member states and inflation, therefore its short-term aim is to keep prices stable, while its long-term aim is supporting economic growth and job creation in the Eurozone. It also sets the interest rates on loans to commercial banks in the Eurozone and manages foreign currency reserves.

There is another financial body of the European Union, t.i. the European Investment Bank, which provides funds for EU investment projects and supports small enterprises through the European Investment Fund.

Other EU bodies are:

- advisory bodies like the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions
- the European External Action Service, assisting the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- the European Ombudsman, in charge of investigating cases of maladministration by EU institutions or bodies
- the European Data Protection Supervisor, for the privacy of personal data
- the Publications Office
- the European Personnel Selection Office
- the European School of Administration, providing training to EU staff members

EU values and principles

The latest treaty on European Union, the Treaty of Lisbon (signed in 2007 but entered into force in 2009) amended the previous treaties, namely the Treaty on European Union (1992) and the Treaty establishing the European Community. Among the general provisions of the Treaty, the

member states agreed on inserting article 1a, which says that "the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail"[8].

In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon mentions some principles that guide the Union's actions and the actions between the Union and its member states:

− the principle of mutual sincere cooperation between the Union and the member states, which establishes a mutual legal obligation for both the Union and the member states to carry out the tasks deriving from the founding treaties in full mutual respect (art. 9);

− the principle of conferral of powers, under which the Union's actions are limited by the competences that the member states agree to confer to it (art. 2 F);

− the principle of subsidiarity, under which the Union shall intervene in matters that are not of its exclusive competence only when member states' intervention is not sufficient (art. 3b). This principle ensures that constant checks are carried out to verify the action at EU level is justified in light of possibilities available at national, regional or local level;

− the principle of proportionality, under which the Union's actions shall be proportionate and shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the founding Treaties (art. 3b);

− the principle of mutual recognition of judicial and extrajudicial decisions in civil matters, which facilitates cross-border judicial cooperation and access to justice by implying the identification of the competent jurisdiction, a clear designation of the law applicable to different situations and effective recognition and enforcement procedures (art. 61);

− the principle of *non-refoulement* for individuals requiring international protection, which regulates EU border management activities and includes the prohibition to remove, expel or extradite people fleeing from a State where they would probably be subjected to death penalty, torture or other humanly degrading treatment (art. 63 of the Treaty of Lisbon and art. 19 of EU Charter of Fundamental Rights);

− the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between the member states, which implies a fair distribution of the burdens related to EU borders, asylum and immigration policies. The principle applies to both EU institutions and member states (art.

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8 Official Journal of the European Union, C 306/12, 17.12.2007, p. 13

63b);

– the principle of sound financial management, which claims that EU budget management shall comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The principle of economy establishes that the resources used by the competent institutions (EU institutions, bodies, decentralised agencies or any other authority designated to manage EU budget) for its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price. The principle of efficiency concerns the best ratio resources employed/results achieved. The principle of effectiveness means achieving the specific targets set and the intended results (art. 268, among the Financial Provisions of the Treaty).

Furthermore, article 6 of the general provisions of the Treaty, says that "the Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000 [...] which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties"[9].

EU priorities and policies

Every five years the President of the European Commission sets out a list of 10 priorities that shall serve as guidelines for the work of the Commission. The current President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has identified the following priorities at the beginning of his mandate in 2014:

- a new boost for jobs, growth and investment
- the creation of a connected digital single market
- a forward-looking climate change policy
- a deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base
- a deeper and fairer economic and monetary Union
- a reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the US
- an area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust
- a new policy on migration
- a stronger foreign policy of the Union
- democratic change within the EU

Juncker's policies are in line with the ones set by Europe 2020 strategy, the 10-year

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9 Official Journal of the European Union, C 306, 17.12.2007, p. 13

European Union's strategy for growth. The strategy was launched in 2010 and it aims to develop a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth within the Union. To do so, specific targets have been set concerning 5 macro-topics, namely employment, investment in R&D, climate change and energy sustainability, education, fight against poverty and social exclusion. Within 2020, the European Union considers that it is possible:

- to ensure that 75% of the 20-64 year-olds have a job
- to invest 3% of the EU's GDP in research&development project and activities
- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% (or even 30%), to have 20% of the total amount of energy produced from renewable resources and to reach a 20% increase in energy efficiency
- to reduce the rate of early school leaving below 10%, and to have at least 40% of the 30-34-year-olds complete third level education
- to reduce at least by 20 million the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

In its latest annual Work Programme, which was published in October 2016, the Commission renewed its commitment to give practical effect to the President's priorities. The Work Programme shows how the Commission intends to give practical effect to the President's political priorities and therefore defines preparation of future legislation. In the document, the Commission reports the achievements obtained so far in the political fields corresponding to the President's priorities, commits itself to collaborate with the other EU institutions in order to implement EU priority policies and UN Millennium Goals and presents for each of the priorities set by the Commission's President the legislative proposals that it intends to submit to EU Parliament the upcoming year (e.g. doubling the duration and financial capacity of European Funds, reforming the economy according to the principle of environmental sustainability, re-launching existing fiscal policies, etc) and the initiatives that it intends to launch.

However, the act of submitting a legislative proposal to the European Parliament is not a simple and immediate process: it needs assessment and preparation. After the Work Programme is published and has been revised from the other EU institutions, the Directorates-General of the Commission draw multiannual strategic and management plans to communicate their relevant specific objectives and how they plan to use available budget resources to reach them. Each Department will then publish an annual report of the activities, so that the Commission assesses

their performance. These reports are then included in a synthesis report communicated to both the European Parliament and the Council.

In this pre-phase the Commission also conducts an *impact assessment* to estimate the potential consequences that new laws would bring about at the economic, social and environmental level. After doing that, public consultations are open in order to let the interested parties or stakeholders participate in the law-making process with their suggestions or opinions. Finally, the list of adopted Commission initiatives is updated regularly and forwarded to the other EU institutions for coordinating and organizational needs.

CHAPTER 1

THE ABC OF EUROPEAN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

1.1 Brief introduction on European project management

The European Commission allocates funds for projects that contribute to implement EU policies all over and outside Europe. European project management refers to the practice of managing projects financed with EU funds, which take the name of European projects.

European projects are among the main strategic tools that the European Institutions can use to achieve the objectives of the European Union and to implement its policies. They contribute to enhance social welfare, social economic growth and territorial integration, since normally they stem from European citizens' common unsatisfied needs or situations of disadvantage[10].

However, only specific categories of beneficiary subjects can be eligible for funding even though European projects beneficiaries are not only the ones awarded with EU funds, but can be divided into three categories[11]:

- eligible beneficiaries, namely the ones that, according to EU law, can receive EU funds
- target groups, namely the social groups of individuals directly involved in the activities planned in the European projects
- indirect target groups, namely the long-term beneficiaries of European projects results

More specifically then, European project management also relates to the opportunity that different types of organisations or specific categories of individuals have of applying for EU funds and give practical effect to their project by allowing a wider audience to benefit from the results of the project itself.

Applying for EU funds is a complex procedure following strict rules and criteria, but before examining its functioning, it is important to briefly discuss where European project management originates from, t.i. from EU budget implementation.

1.1.1 EU budget implementation

Article 311 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) says that

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10 Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, *Guida all'Europrogettazione,* paragraph *Un assetto istituzionale unico*
11 Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, *Op. Cit.,* paragraph *Beneficiare dei progetti europei*

"without prejudice to other revenue, the (EU) budget shall be financed wholly from own resources", meaning that EU budgetary resources can be divided into two main categories, t.i. own resources - traditional own resources like custom duties on imports from outside Europe and sugar levies, VAT-based resources and member states' GNI-based contributions - and other revenues[12].

Planned future allocation of these resources can be seen in the *Multiannual Financial Framework* (MFF), the EU long-term spending plan adopted at least every five years by the Council of the European Union and adjusted annually, after the European Parliament has given consent on it. Article 312 of the TFEU says that the plan "shall ensure that Union expenditure develops in an orderly manner and within the limits of its own resources", therefore its role is to guarantee that EU spending is predictable and stays within the agreed limits. As a matter of fact, the MFF sets a limit, or *ceiling*, to the annual budget that the EU may spend in each political field – called *headings* – as far as the two following types of expenditure are concerned:

- Commitment appropriations: amounts of money deriving from legal obligations - grants agreements, contracts or decisions - that the EU signs with a beneficiary;
- Payments appropriations: amounts of money deriving from funds given to EU by the member states and then spent in different areas of activity.

In addition, the MFF sets an overall annual ceiling for commitment appropriations and another for payments appropriations.

In every MFF the headings correspond to the EU priority policies of the period. In the latest MMF adopted, the one for the period 2014-2020, the headings are the following:

1) Smart&inclusive growth: competitiveness for growth and jobs and economic, social and territorial cohesion, research&innovation, education and training, etc.
2) Sustainable growth: natural resources, common agricultural and fishery policies, rural development, etc.
3) Security and citizenship: this category includes two types of EU expenditures. The ones that derive from the exercise of EU citizens' rights and the ones ensuring security within the Union and on its borders. As far as the former are concerned, they are related with the delivery of public health service, consumer's protection, culture, youth, information and dialogue with citizens. On the other hand, the latter refer to the implementation of the current EU Agenda on Security, whose priorities are the fight against terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. The EU recognises that these are interrelated threats affecting cross-

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12 European Union's Report on Public Finance - Budget, Luxembourg, 2014, 5th edition, p. 190

border areas, therefore it is necessary to strengthen the tools that the EU provides to national law enforcement authorities, information exchanges, operational cooperation, justice implementation, border protection, immigration and asylum policies;

4) Global Europe: here all expenditures for EU external action or foreign policy are included – e.g. humanitarian aids;

5) Administration: this category covers all EU administrative expenditures for staff of EU institutions, pensions and EU-run schools for staff members' children ("European Schools"). Around 6% of EU annual budget is spent on this category;

6) Compensation: temporary reimbursements to some member states to ensure that they do not contribute more to the EU budget than they benefit from it.

Each heading entails a certain amount of EU budgetary resources, or *funds*, to allocate.

The EU can allocate funds through a direct, indirect or shared management method.

1.1.2 Methods of management of EU budget

The reference document containing the principles ruling the process of EU budget implementation – or EU funds allocation - is called *Financial Regulation* (FR). The Financial Regulation adopted in 2012 simplified the methods of EU budget management[13] and reduced them from 5 to 3. According to this and the following FRs the EU budget management can be:

1. **Direct**: the European Commission is in charge of all EU budget implementation tasks, which are performed directly by its Departments or Executive Agencies;

2. **Shared**: article 317 of the TFEU says that "the Commission shall implement the budget in cooperation with the Member States" and that "Member States shall cooperate with the Commission to ensure that the appropriations are used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management". The article establishes a shared responsibility between the Commission and states' national government in the management of EU budget. This means a greater accountability for member states' national governments, since they are requested to set up an internal control system, designate internal authorities responsible for EU funds management and publish an annual financial report on managed funds.

3. **Indirect**: the Commission can externalise the budget management to third entities, such as third countries, international organisations, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the

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13   European Union's Report on Public Finance - Budget, Luxembourg, 2014, 5th edition, p. 223

European Investment Fund (EIF), decentralised agencies and private-public partnership bodies, public law bodies, private law bodies with a public service mission, bodies governed by the private law of a Member State that are entrusted with the implementation of a public-private partnership, persons entrusted with the implementation of specific actions in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Over 75% of EU budget is managed according to the principle of shared management, while the remaining is managed directly by the Commission and its departments or agencies[14].

EU funds are allocated through funds or *funding programmes,* which I will talked about in the next paragraphs.

1.2 EU funds and funding programmes: an overview

1.2.1 The subjects involved in the management of EU funds: the principle of subsidiarity

Article 5 of the Treaty on the European Union governs the exercise of EU competences. According to the principle of conferral, EU shall exercise only the competences that the member states agree to confer upon it in the Treaties. As a consequence, the member states shall exercise all the competences that have not been conferred upon the Union.

As far as the Union's non-exclusive competences are concerned, the principle of subsidiarity applies: in this case, "the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States [...] but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level".

Article 5 of the TEU brings about two important considerations: its general aim is ensuring a certain degree of independence to member states in relation to the Union's higher authority, but at the same time it recognises an area of shared powers between the two authorities, which is normally one of the founding principles of federal States institutions[15]. In addition, it represents the legal basis that justifies the Union's intervention in case of member states' incapability of reaching specific targets effectively by reason of scale and effect of the action in question.

Since it was formally enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union, the

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14 European Commission, *Guidance for beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds and related EU instruments*, 2014, p. 7
15 European Parliament's Fact Sheets on the European Union, *The principle of subsidiarity,* 2016, p. 1-2

principle of subsidiarity has been objects of different interpretations[16]. Some authors have claimed that it aims to avoid an excessive centralisation of government and its excessive dispersal at the same time; others have argued that it represents the balance between two opposite points of view, namely the liberal one, which stands for individual actor's intervention in the decision-taking process whenever possible in a community, and the supranational view, which allows individual action only when it is demonstrated that collective action does not lead to reach the desired objectives; finally, other authors defined it as an instrument that member states could use to defend their own national interests, since article 12(b) of the TEU and Protocol N. 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality establish that national parliaments are in charge of verifying, together with the Commission, the compliance of draft European legislative acts with the principle of subsidiarity.

However, regardless the interpretations scholars have given to the principle so far, in the framework of this dissertation, it is useful to know that it applies to all EU institutions[17] and that it is related to the management of EU funding programmes[18].

1.2.2 European Structural and Investment Funds

The principle of "shared management" of EU budget applies to 5 large funds[19], called *European Structural and Investment funds* (ESI), which work together to support economic development across all EU countries, in line with the objectives set by the Europe 2020 strategy. Three of this funds contribute to the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy, which aims, as defined in the 1986 Single European Act, to reduce disparities between European regions and promote a joint and sustainable territorial development. The Policy establishes a distribution of funds between countries and regions, attributing a bigger amount of funds to less developed regions.

The following 5 Funds are then used by member states to finance national or regional programmes of territorial development:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): it is one of the pillars of the European Cohesion Policy and it contributes to correct imbalances between European Regions by allowing investment in fields such as research&innovation, digital technologies, support for small and medium enterprises or low carbon economy. The amount of resources allocated

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16 R. Levy, *Subsidiarity, Accountability and the Management of EU Programmes*, 1995. Available on the website of the Archive of European Integration of the University of Pittsburgh: www.aei.pitt.edu
17 European Parliament's Fact Sheets on the European Union, *The principle of subsidiarity*, 2016, p. 2
18 R. Levy, *Op. cit.* Available on the website of the Archive of European Integration of the University of Pittsburgh: www.aei.pitt.edu
19 European Commission, *Guidance for beneficiaries..*, Op. Cit., p. 8

depends on the category of the region, namely developed regions, regions in transition or less developed regions. This fund is the one financing also the European Territorial Cooperation Programme (Interreg);

- the European Social Fund (ESF): it is another pillar of the Cohesion Policy and it is the fund dedicated to the implementation of policies contributing to raise employment, support labour mobility and social inclusion, fight poverty, improve lifelong learning and enhance pubic administration's efficiency;

- the Cohesion Fund (CF): it is the third pillar of the Cohesion Policy and it aims to reduce economic and social disparities an to promote sustainable development in those member states where the GNI per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. It supports trans-European transport networks and infrastructure projects that are sustainable for the environment;

- the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): it is considered to be one of the main pillars of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), since it fosters transfer of innovation, competitiveness and innovation in European backward rural areas;

- the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF): this fund contributes to the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy, which ensures that all European fishery units or business have equal access to EU waters and can compete fairly.

Every member state of the European Union can obtain these funds after negotiating with the European Commission what and who can be funded through national or regional programmes.

Unlike what happens with EU direct-funding programmes, the management of EU structural funds implementation in the member states is not handled by the Commission[20]: in fact, member states appoint national or regional authorities in charge of managing the operations related with the funds implementation, according to the principle of "sound financial management" contained in the EU Financial Regulation. Under this principle, budget resources "used by the institution for the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price". In addition, the "the principle of efficiency", which is "concerned with the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved" and "the principle of effectiveness", which is "concerned with attaining the specific objectives set and achieving the intended results" must be respected.

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20 European Commission, *Guidance for beneficiaries.., Op. Cit.*, p. 8

As the European Commission's Guidance for beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds says, in order to give practical effect to the principle, appointed national and regional authorities are requested to

- draw up and apply selection procedures and eligibility criteria;

- provide information to potential beneficiaries of ESI funds such as, the minimum or maximum size of the project, the financing plan and time-frame;

- ensuring that projects fall within the scope of the Funds concerned;

- control the programmes

With the phrase "potential beneficiaries of ESI funds" subjects of different nature are meant: European businesses, foreign firms with a base in Europe, public bodies, associations and individuals.

1.2.3 Other EU funds

The allocation of the rest of EU funds is managed directly by the Commission, which allocates them in the form of contracts or grants.

On the one hand, contracts refer to EU contracting of external service providers of goods and services in order to carry out ordinary EU institutions operations concerning training, IT equipment, research, etc. In this case, contracts are awarded through public call for tenders.

On the other hand, grants refer to forms of financial support assigned by the EU Commission to eligible organisations or individuals that apply for such EU funds in order to contribute to the implementation of EU policies. In this case, grants are attributed through calls for proposals. The canals used by the European Commission to allocate grants are the funding programmes, previously mentioned. Examples of funding programmes are Erasmus+, Horizon2020, Life, Interreg, Cosme.

Each of them contributes to the achievement of specific objectives in line with the EU policies of the relative period, and covers one or more thematic fields. Normally, the Commission is the body in charge of managing all the operations needed to allocate the grants: its Agencies and Departments are therefore responsible for designing apply selection procedures and eligibility criteria, providing information to potential beneficiaries through EU official websites, ensuring that project proposals submitted fulfill the scope of the funding programme concerned and controlling

the programmes.

Nonetheless, other bodies can be involved in the process of grants management[21] like the so-called National Contact Points (NCP), established in order to providing potential beneficiaries with assistance and information about funding programmes. A NCP can either be a private association or a governmental department like a Ministry. Eligible subjects for EU grants can be of different nature: associations, NGOs, training&research institutes or businesses, but also individuals and non-formal groups.

1.3 How to apply for EU funds

Applying for EU funds means submitting to the Commission or to the competent authority[22] a project proposal with an estimated budget plan that needs EU funds in order to be implemented.

There is not a universal method to apply for EU funds, since every funding programme has its specific rules and criteria. However, some common traits can be identified[23], if not in any funding programme, in the majority of them.

Who can apply for EU funds? In most cases project proposals must be submitted by a consortium of partners, reflecting a European scope. The consortium should be well-balanced in terms of technical competences and geographical position of the partners. Some funding programmes are open to all EU countries, while some others, like the ones for Territorial Cooperation, only apply to a cluster of European neighbouring regions.

Call for proposals. They can be considered as "invitations" made by the Commission or the competent authority to eligible subjects that intend to apply for EU funds. Call for proposals normally indicate the criteria for participation in the selection process, the types of activities that can be financed with EU funds, the criteria for the evaluation of project proposals, the available amount of EU funds, the deadline for the submission of proposals and the contacts for further information.

Reference documents for application. Applicants normally rely on a series of documents

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21 Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, *Op. Cit.*, paragraph *Chi gestisce I programmi comunitari*

22 As previously discussed in this dissertation, the operations of EU funds management, including the selection process of project proposals, are not exclusive competence of the European Commission. In the cases of shared-management, member states appoint national or regional authorities for this purpose.

23 Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, *Op. Cit.*, paragraph *I documenti di riferimento*

when submitting an application, among which:

- the funding programme regulation approved by both EU Parliament and the Council of the European Union
- the annual work programme for the implementation of the funding programme
- detailed guidelines with extensive explanations of the shorter indications included in the call for proposal
- proposal submission user guides

As far as the "application package" is concerned, normally applicants have to fill in:

- an application form, where, beside the consortium data, they indicate the objectives, activities and expected results of their project proposal
- a financial plan, where they indicate the estimated amount of EU funds they intend to apply for to implement project activities
- declarations validating the official submission of the project proposal (e.g. declaration of honour)

Co-financing. Structural and investment Funds, as well as some directly-managed funding programmes foresee a co-financing approach in EU grants or funds allocated. This means that, the member states and the consortium partners respectively, will have to cover for a part of project expenses.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS

2.1 The concept of sustainability according to the European Union

Nowadays, "sustainability" is a recurring element that applies to many different fields: business plans, policies, finances, economic growth and development, tourism, transportation, industries, architecture, energy, environment, etc. In each of these fields, the word "sustainability" reflects the opportunity to benefit in the mid or long-term from results of human actions performed in the present. A sustainable action consists of two essential elements: viability and duration. It refers to something useful that can be done today but that will bring positive outcomes also tomorrow and the following day.

Europe 2020, the ten-year strategy for growth adopted by the European Union in 2010, aims to deliver a growth that is smart, sustainable and inclusive. These are the three adjectives that have been and are guiding EU policies in the present decade. Smart refers to investment in education, research&innovation and in the achievement of a digital society; sustainable refers to growth as compatible with environment protection and competitiveness of small&medium enterprises; inclusive refers to social and professional inclusion of unemployed people and disadvantaged target groups through investment in their training and in the modernisation of labour markets.

In the 16-page text of the 2016 Annual Growth Survey, the Commission's monitoring report about the growth agenda, the terms "sustainable" or "sustainability" appear 16 times, which means at least once per page. The EU Commission makes use of them especially when talking about the *path* that all European Institutions and countries have agreed to follow[24] towards the convergence of national policies through joint action, investment unlocking and the strengthening of members states' adjustment capacity. Throughout the document, the same term appears then in relations to the need for supporting friendly and sustainable fiscal policies, for maintaining sustainable public finances and launching a sustainable investment plan, fostering a sustainable

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24 European Commission, *Annual Growth Survey 2016: Strengthening the recovery and fostering convergence*, Brussels, 26.11.2015, pp. 4-5

growth based on investments on human capital, ensuring financially sustainable health care systems and pensions reforms.

To sum up, the European Union is dedicating special attention to the issue of sustainability in all policies and their implementation. Therefore, if it is true that European projects are among the main strategic tools that the European Institutions can use to achieve the objectives of EU policies, it is true that sustainability affects also European project management.

2.2 The concept of sustainability in European Project Management

The existing literature about the sustainability of European projects consists of handbooks on sustainability, manuals, guidelines and brochures of best practices published either by the European Commission's agencies or departments or by consortia of organisations in the framework of EU funded projects.

In many of them, the definition of project sustainability is the one concerning project outcomes or activities that continue to deliver benefits to key actors such as direct and indirect target groups' beneficiaries and stakeholders for an extended period after the EU Commission's financial assistance has been terminated.

In general terms then, an analysis of the sustainability of a European project consists in the answer to several questions that need to be addressed during the elaboration of the project proposal, such as "Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?", or "Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects (meaning replication and extension of its outcomes)?", or "Are the expected results of the proposed action financially and institutionally sustainable?", or "Will the actions lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct and methods?"[25].

To answer these questions and ensure the sustainability of a project, a smart sustainability plan, otherwise called dissemination&exploitation plan, has to be designed before the project starts.

However, opinions about the criteria that such a plan should include to ensure projects sustainability differ according to the type EU funding programme that one is applying for, as I will discuss in the following paragraph.

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25 TACSO, *Developing and Managing EU funded projects*, Sarajevo, 2011, p. 68

2.3 Different sustainability plans for dissemination and exploitation of project results

Sustainability is one of the criteria observed during the selection procedure of project proposals submitted to the Commission.

A project can be considered sustainable for many factors. Examples of project sustainability sources are the beneficiary target groups' long-lasting ownership of the project results, the project influence on relevant policies, the availability of financial resources to continue with project activities and development, the impact on social and cultural environment, the degree of repeatability of working approaches and tools and the fostering of people's autonomous managerial abilities[26].

As a consequence, starting from the very first phase of the project cycle management, project managers should take into account the sources of sustainability concerning their proposal and design an effective sustainability plan, also called *Plan for the Dissemination and Exploitation of Project Results.*

On the webpages of the European Commission's agencies and DGs on these issues, the two activities are sometimes both enclosed in the concept of *valorisation* and described as follows: on the one hand, dissemination means informing the project's key actors and a wider audience about the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the project's outcomes. It happens when the latter are made available or distributed to the project's direct and indirect beneficiary groups, stakeholders and key actors in general. It is important that a dissemination strategy starts before and continues throughout the whole duration of the project implementation, in order to guarantee a continuous flow of updated news about the progressive achievements of the project. To ensure effective dissemination, project partners also need to coordinate communication efficiently in their respective home countries.

On the other hand, exploitation refers to the process of transferring the project's successful outcomes to appropriate decision-makers at local, regional, national or European level and to convince them to use project main results. This phase of exploitation is called *mainstreaming*, but exploitation also implies the concept of *multiplication*, which means getting ordinary individual end users to make effective use of project results after the project has come to and end. In this case as well, an exploitation strategy guiding the whole project consortium should be designed

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26 Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, *Op. Cit.*, paragraph *I criteri di monitoraggio e valutazione*

before the project activities start and should be carried out throughout the whole project implementation.

However, the definitions of dissemination and exploitation, as well as the focus of the project's sustainability plan, slightly change according to the nature of the project's outcomes and the EU funding programme that one is applying for.

In the next paragraphs I will discuss different criteria for elaborating a sustainability plan, depending on the thematic field of the project.

2.3.1 Sustainability plan of research&innovation projects

Horizon2020 is the EU funding programme providing financial support to projects of research and innovation. It represents the instrument implementing the "Innovation Union", one of the Europe2020 strategies, aiming to create an innovation-friendly European environment and boost Europe's global competitiveness.

Within Horizon2020, dissemination of project results is seen as "the public disclosure of the results by any appropriate means (other than resulting from protecting or exploiting the results), including by scientific publications in any medium", while exploitation is defined as "the use of results in further research activities other than those covered by the action concerned, or in developing, creating and marketing a product or process, or in creating and providing a service, or in standardisation activities"[27].

In these projects the target audience of dissemination and exploitation activities also includes the scientific community and the approach of exploitation is much more market-oriented.

In the relevant sustainability plan, called PEDR in official documents - namely Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results - it should be clear that the project outcomes bare a high innovation potential and that the consortium members have thought about concrete measures to enhance innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge.

According to the 2015 guidelines drawn by the European Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk[28], in Horizon2020-funded projects the *PEDR* has therefore three main purposes:

- generating and transferring new knowledge to the audience and strategic stakeholders

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27 Official Journal of the European Union, L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 86
28 Fact Sheet of European IPR Helpdesk, *The plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results in Horizon2020*, 2015

- protecting the project outputs through a well-designed intellectual property right protection strategy
- demonstrating the project's products higher degree of competitiveness compared with existing solutions and commercialising them.

Like what happens with educational projects, involvement of all consortium partners in the designing and regular updating of the PEDR is essential. However, except for the few common criteria listed above, the IPR Helpdesk stresses the fact that there are no specific EU rules to prepare a PEDR[29]: applicants should follow the *ad hoc* instructions included in the guidelines and templates applicable for the specific call for proposals they are applying for.

As a matter of fact, the design of the PEDR varies according to the Horizon2020 type of project:

- for Research&Innovation projects or Innovation and SMEs actions, the PEDR should focus on making the audience aware about the degree of innovation of project outcomes, insisting on real business and competitive commercialisaton opportunities;
- for projects fostering coordination and support actions - namely projects consisting in accompanying measures such as standardisation of a product, awareness-rising, networking, activities of strategic planning and coordination between programmes in different countries - the PEDR should focus on the innovative aspect of technical, market and organisational issues addressed by the project objectives;
- for projects funded under the "Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions" - namely projects supporting researchers' transnational and interdisciplinary mobility – in the PEDR applicants should demonstrate how the impact of their project proposal will improve creative and innovative potential of researchers, enhance their careers and advance research based on opportunities of acquisition and transfer of knowledge.

As far as the only plan of exploitation is concerned, also in this case a well-designed business plan helps boost the project products in the market and increases their chance of sale or application among a wider audience. It should indicate the business model that the project's consortium intends to adopt, with reference to proof of concept, prototyping, demonstration of cost effectiveness, standardisation issues, potential regulatory, health or safety barriers and how to

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29 Fact Sheet of European IPR Helpdesk, *Op. Cit.,* p. 4

overcome them. In addition, it should mention strategies for commercialisation and competitiveness, like the potential geographical coverage and the economic size of the target markets addressed, the profiles of the potential users and the main competitors and the potential competitive advantages.

An analysis of the strategies for the protection of intellectual and industrial property rights through patents, trade marks, design rights and copyright, together with a strategy for risk management, will also allow the evaluation of a potentially sustainable impact of project results on the targeted audience.

To close, the sustainability of research&innovation projects depends from the involvement of all partners and stakeholders in the dissemination process towards a specific audience including the scientific community, but mostly important it depends from how tailored and appropriate is the market-oriented approach used for exploitation.

2.3.2 Sustainability plan of social development projects

As far as the projects fostering social development are concerned, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has identified the following key factors affecting the sustainability of the project benefit streams:

- the ownership by beneficiaries, namely the degree of awareness, involvement and empowerment of target groups such as direct beneficiaries, political actors and different stakeholders in the different project phases such as the designing of project objectives. The quality and frequency of information sharing, consultation, delegation of the decision-taking responsibility and of management capacities are also essential elements;
- the policy support, which is strongly linked to those project activities concerning institutional strengthening and capacity building that aim to develop existing policies and systems and therefore arise the interest in governmental, public, business and civil society organisations;
- the usage of appropriate technology that fixes the needs of the social context of project application;
- the relevance for environmental issues;
- the relevance for socio-cultural issues, namely the relevance of project objectives to pursue existing social needs of change and the compatibility of such a change with the current

situation;

- the relevance for gender quality issues;
- the institutional capacity, namely the degree of commitment of all partners involved and the readiness of the counterparts for a technical, financial and managerial taking over;
- the economic and financial viability, coming from the government budget commitment, the effectiveness of the cost-recovery mechanism, the ability of private sector management.

The Directorate General for Development and Cooperation, namely the body of the European Commission dedicated to manage EuropeAid, the EU funding programme for social development projects, has included the sustainability criteria of OECD Development Assistance Committee in the Quality Frame of its recommended model for Project Cycle Management for social development projects[30]. The Quality Frame represents the set of quality assessment criteria within the project management cycle, and it is based on three main criteria, namely Relevance, Feasibility and Effective&Good Management.

According to the Quality Frame, the feasibility of the project is ensured also through the assessment of institutional capacity, which should also facilitates the project sustainability since it helps local institutions and organisations to deliver a sustainable stream of benefits to beneficiary groups[31]. As a matter of fact, assessing the institutional capacity means in the first place to identify the appropriate stakeholders that can effectively deliver services and manage change, in the second place to identify and design feasible project interventions that support local institutions and organisations to deliver sustainable benefits and finally to identify organisations that are adequate, accountable and transparent. Institutional capacity assessment is especially important in projects that rely on local partners to manage implementation.

The assessment can be carried out at two levels: the institutional level and the organisational one. Assessing the institutional framework means evaluating the regulatory environment within each organisation is working (e.g. network between organisations, influence of the policy framework, law, culture and conventions), while assessing the organisational capacity means focusing on the technical and managerial competencies within an organisation that generate or limit its implementation capacity (e.g.: leadership, policy making, financial management, human resources management and technical capacities).

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30 EuropeAid Cooperation Office (Development DG), *Aid Delivery Methods: Project Cycle Management Guidelines*, Brussels, 2004, 1st volume, p. 23
31 EuropeAid Cooperation Office (Development DG), *Aid Delivery Methods…, Op. Cit.* p. 95

Finally, in these type of projects dissemination can take place through a variety of media and different channels and its aim is making a wider audience aware of a record of key decisions taken or agreements reached and the findings after the evaluation of the project has been carried out. Usually evaluation findings are communicated to the major stakeholders involved in the evaluated project[32].

To sum up, sustainability of the results of social development projects largely depends from the institutional framework within the project is applied and from the suitability of the stakeholders involved.

2.3.3 Sustainability plan in educational projects

As far as educational projects are concerned, dissemination happens when project outcomes are made available and is defined as a "planned process of providing information on the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the results of programmes and initiatives to key actors"[33]. The purposes of dissemination here are informing and educating a wider audience of stakeholders, raising awareness about educational methods or activities from which the whole community could benefit, obtaining an overall feedback from interested stakeholders about the impact of the project's results and promoting free or paid access to them.[34]

In order to attract the community's interest in the project outcomes and to convince them about their future usefulness, first of all project results need to be realistic and, secondly, the members of the project consortium should have the internal capacity and willingness to promote them and make them available to a wider public.

Realistic outcomes means outcomes based on real needs of the target groups who will make use of them. As a matter of fact, specific target groups have to be identified at the earliest stage of the project proposal and their involvement in the designing of both the proposal itself and of the dissemination materials represents an added value for the project's success and sustainability. Their contribution is valuable to identify the elements that would best catch the attention of the audience for whom project results are being developed[35], such as the appropriate language of dissemination and the appropriate channels.

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32 Evaluation Unit of the European Aid Cooperation Office (European Commission), *Project Cycle Management Handbook,* Freiburg, 2002, Version 2.0, p. 31

33 H. Bienzle, E. Hedman, R. Kirtley, V. Purokuro, C. Rus, S. Wiesinger, E. Wilen, *Survival Kit: Managing LLP Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme,* Wien, "die Berater" Unternehmensberatungsgesellschaft mbH,2010, p. 110

34 H. Bienzle, E. Hedman, R. Kirtley, V. Purokuro, C. Rus, S. Wiesinger, E. Wilen, O*p. Cit.,* p. 113

35 DiVa Consortium, *Handbook for dissemination, exploitation and sustainability of educational projects*, 2011, p. 7

Beside target groups' contribution, strategic partners such as organisations with a sound expertise in communication and marketing strategies are also essential in European projects' consortia, since they allow to design a tailored plan to enhance the project's visual identity through an effective logo, recurrent visual elements and an attractive slogan. Nonetheless, all partners should be considered as "fuel" for dissemination[36] and the responsibility for dissemination should be a shared one in the consortium. Concerning projects outcomes that can become real commercial products once the project has come to an end, partners with expertise in designing business plans or plans for product development represent an additional strategic resource for the project sustainability. In this framework, effective project management is also important to guarantee that tasks and workloads are assigned to partners in a correct and fair way.

Dissemination channels and materials could be of different kind: projects outcomes could be made available through the distribution of paper materials such as flyers, printed brochures or press releases, digital channels such as the project website, project pages on the most famous social medias, newsletters, brochures in pdf, but also through presentations during public events and meetings, conferences, fairs, exhibitions or dedicated workshops. Other essential channels for dissemination are each partner organisation's local networks of contacts, European databases for the dissemination of project results, such as E.N.T.E.R., the European Network for Transfer and Exploitation of EU Projects Results created in 2005, or EVE, the Project Results Platform for the 2014-2020 EU funding programme Erasmus+, and of course mass media like the TV, the radio and the press.

As far as the involvement of different stakeholders is concerned, dissemination should address direct and final beneficiaries, end-users of the project's outcomes and any institution, decision-maker or regional and national authority responsible for educational policies that could be directly or indirectly affected by the project's outcomes. Before the project ends, it could be useful to sign with these authorities agreements of collaboration, so that project results (or part of them) might be then exploited and applied to institutional policies[37].

Dissemination within the consortium and the partner organisations themselves is also important in order to let colleagues feel part of the project and keep them updated on its achievements, in case support from them is needed[38]. Regular meetings between project partners should be held and project results and progress should be communicated within the partner organisations during internal events (e.g.: business Christmas party) or through newsletters, the

36 DiVa Consortium, O*p. Cit.*, p. 45
37 DiVa Consortium, O*p. Cit.*, p. 25
38 H. Bienzle, E. Hedman, R. Kirtley, V. Purokuro, C. Rus, S. Wiesinger, E. Wilen, O*p. Cit.,* p. 114

internal journal or the organisation's website.

Exploitation of results, on the other hand, not only means promoting and raising awareness about the project contents, developments and achievements, but also searching for the adequate institutional channels through which project results could be given sustainable promotion and support. It is about persuading end-users to adopt and apply the project results also after the project and the support by its partnership has ended.

Exploitation occurs, for instance, when a local high school decides to adopt an online platform for students' e-learning, designed and tested in the framework of an EU funded educational project, as pedagogical material during ordinary classes.

However, the problem with exploitation of results in educational projects is that most results are intangible and difficult to see[39], and of course it is more likely that only tangible products are transferred and disseminated to other potential users and produce therefore a long-lasting impact on target groups. For these reason, most EU funding programmes for education&training stress the importance of concrete and transferable project outcomes[40], like reports, comparative studies, websites, innovative online and non-online training tools or modules, new curricula and qualifications, guidance materials, e-learning training material, or events like seminars, conferences and awareness campaigns. On the contrary, intangible outcomes are mostly based on *experience* and are perhaps less durable than tangible products[41]. Examples of intangible project outcomes are the experience deriving from an Erasmus+ mobility for study abroad or from a youth town-twinning. Exploitation of intangible results is harder to perform, even though it is not impossible, since forms of accreditation, recognition and certification of competences, such as the Mobility Europass[42], have been created.

In general terms, the criteria that mostly ensure exploitation are networking and lobbying. This means expanding the target groups for exploitation, firstly, by making contact with other project managers or organisations with relevant expertise and learn from their best practices related to exploitation strategies; secondly, establishing partnerships with strategic stakeholders like research centres, universities, think tanks, private/public agencies working in the field of education&training and relevant decision-makers and authorities in charge of educational policies; and thirdly involve such actors since the beginning in project design and implementation by calling

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39 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, *Sustainability of international cooperation projects in the field of higher education and vocational training,* Luxembourg, Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006, p. 7

40 H. Bienzle, E. Hedman, R. Kirtley, V. Purokuro, C. Rus, S. Wiesinger, E. Wilen, O*p. Cit.,* p. 27

41 DiVa Consortium, O*p. Cit*., p. 53

42 The Europass Mobility is a document that records the skills and knowledge that one has acquired in another European country thanks to a work placement in a company, a study experience in a foreign University or a voluntary placement in a NGO.

for their participation and feedback during the target groups' needs analysis, research activities and meetings. When possible, project coordinators should try to obtain the formal commitment from these stakeholders by signing with them *agreements of collaboration,* as mentioned previously in this paragraph.

In case of project outcomes that could become real commercial products, a business plan should be designed and implemented, including a product description, the target audience, instructions for product maintenance and information about pricing (e.g., in the case of an online training tool, whether this will have a free-trial period, a subsequent paid version and how frequent it should undergo updating). A previous testing of one's own product before commercialisation is also recommended, as well as the signing of intellectual property rights agreements among the project partners. Also applying for and obtaining special and recognised awards or quality labels will facilitate the process of exploitation of the products. In addition, it would be useful to collect *sustainable declarations* from individuals and organisations, t.i. written and signed statements where the latter explain how they intend to make effective use of project results.

In order to have a clear idea of the impact of the project's outcomes, evidence of the impact of exploitation activities should be collected through quantity indicators, such as statistical data of the number of website visitors or the number of products distributed, sold or downloaded and quality indicators, such as case studies, observations, focus groups and interviews to end-users of project results[43].

To sum up, according to existing best practices and relevant literature, sustainability in educational projects, be them for higher education, vocational training or education in general, can be ensured through different factors. These can be divided into two categories[44]:

- project-level factors, namely: the involvement of all consortium members in the initial project design; the degree of relevance and quality of the project design in meeting the needs of the target groups addressed (mostly students); the sense of ownership and motivation of the consortium members; an effective project management that enlarges participation through adequate workload distribution and involves influential academic representatives; the capacity of securing adequate resources for continuation;
- context-level factors: academic and institutional commitment and support (e.g.

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43 DiVa Consortium, O*p. Cit.*, p. 36-43
44 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, *Sustainability of international…,Op. cit*, p. 8-9

involvement of official authorities such as the vice-chancellor of University), national authorities' support (e.g. Ministries for Education's support in the form of financial resources, communication or political support), socio-economic support, namely support by private firms, local public administration, professional bodies or NGOs that believe in the project and make and investment for its sustainable success in terms of financial or human resources.

Finally, sustainability also depends on the degree of intensity and enlargement of the international and local cooperation networks that the project has contributed to create. Regular contact-keeping and meetings among the members of the international consortium, or between universities and private firms, as well as their willingness to take care of the project follow-up, increase the chance of project outcomes survival, exploitation and development[45].

2.4 Sustainability: dream or reality?

In past years I had the opportunity to work in the field of European project management and I already faced the issue of long-term sustainability of project results. When I started doing some research and investigation for my final dissertation I was curious to find out more about the issue of sustainability of European projects and relative best practices, since during my past professional experience in the field I had had the opportunity to discuss the issue with professional project managers and very often I had received the same discouraging answers about the complexity of ensuring long-term sustainability of European projects. Thus I wanted to know whether it was only an opinion of the project managers I had been working with or it was a widespread disbelief in the world of European project management.

So I started searching for essays written by junior or senior project managers, where they may have expressed their opinion about sustainability of EU funded projects and about the degree of its feasibility according to their professional experience. Still, after a first vast research on the Internet, no in-depth analysis of the issue and its related-factors had appeared, therefore it seemed to me that, even though on a reduced scale, the theme was worthy of a more complete analysis in my final dissertation.

I thought then that, to know experts' point of view and to have a general idea of how many

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45 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, *Sustainability of international..., Op. Cit*, p. 6

European projects could be considered sustainable without EU financial support, the easiest way was contacting European project managers and directly asking them.

Therefore I started submitting a survey[46] entitled "Sustainability of European Projects: Dream or Reality?". The target organisations that my survey was addressed to were organisations such as universities, associations, foundations and private companies from all over Europe operating in the field of European project management.

My aim was collecting the following information from senior and junior project managers:

- personal data: age, sex, years of experience as project managers of EU funded projects;
- data about their organisation: name, kind and size of the organisation, years of experience in the management of EU funded projects, numbers of European projects managed as coordinator or in which the organisation had participated in as a partner, EU funding programmes with which the organisation had worked since and before 2014;
- percentage of projects managed by the organisation that could be considered sustainable;
- personal opinion about the factors that mostly ensure project sustainability and why they considered them necessary (this was a check-box question, since I made them pick up three essential factors among the following ones: quality of project design, motivation of consortium members, type and age of target groups, active participation of target groups, number of stakeholders involved, dissemination activities, capacity of securing adequate resources for continuation and support of institutions. I also left a blank space in case the interviewed wanted to add a factor not included in the list);
- their personal opinion about sustainability of EU projects in general.

Collecting the personal data of the interviewees and the data of their organisations would have helped me evaluate the relevance of their answer: my aim was collecting the opinions of both "first-generation" and younger project managers, also in order to have possibly a wider vision of the evolution of the concept of sustainability over the years.

My inquiry generated a timid but relevant and enthusiastic response. I collected answers from 21 organisations operating in the following countries: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom. And, what is more important, I managed to reach the exact audience I wanted to reach,

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46 The full text of the survey is available at the end of this paper as an annex.

since 70% of the people interviewed work as project managers in their organisation. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.
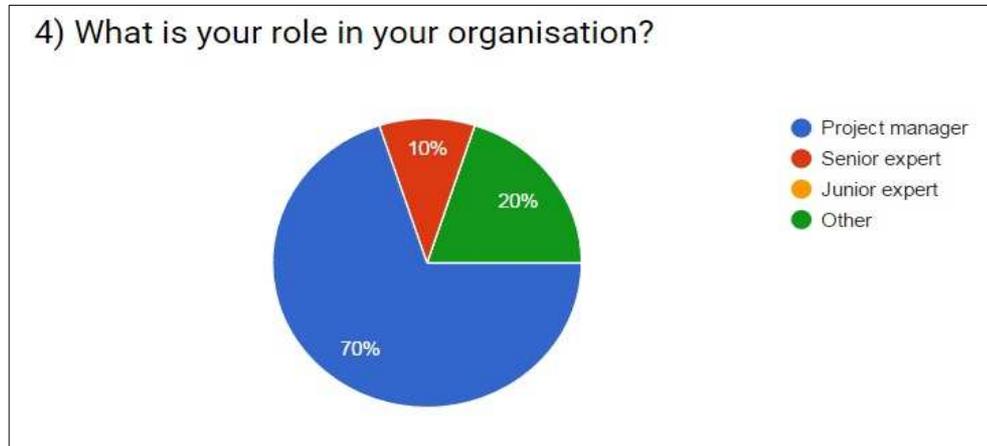
An interesting datum is also the degree of experience of the project managers interviewed: nearly half of them have been working in the field of European project management for a period between 6 and 10 years, some for more than 10 years and 28.6% of them has relatively "little" experience, having worked in the field for a period between 1 to 5 years (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.
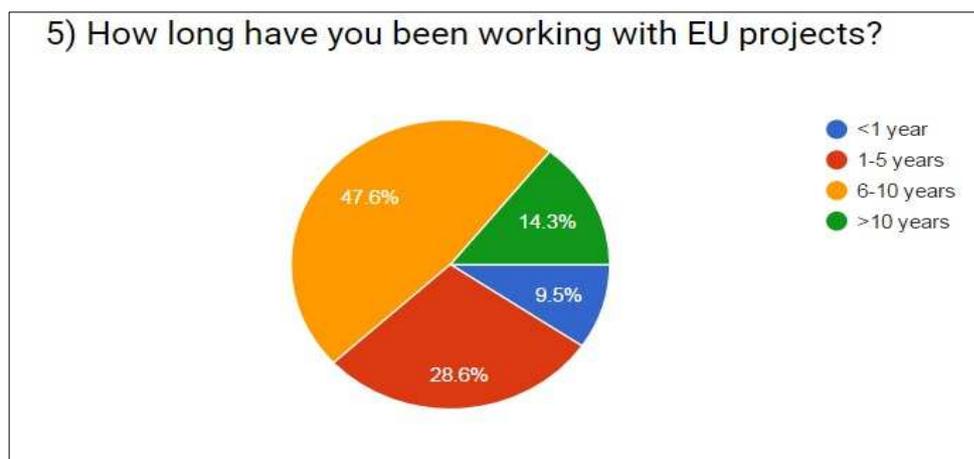
The vast majority of the audience that replied to my inquiry is aged between 36 and 50 or more years old (61.9%), while the rest of the interviewees is aged between 20 and 35 years old.

The predominant sex is the female one (57.1%), suggesting either that women are more involved in European Project management or are more collaborative in answering to foreign students' requests.

Concerning the survey target group involved, I collected answers from several different profiles of organisations: many are public, not-for-profit or non governmental organisations. Almost no private organisation replied to my survey (see Figure 3). Small-and-medium size organisations are the ones that collaborated the most (57.1%), followed by a good share of micro (23.8%) and large (19%) organisations.

Figure 3.

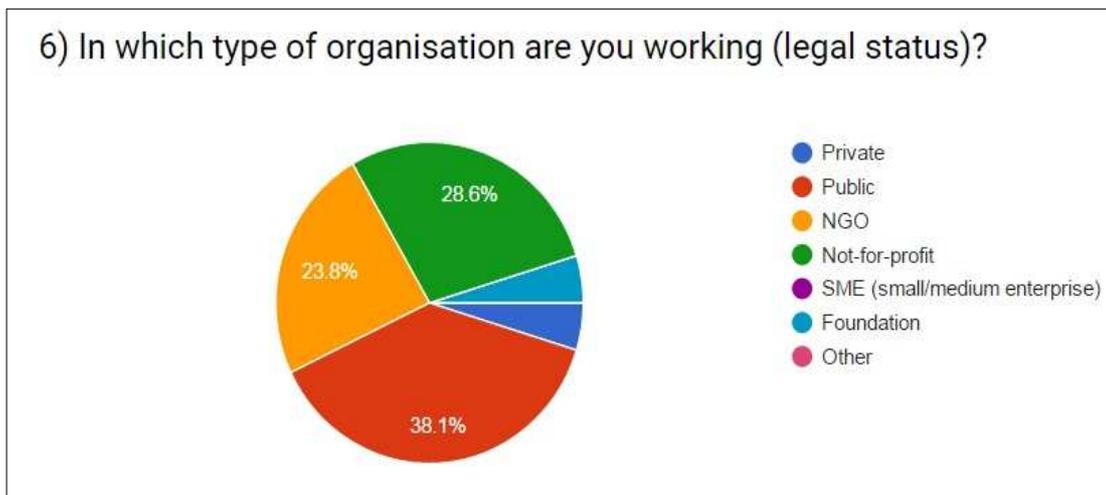The most important datum about organisations is that most of them have long-lasting and proved experience in the field of European project management – 66.7% of them have been managing European projects for over 10 years, while the 28.6% have an experience between 6 and 10 years (see Figure 4).

Within this framework, the organisations that have been mostly engaged in coordinating European projects are the multinational NGO European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), who has coordinated more than 100 projects and participated in over 100 as a partner, and the University of Cyprus, who has played the role of coordinator more than 50 times and has been a partner in over 300 projects. Significant figures also belong to the Faculty of Agriculture of the Hungarian University of Osijek, the Italian not-for-profit "Politecnico Milano" Foundation and the Swedish Jamtli Foundation, which have all managed over 10 projects as coordinator each and

participated as a partner in over 30, 10 and 20 projects respectively. Two organisations out of 21 have not managed any projects as coordinator, while all the others have done it at least three and at most ten times and have experienced many times also the role of project partner.

Figure 4.
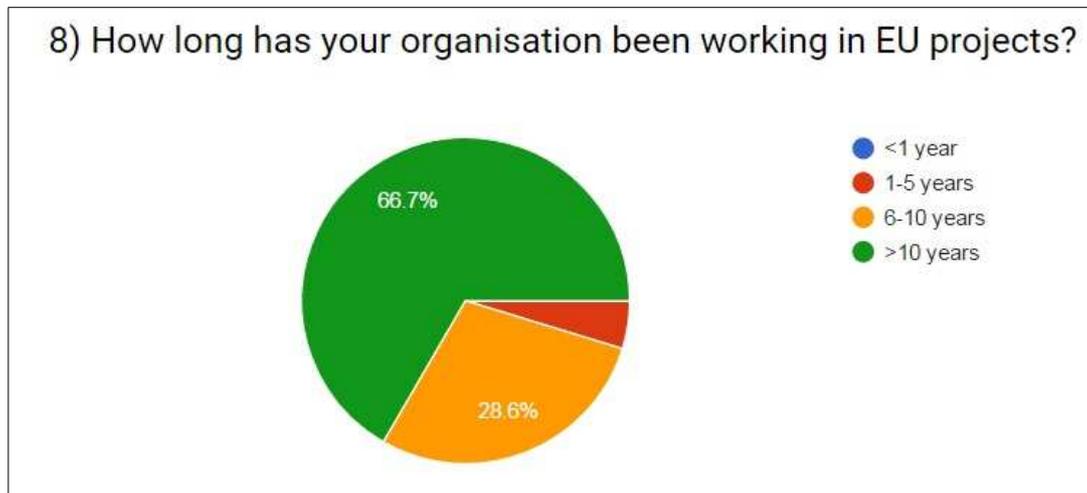
Finally, the EU funding programmes with which the sample organisations have worked the most before 2014 are the Life-long Learning Programme for education and training and Interreg for European territorial cooperation. Other programmes are Youth in Action for educating young people to be active European citizens, the Culture Programme for the enhancement of European cultural heritage, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), designed for the candidate countries who wanted to access the Union, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in support of the democratic, economic and sustainable transition of some of the Union's neighbouring countries, the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) for the enhancement of the quality of higher education and the ALFA III cooperation programme between the EU and Latin America for educational development. The Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development, the Progress programme for employment, social affairs and inclusion and the EuropeAid programme for international cooperation and development complete the list (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.

12) With which European funding programmes has your organisation worked so far? (previous to 2014)

- LLP — 14 (70%)
- FP7 (Sevent...) — 5 (25%)
- Interreg — 9 (45%)
- Europe Aid — 3 (15%)
- Progress — 4 (20%)
- Other — 8 (40%)
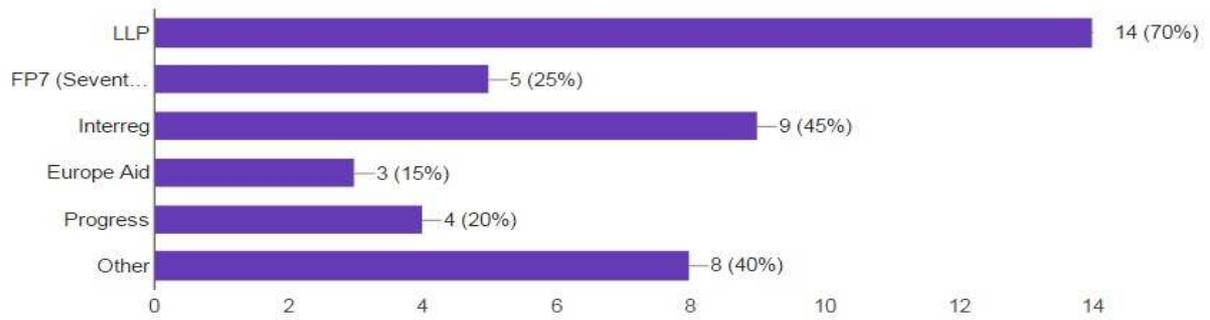
As far as the period 2014-2020 is concerned, most organisations have been working with the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport, Interreg for territorial cooperation and the Horizon2020 programme for research and innovation. Other programmes or funds indicated are the Creative Europe programme for cultural and audiovisual sector, programmes managed by the Directorates General for Justice and Human Rights and the programme Europe for Citizens for the enhancement of European citizens' participation at the Union level, and the Social Fund. The Life programme for environmental conservation and the Cosme programme for the support to SMEs complete the list (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.

11) With which European funding programmes has your organisation worked so far? (2014-2020)

- Erasmus+ — 20 (95.2%)
- Horizon2020 — 7 (33.3%)
- Cosme — 2 (9.5%)
- Interreg — 8 (38.1%)
- Life — 4 (19%)
- Other — 7 (33.3%)
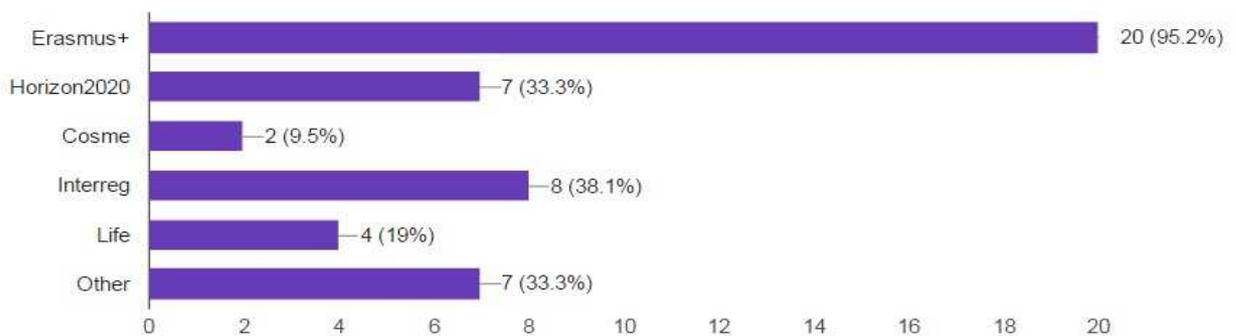
2.4.1 *European project managers' experience with sustainable European projects*

If we examine the final data collected through the survey, the following picture about the sustainability of European projects emerges.

Table 1 represents a summary of how many projects, among the ones that each organisation has coordinated (C) or in which it has participated as a partner (P), can be considered sustainable (S) from the point of view of the organisation itself.

Table 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
K	Ngo	Pub	Nfp	Ngo	Ngo	Ngo	Ngo	Nfp	Pub	Nfp	Pub	F	Pub	Pub	Nfp	Pub	Pub	Priv	Nfp	Pub	Nfp
C	2	>10	3	>100	0	10	6	6	2	>10	5	>10	10	-	3	>50	1	4	-	12	5
P	1	>30	10	>100	3	>10	8	10	7	>10	>30	>20	-	-	10	>300	1	15	>20	8	15
S	2	Most	2	60/70%	2	3	2	3	3	>4	50%	5	-	-	0	-	1	10	2	3	2
%	66.7	Most	15.3	60-70	66.7	13.6	14.3	18.7	33.3	20	50	13.9	-	-	0	-	100	52.6	8.3	15	10

Table 1. K: kind of organisation; Ngo: non-governmental organisation; Pub: public organisation; Nfp: not-for-profit organisation; F: foundation; Priv: private organisation C: role of project coordinator; P: role of project partner; S: sustainable projects; %: percentage of sustainable projects

Except from the three organisations that preferred not to indicate any data concerning sustainable projects due to lack of information or because data were unsure, the final results do not display and homogeneous response that heads toward one single direction, but depict a scenario that is split into two main trends: out of the 18 organisations that provided all the data, 7 claim that 50% or more of their projects can be considered sustainable (Group 1), while 9 indicate that less than 20% of their projects have taken the path of sustainability[47] (Group 2). Among these 9, one indicated that none of the projects managed could be considered sustainable in the long term. The remaining two organisations have ratio comprised between 20 and 33.3%.

Further analysis of the respondents' profiles reveals that the 5 organisations of Group 1 with the highest ratio managed projects/sustainable projects (over 60%) are the Edunet

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47 I obtained these final data by adding arbitrarily 20% to inexact figures (e.g. >10).

Foundation (n° 1), the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Osijek (n° 2), the NGO ALDA (n°4), the Turkish NGO Sosyal Yaşama Ve Eğitime Katki Derneği (Association of Contribution of Education and Social Life, n° 5), and the Skandinavisk Institut of the University of Szczecin in Poland (n° 17).

To draw conclusions about the causes underlying the division between Group 1 and Group 2 only by relying on the data that I collected through my survey would be difficult, since sustainability of project results is not the responsibility of only one organisation, but depends from the joint effort of a consortium of organisations and many other factors.

The aim of my survey in this case was to obtain an even small European picture of how many projects are maintained "alive" after their official conclusion.

2.4.2 European project managers' opinions about sustainability of European projects

According to the answers that I received, all the project managers involved in the survey seem to agree on saying that the following factors are the ones that mostly ensure the long-term sustainability of a project:

- the relevance of the project outcomes with the real needs of the target groups involved, as well as their degree of accessibility and practicality by potential end-users;
- the active participation of the targets groups involved and their subsequent ownership of project results;
- the involvement of the consortium partners and their motivation in pursuing, disseminating and exploiting the project outcomes adequately: partners should have the internal *capacity* to carry out such activities and should be well-connected with external networks;
- the relevance of the stakeholders reached and involved (e.g. School management committee in projects with educational purposes);
- the support of institutions at local, regional, national and European level;
- the capacity of actively searching for and securing financial resources;
- the quality of project design;
- the quality of project management and coordination, which is considered to be essential for a well-designed and effective dissemination and exploitation strategy.

Most respondents particularly insisted on the need for the partners' clear motivation and commitment in order to guarantee a successful follow-up of the project or the birth of new initiatives – not necessarily EU funded - between the project partners, which would reflect the sustainability of the project as well. The silver medal of course goes to the capacity of securing adequate financial resources, considered as necessary since most partners can not keep promoting activities without money.

On the other hand, among the factors that hinder the sustainability of projects, the sample of project managers indicated the organisations' frequent lack of time and energy to sustain project outputs exploitation, the too high sustainability standards that National Agencies[48] impose for EU-funded projects and the subsequent organisation's sense of frustration for not being able to comply with them, the lack of a well-designed sustainability plan before project implementation, the tendency by partner organisations based outside Europe to leave to EU countries the burden of taking initiatives for further collaboration and the interference of the very process of funding with the natural life-cycle of research – this last factor concerns research&innovation projects.

More than one answer include criticism against the European Union's role in ensuring project sustainability. Some project managers believe that the European Union and the agencies managing EU funding programmes should be in charge of disseminating the best projects carried out every year all over and outside Europe and should allocate money for making them European Initiatives promoting the transfer of knowledge and experience in the long term. Some others argue that the European Commission auditing system should be strict in checking how project partners carry out sustainability actions in the years following the conclusion of the project. In addition, as far as educational projects are concerned, some think that the EU should support more the translation and adaptation of education resources in order to favour their use by local users. Only one of the answers argues that the extensive regulation for sustainability that the European Union attributes to every funding programme is very much effective.

Finally, among the remarks and suggestions expressed by the participants, the most interesting are the following ones:
- sustainability depends on the nature of the project and it is hard to give a general

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48 National Agencies are among those bodies that have been designated by the European Commission to manage EU funding programmes at national level.

evaluation about it;

- projects short duration - normally 1.5-2 years - is a very short time to ensure sound sustainability;

- issues related to sustainability should be considered since the very beginning and relative actions should seek a participatory approach that create a sense of belonging to a specific project;

- sometimes a smaller group of dedicated partners ensure sustainability better than a too vast a consortium where perhaps not everybody is able to contribute in some way to the project;

- even small innovations – based on cost-efficiency - might have a great and sustainable impact in the long run, but unfortunately it seems that the European Commission is more interested in granting funds to cutting-edge and innovative project, whose results are then too much expensive for diffusion;

- the projects that have most chances of sustainability are the ones where the final outputs are useful products or services.

2.4.3 European project managers' opinions about sustainability of European projects: an Italian case

While I was collecting project managers' opinions about sustainability of European projects I had the opportunity to interview a representative of an Italian association working in the field of European project management. He based his answers to my questions on his personal and professional experience in Italy.

I believe it is important to consider his opinions separately from the rest, since, among the factors that hinder the sustainability of European projects, he insisted on a special one, which no one of the project managers that answered to my survey had considered. Below is a brief introducing paragraph and the text of the interview.

Davide Ficola works for *Servizio Europa* (SEU), an Perugia-based association founded in 1990 with the aim of getting the European Union closer to its citizens through awareness-rising, information spreading and education&training activities. Examples of SEU initiatives and services provided are training courses and seminars or conferences on European issues (EU policies, EU law,

etc.), research on specific European issues commissioned by external bodies, participation in and implementation of EU funded projects. In past years, SEU participated in European projects funded under the 2007-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Social Fund. Mr. Ficola is currently responsible for the coordination of SEU services, project management and training activities.

Below are the contents of the interview.

L: How important is the issue of sustainability of European projects for the associations and bodies working in European Project Management?

Mr. Ficola: *It is an extremely important issue but also one of the most complex element to arrange. A clear plan ensuring the long-term sustainability of project results must be designed already in the text of the very first project proposal, but sustainability issues are often overlooked, and this may be a cause for the exclusion of the proposal during the selecting process.*

L: Which are in your opinion the elements that mostly ensure the sustainability of a European project?

Mr Ficola: *Measures for dissemination and exploitation of project results must be clear and well-designed already in the project proposal, and all consortium partners should be aware of it and give their contribution also after the project ends. The capacity to assure financial resources for sustainability is also important, but it depends on the nature of the organisations coordinating the project: for instance, a small private association may face difficulties in ensuring the sustainability of a project compared to a public body, therefore it is necessary to find other sources of funding, such as fund-raising. A path that is likely to lead to sustainability consists in involving and spreading awareness among all the stakeholders that may be interested in the issues dealt within the project. With the term "stakeholders" I refer to public local authorities but also private enterprises that may be willing to allocate resources for the project to continue. It is essential to involve them since the beginning and lay down clearly that one of the project objectives is the exploitation of its results or part of them even after the project conclusion. Other financial resources that ensure sustainability and have to be considered are self-financing methods like commercialisation of project results, for instance.*

L: Which are, among the ones that could be developed by a project, the thematic areas that mostly tend to ensure sustainability?

Mr Ficola: *Projects with a social dimension, such as projects providing social care services to people, are more inclined to sustainability and should be designed and supported in order to guarantee their long-term sustainability. When launching a project that aims to provide a social service or product to the community, the proposing consortium should be aware of how to ensure its sustainability already before applying for funds.*

L: Which are the elements that hinder the sustainability of European projects?

Mr Ficola: *I think that the missing element is the right "cultural approach", at least as far as my experience with Italian partners is concerned. Many associations or bodies apply for EU funds only to give practical effect to projects or ideas, but do not take into consideration their long-term sustainability. They often see European call for proposals like mere funding opportunities, but then neglect the quality of the project design. As a matter of fact, the number of applications for EU funds coming from Italian associations is very high compared to other countries, but then only a low percentage is awarded grants.*

However, this wrong approach is gradually fading away and is being replaced by a strengthening of individuals' competences in European project management.

L: Therefore, is it possible to say that the sustainability of European projects is a feasible achievement?

Mr Ficola: *Of course it is, otherwise the Commission would not require applicants to draw a precise sustainability plan and a demonstration of its functioning in the project proposals. However, according to my experience, to ensure the sustainability of project results a change in the project managers' cultural approach is needed in the first place, followed by the acquisition of high quality competences in European project management.*

L: According to your experience, which is the sector – private or public - that mostly supports the paths towards sustainability of project results?

Mr Ficola: *In the Umbria Region both sectors are very receptive, even though both have their pros and cons. On the one hand, public bodies may be more interested in a dedicated issue dealt within an European projects, but its actions are limited by annual budget related priorities, while on the other private enterprises are more flexible and capable, but do not get engaged in*

European projects issues, unless this brings them back a great return in terms of image and reputation.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In the last chapter of my final dissertation I will analyse the elements of sustainability of three interrelated European projects, two of which are educational projects, therefore I will dedicate this chapter to the issue of sustainability of European projects for education and training.

I will do it by presenting the results of an interim evaluation of the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the main EU funding programme for the period 2007-2013.

The evaluation provides data about the extent to which the Programme contributed to the development of dissemination&exploitation activities for the sustainability of educational projects results that are part of today's literature on the issue.

Eventually, I will discuss some measures and actions to improve the sustainability of LLP project results.

3.1 The Europe of lifelong learning

The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997 and amending the previous Maastricht Treaty, explicitly recognised the importance of the "development of the highest possible level of knowledge [...] through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating"[49] for European peoples.

The "continuous updating" of European citizens' knowledge would then be translated into the European slogan *lifelong learning,* which was officially recognised as one of EU horizontal priorities of the European Employment Strategy in 1998.

However, it was the Lisbon Strategy launched in 2000 that positioned education and training, and especially lifelong learning, among the priorities on which the EU was supposed to invest the most. The members of the European Council that met in Lisbon on March 23rd-24th 2000 agreed on "giving higher priority to lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social

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49 Article 2 of the Treaty of Amsterdam amending the treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Acts.

model" and made a special appeal to companies' corporate sense of social responsibility regarding the best practices on it[50].

Following the conclusions of both Lisbon and Feira Councils – which took place in March and June 2000 respectively -, the Commission published a Memorandum on Lifelong Learning that same year, where it demanded that all Member States took a common strategic action to change or reform their educational systems and adapt them to the principles of lifelong learning in order to support active citizenship and employability of individuals[51].

Further developments of EU lifelong learning policies came first with the 2001 Stockholm European Council and then with the "ET 2010 work programme" adopted in 2002. The first one laid down three strategic objectives, namely increasing the quality and effectiveness of education systems in the EU, facilitating everybody's access to education systems and opening up education and training systems to the wider world. The "ET 2010 work programme" made these objectives operational and re-emphasised the importance of lifelong learning.

After two editions of the funding programmes Socrates and Leonardo Da Vinci in the field of education, covering the period from 1995 to 2006, in 2007 the European Commission launched the Lifelong Learning Programme, which integrated the previous Community actions in the area of education in a single programme covering all ages and stages of learning from pre-school to post-retirement.

3.2 The Lifelong Learning programme: an overview

According to the so-called LLP Decision, namely the Decision n° 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 15th of November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, the Lifelong Learning Programme addressed all type of learners in their specific environment: pupils, students, trainees, adult learners, teachers, trainers, staff members, people already in the labour market, institutions or organisations providing opportunities of lifelong learning, persons and bodies responsible policies or systems related to lifelong learning at local, regional or national level, enterprises, trade organisations, chambers of commerce, bodies providing education and training activities related with lifelong learning, research centres, formal or non formal associations working in the field of lifelong learning, non-profit organisations, voluntary bodies and NGOs.

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50 Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.
51 Working paper of the Commission of the European Communities, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, 30.10.2000, p. 5-6

Concerning the objectives of the programme, these can be divided into general and specific objectives[52]. On the one hand, the general objective of the Lifelong Learning Programme was "to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the EU as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, while ensuring good protection of the environment for future generations"[53].

On the other hand, LLP specific objectives were 11 and could be divided into three different categories: objectives at individual, at institutional and at system level. The first category referred to the impact that LLP was supposed to have on individuals and on the individual sphere; the second category referred to LLP impact on institutions responsible for services, pedagogies, contents and practices in the field of education; and the third category referred to LLP influence on national systems of education and on the development of a shared European dimension in the education field.

These were the 11 specific objectives of the programme:

− to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning, and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field

− to support the realisation of a European area for lifelong learning

− to help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning available within Member States

− to reinforce the contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfillment

− to help promote creativity, competitiveness, employability, and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit

− to contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socioeconomic background

− to promote language learning and linguistic diversity

− to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning

− to reinforce the role of lifelong learning in creating a sense of European citizenship based on an understanding of and respect for human rights and democracy, and encouraging

[52] Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, Contractor: Viešosios Politikos Ir Vadybos Institutas, *Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013)*, 18.02.2011, pp. 19-21

[53] OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, *DECISION No 1720/2006/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning*, p. 48

tolerance and respect for other peoples and cultures

− to promote cooperation in quality assurance in all sectors of education and training in Europe

− to encourage the best use of results, innovative products and processes and to exchange good practice in the fields covered by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in order to improve the quality of education and training

In order to reach these objectives, a budget of €6.97 billion was set for the whole duration of the programme and six sub-programmes were created: *Comenius* for school education, *Erasmus* for higher or university education, *Leonardo Da Vinci* for vocational education and training, *Grundtvig* for adult education, the Transversal programme for cross-cutting areas such as policy cooperation and innovation in lifelong learning, languages, development of innovative ICT and dissemination and exploitation of LLP projects results, and the Jean Monnet programme for research and studies on the theme of European integration.

These sub-programmes could support 8 types of actions, managed by different bodies or agents: multilateral projects and networks, unilateral or national projects, observation and analysis of policies related to lifelong learning and other accompanying measures in line with the programme objectives were considered as "centralised" actions and therefore managed directly by the Commission or by its executive agencies, while mobility of individuals and bilateral and multilateral partnerships were defined as "decentralised" actions and therefore managed by national designated authorities or agencies.

LLP was in fact implemented through a shared budget management mode, which means that, as the Decision n° 1720/2006/EC establishes, LLP implementation is responsibility of the Member States, the Commission and the National Agencies in each country. More specifically, the main bodies engaged in the implementation of the programme were:

• the European Commission, assisted by the LLP Committee, in charge of ensuring LLP overall effective and efficient implementation;

• the National Authority, usually identified with the Ministry of Education in each participating country, who monitors the work of its National Agency(-ies);

• the National Agencies (NAs), in charge of managing the lifecycle of the projects funded through LLP within the country and performing evaluation activities concerning LLP decentralised actions in their country;

- the Commission's executive agency EACEA, in charge of the operational management of LLP centralised actions;

- the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), which supported the Commission by coordinating the implementation of study visits of the Transversal Programme at the EU level.

The monitoring of LLP at project level - namely, providing support for each project by offering guidance and advice to beneficiaries and checking whether their project was in line with its objectives through monitoring visits or assessment of final or intermediary project reports - was carried out by the National Agencies for decentralised actions, and EACEA for centralised actions.

At the programme level, monitoring and support National Agencies and Executive agencies was managed and offered by the Commission in the case of centralised actions, and in the case of decentralised actions by the Commission in collaboration with the participating countries and their respective National Authorities.

3.2.1 Evaluation of the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme

Article 15 of the LLP Decision established that the Commission "shall, in cooperation with the Member States, regularly monitor and evaluate the Lifelong Learning Programme against its objectives". "Member States" it continues "shall submit to the Commission […] reports on the implementation and the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme".

Measuring the impact that a specific EU funding programme has on the addressed target groups means measuring the short-, medium- and long-term benefits of the actions designed and performed in order to achieve its general and specific objectives. Therefore, measuring the impact also implies identifying the extent to which a programme promotes sustainable results.

After the first three years, the European Commission commissioned to the Lithuanian organisation Viešosios Politikos Ir Vadybos Institutas an interim evaluation of the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme[54] that measured, among others, the elements of sustainability promoted by the Programme. The evaluation was based on three main criteria:

- relevance

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54 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, Contractor: Viešosios Politikos Ir Vadybos Institutas, *Op. Cit,* 18.02.2011

- effectiveness

- efficiency

The first criterium referred to the relevance of the Programme objectives with the Union's priorities and socio-economic needs and with the European principle of mutual cooperation among States; the second concerned the extent to which the Programme objectives had been achieved so far, the extent to which the Programme had contributed to political priorities in the European educational field, had reached its target groups and how much the education and training community was aware of its existence; the third and final criterium referred to what extent LLP implementation, management and monitoring structure of centralised and decentralised actions had been appropriate and efficient.

The data for the evaluation were collected through methods such as desk research (analysis of EU policy documents relating to education and training, skills, the Lisbon agenda, previous studies and evaluations of the sub-programmes and actions, reports, minutes of the LLP Committee meetings and other documents concerning decisions on the operational management of the LLP and its sub-programmes, monitoring data on financial and physical implementation of the LLP and its sub-programmes, statistical data in the area of education and training provided by Eurostat), synthesis of National Reports on LLP impact, case studies of different LLP-funded projects, interviews to EU-level respondents from the European Commission and respondents at the national level (respondents from the National Authorities, social partners, various associations, NGO's, grant beneficiaries of the decentralised actions), surveys to institutional and individual beneficiaries, surveys to the National Authorities and the National Agencies involved in LLP management, expert assessment and panels.

As far as the elements of sustainability are concerned, the evaluation showed that LLP had contributed to:

- long-term cooperation between providers of education and training thanks to mobility actions, bilateral or multilateral projects and partnerships;

- the development of internationalisation strategies and support services for mobile learners, teachers and administrative staff within education and training institutions;

- satisfy the beneficiaries' needs related to lifelong learning, such as acquisition of specific, social, cognitive and communicative competences, as well as practical skills and flexibility (results of the survey question about the match between the needs of the beneficiaries and their satisfaction with the outputs and results of different LLP sub-programmes and actions:

65% of the National Agencies and 55% of the National Authorities answered that LLP integration had a significant effect on meeting the needs of beneficiaries better);

- the Programme results had been so far disseminated to a great extent and through different means or canals: compulsory sustainability plans, networks and partnerships, accompanying measures for each sub-programme, additional Commission/EACEA dissemination and exploitation activities (databases, conferences, etc.), National Agency events and publications.

Another important canal for dissemination and exploitation of LLP project results was represented by the Key Activity 4 (KA4) of one of LLP sub-programme itself, the Transversal Programme. The funds that beneficiaries applied for under this Key Activity would be allocated for the implementation of strategies for the dissemination and exploitation of LLP project results.

The interim evaluation showed that KA4 funds had been normally used up every year between 2007 and 2009, which confirmed a good progress towards the implementation of the Key Activity.

The results of the case studies analysis confirmed that project consortia had been focusing increasingly on longer term strategies for dissemination and exploitation, instead of single events like conferences or seminars, and that more and more LLP-funded projects had been promoting the mainstreaming of products and results to policy makers and other important multipliers.

However, the ambitious objectives featuring project proposals for KA4 normally crashed against the ceiling imposed to funds available under the Key Activity, which many of the interviewees claimed to be too limited.

Regarding the other dissemination and exploitation activities besides Key Activity 4 of the Transversal Programme, survey data revealed that project sustainability plans were executed as planned and successfully – more than 80% of the organisational beneficiaries interviewed considered the implementation of sustainability plans as rather or very successful and confirmed that they were aware of good practices and project results of other organisations operating with the Lifelong Learning Programme. Exchange of information and good experience was rated very good, mostly among Erasmus beneficiaries.

Nonetheless, while dissemination activities seemed to have been working well during the

first period of LLP implementation, according to the survey data coming from National Agencies and National Authorities, exploitation activities had been less prioritised and in a few cases project results were never adopted or mainstreamed into local, national or European policies on lifelong learning. This impression was then confirmed by the information collected through the analysis of the case studies and the National reports. Specifically, on the one hand the latter pointed out the existence of a gap between projects and policy makers and the subsequent difficulty faced by project beneficiaries to get access to decision-makers, but on the other hand, answers to the EU-level interviews highlighted a lack of project beneficiaries' competences related to virtual and non virtual dissemination and exploitation strategies addressing policy makers and other organisations.

To sum up, the data and opinions collected in the evaluation showed that dissemination and exploitation activities of LLP project results had been carried out at different levels, but without being properly coordinated. The burden was mostly left up to beneficiaries, who had to involve policy makers only with their own strengths and expertise. Some of them, when interviewed, also invoked a more active leadership of EACEA and the European Commission in the linking of projects/networks to one another, in reaching and involving policy makers and in encouraging the usage of databases of project results and best practices.

The interim evaluation that I have summarized in the previous paragraphs suggests that after three years from its launch, ensuring the sustainability of LLP project results was not easy mainly because beneficiary organisations lacked of appropriate competences in the field and did not receive the adequate support from EU bodies when trying to reach the audience of policy makers.

3.3 Measures and actions to improve the sustainability of LLP project results

While I was searching for bibliography on the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme, I bumped into some literature focusing on strategies for improving the sustainability of LLP results, which I consider important to include in this chapter.

3.3.1 Validation of competences related to learning

Since the actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme addressed all the phases of the human learning process and many LLP projects aimed at the acquisition of new learning competences, talking about the sustainability of LLP projects results also means talking about a way to certify in the long-term the new knowledge acquired by learners during, for instance, a mobility or a period of study abroad. It is then the case of forms of validation of learning, be it related to high schools, vocational training, higher education, etc.

Validation of learning is important for promoting transferability of skills and therefore mobility in the labour market and for a better matching of skills and labour demand. It also contributes to fighting social exclusion by providing a way for young people who leave school early, unemployed people and other groups at risk, particularly low-skilled adults, to improve their employability[55].

Funding sources for validation of learning are provided both by countries

- through dedicated public funding from national or regional sources or
- through public funding not specifically for validation

and by the European Union through project funding.

Normally, EU funding is used alongside national public sources, due to the requirement of match funding, and for many countries it has been an important source for validation activities in recent years. In most countries it has been used to support validation projects – such as small-scale pilot projects funded under the LLP and the Erasmus+ programmes, rather than traditional validation systems – funded mostly through the European Social Fund.

However, supporting validation with EU funds can cause limitations. First of all, it may lead beneficiaries of funds to consider only short-term results and forget about the issue of sustainability of projects or activities; secondly, validation may be designed according to targets imposed by the European funding body, instead of being user-centred; and finally, if no activity to sustain and enhance validation projects is carried out, the learning and outputs that the latter generate are likely to be lost.

Nowadays, institutions in some countries tend to make the validation and certification services financially autonomous and independent from EU funding, by searching for alternatives

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55 CEDEFOP, *Funding Validation – A thematic report for the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning,* Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2016, p. 4

like cooperation between the public and the private sectors. This is seen as a solution to the sustainability of the results of validation projects and activities. Examples of this new approach can be seen in Finland and Italy.

In Finland, funds from the European Social Fund have been used to set up a national training programme for validation practitioners in higher education, but then the programme has been sustained through national funding.

In the Italian region of Emilia Romagna, companies have the possibility to make use of the public validation system to validate competences and qualifications for their employees. In this case the public sector provides the methodology and supervision while the company bears the costs. The other Italian example is represented by the Region of Lombardia, where the public validation service is free but the final beneficiary is asked to contribute to the production of the portfolio of evidence[56].

3.3.2 Dedicated measures for better dissemination and exploitation of LLP project results

As I mentioned above, according to the Interim evaluation of the impact of Lifelong Learning Programme published in 2011 and referring to the first three years of implementation after the launch of the programme in 2007, the following problems concerning dissemination and exploitation of LLP results were identified[57]:

- sharing of knowledge on the projects among LLP funds beneficiaries and among the members of beneficiary organisations was not enough or was not effective;
- overreliance on informal dissemination activities such as the "word-of-mouth" discouraged the inclusion of potential candidates and eligible institutions;
- the guidance given by EACEA and National Agencies on dissemination of project results was not satisfactory;
- the involvement of policy makers in the dissemination and exploitation activities of project results was limited.

Among the conclusions of the evaluation report[58], the authors stressed therefore the need for a more careful future approach on dissemination and exploitation of project results, as well as a wider involvement of national policy makers in this process, and a better monitoring of the

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56 CEDEFOP, *Funding Validation…, Op. Cit.,* pp. 28-39
57 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, Contractor: Viešosios Politikos Ir Vadybos Institutas, *Op. Cit,* pp. 72, 114, 128
58 Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, Contractor: Viešosios Politikos Ir Vadybos Institutas, *Op. Cit,* pp. 90-100

Programme impacts on policy.

While the implementation of dissemination activities had been rated positively, more emphasis, they argued in the report, had to be placed on exploitation in order to enhance the impact of the Lifelong learning Programme. Actions had been already taken at many levels to ensure the long-term sustainable use of LLP results, as in the case of European databases for the valorisation of project results, such as EST for Comenius, Leonardo Da Vinci and Grundtvig partnership projects, ADAM for products and results of Leonardo Da Vinci Transfer of Innovation projects and EVE – electronic platform for dissemination and exploitation of results of projects supported by the DG Education and Culture in the fields of education, training, culture, youth and citizenship.

However, the report pointed out that a more centralised coordination of exploitation activities at the Commission, Executive Agency and the National Agencies was especially recommended, alongside with the enhancement of the competences of funds beneficiaries in the field of dissemination and exploitation strategies.

In this framework, Key Activity 4 of the Lifelong Learning Programme for dissemination and exploitation of project results was designed especially for contributing to the enhancement of the impact of the Programme, and many have been the projects targeting this purpose.

Below are two examples that I found during my research activities for my final dissertation.

Project "Web2llp"[59]: Handbooks for improving web strategies and maximizing the social media presence of LLP results. In the framework of the European multilateral project "Web2llp" funded under Key Activity 4 of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the period 2012-2013, three handbooks for improving the strategies for the dissemination and exploitation of LLP results have been published. The main aim of the three handbooks is providing project managers with a methodology for establishing an efficient web strategy for dissemination and exploitation of the outcomes of LLP projects online through websites, blogs, video tutorials, YouTube, Vimeo, and social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning or Twitter. The guidelines were designed after a needs analysis conducted in two stages: desktop research on Internet and social media practices among 150 randomly selected LLP projects funded in 2010 and an online survey of practices and attitudes on LLP projects. In both cases low uptake of social media had been identified, revealing a

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59 http://www.web2llp.eu/project/

need to upgrade skills and improve practices amongst the target group object of the analysis.

Besides explaining how to build an effective web strategy, the handbooks provide the reader also with the tools for self-assessing his/her project web strategy – e.g. through a SWOT analysis - and to keep its impact monitored – e.g. through Google Analytics or single monitoring platforms.

Project "Di-XL" for the dissemination and exploitation of LLP results via libraries. The project "Di-XL" is a pilot-project funded under KA4 of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the period 2012-2014. It aimed to create a robust model of dissemination and exploitation of Lifelong Learning project results through libraries, namely the Di-XL Model, in 5 partner countries. The four thematic areas covered by the LLP project results object of dissemination and exploitation were: A. Gender equality and diversity, B. Intercultural and language training; C. Use of ICT in learning; D. Safety at work.

The Di-XL model consisted in the following steps:

- establishing partnerships between organisations working with the Lifelong Learning Programme and libraries;
- initiating dissemination and utilization activities - agreement of dissemination and utilization activities, placement of physical results (books, booklets, leaflets, posters) in library space, joint organization of events (seminars, workshops, discussions when LLP results are being disseminated and exploited), dissemination through library newsletters and Facebook page, etc.

The final outputs of the project were 1) partnerships between libraries and organizations implementing lifelong learning projects in Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia; 2) needs analysis and research report focused on the issue of cooperation between libraries and organizations; 3) a model of Cooperation between Libraries and LLP organizations; 4) an e-tool box, t.i. an electronic, more attractive presentation of the Model which could be used as learning material by libraries' staff and representatives/coordinators of LLP projects in order to start dissemination and exploitation of LLP project results through libraries; 5) the European Workshop for Libraries that took place in Prague in September 2013 with library representatives from 5 countries: Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia and Lithuania; 6) communities of practice (partnerships involving representatives of different libraries and coordinators/representatives of LLP projects) jointly planning and working for dissemination of LLP project results in libraries; 7) virtual

communities, social networks representing library people and LLP project people; 8) during the exploitation phase (started at the end of 2013 and lasted until April/May 2014), results of a number of LLP projects (representing the 4 different areas/topics and other projects) were promoted through large and small libraries in 5 countries through the testing of the Di-XL model; 9) project publication "Libraries as Powerful Partners in Dissemination and Exploitation of LLP Project Results" that included the Model as well as examples/experiences of dissemination and exploitation through libraries.

At the beginning of February 2017 I wrote to the Latvian coordinator of the project, Vita Žunda of the Baltic Bright Consulting and Training, and asked her whether the partnerships between libraries and organisations working with LLP projects were still lively in 2017 and kept using the Di-XL model (as well as the E-tool Box). She confirmed that of course the partnerships were still lively and evidence of it could be seen both in Latvia and in other countries.

CHAPTER 4

A CASE STUDY ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS: THE TEACH – TEACHTWO - SEM@SCHOOLS.EU MODEL

In this final chapter I will analyse a case study concerning a series of sustainable interrelated European projects aiming to educate young people to energy management through the adoption of a common methodology for the energy analysis of school buildings.

The contents of the next paragraphs are based on two main sources:

- information found in the Internet: on the projects' websites, on the project partner organisations' websites or in the archives of online magazines dealing with energy issues;
- face-to-face or telephone interviews made with key actors that were directly responsible for the activities and projects developed. Among the interviews, the contribution of Mr. Massimo Bastiani, architect and founder of the Italian organisation Ecoazioni, has been a really valuable one for the elaboration of this final chapter. Mr. Bastiani has participated to all the projects presented in the following paragraphs, from the original initiative *Pelle di Scuola* (Skin of School) to its latest follow-up, represented by the European project SEM@schools.eu. I had the opportunity to interview him during an intermediary meeting between the partners of SEM@schools.eu in Nicosia (Cyprus) in October 2016, while I was doing my Erasmus+ traineeship at the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Spain, and he helped me retrace the events that have led to the onset of each of the projects mentioned below, their impact on the target groups involved and the main reasons that have ensured their sustainable success over the years.

After presenting briefly the objectives, activities and impact of the projects, I will then focus on the elements that during or after the projects' life have ensured the long-term sustainability of project results.

4.1 "Pelle di scuola": when everything started

In 1998 the *Museo della Scienza e della Tecnica* of the City of Milan (Museum of Science and Tecnique) launched an initiative called *Pelle di Scuola* (Skin of School), which addressed students of secondary education schools from all over Italy.

The main aim was spreading among the students awareness on the issue of effective energy management by giving them the tools to measure the energy balance of their school first, and think about how detected flaws in the school's energy management system could be solved.

By being directly involved in the assessment of the energy management of the building where they spent most of their day, the students would be aware of the elements affecting energy (mostly heat) losses and gains in the building and could think about specific low, middle or high cost interventions to reduce energy consumption and related pollution. After carrying out the energy analysis, the students would be then expected to draw a final energy *diagnosis* of their own school and share it with the students in the other Italian schools involved via an online platform.

Analysis tools and parameters were elaborated by energy agencies or experts operating in the energy field, who constantly supported each group of students involved in the analysis activity.

The analysis focused on different aspects that, if improved, could reduce energy consumption, such as the management of heating or artificial lighting. Some of the elements affecting the energy unbalance detected by the students in their schools were, for example, bad management of natural light and a wrong habit to prefer artificial light, or the larger energy consumption caused by a non-rational use of renewable energy sources.

In the Region of Perugia, the organisation in charge of supporting students in the development of the energy analysis was Ecoazioni, represented by his founder, Mr. Massimo Bastiani.

The most successful result, Mr. Bastiani told me, was that the data of the energy analysis obtained in one of the local high schools involved, located in Umbertide, were later taken into consideration in the framework of a European project funded by the EU programme THERMIE: thanks to EU funds, technical and architectural interventions were carried out to improve the school's energy unbalance, caused by a scarce utilization of renewable energies in the overall energy management system. Examples of the interventions carried out were the covering of the facades that received excessive sunlight with special brise soleil in order to have a better distribution of natural light inside the classrooms and the installation of photovoltaic panels on the

roof.

Thanks to the successful follow-up of the initiative, in 1999 Ecoazioni was awarded the *Eurosolar Italia* prize[60] for promoting the usage of renewable energies at national level, and the initiative *Pelle di Scuola* was re-launched by the *Museo della Scienza e della Tecnica* of the City of Milan. This fact further consolidated the success of the initiative and caused the network of schools created to expand and become well-known at national level.

In early 2000s, the conditions for turning *Pelle di Scuola* into something bigger had been set and the initiative was applied at international level. This was the onset of the project "TEACH".

4.2 TEACH: Training pupils for Energy Analysis in sCHool buildings[61]

Coordinated by the Agency for Energy and Environment of the Province of Perugia (Italy) and involving 9 partner organisations from Italy, Austria and Ireland, TEACH was a 2000-2001 European project funded in the framework of the EU funding programme SAVE for the rational use of energy, managed by the Directorate General for Transport and Energy.

As a general purpose, the project aimed to educate young students – namely, future consumers – to a correct use of energy resources that the environment provides and to be aware that changes in energy consumption depend from individuals' behaviours and affect individuals' health and general well-being. As a specific purpose, TEACH wanted to promote a methodology that, at the same time, allowed its users to conduct an energy analysis of schools buildings and was shared with pupils coming from different European countries – and facing different climate conditions in their geographical areas of residence.

The methodology for the energy analysis was designed by specialised energy agencies partners of the project in the three countries, who previously trained pupils and got them familiar with the different tools that they would use to perform the analysis, namely[62]:

– *a perceptive test:* the aim of the survey was investigating how students, teachers and school staff perceived energy management at school (e.g. artificial and natural light quality,

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[60] The *Eurosolar Italia* prize is handed out by the Italian branch of the European Association For Renewable Energies, which established the European Solar Prize in 1994 in cooperation with its national sections. This prize has been given every year to towns and municipalities, community businesses, associations or organisations, architects, journalists and individuals for their significant contributions to the use and expansion of renewable energy in Europe

[61] Project website: www.museoscienza.it/progteach

[62] All test templates, except from the perceptive test, are available and can be downloaded on TEACH project website, under the entry "Questionnaires": http://www.museoscienza.it/progteach/questionnaires/questionnaires.htm.

ventilation, temperature, etc.) and to what extent environmental factors of discomfort (e.g. stuffy air, noisiness, excessive hot or cold temperature, poor lighting, etc.) affected their physical wellbeing. The survey was submitted by the students participating in the project to their peers, teachers and school staff;

— *a critical test:* it consisted of six check-lists for a good use of energy at school as far as the following areas were concerned: electrical appliances, lighting, heating, water, building and others. This test was designed to stimulate class debates and discussions on the different low cost measures (e.g. cleaning lamps to ensure better lighting, switching off artificial lights when there was plenty of natural light in the room, switching schools refrigerators during holiday time, replacing old electrical appliances with newer and more efficient ones) that students could easily implement to reduce unnecessary energy consumption;

— *an analytical test:* this was an excel file that helped students calculate how big the energy (heat) losses and gains in their school were (through specific calculations including data about wall surfaces, the area of windows coverage, as well as technical indices) and understand which area of the school needed low-cost interventions or high-cost ones, such as the installation of double-glazing windows or architectural retrofit in order to improve the energy balance of the building.

Intermediary and final results[63] of the energy analysis were shared both online among the students involved and students' exchange visits[64] were also organised between countries to discuss the latest findings in each school and compare ideas.

Successful project elements and sustainability of project results. Among the elements that favoured the overall success of the project, Mr. Bastiani indicated two main ones.

The first element was that TEACH methodology, apart from providing reliable and scientific data on current energy balance of school buildings, addressed the essential issue of economic saving: as a matter of facts, the final results of the energy analyses showed that, thanks to easy low cost measures carried out by students, unneccessary energy consumption could be reduced as well as energy-related expenses or dependence on private companies' energy supply. Therefore, TEACH methodology could be possibly presented to relative stakeholders and public institutions as both

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63 TEACH project results are available on the project website, under the entry "Results": http://www.museoscienza.it/progteach/results/results.htm
64 The reports of the exchange visits, written by participating students, are available on the TEACH project website under the section "Documents": http://www.museoscienza.it/progteach/documents/documents.htm

an eco-friendly and a value-for-money solution that could improve energy management in schools.

The other element was the role covered by the training activities that both professors and students received before carrying out the school energy analysis, which favoured their active involvement and fuelled their enthusiasm throughout the project duration. In the case of the schools located in the Province of Perugia, some of the students that had been involved in the project, had applied the same methodology at their home, collecting and analysing data through the three tests used in the project activity. In most cases, this had led to a long-lasting change in their family's habits and improved the overall household energy management, allowing a reduction in both energy consumption and energy-related expenses. Unfortunately, in this case, it was not possible to quantify the benefits that the application of TEACH methodology brought to the students' families, since such statistics were not elaborated after the project's end.

Another initiative concerning the testing of TEACH methodology outside the context for which it had been designed, was one led by Ecoazioni itself. Mr. Bastiani and his colleagues engaged in the testing of TEACH methodology in the offices of public bodies, but the initiative did not receive an enthusiastic response and was therefore abandoned.

Concerning the results of the schools energy balance analyses, in the partner countries these were not disseminated only among the project's direct key actors, but also to indirect stakeholders like public authorities, together with tailored policy recommendations. However, once the project was over, in Italy it was not possible to investigate whether the data had been used or not by authorities.

Furthermore, dissemination and exploitation of TEACH results continued thanks to TEACH sequels, namely the European projects TEACHTWO and the more recent SEM@schools.eu, which I will discuss in the next paragraphs.

All the cases mentioned above represent follow-up activities that turn TEACH pilot experience into a sustainable project for the following main reasons:

- the utilization of TEACH outcomes has produced benefits also beyond the original project scope and objectives - see the benefits they brought to involved students' families;

- TEACH outcomes have been re-used, updated and disseminated in new countries and among new target groups and stakeholders over the years until present day (2017) thanks to the sequels TEACHTWO and SEM@schools.eu.

4.3 The sequel of TEACH: TEACHTWO[65]

TEACHTWO was funded under the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme for vocational education and training, a sub-programme of the wider Lifelong Learning Programme[66], launched by the European Commission for the period between 2007 and 2013. The project was coordinated by Ecoazioni, lasted from 2010 to 2013 and involved partners from four different European countries, namely Italy, Greece, Latvia and the United Kingdom.

In those years the theme of energy efficiency came to be one of the main priorities of the European Commission, as the launch of the Europe2020 strategy for a sustainable growth in 2010 demonstrated. Europe's resource efficiency was included among the seven flagship initiatives of the strategy, and in this framework improving the energy performance of buildings was to considered among the priorities. The 2010 Energy Performance of Buildings Directive established that all EU countries had to lay down the necessary measures to establish regular inspections of the building heating and air-conditioning systems, and that the number of nearly-zero energy buildings[67] should be progressively increased. Besides, the nearly zero or very low amount of energy required in these building should be covered to a very significant extent by energy from renewable sources, including energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby.

The project TEACHTWO was in line with the European Commission's directive, since it aimed to transfer the outcomes and tools realised within the project TEACH and, like the latter, foster the adoption of a methodology for schools' energy audits in cooperation with students of European schools for vocational training. The audit was supposed to be identified with a commonly accepted procedure to "self-diagnose" the school energy management system and produce an energy report where priorities, needs, emergencies and ad hoc interventions were suggested to improve the rational use of renewable energies through low or medium cost measures.

The direct beneficiaries of the project activities were students of networks of schools in Italy, Greece and Latvia, while the indirect target group addressed consisted of stakeholders like public institutions in charge of the school sector, who the project would equip with a concrete tool for the designing of energy intervention on analysed buildings.

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[65] Project website: www.teach2project.eu
[66] For further information, see Chapter 3.
[67] "Nearly zero-energy building" means a building that has a very high energy performance and requires zero or very low amount of energy.

Successful elements and sustainability of project results. The things that have been said for TEACH are true also for TEACHTWO. Motivational and training courses for students and professors were essential to guarantee a smooth project development, together with courses for enhancing professors' social competences, namely relational skills with students. Moreover, the fact that TEACHTWO methodology provided stakeholders with tangible data about the reduction of both energy consumption and related expenses was again another key factor of success, since it arose the interest of public stakeholders operating in the school sector.

According to Mr. Bastiani, after the project's end, in the Italian schools involved the professors that had been trained in the project framework, kept disseminating among their students the project results and tools – TEACHTWO methodology for energy analysis and the online platform that partner and schools used to upload the updated project findings and results – by presenting the project as an example of best practices in matter of energy analysis.

Moreover, one of the Italian schools involved, namely the school for vocational education "Andrea Ponti", located in Gallarate (Province of Varese) set up an initiative inspired by the results obtained in TEACHTWO. In 2014, a collaboration between the school and several enterprises working in the energy sector was set with the aim of allowing the students to perform internships in the energy sector and therefore experience a practical application of what they had learned during TEACHTWO activities.

4.4 SEM@schools.eu: Sustainable Energy Management at Schools in Europe[68]

Immediately after the end of TEACHTWO in 2013, some of the partners forming the consortium engaged in another European project, SEM@schools.eu, which started the following year and whose activities will come to an end on July of the current year (2017).

The project, coordinated by the Italian Association Study Centre City of Foligno, involves partners from Italy, Spain, Romania, United Kingdom, Greece, Cyprus, and Latvia, and it is funded under the Erasmus+ funding programme, which demonstrated its strong educational purpose, like the previous TEACHTWO had already engaged in.

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68 Project website: www.sematschools.eu

Like TEACHTWO, it addresses students from vocational training schools in Italy, Spain, Latvia, Romania and United Kingdom, but this time with a slightly different main purpose: the aim of SEM@schools.eu is to raise awareness about training facilities on the themes of the green economy and to train young people from different European countries on the new professional profiles related to the energy in the building sector in a European vision. The project aims thus to increase students' skills in the energy management and make them aware of the opportunities for employment related to the new professional profile of the "energy manager".

The basic aims of both TEACH and TEACHTWO, namely awareness-rising and environmental education to train future responsible consumers, have evolved in SEM@SCHOOLS.EU and were given a practical dimension, since the final stage phase of the project foresaw the opportunity for the VET students involved to perform an internship in a business working in the energy sector.

However, the first real challenge identified since the beginning by the project consortium of SEM@schools.eu is showing that the methodology of energy analysis of buildings, which has been tested and adapted thanks to the results of the experience in TEACH and TEACHTWO, could apply to many different European countries and hopefully being introduced as a permanent activity for the acquisition of transversal competences in energy management in the study curriculum of European VET schools.

Elements of sustainability. Since the project is still ongoing, it is not possible to evaluate its overall long-term sustainability, but below is the list of its elements of sustainability:

- the networks of schools involved in the testing of the methodology have been further expanded, since new countries, namely Romania and Spain, who did not take part either in TEACH or in TEACHTWO, are now partners of SEM@SCHOOLS.EU;

- the methodology for energy analysis already tested in TEACH and TEACHTWO has been integrated and adapted to suit the new aim of SEM@SCHOOLS.EU. In fact, the old model has now been converted into a curricular path consisting of nine online training modules – namely: energy production and climate change, monitoring consumption, natural lighting, artificial lighting, electrical appliances, heating, ventilation and insulation, water, green jobs&energy management – and instruction manuals for conducting the perceptive, critical and analytical analysis. Students are then supposed to do the nine modules on the project e-Learning online platform and, after dedicated training sessions, to perform the practical energy analysis of their school with the help of their professors. After collecting the data,

each school has to elaborate the usual energy report including the suggested low, medium and high cost interventions to improve the school energy balance and share it with the rest of the schools involved in each country;

- the project key actors and stakeholders addressed, namely schools, private energy businesses and public bodies in charge of educational policies, have the opportunity to evaluate the project together and discuss sustainability issues during dedicated events called "round tables";

and two examples of exploitation of project results obtained so far in Spain:

- the results of the energy analysis of schools have led to the practical implementation of the suggested interventions for the overall improvement of the building energy balance. It is the case of the VET school "Juan XXIII" in Madrid, whose students have developed the following interventions: replacement of all obsolete lamps with LED lamps, installation of motion detectors in the hallways to reduce lighting-related consumption, replacement of old printing machines with eco-friendly ones, installation of toilet double flushing systems and installation of push-botton taps to reduce water consumption. Besides, the same students have run a one-week awareness campaign at their school consisting in promoting among peers a more responsible behaviour when using energy at school – e.g. by switching electrical appliances or lights off when not using them. At the end of the week they measured the school overall energy consumption and found out that it has decreased significantly;

- one of the Spanish schools involved in SEM@SCHOOLS.EU is participating in SPAINERGY, a mobility project funded under the Erasmus+ programme and coordinated by the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Spain, partner of SEM@SCHOOLS.EU. SPAINERGY will allow 63 Spanish students to perform a 3-month internship abroad to strengthen their professional competences in the field of the green economy.

GENERAL REMARKS

ABOUT THE EXISTING LITERATURE

While much literature can be found on the theme of sustainability of project management or project results in general, it seems that very scarce and fragmented literature exists on the theme of sustainability of European projects.

<u>Publications by the European Commission or other EU bodies/departments/agencies</u>

During the investigation phase for my final dissertation, beside conducting research on the Internet, I contacted the following EU and non-EU bodies in order to collect material

- EACEA - Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission

- the Centre of European Documentation at Ca' Foscari University

but most of the publications they sent me were studies or evaluation reports of the impact of specific EU funding programmes or actions (e.g. impact of Erasmus mobilities, impact of Leonardo Da Vinci programme) that addressed only partially the issue of sustainability of European projects.

<u>Other literature</u>

Most of the dedicated pieces of literature that I managed to collect were dissemination and exploitation materials (handbooks or manuals), namely outputs of old EU funded projects and published by organisations that coordinated those projects or participated in them as partners.

General dedicated essays, research, analysis and studies on the theme seem not to exist, which leaves the community of European project managers without a consolidated databases of good practices and guidelines on how to make a project sustainable.

ABOUT PROJECT MANAGERS' OPINIONS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS

The same criticism against EU bodies can be found both among the answers that the representatives of organisations beneficiary of EU grants gave to the open questions to the survey

"Sustainability of European Projects: Dream or Reality?" (2017) and in the interim evaluation of the impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme that I presented in Chapter 3 (2011).

In both cases the criticism is against the European Union's scarce role in ensuring project sustainability and policy makers' involvement in the dissemination&exploitation activities.

It is curious to notice how, after 6 years, some opinions have remained unchanged.

ABOUT THE FACTORS THAT ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS

According to the project managers' opinions that I collected through the survey and through the tailored interviews that I did - to Mr. Ficola and Mr. Bastiani -, it seems that the main factors ensuring the sustainability of project results are the high degree of motivation and participation of project partners and the capacity to ensure adequate financial resources for the project continuation.

The best practice of the TEACH - TEACHTWO - SEM@schools.eu model confirms this thesis, at least as far as the partners' motivation is concerned: if partners had not dedicated time and efforts to involve schools and students in the projects, probably the model would have been abandoned soon due to its complexity.

The question of whether adequate financial resources will be found to ensure the sustainability of the model after the end of SEM@schools.eu remains an open one, for now.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: <u>Survey "Sustainability of European Projects: Dream or Reality?"</u>

Text of the survey "Sustainability of European Projects: Dream or Reality?" that I submitted to organisations from all over Europe working in the field of European Project Management. The aim of the survey was collecting their personal data and opinions about the issue of sustainability of EU funded projects, as well as data about the overall amount of EU projects managed by their organisations (as coordinator or partner) and the projects that can be considered sustainable among them.

SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS: DREAM OR REALITY?

According to EACEA's Handbook of Sustainability, a project is considered to be ***sustainable*** when: 1) *its outcomes or activities continue to deliver benefits to the project direct and indirect beneficiaries for an extended period after the Commission's financial assistance has been terminated (e.g.: duration of new courses, up-dating of new tools)* and 2) *the international and local networks created enlarge and cooperation among its members becomes more intense after the project's end.*

Among the weaknesses of the management of European projects we can find the lack of sustainability in the long run of the projects themselves, especially those concerning education and training. We often hear about great ideas which European projects put into practice at local, national and international level, but the positive impact on the different target groups involved seems to stop as soon as project activities come to an end.

By submitting this questionnaire, my aim is to collect data about existing sustainable projects and professional project managers' general opinions on the theme of sustainability in EU projects. The collected data will then be analyzed, processed and included in the final dissertation for my Master's Degree at University Ca' Foscari (Venice).

1. **ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANISATION**

1) **Age**

    20-35 / 36-50 / >50

2) **Sex**

    M / F

3) **What is the name of your organisation?**

    (OPEN ANSWER)

4) **What is your role in your organisation?**

    Project manager / Senior expert / Junior expert / Other: (specify)

5) **How long have you been working with EU projects?**

    <1 year/ 1-5 years / 6-10 years / >10 years

6) **In which type of organisation are you working (legal status)?**

    Private / Public / NGO / Not-for-profit / Foundation / SME / Other: (specify)

7) **How many employed persons are there in your organisation?**

    <10 (micro) / 10-49 (small) / 50-249 (medium) / >250 (large)

8) **How long has your organisation been working in EU projects?**

    <1 year/ 1-5 years / 6-10 years / >10 years

9) **How many EU projects has your organisation managed as coordinator?**

    0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / More (specify how many)

10) **In how many EU projects has your organisation participated as a partner?**

    0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / More (specify how many)

11) **With which European funding programmes has your organisation worked so far (2014-2020)?**

    Erasmus+ / Horizon2020 / Cosme / Interreg / Life / Other: (specify)

12) **With which European funding programmes has your organisation worked so far (previous to 2014)?**

    LLP / FP7 / INTERREG / EUROPE AID / PROGRESS / Other: (specify)

2. ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EU PROJECTS

1) **How many projects can be considered *sustainable,* among the ones managed by your organisation or in which your organisation has participated as a partner?**
   0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / More (specify how many)

2) **If your organisation has managed or participated in EU projects funded by the LLP or Erasmus+ programme, how many of those projects can be considered sustainable?**
   0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / More (specify how many)

3) **Please, specify the reference number and the website of the LLP and Erasmus+ projects that you consider sustainable.**
   (OPEN ANSWER)

4) **Which are, in your opinion, the 3 strengths that most ensure the sustainability of a project?**
   Quality of project design / Motivation of consortium members / Type and age of target groups / Active participation of target groups / Number of stakeholders involved / Dissemination activities / Capacity of securing adequate resources for continuation / Support of Institutions / Other: (specify)
   Please, explain your answer and give your personal opinion about the strengths that a European project must have to be sustainable (max 500 characters).
   (OPEN ANSWER)

5) **Please, give your personal opinion about the sustainability of EU projects in general (max 800 characters).**
   (OPEN ANSWER)

ANNEX 2: Chronology of the history of the European Union (available on www.europa.eu)

9 May 1950: French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presents a plan for deeper cooperation.

18 April 1951: Based on the Schuman plan, six countries sign a treaty to run their heavy industries – coal and steel – under a common management. The six are Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

25 March 1957: Building on the success of the Coal and Steel Treaty, the six countries expand cooperation to other economic sectors. They sign the Treaty of Rome, creating the European Economic Community (EEC), or 'common market'.

30 July 1962: The EU starts its ' common agricultural policy ' giving the countries joint control over food production.

20 July 1963: the EU signs its first big international agreement — a deal to help 18 former colonies in Africa.

1 July 1968: The six remove customs duties on goods imported from each other, allowing free cross-border trade for the first time. They also apply the same duties on their imports from outside countries.

24 April 1972: The EU's first plan for a single currency dates from 1970. To maintain monetary stability, EU members decide to allow their currencies to fluctuate against each other only within narrow limits. This exchange rate mechanism (ERM), created in 1972, is a first step towards the introduction of the euro, 30 years later. The fight against pollution intensifies in the 1970s. The EU adopts laws to protect the environment, introducing the notion of 'the polluter pays ' for the first time.

1 January 1973: The six become nine when Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom formally enter the EU.

7–10 June 1979: EU citizens directly elect the members of the European Parliament for the first time. Previously they were delegated by national parliaments. Members sit in pan-European political groups (Socialist, Conservative, Liberal, Greens, etc.) and not in national delegations. The influence of the Parliament is constantly increasing.

1 January 1981: Membership of the EU reaches double figures when Greece joins.

1 January 1986: Spain and Portugal enter the EU, bringing membership to 12.

17 February 1986: Although customs duties disappeared in 1968, trade is not flowing freely across EU borders. The main obstacles are differences in national regulations. The Single European Act of 1986 launches a vast six-year programme to sort these out.

15 June 1987:The EU launches the 'Erasmus' programme to fund university students wishing to study for up to a year in another European country. More than 2 million young people have benefited from this and similar EU schemes.
The collapse of communism across central and eastern Europe, which began in Poland and Hungary, is symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Faced by a mass exodus of its citizens to West, the East German government throws open the gates. Germany is united after more than 40 years, and its eastern part joins the EU (1990).

7 February 1992: The Treaty on European Union is signed in Maastricht in the Netherlands. It is a major EU milestone, setting clear rules for the future single currency as well as for foreign and security policy and closer cooperation in justice and home affairs. Under the treaty, the name 'European Union' officially replaces 'European Community'.

1 January 1993: The single market and its four freedoms are established: the free movement of goods, services, people and money is now a reality.

1 January 1995: Austria, Finland and Sweden join the EU. The 15 members now cover almost the whole of western Europe.

26 March 1995: The Schengen Agreement takes effect in seven countries — Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Travellers of any nationality can travel between all these countries with no passport control at the frontiers.

17 June 1997: The Treaty of Amsterdam is signed.

13 December 1997: EU leaders agree to start the process of membership negotiations with 10 countries from central and eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta are also included.

1 January 1999: The euro is introduced in 11 countries (joined by Greece in 2001) for commercial and financial transactions only. Notes and coins will come later. The euro countries are Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom decide to stay out for the time being.

1 January 2002: Euro notes and coins become the legal currency in 12 EU countries.

31 March 2003: As part of its foreign and security policy, the EU takes on peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, firstly in   the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and then in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In both cases, EU-led forces replace NATO units. Internally, the EU agrees to create an area of freedom, security and justice for all citizens by 2010.

1 May 2004: Eight countries of central and eastern Europe — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia— join the EU. Cyprus and Malta also become members.

29 October 2004: The 25 EU countries sign a Treaty establishing a 'European constitution'. When voters in France and the Netherlands reject the constitution in June 2005, EU leaders declare a 'period of reflection'.

1 January 2007: Two more countries from eastern Europe - Bulgaria and Romania - join the EU, bringing the number of Member States to 27. Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey are also candidates for future membership.

13 December 2007 : The 27 EU countries sign the Treaty of Lisbon, which amends the previous treaties. It is designed to make the EU more democratic, efficient and transparent, and thereby able to tackle global challenges such as climate change, security and sustainable development. The Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by all EU countries before entering into force on 1/12/2009.

September 2008: A major financial crisis hits the world economy. The problems start with mortgage loans in the United States. Several European banks also experience difficulties. The crisis leads to closer economic cooperation between EU countries

April 2012 : The European Citizens' Initiative becomes operational, giving citizens the direct possibility to propose the creation of a law to the European Commission.

10 December 2012 : The EU is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for over six decades [having] contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe".

1 July 2013: Croatia joins the EU, becoming its 28th member.

22 February 2014: The President of Ukraine is ousted by its Parliament following several months of popular protest and unrest. The country's relationship with the EU and Russia is at the heart of a long period of uncertainty. Crimea, a part of Ukraine, is illegally annexed by Russia, an action condemned by the EU.

15 July 2014 : The European Parliament elects Jean-Claude Juncker as the President of the European Commission, following the European elections in May.

26 November 2014 : The Commission announces a €315 billion investment plan with a view to creating up to 1.3 million new jobs.

July 2015 : Greece is the EU country worst hit by the economic crisis. Discussions on reforms in the country and support from the EU lead to a new deal.

13 November 2015 : 130 people are killed in a terrorist attack in Paris. Shortly afterwards, EU ministers agree on tougher   border security measures around the passport-free Schengen zone.

December 2015 : By the end of 2015, around one million asylum seekers have arrived in Europe during the year, many fleeing civil war in Syria and in need of international protection. EU leaders step up efforts to strengthen external border controls and reduce the number of asylum seekers by cooperating with neighbouring states such as Turkey.
At a climate conference in Paris, 195 countries agree to limit the global temperature increase to less than 2°C.

28 January 2016 : The European Commission announces proposals to tackle corporate tax avoidance by large companies in all 28 EU countries.

16 February 2016 : The European Commission presents its energy security package. It contains proposals aimed at ensuring that consumers in the EU are provided with sustainable, competitive and affordable energy, requiring a fundamental transition of the energy landscape.

19 February 2016 : Meeting in the European Council, EU leaders agree on a new settlement for the United Kingdom within   the EU. This includes the EU further promoting the competitiveness of the economy, that EU countries can temporarily limit some EU migrants' social benefits as well as the introduction of safeguards to strengthen subsidiarity. Prime Minister David Cameron announces that a referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU will take place on 23 June 2016.

7 March 2016 : EU leaders hold a meeting with their Turkish counterparts on strengthening cooperation on the migration and refugee crisis.

17-18 March 2016: At a European Council meeting in Brussels, EU leaders reach an agreement with Turkey that aims to reduce irregular migration by sea from Turkey to Greece. The agreement states that Turkey will accept the return of people who have already made the sea crossing to Greece; certain refugees from Turkey will be resettled in the EU; and the EU will increase its funding to help refugees in Turkey.

22 March 2016: A double terrorist attack in Brussels leaves more than 30 people dead and over 300 injured.

23 May 2016 : At the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, the European Union commits to supporting United Nations' action aimed at improving assistance to people in crisis across the globe and to lessen the impact of future humanitarian crises.

27 May 2016: Japan hosts the meeting of the G7 heads of state and government, the forum of the world's leading advanced economies. Discussions focus on the global economy, foreign policy and the migration and refugee crisis.

23 June 2016: The people of the United Kingdom vote to withdraw from the European Union by a margin of 52 % to 48 % in a referendum. Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union sets out the procedures to be followed if a Member State decides to leave the European Union. The United Kingdom remains an EU Member State until negotiations on the terms of exit are completed.

29 June 2016 : Together with the Presidents of the European Council and of the European Commission, EU leaders meet for the first time without the United Kingdom at the table. They express regret about the result of the referendum but are determined to forge ahead with current priorities.

13 July 2016 : EU leaders and their Chinese counterparts meet in Beijing and agree to move forward their strategic partnership. Leaders also agree to have another round of the human rights dialogue between the EU and China later this year in Brussels.

14 July 2016 : A terrorist attack in Nice, France, leaves 87 people dead and over 300 injured.

20 July 2016 : The European Commission presents its Energy Union and Climate Action package aimed at accelerating the transition to low-carbon emissions in all sectors of the economy in Europe.

16 September 2016 : At an informal meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, 27 heads of state or government meet to begin a political reflection on further development of an EU with 27 member countries, following the UK's decision to leave the Union. They agree on the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, which set out the objectives for the coming months.

30 September 2016 : EU ministers approve the ratification by the European Union of the UN 'Paris Agreement' on climate change, agreed in December 2015. This allows the agreement to enter into force.

6 October 2016 : The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is officially launched to reinforce the management and security of the EU's external borders.

30 October 2016: EU and Canadian leaders meet in Brussels to sign the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, also known as 'CETA'.

24 November 2016 : EU and Ukrainian leaders meet in Brussels. Since the last summit in 2015 Ukraine has worked on an ambitious reform agenda, with strong EU support.

30 November 2016 : The European Commission presents a package of measures entitled 'Clean Energy for all Europeans'. It has three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers.

15 December 2016: At a European Council meeting in Brussels, European leaders discuss the most pressing issues including migration, security, economy, youth and external relations.

21 December 2016: The European Commission adopts a package of measures to strengthen the EU's capacity to fight the financing of terrorism and organised crime in the areas of money laundering, illicit cash flows and the freezing and confiscation of assets.