

Article

Analysis and Assessment of New Permanent Teacher Training Activities under the Erasmus+ Program from the Perspective of the Participants of Spain in Times of COVID-19

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Abstract: The Erasmus+ program (2014–2020) is one of the main initiatives developed by the European Commission in the field of education and is the final joint evolution of other minor and prior actions that provide schools and teachers with funding to carry out international mobility projects with a variety of formative activities. The benefits of carrying out international mobility activities to strengthen student learning and teacher training are well known and have been researched or reported even from the early stages of a program that was born back in the 1980s but has always been focused on the university level. When considering teachers at early levels (schools and high schools), the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ program was the main source of funding to grant Spanish teachers permanent training activities abroad with a direct positive impact on their careers. The year 2020 is the last year of the first evolution of the Erasmus+ program, which has been renewed, extended, and strengthened for a new six-year term (2021–2027). However, 2020 has also been a significant year. The COVID-19 global pandemic continues to affect the mobility of citizens within the different territories of the union and, thus, have a direct negative impact on international teacher and student mobility. Being 2020 the end of a cycle and a critical moment, it is the perfect time to conduct an analysis of the data associated with the participation of teachers and schools in Spain, their perceptions of the program, the different activities carried out, and the impact of the pandemic. This research study is based on an analysis of an opinion survey through a nationwide sample of teachers participating in KA101 Erasmus+ projects. This paper gathers and presents data and conclusions using information previously not available that most of the time is published in official reports globally without considering the particularities of the different states of the European Union.



Citation: Salcedo-López, D.; Cuevas-López, M. Analysis and Assessment of New Permanent Teacher Training Activities under the Erasmus+ Program from the Perspective of the Participants of Spain in Times of COVID-19. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 11222. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132011222>

Academic Editor:
Pedro Vega-Marcote

Received: 25 August 2021
Accepted: 9 October 2021
Published: 12 October 2021

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Keywords: international mobility; COVID-19; Erasmus; teachers; teacher training; international programs; faculty mobility

1. Introduction

Permanent teacher training has been consolidated in recent years as a fundamental pillar for the development and professional updating of teachers [1]. The implementation of methodologies derived from new technologies in addition to the evolution of the training methods and activities carried out represent an improvement that culminates with the programs born from within the European Union itself with Erasmus+ as the basic core and the addition of the international mobility concept [2]. Furthermore, the incoming numbers in terms of budget and statistics of the new Erasmus+ program for the period 2021–2027 are predictions of a promising future, especially in terms of projection and financing.

Permanent teacher training has been considered in Spain and reviewed under the different national educational laws and later regional regulations [3] but always with the downside of being highly restrained within our borders and considered an internal subject [4–6]. The topic of international mobility in terms of training or studies has increasingly gained an important role and the benefits of internationalization under the European

scheme have had an impact on students and teachers' careers [7–9]. However, there are no published references or studies other than official reports that are often inaccurate since countries are referenced as a whole in terms of mobility sectors and participants.

The appearance of different training actions promoted by the European Commission has meant a new approach that exceeds expectations and emerges directly from the consideration of permanent training with the primary component of the international mobility of teachers in our schools and high schools, therefore evidencing the need for training that surpasses the frontiers of the countries of the union and that is enriched by the plurality and multiculturalism that characterizes them [10,11].

There is evidence that the situation generated by the global alert derived from the COVID-19 pandemic has a primary effect on the methodologies and types of activities to be fulfilled in terms of permanent training. The different permanent training plan updates by most of the autonomic regions in Spain that administrate school districts evidence a shift towards online teaching that is motivated above all by mobility restrictions and is a boost to telematic teaching to make teachers better prepared to serve students in periods of confinement.

Teacher mobility numbers in Spain were already encouraging and promising, with emerging growth after the different calls under the Erasmus+ program (considering 2014 the first). It is evident that, once the data referring to the mobilities completed in 2020 are published, we will observe that many mobilities have been cancelled or modified, especially those whose typology requires greater direct contact with other institutions. Unfortunately, these activities are the ones that generate the greatest impact on teachers and the subsequent improvement of their performance.

2. Mobility Projects for School Education Staff. Action KA1-(KA101)

The different actions under the Erasmus + program within Key Action 1 (KA1) specific to teacher training in schools are gathered in the acronym KA101, where mobility projects in the field of education are supported, especially those of school staff considering different or specific profiles.

The development of different projects is intended to generate specific results both in teaching professionals and their institutions [12]. Mobility activities are expected to produce outcomes such as improved competences linked to professional profiles, a broader understanding of practices, policies, and systems in education across countries, an increased capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernization and international openings within educational organizations, a greater understanding and responsiveness to social, linguistic, and cultural diversity, and improved foreign language competences [13–15].

As regards schools, strategies towards internationalization will be set focusing on improving management skills and cooperation with partner institutions from other countries, thus creating a more modern environment that integrates good practices and methods as well as enhancing synergies with other educational institutions with similar characteristics.

To work towards these outcomes, schools can request, under the action during different calls each year of the program, funding for a teacher mobility project proposal that includes a variety of international mobility activities with the typologies presented in Table 1.

Table 1. KA101 Mobility activities. (Source: Erasmus+ Program guide 2020, Own Elaboration.).

Denomination	Detail
Structured courses	Courses or specific training events abroad. Including activities such as conferences and symposiums
Job shadowing	Teaching observation at a partner school abroad
Teaching assignments	Teaching at a partner school abroad

We must emphasize that the table is detailed in descending order considering the most requested typology based on the number of total requests for these mobilities in the

approved projects in Spain for the total duration of the program. Some of the statistics presented by the national Spanish agency of Erasmus+ (the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education, SEPIE) related to each call of the program for each annual period we will analyze later. However, there is an impulse throughout each annual call of the program that is aimed at requesting a higher number of observations and teaching assignments since these activities consequently have a much greater impact on teacher training than the mere fact of participating in a structured course.

Both typologies imply more work from and the dedication of both educational institutions involved, are more complicated to manage, and, therefore, are less resistant to external incidents that cannot be controlled, regardless of whether actions or protocols are established, such as those derived from non-planned situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the United Kingdom's departure from the Union (Brexit), which have already caused the cancellation of planned mobilities between participating schools in both countries, mostly due to the uncertainty and insecurity these situations generate.

The duration of the international mobility, regardless of its typology, can range from two days to two months. Obviously, it is up to the applicant to choose a specific duration within this range, which should be consistent with the type of activity to be carried out and always under a proportionality principle. As examples, we highlight that a teaching assignment period of two days would obviously be of little impact and an observation assignment lasting a month would be disproportionate.

A KA101 project should not be considered a sum of mobilities abroad composed of activities of different typologies. With a duration of one to two years, it is a project that shows the will of an educational institution to succeed that involves its entire educational community and is to be considered after a determination on needs with specific objectives. The project outcomes should be those that improve, through these internationalization activities, the institution as well as its teachers' practices and finally reverberating onto their students.

The subsequent definition of a KA101 project as being part of the main core of the school and its internationalization process does not limit the possibility of other professionals participating in the different mobility activities. In fact, a well-planned project will show the joint effort of a learning community with the participation of other members of the school staff: principals or assistant principals, counsellors, or even social workers. However, some participant profiles will require revision of the different topics or objectives proposed. For example, a project of a school trying to reduce early drop out students will surely benefit from the participation of social or community workers if they are members of the school's staff.

The different organizations involved in a mobility project receive a specific denomination in terms of the program and specific roles [12]: applicant (sending or receiving). A school is always the applicant and sending institution while eligible receiving organizations are course providers in the case of structured courses or schools if considering a job shadowing or teacher assignment. The applicant organization can be defined as a national mobility consortium if at least three organizations are involved: two schools and the coordinator itself. This could be applied to schools in rural areas to develop a project with a common goal with the support and under the control of an administrative educational institution that serves both roles.

Job shadowing and teacher assignments require the signing of agreements prior to starting any mobility activities. Both schools should establish the different aspects, objectives, and activities to develop abroad during the duration of the mobility. The agreement will also stipulate the rights and duties of all parties.

Eligible mobility activities are required to be transnational (conducted abroad) and involve a minimum of two participating organizations in different countries of the program (one sending and one receiving).

Eligible countries are those listed as members of the European Union and those who are not members of the Union itself but are part of the Erasmus+ program.

The Member States of the European Union are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finlandia, and Sweden.

The Non-European Union Program Countries are the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Turkey.

The United Kingdom officially withdraw from the European Union on 1 January, 2021, when the transitory period of the process known as Brexit officially ended after negotiations for a mutual bilateral relationship were settled. In terms of Erasmus+, the agreement ends the participation of the United Kingdom in the program when all actions related to the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ program end, giving the possibility for all projects and activities to be completed. It has been confirmed that the United Kingdom will not be a participating country in the new Erasmus+ scheme and the country has announced the creation of a similar program denominated the Turing program.

A KA101 project proposal reflects three different stages [12–15]: preparation, implementation, and follow-up. The first stage contains a determination of needs, details of the practical arrangements, the selection of participants under an open and fair procedure, the setting up of agreements with partner schools or providers and the linguistic/intercultural/learning-and-task-related preparation of participants before departure. Implementation refers not only to mobility activities abroad but also to all activities related to the project conducted at the applicant school for the duration of it. Finally, the follow-up procedure includes the evaluation of all types of activities and the validation as well as dissemination and use of the project's outcomes in subsequent teacher practices.

All stages should be set as part of the organization's European Development Plan that will be the reference for its modernization and internationalization to respond to the training needs of teachers, previously identified, towards the goal of the success of their students.

All these aspects are to be specified in an official project application document that is filed electronically as a grant proposal that is subsequently evaluated through a specific procedure supervised by the national agency. The procedure also includes the participation of external expert evaluators to the national agency itself so that the procedure for evaluating the quality of the different proposals or requests for grants is as fair and equitable as possible [14,15].

Proposals are given a final score over 100 points with a minimum of 60 points in total required to be considered for funding. Furthermore, proposals must score at least half of the maximum points available in each of the three categories of award criteria, as shown in Table 2, to be eligible. When all eligible proposals are assessed, a ranking of eligible projects is created, and they are financed based on the annual budget available for the country.

Table 2. KA101 Award Criteria (Source: Erasmus+–Programme guide 2020, Own Elaboration).

Award Criteria	Range
Relevance of the project	Maximum 30 points
Quality of the design and implementation	Maximum 40 points
Impact and dissemination	Maximum 30 points

The relevance of the project is the first step towards a quality proposal and is determined by choosing different topics of interest after a deep analysis of the staff's formative needs and establishing proper, coherent, and achievable objectives throughout the three stages within the duration of the project with the requirements of the action showing the benefits of the school's international projection.

In reference to the quality of the design and implementation, all managing, budgetary, and scheduling actions are to be considered in addition to the correct planning and detailing of all associated activities, even if they are not international mobility ones. All of them are to be included in the institution's European Development Plan and should also consider

the preparation of the participants before each mobility activity is carried out. Applicants should be aware that coherence among the different proposed mobility activities is a must and out-of-topic activities will surely penalize the final score of the project in this award criteria. The element of proportionality in all parts of the project is also a particularly good measure of its quality: the global duration of the proposal, and the total number of participants and mobilities and even their typologies, are to be considered especially in terms of the size of the school.

Finally, as regards impact and dissemination, a quality proposal should include short-term and long-term evaluations covering the duration of the project, even after its completion, and consider all actors involved (participants, institution, students, etc.). In addition, the dissemination procedure should take into account local, regional, national, and international levels.

3. International Mobility as a Core Element in Permanent Teacher Training

The rights to Liberty and Freedom of Movement grant every citizen of the Union the right to move freely within the territory of its member states and are fundamental rights inherent to European citizenship [16,17].

The recent European Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond 2021–2030 [18] establishes as a priority making lifelong learning [19] and mobility for all a reality and regulations set teachers a target as well [20]. Mobility is established as a key element of the European Union's framework for cooperation and a tool to promote educational quality and equity. Additional efforts must be made to eliminate existing obstacles and barriers to all types of mobility, both for students and teachers, such as those of access or recognition (Strategic Priority 2). In addition, as part of the new Erasmus+ program, new initiatives such as European Teachers' Academies have been established to facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, and mobility between institutions (Strategic Priority 3), establishing a concrete action for teachers and trainers towards an increase in quality learning mobilities. This is further considered under the new Erasmus+ program regulation for 2021–2027, as the program establishes an even greater number of typology activities for teacher mobilities, such as expert visits and teacher-in-training stays [21,22].

In the school sector, which includes non-university school education (nursery school, primary–elementary school, and high school teachers), and as regards the permanent training derived from the Erasmus+ program and, more specifically, the training carried out based on mobilities abroad, it is evident that there remains a lot of pending work, although the number of completed mobilities supported by the program increases every year, as seen in the reports and data provided by the different agents involved.

A Spanish educational legislation review, checking both national and regional administrative levels, leads us to conclude that there is a non-common standard when it comes to certifying and registering these types of activities (Erasmus+ mobilities). However, it is appreciated that the different regional autonomies are becoming aware of its importance as the standard is extracted from the regulations that have been published in recent years towards recognition and accreditation.

In addition to the joint regulation for the purposes of recognition, certification, and registration, perhaps the most troublesome fact is the lack of a specific and common criterion when considering the starting point about accessing mobilities. We should remember that, when requesting a mobility project, many teachers will be absent during school periods with the consequent problem that may arise within compulsory attendance due to the young age of the students. There is a great difference between the access that university faculty have to mobility and that of teachers in the previous stages and levels of the educational system. Let us not forget that for professors, carrying out mobilities abroad, e.g., conducting research or giving lectures, is a positive incentive for their professional career development due to the promotion and recognition that such mobilities will impart to their curriculum, a situation that does not occur with school staff.

Historically, the Erasmus program has been focused on the mobility of university students and faculty members. It is, in fact, the current Erasmus+ program that greatly favors the mobility of school staff but is sometimes not able to reach all students with different backgrounds and may even reflect a gender gap among participants [23,24].

Analyzing published research studies on university faculty members' mobilities and their impact provides us with a way of consolidating the need to carry out these types of activities as part of the permanent training of non-university teaching staff [25–27]. Furthermore, we should consider it to be an essential part of their professional career with future incentives comparable to those of higher levels. Published papers also consider the positive relation between an Erasmus or international mobility for students and their future professional careers and personal development [27–30].

We may be tempted to assume that the educational impact of a mobility on college or school students will always be greater given that these mobilities (especially those carried out under the Erasmus+ program) are longer in terms of duration. For professors, even short-term stays are a success, with results that indicate approximately a 60% positive impact on their professional development in general, both in terms of academic improvements and the search for contacts for future research schemes. Furthermore, about 50% improved their teaching ability and implemented new methodologies in their classes [27].

Publications strengthen this position by considering the international mobility of university faculty to be a positive and enriching experience as well as decisive for their future and labor outcomes [31–35]. In addition, the continuous impulse given by European institutions to the mobility of non-university teaching staff supports the idea of the benefits of its completion towards improving the quality of education in European Union member states.

The development in Spain of bilingual education through different specific programs implemented at the regional or central level, such as the British Council Program, reinforces the professional profile of teachers with an advanced level of education in foreign languages. Therefore, teachers aiming their professional development towards the participation in these programs, or those whose in-service teacher education are under this profile, are an important quantity of those school staff members that move abroad using international mobilities. This fact is verified by the data provided by the last Erasmus+ annual report, where foreign languages and/or the teaching of foreign languages continue to be trending topics.

In terms of participation and mobility, the data presented in the last Erasmus+ report published by the European Commission [36] target Spain as one of the member states, alongside Germany, with the highest rates; both these countries have more than six hundred projects granted and around seven thousand participants in mobilities. France, Italy, and Poland each feature around two hundred projects granted and five, four, and close to three thousand participants in mobilities, respectively.

A third block of member states can be classified under the “common participation” category with less than a hundred projects granted and between 1000 and 2000 participants in mobilities. Such is the case for Ireland, Greece, Belgium, and The Netherlands.

It is evident that these data strengthen the perspective of selecting a sample of teachers in Spain as representatives of participation in the program.

4. Research Methodology

There are no specific articles or studies related to Erasmus+ teacher mobility at the school level in Spain. Published texts focus on teachers and students at university levels. Furthermore, the published data at the school level are always given as a whole block in different official reports by the European Commission and are always given the year after the mobilities' completion. Due to this fact, we have gathered data and statistics on the number of teachers in international Erasmus+ mobilities in Spain by making an official request to the national Spanish Erasmus+ agency to clarify and compare the data and the typologies of mobilities carried out in Spain during the 2014–2020 period of the program.

These data are not available separately in any of the different reports available. The data were obtained either by extracting them from official European or Spanish national reports or as responses to official requests or questionnaires sent to the corresponding national or international agency.

As an initial approach to the topic, we aimed to respond to the following questions:

- In what ways do the Erasmus+ KA1 program's mobility activities contribute to teacher training? What are the main differences in the previous training model activities conducted, the participation levels, and the progression over the different calls of the program?
- Which international mobility activities are most popular in terms of teacher training and which typology generated the greatest impact among the participants?
- Program promotion and support from the different education administrations.
- The impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

After this initial official data search, we requested the collaboration of 883 schools that were granted Erasmus+ KA101 funding during the 2017–2019 period to collect mobility participants' opinions. Thus, a 50-item questionnaire developed using the Google Forms tool was completed by participant teachers online. The request to participate was sent through an official email account from the University of Granada to the official institutional email account of the school to be completed internally by its participant teachers. The email detailed the topic and the focus of the study and its anonymity, encouraging all participant schools to collaborate.

The items were divided into three main blocks:

- The profile of the respondent: gender, age, place of residence, etc.
- The respondent's knowledge of the Erasmus+ program and their opinion of it.
- The impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 141 teachers answered the questionnaire, resulting in a positive response rate of 15.97% considering the initial request. Respondents had an average age of 46.62 ± 8.08 years and an average teaching experience of 18.23 ± 6.97 years. A total of 63.1% of the respondents were female and 36.9% were male.

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the sample in the different autonomous communities of Spain, where different educational administrations and regulations apply due to its being a decentralized educational system.

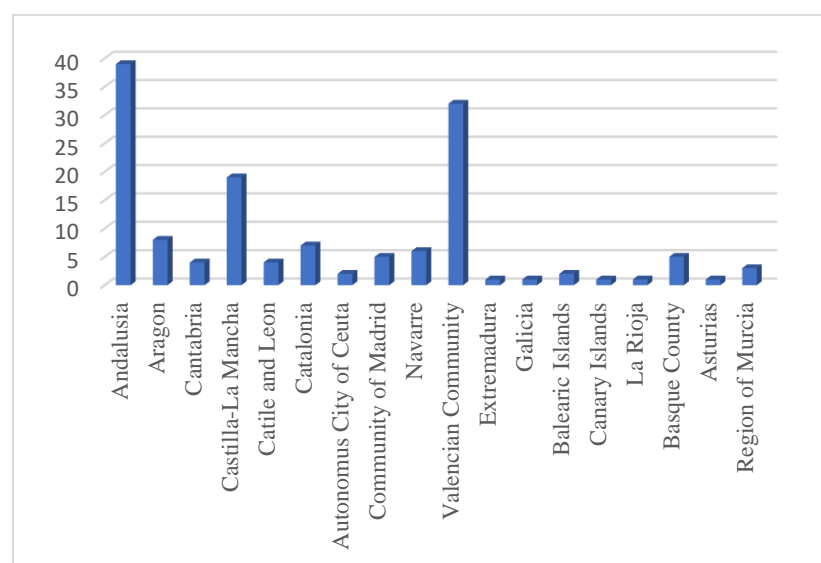


Figure 1. Geographical distribution of the sample.

5. Results

In terms of the research objective, the results obtained are as follows.

Q 1: In what ways do the Erasmus+ KA1 program's mobility activities contribute to teacher training? What are the main differences in the previous training model activities conducted, the participation levels, and the progression over the different calls of the program?

The Erasmus+ program as we know it today was born in 2014. Constant updates in the numbers and associated statistics are published by different institutions [37] under the commission's supervision and we should also remember the different reviews and analysis processes carried out by the respective national agencies of the program. The latest report on the Erasmus+ program published by the European Commission corresponds to the data up to the 2019 call and includes the progression since 2014 [38].

The KA101 action shows a continuous increase in the number of projects presented after the 2015 call and in the total number of projects receiving funding. The KA101 action initially maintained a success rate in the percentage interval [30,35] and reached its highest growth peak (close to 40%) during the last call, corresponding to 2019. Figure 2a,b show the corresponding projects granted in the school sector and their success rate.

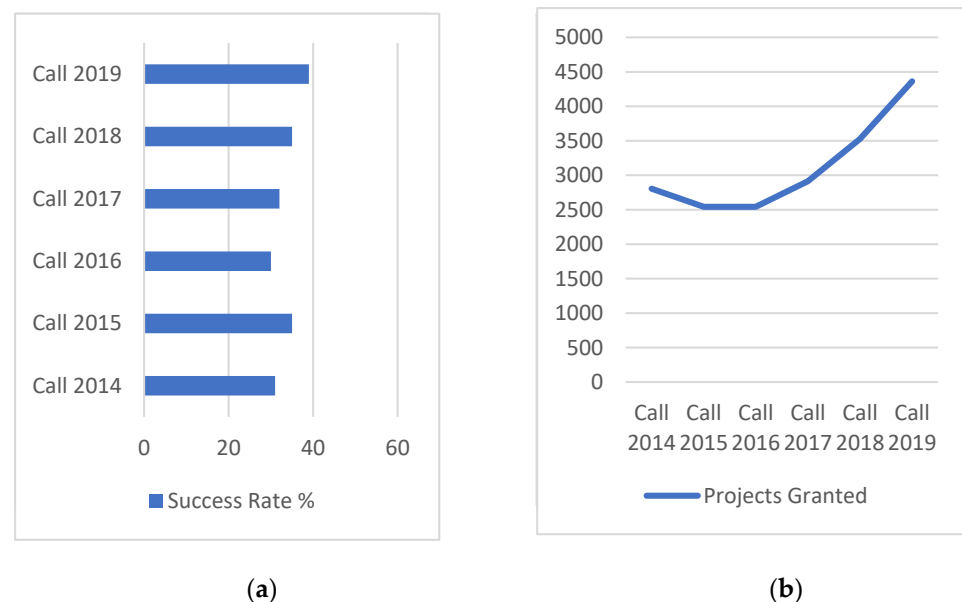


Figure 2. (a) KA101 school education projects trend for 2014–2019; (b) KA101 school education success rate (%)—projects received vs. projects granted (Source: European Commission. Erasmus+ Annual Report 2019, Own Elaboration).

The mobility activities numbers still reflect structured courses as the most requested typology, accounting for nearly 75% of the total number of mobilities carried out. There was also an increase in consortium applications, especially by regional or local educational institutions acting as representatives of small, rural, and geographically disadvantaged schools or those lacking experience in the program.

The topics, themes, and objectives of the different projects received and granted differ in every call of the program; however, throughout the different calls, we found five that qualify as recurring [37]: teaching and learning of foreign languages, educational innovation and curriculum, digital competence, pedagogy and didactics, and educational quality and development.

In relation to the number of participants in the mobilities and the grants awarded, a clearly growing trend was observed, with the initial rates almost tripling in the last call for the whole period analyzed (six calls). These data are presented in Figure 3.

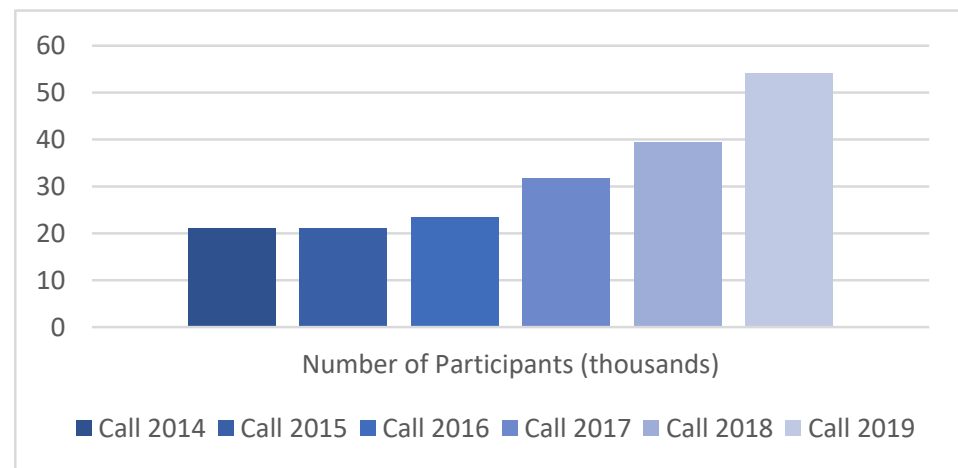


Figure 3. KA101 school education: contracted grants and forecasted participants per call year (Source: European Commission. Erasmus+ Annual Report 2019, Own Elaboration).

In Spain, comparatively since the implementation of the program in 2014, the data in Table 3 reflect a notable increase in applications obtaining funding after a positive evaluation, as the numbers almost quadruple the total number of mobilities carried out in the years of the program. This increase is accompanied by a progressive reinforcement of the annual budgetary amounts.

Table 3. Key Action 1 (KA101)—Mobility Projects for School Education Staff in Spain: Statistics for 2014–2020.

Call	Projects Granted	Mobilities	%Relation Courses—J. Sh. and T.A.	%Teaching Assignments
2014	209	1557	N/A	N/A
2015	319	1821	N/A	N/A
2016	345	2150	69–31%	1%
2017	339	2809	65–35%	2%
2018	437	3803	63–37%	1%
2019	505	4842	60–40%	2%
2020 ^a	603	5337	51–49%	N/A

In Figure 4a,b, we compare the latest numbers for Spain, which correspond to 2018 and 2019 [39,40].

Q 2: Which international mobility activities are most popular in terms of teacher training and which typology generated the greatest impact among the participants?

It must be mentioned that multiple answers could be given as a response to this matter in the corresponding item of the questionnaire. All participants could mark more than one type of activity. Thus, there is a greater number of answers (*n*) for this subject. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Most popular/adequate KA101 activities.

Type of Activity	Most Popular		Most Adequate	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Structured courses	97	38.19	66	26.40
Job shadowing	107	42.13	111	44.40
Teaching assignments	50	19.68	73	29.20
Total	254	100.00	250	100.00

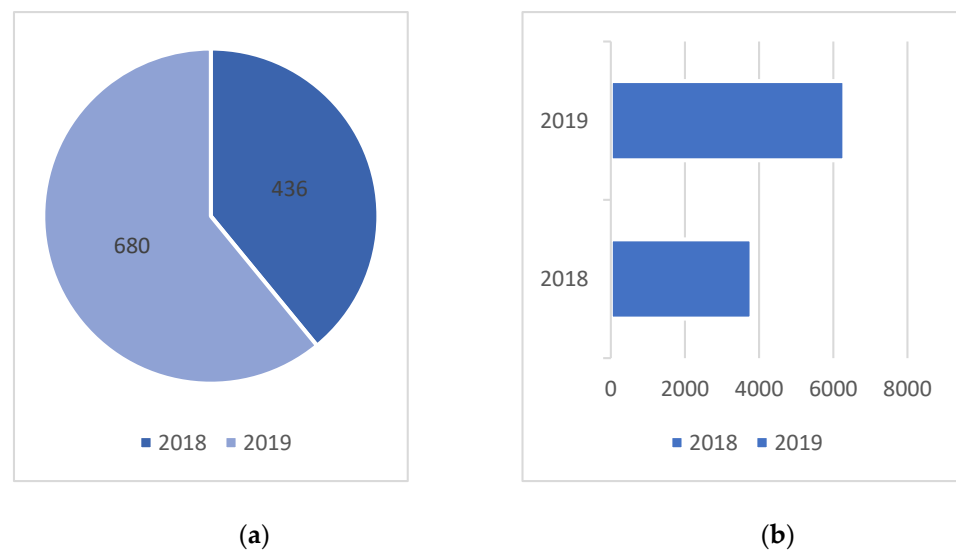


Figure 4. (a) KA101 mobility projects granted for in Spain (calls 2018 and 2019); (b) KA101 mobility participants for from Spain (calls 2018 and 2019). Own elaboration. Source: European Commission. Erasmus+ in Numbers. Annual Reports 2018–2019. Spain Fact Sheet.

Job shadowing activities were considered to be the most popular and adequate activities with 42.13% and 44.40% of the total number of responses, respectively. This reflects and supports the importance of the tendency to apply not only and exclusively for structured courses abroad, but for activities with the potential to generate a greater impact, such as observations.

Q 3: Program support and promotion from the different educational administrations.

The program support level was analyzed considering the mean values of three different items of the questionnaire in which the national support, regional support, and local support from the principal of the school were measured.

A total of 64.5% of the respondents considered the support to be moderate, while 15.6% of the respondents considered it to be high and 19.9% of the respondents considered it to be slight.

With regard to the promotion of the program, the needs in terms of promotion from the perspective of three educational administrations (national, regional, and local) were considered and analyzed, showing a final and clear result of 63.1% towards the need for an effectively higher impulse, 36.2% towards the need for a moderate impulse, and 0.7% with the absence of a need for promotion.

In relation to the two variables ‘support’ and ‘promotion’, we studied the hypotheses of whether the responses to these dependent variables differed in terms of the autonomous community of the participant, their gender, or number of years of teaching experience considering the usual 95% significance level in social studies.

The Kruskal–Wallis test using the autonomous community as the aggregate variable showed p values of 0.591 and 0.556 for the support and promotion variables, respectively, confirming no significant differences between the different groups (autonomies).

The Mann–Whitney U test, applied after checking that normality conditions were not satisfied, showed that in terms of gender the distribution of the support variable did not differ, being $p = 0.741$. On the contrary, the promotion variable gave a p value of 0.02; so, statistically significant differences were present.

Finally, a one-way ANOVA test showed a p value of 0.559 for the support variable and a p value of 0.670 for the promotion variable, confirming the nonexistence of significant differences related to the years of experience of the participants.

Q 4: Impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

A specific item asked the participants whether, if applicable, their mobilities had been cancelled due to this situation. The results were that $n = 51$ participants (36.2%) had

mobilities cancelled, $n = 57$ did not encounter problems, and to $n = 33$ participants the situation was not applicable because their projects did not have mobilities to the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, greatly affected all projects with ongoing or future mobilities. In this case, $n = 119$ (84.4%) of the participants were affected. Table 5 shows the consequences of this situation in terms of those projects whose participants officially requested a project extension from the national agency or cancelled mobilities.

Table 5. Impact of COVID-19 on KA101 projects in Spain.

Situation	Project Extension Request		Mobilities Cancelled	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Affirmative	101	71.63	92	65.25
Negative	16	11.35	22	15.60
Not applicable	24	17.02	27	19.15
Total	141	100.00	141	100.00

6. Discussion

International mobility is a factor that favors the quality of permanent teacher training [2]. The Erasmus+ program is not by any means a funding source; it is an evolving tool that adapts itself to new educational policies and aims to fulfil the needs of all actors involved in education [41]. If we consider the initial questions presented above, the data analyses the three main activities offered under the KA101 action: structured courses, job-shadowing activities, and teaching assignments. The possibility of all teachers nationwide being able to conduct them abroad turns out to be a primary contribution to teacher training in a country that was lacking this type of program and that sometimes treated them unequally depending on the region where they served.

In terms of motivation, participation, and progression, the data and numbers clearly indicate that the option of international mobility training has become a primary source for answering needs in terms of the professional development of staff at schools at pre-university levels, being the job-shadowing typology the most requested and adequate in the opinion of the participants in these projects.

Finally, the increasing number of participants applying for job-shadowing activities and teacher assignments suggests that these typologies are the ones that generate a greater impact on the participants' professional development and careers. Overall, as approximately 16% of the participants in projects that were granted funding in the 2017–2019 period collaborated in this research, the results are considered to be representative of the study population.

It is not a time for mobility. The global COVID-19 pandemic has generated restrictions that affect the ability of citizens to move between countries or even within their own national territory. Universities paralyzed the mobility of their students and faculty during the second semester of 2020 and not many calls were published for the 2020/2021 academic year due to the uncertainty of the pandemic situation. However, calls are slowly being published for the 2021/2022 academic year but under heavy restrictions and these projects may even be cancelled prior to starting.

The Erasmus+ program has had to adapt to this global situation. The national Erasmus+ agencies of each member state have issued instructions in addition to extending the deadlines for carrying out mobility projects that were paralyzed when confinements or lockdowns were declared by national authorities. Actions related to the cancellation of mobilities, or their modification, have been considered, and participants have been given the option to make contact by videoconference. Thus, introducing the new concept of virtual mobility, which would partially make up for their non-attendance at schools abroad; Spain is a clear example of this.

Recent publications show awareness of this situation in terms of its impact and possible future projections, opportunities, actions, and outcomes, but again focus on higher education levels [42,43] and even consider a that transition to virtual mobility [44].

Consequences for the different mobility projects will be substantial, since restrictions have the full impact on the soul of the program itself (mobility), but also affect the immersion in the receiving institution and the interaction process in the foreign educational system. Since mobility data related to the program are published in the first quarter of the year following the end of the project and, currently, the recently published data available correspond to the calls that ended in 2019, we will have to wait for the European Commission report in 2020 to clearly appreciate the impact of the pandemic on the program itself when record numbers were achieved, with 603 projects validated and 5337 mobilities granted. It is yet to be confirmed how many of them have been completed or affected by the pandemic situation.

7. Conclusions

The next stage of this research will occur during the first quarter of 2022, when the new progress report of the Erasmus+ program is to be published. The report will contain the official data on all international mobility numbers during 2020. We are now mining data to perform a comparative analysis as well as gathering the opinions of teacher training advisors in various regions of Spain to compare those results with the data gathered to review the impact of the program on their careers and the problems encountered irrespective of whether they are related or not to the COVID-19 pandemic. This new profile of respondents will give us the possibility to compare two different samples on the same issue.

The new update of the Erasmus+ program for the next six-year term (2021–2027) includes a substantial increase in budget, a revision of the prior key actions, simplified procedures and applications, and modifications such as the possibility of including new original activities to support teacher training. However, the main three international mobility activities remain present.

The questionnaire used for the study contains further information on different topics consistent with the status of teacher training in the country, its evolution, the opinions of the teachers, and their suggestions for the design of the different Erasmus+ KA101 projects and requirements to apply. This provides us with further material to work with on other aspects related to this scheme.

Finally, the gender differences observed during the study, quite apart from the fact that there were more female participants in the sample, suggest that further study is required on the motives derived from this situation.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; methodology, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; validation, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; formal analysis, D.S.-L.; data curation, D.S.-L.; writing—original draft preparation, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; writing—review and editing, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; visualization, D.S.-L. and M.C.-L.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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