



Order no 20

## Analysis of the Grundtvig Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges Actions

DG Education and Culture - FC 02/10 – Lot 1

### Final Report

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# Analysis of the Grundtvig Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges Actions

DG Education and Culture Framework Contract 02/10 - Lot 1

## Final Report

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Order No 01-020 under Framework Contract DG EAC 02/10 - Lot 1

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## Document control

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## Executive summary

### Background and purpose of the study

The Grundtvig programme is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and funds activities that support staff in adult learning institutions to travel abroad for gaining learning experiences, carrying out teaching and other professional activities and exchanging professional experiences with colleagues in other countries.

The purpose of this study is to analyse and assess the first years of implementation of the two Grundtvig Mobility Actions "Assistantships" and "Visits and Exchanges", which were both established in 2009. The following sections present the main findings of the study.

### Assistantships Action

Overall, the Assistantships Action has accomplished its objectives and contributed to the key political priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. The Action has enhanced the beneficiaries' personal and professional development by enhancing their intercultural and foreign language competences as well as their knowledge of adult education systems in other countries. In general, the beneficiaries have achieved a profound European perspective enabling them to compare educational systems, methods and cultures and enriching their learning. The implementation and management of the Action have been successful as most beneficiaries express high levels of satisfaction.

#### *The profile of beneficiaries*

The Assistantships Action has attracted the intended target groups, i.e. persons of various employment statuses who have previously worked in the field of adult education. However, the high share of beneficiaries with a Master's degree (71%) indicates that the Assistantships Action has tended to attract an elitist group of participants and not those who may benefit most from additional learning opportunities. The decision to apply for an Assistantship is generally not the result of an institutional strategy, as most of the beneficiaries (72%) decided themselves to apply for a grant. Based on these findings, we think that it is appropriate to change the application procedure so that applications are submitted by organisations instead of individuals.

#### *Certification and recognition of the Assistantships*

The European Agenda for Adult Learning calls for the development of effective lifelong guidance systems as well as integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Assistantships Action has contributed to the accomplishment of this objective as most beneficiaries have received some kind of certification, recognition or credit for the activities they carried out during their Assistantships. However, the certification could be improved by establishing a standard document at European level.

#### *Impact of the Assistantships Action*

The Assistantships Action has enhanced the participants' skills in line with key European policy priorities as regards basic skills, foreign language learning and ICT-skills. The Action has also improved competences related to the provision of basic skills and beneficiaries' intercultural competences in education. Furthermore, the Assistantships have a "spiralling effect" as they contribute to the development of international networks that pave the way for new projects, partnerships and exchanges. Overall, the impact of the Assistantships is significant at personal and professional level while it has a moderate organisational impact. To enhance the organisational impact to the benefit of the learners, we propose improved procedures for planning the follow-up to Assistantships.

#### *European added value*

Many beneficiaries find that the Assistantships Action has a European added value by providing access to educational programmes or projects that were not available in their home countries. They find that the Assistantships enrich subjects with a European dimension and new comparative insights. Furthermore, Assistantships have enhanced the internationalisation of the home organisations including new cooperation activities between home and host organisations abroad.

### *Management of and future improvement in the Assistantships Action*

Overall, the analysis indicates that valuable experiences have been gained during the Assistantships Action's first three years. The future implementation of the Assistantships Action calls for more formalisation and regulation. Based on comments and proposals from beneficiaries and National Agencies we recommend simplification and merging of the Grundtvig Staff Mobility Actions and more systematic monitoring and pre-agreement signed by host organisations.

### *Visits and Exchanges Action*

The Visits and Exchanges Action has enabled beneficiaries working in the field of adult education to participate actively in learning activities, and their participation has generated new reflections and insights contributing to their personal and professional development. The levels of satisfaction indicate that the first three years of the Visits and Exchanges Action have been successful. Most of the beneficiaries (92%) and the National Agencies (97%) find that the host organisations were generally good at ensuring a successful visit or exchange.

#### *Profile of beneficiaries*

Overall, the Visits and Exchanges Action has attracted the intended target groups, i.e. persons of various employment statuses who have previously worked in the field of adult education. However, the high share of beneficiaries holding a Master's degree (61%) indicates that the Action is not reaching those who would generally benefit the most from additional learning opportunities. In parallel to the Assistantships Action, we recommend changing the application procedure so that future applications are submitted by organisations instead of individuals.

#### *Certification and recognition of beneficiaries from Visits and Exchanges*

Most beneficiaries (78% according to the survey) received some kind of certification/recognition for the activities carried out during their visits and most of them find this important in relation to their future employers and job mobility. Although most beneficiaries consider that the certification/recognition procedure works well, they generally request a standard certification acknowledged by the European Commission.

#### *Impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action*

The Visits and Exchange Action has contributed to enhancing skills that are in line with key European priorities, including basic skills, digital competences and foreign language learning. In particular, the Action has improved competences related to being directly involved in the adult learning process, such as being able to design the learning process and being a facilitator of knowledge, practical and/or theoretical, and stimulating adult learners' own development.

#### *European added value*

Both beneficiaries and home organisations consider that there is a substantial European added value in visiting another country instead of carrying out the same activity at national level. Compared to national activities the Visits and Exchanges Action opens up a much wider dimension of experience and best practice in the field of adult education and shows that enhancing the participants' knowledge about other educational systems can stimulate creativity and innovation.

#### *Management of and future improvements in the Visits and Exchanges Action*

In parallel to the Assistantships Action, the future implementation of the Visits and Exchanges Action calls for more formalisation of obligations, more systematic follow-up procedures for quality assurance, and digitalisation of documentation.

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## Part I – Overview of the main outcomes of the study

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and purpose of the study

The Europe 2020 Strategy to create a smart, green, sustainable, inclusive and high-employment economy in the next decade emphasises the contribution of education and training to all dimensions of the economy and society (innovation, social inclusion, employment, etc.). In an economy that is shifting to services and knowledge-intensive occupations, technology, innovation, demographic changes and climate change generate new demands for skills.<sup>1</sup>

The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme is a key element in supporting the overall priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. The programme aims at enabling people at all stages of their lives to take part in stimulating learning experiences as well as helping develop the education and training sector across Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The Grundtvig sectoral programme within the Lifelong Learning Programme provides important practical support for the implementation of the adult learning policies. Launched in 2000, the Grundtvig programme aims to provide adults with more ways to improve their knowledge and skills, facilitate their personal development, and boost their employment prospects. In order to improve and develop the quality of the provision of lifelong learning, the competence development of teachers and other staff in adult learning needs to be a major focus of attention. The Grundtvig programme responds to this by funding activities that support staff in adult learning institutions to travel abroad for learning experiences, carry out teaching and other professional activities and exchange professional experiences with their colleagues in other countries.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the Grundtvig programme enables staff working within organisations active in formal, non-formal and informal adult learning to exchange and discuss a wide range of practices in adult education, ranging from teaching methods and the use of new technologies to institutional governance.

The two Grundtvig Mobility Actions "Assistantships" and "Visits and Exchanges" were both established in 2009. The purpose of this study is to analyse and assess the first two years of implementation of the two Actions and available results from the third year of implementation.

The analysis and assessment will particularly focus on the following key issues:

- profile of the beneficiaries;
- certification;
- personal and institutional impact;
- European added value; and
- management and future improvement in the two Actions.

The outcome of the analysis will serve as input for the continuous development of and improvement in the Grundtvig programme.

## 1.2 Methodology

The figure below presents an overview of the methodology of the study including the central actors, data sources and analytical focus.

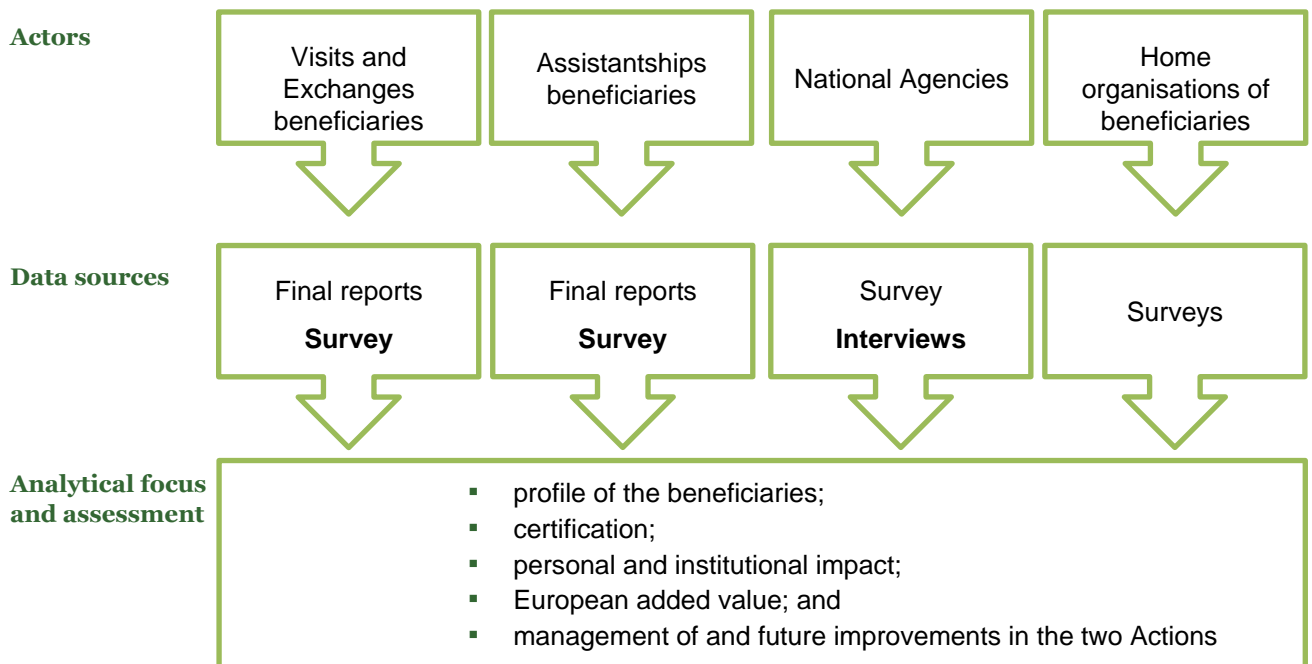
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<sup>1</sup> EUROPE 2020, A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Brussels, 3.3.2010 COM(2010) 2020

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc86\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc86_en.htm)

Figure 1-1: Methodological overview



As illustrated in Figure 1-1, the study includes four different groups of actors, namely the beneficiaries of the two Grundtvig Actions, the National Agencies, and the home organisations of the beneficiaries. In order to cover all aspects of the analytical focus and assessment, different data sources had to be taken into account. The data sources include final reports written by the beneficiaries of both actions, surveys conducted among beneficiaries of both actions, a survey among the National Agencies supplemented by qualitative interviews, and finally two surveys among the home organisations of the beneficiaries. In the following sections, the different data sources will be presented and the quality of the data discussed.

*Final reports*

After the implementation of a Visit or an Assistantship, the beneficiary is obliged to fill in a final report and submit it to his/her National Agency in the country where he/she applied for a grant. The report follows a template and includes the following main subjects:

- factual information on beneficiary, home and host organisation (if any);
- purpose of the visit or the Assistantship and description of activities;
- impact of the visit or the Assistantship.

The study team received the beneficiaries' final reports from the National Agencies via e-mail from the middle of December 2011 until the end of February 2012. The tables below show the number of potential and received final reports for the two actions by country and year.

Table 1-1: Number of potential and received final reports for the Grundtvig Assistantships Action

Country	2009		2010		2011		Sum	
	Potential	Received	Potential	Received	Potential	Received	Potential	Received
Austria	2	1	1	2	2	0	5	3
Belgium (F)	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	3
Belgium (NL)	4	4	3	4	4	7	11	15
Belgium (DE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	1	1	1	1	2	0	4	2
Croatia	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Czech Republic	1	1	3	2	3	1	7	4
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Estonia	0	0	1	1	3	0	4	1
Finland	2	2	3	3	3	0	8	5
France	10	0	24	0	28	0	62	0
FYROM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	4	0	5	0	5	0	14	0
Greece	2	2	3	3	3	0	8	5
Hungary	4	4	6	7	6	1	16	12
Iceland	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1
Ireland	3	3	2	1	2	1	7	5
Italy	8	0	16	0	19	0	43	0
Latvia	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	2
Liechtenstein	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lithuania	3	0	3	3	1	0	7	3
Luxemburg	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Norway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	6	5	8	7	10	0	24	12
Portugal	7	5	6	6	10	2	23	13
Romania	1	1	4	4	3	0	8	5
Slovakia	0	0	4	4	3	0	7	4
Slovenia	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2
Spain	8	6	30	0	40	0	78	6
Sweden	0	0	2	2	2	0	4	2
Switzerland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	4	4	3	1	13	1	20	6
UK	3	3	7	7	6	6	16	16
<b>Sum</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>127</b>

Table 1-2: Number of potential and received final reports for the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action

Country	2009		2010		2011		Sum	
	Potential	Received	Potential	Received	Potential	Received	Potential	Received
Austria	39	32	28	17	20	0	87	49
Belgium (F)	8	11	10	10	9	13	27	34
Belgium (NL)	17	15	27	27	15	7	59	49
Belgium (DE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
Croatia	0	6	8	5	3	1	11	12
Czech Republic	12	14	8	8	6	11	26	33
Cyprus	3	3	2	2	1	2	6	7
Denmark	22	26	3	3	32	14	57	43
Estonia	6	3	4	4	4	4	14	11
Finland	51	52	39	33	3	13	93	98
France	117	0	95	31	47	0	259	31
FYROM	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Germany	29	29	25	26	10	9	64	64
Greece	9	15	16	10	7	12	32	37
Hungary	18	17	15	16	9	13	42	46
Iceland	13	11	7	5	3	6	23	22
Ireland	21	22	13	10	2	7	36	39
Italy	30	28	55	49	14	26	99	103
Latvia	5	5	4	4	2	2	11	11
Liechtenstein	3	1	1	1	1	1	5	3
Lithuania	10	0	3	0	3	0	16	0
Luxemburg	7	6	4	5	2	4	13	15
Malta	4	3	3	2	2	2	9	7
Netherlands	67	64	57	61	10	29	134	154
Norway	28	31	13	8	10	14	51	53
Poland	30	30	32	32	14	12	76	74
Portugal	20	18	29	23	4	8	53	49
Romania	25	0	27	27	3	10	55	37
Slovakia	11	10	13	13	4	5	28	28
Slovenia	6	2	7	6	0	0	13	8
Spain	33	0	52	49	12	10	97	59
Sweden	21	19	26	21	37	17	84	57
Switzerland	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	0
Turkey	10	6	9	0	3	0	22	6
U.K.	70	29	62	39	49	52	181	120
<b>Sum</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>1792</b>	<b>1366</b>

All National Agencies responded to the request for sending final reports. For the Assistantships Action, the study team received 127 final reports out of 396 potential reports that were available at the time the study started. For the Visits and Exchanges Action, the study team received 1366 reports out of 1792 potential reports available at the time when the study started. The number of potential reports is based on LLPLink data received from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. In some cases, the number of reports received exceeds the number of potential reports. The reason for this difference is that the potential number for 2011 was estimated before the end of 2011 (17 October 2011), and in the meantime additional applications were received. Hence, a clear distinction between the number of applications selected in 2009-2010 and in 2011 should be made, as the selection process for the 2011 Call for Applications continued until March 2012.

Each final report was translated into English and entered into a web-based questionnaire template developed using the online survey tool Analyzer.<sup>4</sup>

The data of the final reports consist of multiple-choice answers to closed questions as well as free text. Many beneficiaries wrote very long texts in their final reports. When coding the reports, the text entered by beneficiaries was summarised and not translated word by word, so that the main messages of the texts were entered in English into a template following the structure of the final report form. The final report form for Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges is enclosed in Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively.

The final reports represent a very rich and detailed data source. Many beneficiaries wrote very thorough and reflective comments about their learning experiences.

The share of received reports from the beneficiaries of Visits and Exchanges is quite high (76%), which allows solid quantitative conclusions to be drawn.

In comparison, the lower share of received reports from the Assistantships Action (32%) makes it more difficult to draw reliable quantitative conclusions. However, the final reports received for the Assistantships Action include very detailed information, particularly on qualitative issues.

### *Surveys*

In order to supplement the data from the final reports, five online surveys were conducted among beneficiaries and home organisations of beneficiaries of the two Actions as well as among National Agencies.

The surveys among beneficiaries and National Agencies focused on the following themes:

- purpose of the Visit or the Assistantship;
- initiation of a Visit or an Assistantship and obstacles;
- target groups;
- application procedure;
- preparation of a Visit or an Assistantship;
- host organisation;
- duration of the Visit or the Assistantship;
- certification;
- employment status of beneficiaries;
- European added value;
- impact of the Visit or the Assistantship;
- future improvements in the two Grundtvig Actions.

The two surveys among the home organisations of beneficiaries of both the Visits and Exchanges Action and the Assistantships Action focused on the following themes:

- impact of a Visit or an Assistantship at institutional level;
- improvements in the two actions.

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<sup>4</sup> The Analyzer services are described in English at <http://www.analyzer.com/company.aspx>

Compared to the data from the final reports, the questions in the surveys were more future-oriented and focused on proposals on how the Grundtvig Actions can be improved to be made more attractive.

The table below shows the distribution of potential respondents and responses from the five online surveys:

**Table 1-3: Number of potential respondents and received responses from online surveys**

	Potential respondents	Received responses	Response rate
<b>National Agencies</b>	35	30 (44)	86%
<b>Beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action</b>	389	87	22%
<b>Beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action</b>	1792	381	21%
<b>Home organisations of beneficiaries of Assistantships</b>	76	7	9%
<b>Home organisations of beneficiaries of Visits and Exchanges</b>	766	90	12%

Thirty National Agencies participated in the survey of the National Agencies, and some of them sent more than one answer, leading to the study team receiving 44 answers. In general, there are two different responsible persons for the two Grundtvig Actions at the National Agencies. One person is responsible for the management of the Visits and Exchanges Action, and one person is responsible for the management of the Assistantships Action. No responses were received from Belgium (DE), the Czech Republic, Malta, Norway and Switzerland.

Regarding the surveys among the beneficiaries of the two actions, the National Agencies were instructed to send out a message containing the link to an online questionnaire to the two categories of beneficiaries. For the Assistantships Action, 87 responses were received, and for the Visits and Exchanges Action, 381 respondents sent their feedback to the study team. Beneficiaries from most of the countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme participated in the survey; however, the response rate was moderate.

Finally, for the surveys among home organisations, the study team received a list with e-mail addresses of home organisations from both actions from Directorate-General for Education and Culture and sent out an online questionnaire. However, the response rate was very low for both actions. There are two main explanations for this low response rate:

- The quality of the e-mail addresses was not very good as organisations might have changed their contact details in the meantime, or the information available on some contact details of home organisations was incomplete or wrong in the LLPLink.
- The link between a home organisation and an individual beneficiary is not necessarily very strong. The receiver of the questionnaire in an organisation might not even know that the organisation has beneficiaries among its employees or staff.

Thus, the surveys among beneficiaries, home organisations and National Agencies are only moderately adequate for analysing quantitative issues. For example, quantitative issues such as “What proportion of the beneficiaries from Visits/Assistantships has carried out a job-shadowing?” or “What proportion of the beneficiaries was unemployed before the Visits/Assistantships?” led to moderate response rates, making it difficult to make reliable estimates on these issues.

*In contrast, the survey results were more useful for a qualitative analysis, for example, on issues such as “What obstacles have the beneficiaries encountered in general?” or “What do the beneficiaries propose to make the Visits and Exchanges Action more attractive?”* Thus, more reliable conclusions on qualitative issues could be drawn from the comments of beneficiaries from different countries.

In conclusion, the study team used the data from the beneficiaries’ final reports mainly for quantitative descriptive purposes and the survey data for qualitative issues concerning the future improvements in the two actions.

### *Qualitative interviews with National Agencies*

In addition to the online survey, all National Agencies were contacted by phone and asked to participate in a qualitative interview to share their points of view and suggest future improvements of the two actions. The interviews covered the following topics:

- proposals for the future improvements in the Grundtvig Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges Actions;
- main aspects to be changed within the two actions; and
- need for further support from the European Commission to enhance the implementation of the Grundtvig mobility actions.

Interviews were conducted with 29 of the 35 National Agencies participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

### **1.3 Introduction to the Grundtvig Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges**

#### *The Assistantships Action*

The Grundtvig Assistantships Action enables present or future staff involved in adult education - whether formal, non-formal or informal - to spend a period of 13-45 full weeks as a Grundtvig Assistant at an adult education organisation in another European country participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) other than that where they normally live or work.

The objective is to give participants the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the European dimension in connection with adult learning, enhance their knowledge of foreign languages, other European countries and their adult education systems, and improve their professional and intercultural competences.

The tasks to which an Assistant may contribute include:

- assisting in facilitating learning or with regard to some aspect of managing adult education;
- providing support for adults with special educational needs;
- providing information on the Assistant's country of origin and assisting in the teaching of its language;
- introducing or reinforcing the European dimension in the host institution; and
- initiating, developing and assisting in the implementation of projects.

Assistants should be fully integrated into the host organisation. As the Assistantships Action enables different adult education staff to apply for a grant, the participants' level of experience and seniority vary considerably. Depending on their specific profile, the Assistant may either:

- play a mainly ancillary role in the host organisation, assisting in various teaching or management activities;
- take full responsibility for one or more courses or a particular aspect of management in the host organisation (such cases are known as Expert Assistants).

Prior to submitting their application for an Assistantship, applicants must have identified the host organisation at which they wish to carry out the Assistantship. Applications must contain confirmation from this organisation that it is willing to receive the Assistant.

Assistants are selected by the National Agencies<sup>5</sup> in their home country. The award criteria include:

- European added value;
- content and duration;
- impact and relevance.

Grundtvig Assistantship grants are not normally awarded more than once to the same person within a 3-year period.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For simplification, LLP National Agencies are referred to as National Agencies (or NAs in tables) throughout the report.

<sup>6</sup> Fiche N°/File Nr 38: GRU-Mob: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund3\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund3_en.pdf)



### *The Visits and Exchanges Action*

The objective of this Action is to help improve the quality of adult learning in the broadest sense - formal, non-formal or informal - by enabling present or future staff working in this field, or persons who are engaged in the in-service training of such staff, to undertake a work-related visit to a European country abroad participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) other than the one in which they normally live or work. In this way, participants are encouraged to gain a broader understanding of adult learning in Europe and, depending on the purpose of the visit, improve their practical teaching/coaching/counselling/management skills and/or support the work of the host organisation by providing expertise in the area of teaching, management or other related activities.

The visits may be carried out singly or, where appropriate for the visit concerned, in small groups (in the latter case, a separate application must be submitted for each participant). They may be unidirectional or carried out as part of an exchange between organisations. Where appropriate, one grant may cover visits to several organisations. The visit activities for which grants are awarded must relate to the candidate's professional activities in any aspect of adult learning. This may, for example, have to do with:

- carrying out a teaching assignment at an adult education organisation;
- studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country, such as the content and delivery of adult education (course content and teaching methodology); the methods adopted to increase access opportunities to adult learning; the management of adult learning (governance at local and regional level, administration and leadership of organisations, budgeting, quality assurance, etc.); support services such as counselling and guidance, developing community-based schemes for adult learning etc.;
- studying and/or providing expertise on system/policy-related aspects of adult education including all types of strategic issues, funding models, development of indicators and benchmarking, etc.;
- participating in less formal types of training for adult education staff, such as a period of "job-shadowing" (observation) in an adult education organisation or a public or nongovernmental organisation involved in adult education;
- attending a conference or seminar, where this will have a demonstrably strong added value for the participant and thereby for his/her organisation, including the European Conferences relating to Grundtvig Learning Partnerships and Grundtvig thematic events organised by the Commission.

The duration of the visit is from 1 calendar day up to 90 calendar days depending on the purpose of the visit. Beneficiaries are selected by the National Agencies in their home country. The award criteria include:

- European added value;
- content and duration; and
- impact and relevance.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Fiche N°/File Nr 37: GRU-Mob: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2_en.pdf)

## 2. Conclusions and recommendations - Assistantships

This section presents the main conclusions of the analysis of the Assistantships Action and recommendations for the future development of and improvement in the Action.

The conclusion focuses on the following key issues:

- profile of the beneficiaries;
- certification;
- personal and institutional impact;
- European added value; and
- management of and future improvements in the Action.

### 2.1 Overall conclusion

The results of the current analysis show that the Assistantships Action has accomplished its objectives. Thus, the Action has enhanced the beneficiaries' personal and professional development by enhancing their intercultural and foreign language competences as well as their knowledge of adult education systems in other countries. In general, the beneficiaries have achieved a profound European perspective enabling them to compare educational systems, methods and cultures and enriching their learning. Furthermore, beneficiaries and home organisations report that the Assistantships Action contributes to the development of international networks that pave the way for new projects, partnerships and exchanges.

Overall, the Assistantships Action has contributed to the key political priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. In particular, the Action has improved adult learning competences and innovative adult learning settings that embrace less traditional groups of learners as a means of displaying social responsibility and greater openness towards the community. Many of the beneficiaries (79%) have studied aspects of adult education/learning, particularly aspects concerning inclusion, e.g. how to reduce social exclusion/discrimination, and the digital divide. Furthermore, the Action has enhanced skills that are in line with key European policy priorities such as basic skills, foreign language learning and ICT-skills.

The implementation and management of the Action have been successful as most beneficiaries express high levels of satisfaction. So far, the Assistantships Action has experienced three "pioneer" years that have yielded valuable experiences. The future implementation of the Assistantships Action calls for increased formalisation including regulating the relationship between home and host organisations, creating a database containing potential host organisations for future Assistants and issuing standard certification documents. In order to increase efficiency and improve monitoring, the future also calls for increased digitalisation of application and reporting procedures.

### 2.2 Profile of Assistants

#### *Employment status and educational background*

Overall, the Assistantships Action has attracted the intended target groups, e.g. persons of various employment statuses who have previously worked in the field of adult education. According to the survey, most of the beneficiaries (65%) were employed in an adult education organisation before the Assistantship. The remaining 35% were employed outside adult education organisations and were typically self-employed or part-time employed in positions that related to the field of education or voluntary work.

Furthermore, according to the results of the survey, the Action has attracted a considerable number of unemployed persons (30% of the beneficiaries) and helped more than half of the unemployed beneficiaries to find a new job.

The wide variety of employment statuses among the beneficiaries indicates that the Assistantships Action has contributed to key objectives of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, such as enhancing the possibilities for adults, regardless of gender and their personal and family circumstances, to access high-quality learning opportunities at any time in their lives to enhance their

personal and professional development, empowerment, adaptability, employability and active participation in society.<sup>8</sup>

However, as regards the educational background of the beneficiaries, the results of the study indicate that the Assistantships Action has tended to attract an elitist group of participants. The high share of beneficiaries with a Master's degree (71%) may indicate that the training of the Action is not reaching those who may generally need to benefit most from additional learning opportunities. In most countries, a Master's degree is not a formal requirement for becoming an adult educator. A similar finding has been identified in the study on the Grundtvig In-Service Training Action.<sup>9</sup>

The decision to apply for an Assistantship is generally not the result of an institutional strategy but rather the beneficiaries' own idea, as most of the beneficiaries (72%) were self-motivated to apply for a grant. Based on these study findings, we think that it is appropriate to change the application procedure, so that applications are submitted by organisations instead of individuals (see Recommendation 4 below). This will allow home organisations to use the Assistantships grants more strategically by selecting themselves the staff to be sent abroad and establishing more systematic follow-up procedures to ensure that the organisations benefit as much as possible from the Assistantships Action.

### *Purposes*

The Assistantships Action has provided the beneficiaries with access to new training opportunities abroad that stimulate the beneficiaries' individual responsibility for learning based on their own experiences.

The most frequent purpose of the Assistantships Action is to carry out a teaching assignment (77%), and in this connection many beneficiaries have had full or partial responsibility for carrying out a teaching assignment and preparing all necessary education materials and presentations. According to the beneficiaries' descriptions, the learners had very diverse profiles, different ages and skills. In many cases, the same beneficiary taught students of different grades and very different levels of skills. Furthermore, many beneficiaries (79%) have studied aspects of adult education/learning, particularly aspects concerning inclusion, e.g. how to reduce social exclusion/discrimination and reduce the digital divide.

### *Level of satisfaction with the host organisation*

The beneficiaries' level of satisfaction with the host organisation is high. Thus, 86% of the beneficiaries as well as the National Agencies find that the host organisations were generally good at ensuring a successful Assistantship.

When asked what the host organisation could have done better, the beneficiaries generally think that the follow-up and communication throughout the Assistantship could be improved. The beneficiaries suggest regular meetings at the host organisation to discuss the achievement of the overall objectives of their Assistantship and receive feedback on the activities they have carried out. In addition, some beneficiaries request more help in finding accommodation and organising their activities such as classrooms, timetables as well as involving themselves in different social and training activities.

Currently, there is only little formal cooperation between the home and the host organisation because the contact with the host organisation is mainly established by the individual participant. In general, home organisations do not know where the beneficiary is going and what his or her tasks will be. Because of these findings, we propose more formal obligations and contracts for the host organisations (see Recommendation 1 below) and more systematic follow-up activities during the Assistantships (see Recommendation 2 below).

In order to help beneficiaries and adult learning institutions find host organisations, we also recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies establish a database in which

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<sup>8</sup> For further information about the European Agenda for Adult Learning, please follow the link:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-adult\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-adult_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup> For further information about the study on the Grundtvig In-Service Training Action, please follow the link:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/studies/documents/grundtvig\\_lot2/lot\\_2\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/studies/documents/grundtvig_lot2/lot_2_final_report.pdf)

beneficiaries and other interested stakeholders can find information about potential host organisations and suitable partners involved in the field of adult education (see Recommendation 3 below).

### *Obstacles*

'Insufficient level of grant' is the most frequently mentioned obstacle (41%) by beneficiaries regardless of purpose. Many beneficiaries hesitate to apply for an Assistantship and leave their jobs for almost a year, as they think that the grant level is insufficient and the cost of living in some countries is too high in comparison to the level of grant awarded. Consequently, to encourage more employed applicants to apply for an Assistantship grant, it may be appropriate to reconsider the level of grant awarded (see Recommendation 6 below).

## 2.3 Certification and recognition of the Assistantships

The European Agenda for Adult Learning calls for the development of effective lifelong guidance systems as well as integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Assistantships Action has contributed to the accomplishment of this objective as most beneficiaries (70% according to the survey) received some kind of certification, recognition or credit for the activities carried out during their Assistantships. The majority of the beneficiaries (82%) who received certification were satisfied and thought that the certification/recognition document provides useful and clear information on their Assistantships.

However, the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action who participated in the survey suggest that the certification could be improved by establishing a standard document at European level or expanding the use of the Europass Mobility document as only 14% of beneficiaries received this certification document after the completion of their Assistantship. Based on these findings, we recommend that the European Commission make use of the Europass Mobility document compulsory for host organisations that should issue this certification documents to each beneficiary after completing the Assistantship. The Europass Mobility document is a relevant tool for this purpose as it records skills obtained in organised, transnational experiences involving a sending and hosting organisation that agree on the learning purposes of the experience, often in the context of a European programme or action (see Recommendation 7 below).<sup>10</sup>

## 2.4 Impact of the Assistantships Action

### *Impact in relation to European priorities*

The analysis of the Assistantships Action shows that it has enhanced skills that are in line with key European policy priorities as regards basic skills, foreign language learning and ICT-skills.

Many beneficiaries report that they have improved their foreign language competences (65% report very strong impact), particularly competences related to teaching in another language, and that their cultural experiences have enriched the content of their courses.

34% of the beneficiaries indicate in their final report a very strong impact as regards having been encouraged to use more ICT in the classroom. 37% answer that they have improved their competences in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments. The improved ICT-facilitator competences are important in relation to the objective of enhancing digital literacy in Europe.

The Assistantships Action has also improved *competences related to the provision of basic skills*. An analysis of the content and purpose of the Assistantships Action indicates that many beneficiaries have acquired competences related to new ways of organising learning and educational provision of basic skills to disadvantaged learners.

Furthermore, the Action has improved beneficiaries' *intercultural competences in education*. Large shares of beneficiaries report (77% report very strong impact) that they have upgraded their knowledge about other countries/cultures/education systems.

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<sup>10</sup> For further information about Europass Mobility see <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/europass-mobility>

### *Impact on multiple levels*

The analysis shows that the Assistantships Action has had an impact at three levels, i.e. the personal and professional development of beneficiaries, home organisations and their local communities as well as host organisations and their local communities.

The activities carried out during the Assistantship helped beneficiaries develop their competences related to the learning process, such as 1) being able to assess adult learners' learning needs (81%); 2) being able to design the learning process (81%); 3) being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and stimulating an adult learner's own development (76%). According to the final reports, beneficiaries have particularly improved their competences related to teaching in another language and their international/European perspective on subjects.

Furthermore, the Assistantships have a "spiralling effect" as they contribute to the development of international networks that pave the way for new projects, partnerships and exchanges. In the survey, 63% of the beneficiaries answer that their Assistantships have inspired colleagues in their home organisations to apply for a Grundtvig Assistantships grant. In general, each beneficiary has inspired 1-2 colleagues.

Overall, the impact of the Assistantships is significant at personal and professional level, while, in comparison, the Assistantships Action has a moderate organisational impact, such as introduction of changes in the way the home organisation is managed, or the range of services provided by the organisation.

To enhance the organisational impact to the benefit of the learners, we propose improved procedures for planning the follow-up, i.e. beneficiaries should describe in their applications forms how the Assistantship is intended to benefit their learners and organisations after the assistant returns (see Recommendation 8 below).

## 2.5 European added value

The analysis shows that the Assistantships Action has a European added value in multiple ways. Many beneficiaries highlight that the Assistantships have given them access to educational programmes or projects that were not available in their home countries. They find that the Assistantships enrich subjects with a European dimension and give new comparative insight. Furthermore, Assistantships have enhanced the internationalisation of the home organisations including new cooperation activities and new projects between home and host organisations abroad.

These results are very similar to the findings of the In-Service Training study, where more than 75% of beneficiaries found that they became more aware of the European dimension and applied it in their teaching.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.6 Management and future improvements in the Assistantships Action

Overall, the analysis indicates that so far the Assistantships Action has been through the first three years and gained valuable experiences. The future implementation of the Assistantships Action calls for more formalisation and regulation.

Looking across all the comments and proposals from beneficiaries, home organisations and National Agencies, we think that they particularly concern the following aspects:

### *Simplification and merging of the Grundtvig Staff Mobility Actions*

Beneficiaries and National Agencies propose that instead of having three separate Staff Mobility Actions, the Assistantships Action should be merged with the In-Service Training Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action in only one Staff Mobility Action. They argue that it is not necessary to have three different actions for individual mobility and only one action for Grundtvig staff mobility, and applicants should have the opportunity to choose the type of activity (course, seminar, conference,

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<sup>11</sup> For further information about the study on the Grundtvig In-Service Training Action, please follow the link: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/studies/documents/grundtvig\\_lot2/lot\\_2\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/studies/documents/grundtvig_lot2/lot_2_final_report.pdf)

short-term job-shadowing, long-term job-shadowing, etc.) and the duration they want. Based on these observations, we propose merging the three Staff Mobility Actions (see Recommendation 9).

Furthermore, we propose that the European Commission develop electronic application and final report forms. This would enable better and quicker statistical information on the number of applications, the profile of beneficiaries, and greater impacts/results at national and European level. We also recommend that the European Commission establish a digital platform to support the cooperation and exchange of information between host and home organisations during the entire period of the Assistantship (see Recommendation 10).

#### *More systematic monitoring and pre-agreement signed by host organisations*

Beneficiaries and National Agencies request more monitoring and follow-up during the Assistantships to make sure that the host organisation fulfils the objectives established before the Assistantship and ensures good learning conditions. Beneficiaries suggest organising interim evaluation meetings in their host organisation and that National Agencies contact host and home organisations more frequently to monitor the implementation of the Assistantship activities.

National Agencies and beneficiaries believe that minimum rules concerning medical insurance and a contract of employment giving the assistant some basic rights should be established. The Agencies propose that the host organisation sign a pre-agreement when hosting the assistant. They also propose that this document be sent to the involved National Agencies to formalise the Assistantship and ensure adequate follow-up (see Recommendation 1 below).

## 2.7 Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1 – Demanding host organisations to sign a pre-agreement with the National Agency concerned before the Assistantship**

We recommend that the European Commission establish rules cornering the obligations of the host organisations. For each beneficiary, the host organisation should sign a pre-agreement with the National Agency containing the duration, location, planned objectives, purposes and activities and a detailed programme for the Assistantship. Such a pre-agreement should be signed minimum 2-3 months before the Assistantship so that all parties concerned can undertake appropriate preparation activities. The pre-agreement should also specify which preparation activities the host organisation and the beneficiary should carry out.

### **Recommendation 2 – Ensuring more follow-up during the Assistantship**

We recommend that the host organisation and the beneficiary prepare an interim report during the Assistantship describing:

- the extent to which the initially planned activities are realised;
- preliminary results and experiences;
- obstacles and challenges; and
- changes in comparison to original plans, if the case.

The interim report should be prepared by the host organisation in dialogue with the beneficiary to ensure that the two parties clarify their mutual expectations.

The interim report should be submitted to the respective National Agencies in the host and home countries and to the beneficiary's home organisation.

### Recommendation 3 – Creating a database containing information on potential host organisations

We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies establish a database in which beneficiaries and other interested stakeholders can find information about potential host organisations and suitable partners involved in the field of adult education. The database could provide information on the profile of the host organisations, their area of activity as well as on on-going and finished Assistantships. This could support applicants in finding relevant placements and ensure that quality control mechanisms are in place to support the delivery of training activities.

### Recommendation 4 – Submitting the application form through an organisation

Based on the study findings, we believe that it would be appropriate to change the application procedure so that applications are submitted by organisations instead of individuals. This will allow home organisations to use the Assistantships Action more strategically because they can select the staff to be sent abroad without interference and establish a more systematic follow-up procedure to ensure that the Assistantship has a sustainable impact on the organisation.

However, the submission of the application forms through an organisation might leave out vulnerable groups, such as unemployed people and freelancers, as they cannot apply through an institution. We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies discuss appropriate measures to ensure that home organisations organise calls for applications that take into consideration relevant target groups that cannot apply through an organisation.

### Recommendation 5 – Creating guiding principles for the selection of applicants

We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies establish guiding principles for home organisations on how to select staff that would benefit the most from an Assistantship. In their applications, home organisations should describe why the applicants have been selected and how the applicant, the home and host organisation as well as learners will benefit from the Assistantship.

### Recommendation 6 - Considering more flexible principles for the grant level

We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies discuss whether it would be appropriate to differentiate the grant levels according to the cost of living in the host country.

### Recommendation 7 – Making the Europass Mobility document a compulsory tool for the recognition of learning outcomes

We recommend that the European Commission makes the Europass Mobility document compulsory for host organisations as a standard tool of recognition of learning outcomes. Host organisations should issue a Europass Mobility document to all beneficiaries when they have completed their Assistantship.

### Recommendation 8 – Insuring better follow-up to increase the impact of the Assistantship on beneficiaries, home/host organisations and their local communities

We recommend that home organisations, when submitting applications, describe in more detail than currently how beneficiaries will benefit from the Assistantship after they return and how the home organisation will support the dissemination of results. Furthermore, in the final report the beneficiary and the home organisation should describe the impact of the Assistantship on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary, the home and host organisation and their local communities.

### Recommendation 9 – Merging the three Staff Mobility Actions

We recommend that the European Commission together with the National Agencies consider merging the three Grundtvig Actions - Assistantships, Visits and Exchanges and In-Service Training - into one Staff Mobility Action. The purposes/activities of the three Actions should be compiled into one list, so that applicants could select different types of purposes/activities from this list and indicate the duration of activities. However, the allowed minimum duration should be longer for purposes such as job-shadowing and teaching assignments than for short-duration activities such as conferences or seminars.

Final report forms should be adapted according to the different purposes of the Staff Mobility Action. For long-duration purposes/activities, such as job-shadowing and teaching assignments, host organisations and beneficiaries should be required to produce interim reports and extensive final reports, while reporting on short-duration activities such as conferences or seminars should be briefer.

### Recommendation 10 – Digitalisation of administrative documents

We recommend that the European Commission develop electronic application forms and final reports. This would ensure better and quicker statistical information on the number of submitted applications, the profile of beneficiaries, and impacts/results at national and European level. We also recommend that the European Commission establish a digital platform to support the cooperation and the exchange of information between host and home organisations throughout all steps of the Assistantship.



### 3. Conclusions and recommendations – Visits and Exchanges

This section presents the main conclusions of the analysis of the Visits and Exchanges Action and recommendations for the future development of the action.

The conclusion focuses on the following key issues:

- profile of beneficiaries;
- certification;
- personal and institutional impact;
- European added value; and
- management of and future improvements in the Action.

#### 3.1 Overall conclusion

The Visits and Exchanges Action has attracted the intended target groups working in the field of adult education, and enabled beneficiaries to carry out work-related Visits abroad to gain a broader European perspective on adult learning and improve their practical teaching, coaching, counselling and management skills.

In general, beneficiaries provided very detailed information on their Visits indicating that they have actively participated in learning activities, and that their participation has generated new reflections and insights contributing to their personal and professional development. In particular, beneficiaries have improved their competences in connection with the provision of adult learning, especially to disadvantaged learners.

#### 3.2 Profile of beneficiaries from Visits and Exchanges

##### *Beneficiaries' educational background and employment status*

Overall, the Visits and Exchanges Action has attracted the intended target groups, i.e. persons of various employment statuses who have previously worked in the field of adult education. According to the survey, the Action has attracted many beneficiaries (62%) working in an adult education organisation. Most of them are experienced employees, who have been employed for 12.5 years on average in an adult education organisation.

The Visits and Exchanges Action has attracted a mixed group of persons who are currently unemployed (10%) or working outside the formal adult education sector (38%) in many different types of organisations such as “cultural” organisations, libraries, art schools, galleries, non-formal education institutions, and voluntary organisations (NGOs).

According to the survey, 50% of the previously unemployed beneficiaries obtained employment after their Visit, and 42% of these beneficiaries indicate that the Visits and Exchanges Action helped them to find a new job. This shows that the Action has also contributed to the objective of enhancing the possibilities for adults to benefit from learning activities and promoting their employability.

However, some of the criteria defining the intended target groups of the Visits and Exchanges Action have only been partly met by the group of beneficiaries it attracted. One of the objectives of the Visits and Exchanges Action is to attract “persons involved in the training of adult education staff”, but according to the survey only 39% of the participating target group are trainers of adult educators, and only 3% of the purposes of the Visits & Exchanges Action dealt with providing training for adult education staff.

Furthermore, most of the beneficiaries hold a Master's degree (61%). This high educational level may indicate that the training opportunities of the Action are not reaching those who should generally benefit most from additional learning opportunities. In most countries, a Master's degree is not a formal requirement for becoming an adult educator. Furthermore, a moderate share (39%) of the attracted target group is formally educated in adult education, and only 3% have indicated the purpose of providing training for adult education staff.

Many of the beneficiaries (39%) were self-motivated to apply for a Visit, while only 11% were motivated by their management to apply for a Visit. The results indicate that the decision to apply for the Visits and Exchanges Action is often not the result of an institutional strategy but rather the beneficiaries' self-motivation or inspiration from personal or professional networks.

Based on these results, we recommend changing the application procedure so that future applications are submitted by organisations instead of individuals. The proposed change will enable home organisations to use the Action more strategically by deciding themselves whom to send abroad. The home organisations can also establish a more systematic follow-up procedure to ensure that the impact is beneficial to the organisations and learners (see Recommendation 1).

### *Purposes*

The most frequent purposes reported by beneficiaries are attending a conference or a seminar (57%), studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country (28%) and job-shadowing (17%). This pattern is roughly the same regardless of the home country of the beneficiary. The duration of most Visits and Exchanges (61%) is less than a week – a logical reflection of the high frequency of the conference/seminar purpose. Only 4% of the beneficiaries have been involved in an exchange or a visit lasting more than 30 days.

Many beneficiaries have been active participants in conferences/seminar, e.g. as speakers or involved in planning and implementation of the conference/seminar. The detail of their reports indicates that their participation in Visits and Exchanges activities has generated reflection and new insight.

As conferences and seminars are very frequent activities undertaken under the Visits and Exchanges Action, we find that there could be “economies of scale” for supporting systematic dissemination of results at European level. We recommend that the European Commission establish a database that provides information on conferences and seminars held and attended by beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action (see Recommendation 2).

The analysis of the themes and purposes of visits shows that the content and themes of many visits focus on innovation in the provision of adult education/learning, especially in connection with disadvantaged learners with learning difficulties. The learning contexts of the teaching assignments vary considerably and involve many different target groups of adult learners of different ages as well as vulnerable groups such as minority groups, people with disabilities, people with a low level of basic skills, unemployed people and prisoners.

### *Satisfaction*

Concerning the beneficiaries' level of satisfaction with the Visits and Exchanges activities, the first three years of the Visits and Exchanges Action have been very successful. Thus, 92% of the beneficiaries and 97% of the National Agencies find that the host organisations were generally good at ensuring a successful visit or exchange.

When asked what the host organisations could do better, the beneficiaries often request clearer information about accommodation at conferences or seminars. They also ask to receive better information on the working language of the conference and a list of conference participants before its start, since networking is an important issue when participating in a conference.

Based on these results, we recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies establish a database in which beneficiaries and other interested stakeholders can find information about potential host organisations and other stakeholders active in the field of adult education (see Recommendation 3).

### *Obstacles*

The most frequently reported obstacles mentioned in beneficiaries' final reports are insufficient language skills (29%) and insufficient grants (19%). “Other obstacles”, representing 35% of the responses, mainly concern obstacles related to handling of funding and transfers of grants, especially making proof of the receipt of funding and getting approval in the home organisation.

As the duration of most Visits is less than a week, it would be unreasonable to make attending language courses or cultural courses for all beneficiaries compulsory. Instead, we recommend that guidelines for host organisations be developed with appropriate preparation activities depending on the type and the duration of the activity (see Recommendation 4).

### 3.3 Certification of the beneficiaries from Visits and Exchanges

The European Agenda for Adult Learning calls for the development of effective lifelong guidance systems together with integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Visits and Exchanges Action contributes to the accomplishment of this objective as most beneficiaries (78% according to the final reports) received some kind of certification/recognition for the activities carried out during the visit. Most of the respondents from the survey of beneficiaries (79%) find that certification/recognition is important, in particular in relation to their future employers and job mobility.

Although most beneficiaries consider that the certification/recognition procedure works well, they generally request a standard certification acknowledged by the European Commission, such as a standardised Grundtvig certificate for all types of Visits and Exchanges activities completed within a host organisation. The document should give a detailed description of the activities, skills, experiences and competences gained.

With a view to these requests, we recommend that the Europass Mobility document be used by host organisations to recognise the learning outcomes of beneficiaries. Host organisations should issue a Europass Mobility document for each beneficiary after completing a long-duration activity such as a job-shadowing. The Europass Mobility document is a relevant tool for this purpose because it records skills obtained in organised, transnational experiences involving a sending and hosting organisation that agree on the learning purposes of the experience, typically in the context of a European programme or action (see Recommendation 5).

### 3.4 Impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action

#### *Impact in relation to European priorities*

The analysis of impact of the Visits and Exchange Action shows that it has contributed to enhancing skills that are in line with key European priorities, including basic skills, digital competences and foreign language learning.

The extent of the impact, however, is more moderate than the impact of the Assistantships Action. A possible explanation could be that the Visits and Exchanges Action is a short-duration Action and more than half of the activities undertaken have a duration of less than a week. While the most frequent activity is conferences/seminars (57%), only 6% of the beneficiaries have visited an adult education organisation to carry out a teaching assignment.

20% of the beneficiaries report a very strong impact as regards the improvement in their foreign language competences, and many beneficiaries comment in their reports that they have improved their competences in teaching in another language.

15% have improved their competences in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments, i.e. being an ICT-facilitator. The improved ICT-facilitator competences are important in relation to one of the objectives of the European Agenda for Adult Learning to enhance digital literacy.

The Visits and Exchanges Action has also improved competences related to the provision of basic skills to disadvantaged learners. Improving basic skills is a key objective of Europe 2020 and an adequate level of skills is considered a prerequisite for the further updating of skills.

Furthermore, the Action has improved intercultural competences. Many beneficiaries report (52% report very strong impact) that they have upgraded their knowledge of other countries/cultures/education systems, and 28% of the beneficiaries report that their Visit has helped them to increase the interest of their learners/colleagues in European topics.

#### *Impact on multiple levels*

Overall, the analysis shows that the Visits and Exchanges Action has a strong impact on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary, and a moderate impact on the home organisation and its local community as well as the host organisations and their local communities. Furthermore, the impact has “spiralling effects” at all levels as the Visits and Exchanges Action contributes to the development of international networks that pave the way for new projects, partnerships and exchanges. Hence, many home organisations report that they want to send more staff to another country in the future, and many beneficiaries have inspired their colleagues in their home organisations to apply for a Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges grant.

At the personal and professional development level, many beneficiaries report that they mainly improved their competences related to being directly involved in the learning process, such as being able to design the learning process (52%) and being a facilitator of knowledge, practical and/or theoretical, and stimulating an adult learner's own development (55%).

The impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action on home organisations mainly concerns its internationalisation as other colleagues and learners of beneficiaries benefit from the experiences of their colleagues who have received a grant. Many beneficiaries report different types of impact that their Visit has had on their home organisation such as “encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities” (73%); “helped to increase the European dimension in the work of my organization” (71%) or “helped me increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics” (67%). Home organisations report that the Visits and Exchanges Action opens up a much wider European dimension of experience and best practice in the field of adult education in general.

Similarly, the impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action on host organisations generally concerns their increasing internationalisation, such as increasing the interest of learners/colleagues in European topics (28%), encouraging colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities and educational programmes (34%).

Although the Visits and Exchanges Action has impacts at all levels, we do not have much information on how and to what extent the impact is beneficial to the learners of adult education. Therefore, we recommend that home organisations, when submitting future application forms, describe how the Visits and Exchanges activities will be beneficial to them and learners after the beneficiaries return and how the organisation will provide or support dissemination activities (see Recommendation 6).

### 3.5 European added value

The analysis of the Visits and Exchanges Action shows that the activities carried out had an European added value in many different ways, and that there are considerable advantages to be derived from providing learning opportunities in another country supported by a European programme. Both beneficiaries and home organisations emphasise that there is a substantial European added value in visiting another country instead of carrying out the same activity at national level.

The beneficiaries consider that visiting another country contributes to their professional development by enabling them to exchange experiences with colleagues in other countries. Home organisations consider that the Visits and Exchanges Action opens up a much wider dimension of experience and best practice in the field of adult education and that enhancing their knowledge on other educational systems can stimulate creativity and innovation. Moreover, beneficiaries agree that the Visits and Exchanges Action gives a more diverse perspective on different cultural approaches to learning that cannot be achieved by inviting speakers from abroad to give presentations in the home country.

### 3.6 Management of and future improvements in the Visits and Exchanges Action

The surveys of and interviews with beneficiaries, home organisations and National Agencies provide comprehensive proposals and comments on future improvements on how to make the Action more attractive and how to improve its management and implementation. Looking across all the comments and proposals from beneficiaries, home organisations and National Agencies, the overall message is that the future implementation of the Visits and Exchanges Action calls for more formalisation of obligations, more systematic follow-up procedures for quality assurance, and digitalisation of documentation.

#### *Guidelines and database containing host organisations*

In general, beneficiaries and National Agencies suggest that the host organisations be monitored more systematically and must accomplish some minimum criteria of the Action. In addition, there should be more guidelines for host organisations. Consequently, we recommend the development of guidelines for host organisations on appropriate preparation activities before the Visit (see Recommendation 4).

Furthermore, we recommend that the European Commission establish a database of host organisations to support applicants in finding placements and ensuring that quality control mechanisms are in place to support the delivery of activities (see Recommendation 3).

### *Digitalisation of administrative documents*

Beneficiaries and National Agencies suggest replacing the current paper forms by electronic application forms and final reports. The National Agencies argue that on-line application forms and final reports are very important for the management of the Action to increase efficiency and effectiveness. With a view to these requests, we recommend that the European Commission develop electronic application forms and final reports (see Recommendation 7).

### *Simplification by merging actions*

Overall, the National Agencies think that the Grundtvig Actions are too closely related and target the same types of staff mobility activities. Instead of separate Actions, the National Agencies suggest merging the activities of the In-Service Training Action, the Visits and Exchanges Action and the Assistantships Action. Some National Agencies suggest that there should be only one Grundtvig Action for individual mobility, one application form and only one application round with the possibility of choosing the duration and purpose (course, seminar, conference, short-term job-shadowing, long-term job-shadowing, etc.). The National Agencies argue that merging the actions would reduce the administrative workload and that one Staff Mobility Action would be easier to understand for applicants.

Therefore, we recommend that the European Commission consider merging the three staff mobility Actions (see Recommendation 8).

## 3.7 Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1 – Submitting the application form through an organisation**

Based on the findings of this study, we believe that the application procedure should be changed to increase the impact of the Action, and that application should be submitted through organisations instead of individuals submitting them. This change will enable home organisations to use the Action more strategically by deciding which staff to send abroad and establishing more systematic follow-up procedures to ensure that adult learning organisations, their local communities and the learners of the individual beneficiaries benefit the most from the Visit.

However, an organisational application procedure might leave out vulnerable groups, such as unemployed people and freelancers, as they cannot apply through an organisation. We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies discuss appropriate ways to ensure that home organisations organise calls for applications that take into consideration relevant target groups that cannot apply through an organisation.

### **Recommendation 2 – Creating a database to support systematic dissemination**

As conferences and seminars are the most frequent activities under the Visits and Exchanges Action, we recommend that the European Commission establish a database containing information on conferences and seminars attended by beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action. For each conference/seminar planned or held, the database could contain conference programmes, papers/articles presented and minutes of discussions/workshops. Furthermore, Visits and Exchanges beneficiaries could upload articles, learning materials and their comments in the database.

### **Recommendation 3 – Creating a database containing information on potential host organisations**

We recommend that the European Commission and the National Agencies create a database in which beneficiaries and other interested stakeholders can find information

about potential host organisations and suitable partners involved in the field of adult education. The database could provide information on the host organisation's profile, its areas of activity and on-going and finished Visits and Exchanges activities. This could support applicants in finding relevant placements for their job-shadowing and ensure that quality control mechanisms are in place to support the provision of training activities.

#### Recommendation 4 – Creating guidelines for host organisations on preparation activities

As most Visits last less than a week, it would be unreasonable to make it compulsory for all beneficiaries to attend language or cultural courses. Therefore, we recommend that guidelines be developed for host organisations with appropriate preparation activities for each purpose of the Visit. The overall purpose of the guidelines is to offer clear information to beneficiaries on how they are expected to prepare for the Visit.

#### Recommendation 5 – Using the Europass Mobility document as a tool for the recognition of the learning outcomes

We recommend that the Europass Mobility document be used as a tool of recognition of the learning outcomes. Host organisations should issue a Europass Mobility document to all beneficiaries when these complete their Visit.

#### Recommendation 6 – Insuring better dissemination to increase the impact of the Visit on beneficiaries, home/host organisations and their local communities

We recommend that home organisations, when submitting applications, describe in more detail than is currently the case, how beneficiaries will benefit from the Visit after their return and how the home organisation will support the dissemination of results. Furthermore, the beneficiary and the home organisation should describe in the final report the impact of the Visit on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary, his/her learners, the home and host organisation and their local communities.

#### Recommendation 7 – Digitalisation of administrative documents

We recommend that the European Commission develop electronic application forms and final reports. This would insure better and quicker statistical information on the number of submitted applications, the profile of beneficiaries, and impact and results at national and European level. We also recommend that the European Commission establish a digital platform to support the cooperation and the exchange of information between host and home organisations throughout all steps of the Visit.

#### Recommendation 8 – Merging all three Staff Mobility Actions

We recommend that the European Commission consider merging the three Grundtvig Staff Mobility Actions, i.e. Visits and Exchanges, Assistantships and In-Service Training, into one Staff Mobility Action. The purposes and activities of the three actions should be

merged and applicants should be able to select different types of purposes and activities and indicate the duration. However, the allowed minimum duration should be longer for purposes such as job-shadowing and teaching assignments than for conferences and seminars.

Final reports should be adapted according to the different purposes of the Staff Mobility Action. For long-duration activities, such as job-shadowing and teaching assignments, host organisations and beneficiaries should be required to produce interim reports and extensive final reports, while reporting on short-duration activities such as conferences or seminars should be briefer.

## Part II - THE GRUNDTVIG ASSISTANTSHIPS ACTION



## 4. Profile of Assistants

This chapter analyses the profiles of beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action. The analysis focuses on the following main issues:

- The background of the application: What motivated the beneficiaries to apply? Did they get the idea themselves or were they inspired by the management of the home organisation or others? Did the beneficiaries have any hesitations to apply?
- The employment and educational level of beneficiaries: What was the beneficiary's employment status before the Assistantship? Did the Assistantship improve the beneficiary's employment and career?
- The purpose and duration of the Assistantships: What is the typical purpose and duration?
- The preparations of Assistantships: What preparation activities have been carried out before the Assistantship? Were the activities sufficient?
- The satisfaction with the host organisation: Did the host organisation ensure a successful Assistantship?
- Obstacles encountered: What were the typical obstacles?
- The promotion of the Assistantships Action.

Based on the analysis of these issues we draw conclusions as regards whether the Assistantships Action has attracted the intended target groups.

### 4.1 Duration of the Assistantship

The minimum duration of an Assistantship is currently 13 full weeks (91 calendar days) and the maximum duration is 45 weeks (315 calendar days).<sup>12</sup>

Table 4-1 shows the distribution of completed Assistantships by duration (2009-2011).

**Table 4-1: Duration of Assistantships 2009-2011**

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>13-15</b>	<b>15-20</b>	<b>20-25</b>	<b>25-30</b>	<b>35-40</b>	<b>40-45</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>%</b>	18%	12%	7%	11%	18%	35%	<b>112</b>

*Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of Grundtvig Assistantships 2009-2011. Note: Group 13-15: not including 15 weeks; group 15-20: not including 20 weeks, etc. The sum of the percentages exceeds 100 % due to rounding.*

According to the reports from the beneficiaries received for this study, the duration of an Assistantship is mostly relatively short (13-20 weeks) or long (40-45 weeks). The average duration is 213 days or approx. 30 weeks.

#### *Minimum duration*

Both the National Agencies and the beneficiaries were asked about the appropriate minimum duration of an Assistantship.

<sup>12</sup> Fiche N°/File Nr 38: GRU-Mob:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund3\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund3_en.pdf)

**Table 4-2: Appropriate minimum duration of an Assistantship by group of respondents**

Weeks	<12	12-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	35-40	40-45	45<	N
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	15%	30%	14%	22%	5%	4%	8%	3%	74
<b>NA</b>	34%	18%	3%	6%	-	-	-	-	32

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012. Note: Group 12-15: not including 15 weeks; group 15-20: not including 20 weeks, etc.

The appropriate minimum duration of an Assistantship is significantly shorter from the perspective of the National Agencies compared to the viewpoints of the beneficiaries. The suggested minimum duration by National Agencies is an average of approx. 10 weeks, while beneficiaries suggest an average of approx. 19 weeks as the minimum duration. The main argument from the beneficiaries regarding minimum duration is that it takes at least a month to get settled in a new country and an additional month or two to establish a good personal relationship with the employees at the host organisation. Another argument put forward by the beneficiaries is that the minimum length should take into account the term structure of the adult learning institutions.

The arguments from the National Agencies are somewhat similar in the sense that it takes time to settle in a new country. However, some argue that by shortening the minimum duration of an Assistantship, the barrier for participation for employed people would be lowered as these often hesitate interrupting their jobs for a longer period of time.

#### Maximum duration

Accordingly, the National Agencies and the beneficiaries were asked in the same survey about the appropriate maximum duration of an Assistantship. Table 4-3 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 4-3: Appropriate maximum duration of an Assistantship by group of respondents**

Weeks	<40	40-52	52<	N
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	22%	46%	32%	72
<b>NA</b>	23%	71%	6%	31

Source: Survey among all National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

The average appropriate maximum duration of an Assistantship is approx. 48 weeks according to the answers received from the beneficiaries. The National Agencies suggested an average maximum duration of approx. 40 weeks. However, the vast majority of the National Agencies considers that the present maximum duration of 45 weeks is appropriate. Beneficiaries and National Agencies, who favour a longer maximum duration period, mainly argue that a one-year Assistantship allows beneficiaries to take part in the whole year cycle in the host organisation.

## 4.2 Motivation to apply for an Assistantship grant

The table below shows the distribution of answers from a survey among beneficiaries regarding the motivation to apply for an Assistantship grant.

**Table 4-4: Motivation to apply for an Assistantship grant**

<b>How did you get the idea to apply for a Grundtvig Assistantship?</b>		
<b>Motivation</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>It was my own idea</b>	72%	59
<b>My workplace colleagues</b>	9%	7
<b>My workplace management</b>	5%	4
<b>Others:</b>	15%	12
<b>Total</b>	101%*	82

\*The percentages add to 101% due to rounding.

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

The vast majority of beneficiaries (72%) are self-motivated to apply for an Assistantship grant. Only very few respondents indicate that the workplace management (5%) or the colleagues (9%) were the motivating factors. These results indicate that the decision to apply for an Assistantship is often not the result of an institutional strategy but rather the beneficiaries' self-motivation.

15% of beneficiaries who indicate other motivating factors for applying for an Assistantship received recommendations from friends or family, participated in conferences where the action had been advertised, or were directly invited by the National Agency.

In comparison to the Visits and Exchanges Action, more beneficiaries (18%) hesitated to apply for a longer duration Assistantship. Most of the beneficiaries' hesitations concern economic issues such as the amount of the grant, preservation of their jobs during the Assistantship, and ensuring a subsistence minimum for their family or relatives at home. Furthermore, some beneficiaries comment that leaving their job for almost one year is a big challenge from a psychological point of view.

### 4.3 Satisfaction with the host organisation

According to a survey, most beneficiaries of Assistantships (86%) are satisfied with the host organisation.

**Table 4-5: Satisfaction with the host organisation**

<b>Do you think that the host organisation did enough to ensure you a successful Assistantship?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Yes</b>	86%	68
<b>No</b>	14%	11
<b>Total</b>	100%	79

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

When asked what the host organisation could have done better, the beneficiaries mention aspects such as:

- Better follow-up and communication during the entire Assistantship period. Beneficiaries suggest regular meetings to discuss the achievement of their overall objectives and feedback on their activities.
- Providing help to look for accommodation.

- More help to organise the Assistant's activities, such as classrooms and timetables, and the Assistant's involvement in different social and training activities, professional courses for teachers and conferences.

Overall, the comments suggest improvements as regards help for organising the Assistant's activities during the term and the feedback on fulfilment of the Assistantship's objectives.

#### 4.4 Obstacles encountered by Assistants

The table below shows that the obstacles encountered by beneficiaries most frequently concern inadequate grant levels (41%), insufficient language skills (22%), failure of the host organisation to prepare thoroughly for the Assistantship (18%), and difficulties in integrating in the host organisation. The same pattern applies when obstacles are cross-tabulated with the purposes of Assistantships. The obstacle inadequate grant levels is the most frequently mentioned obstacle regardless of purpose.

Many beneficiaries report that they had hesitations about applying for an Assistantship, as it is a major step to leave jobs and families for almost a year.

31% of the Assistants have indicated "other obstacles". These obstacles mainly concern bureaucratic problems with the tax authorities in the visited country and difficulties in obtaining a residence permit. For example, an Assistant had difficulties in getting a residence permit because the contract was written in Turkish and the authorised person in the city hall did not understand Turkish. In retrospect, the Assistant would have preferred to have a contract written in English as well as in Turkish.

Another Assistant had trouble with obtaining status as a resident in the host country as the duration of his Assistantship was less than 6 months. Other obstacles mentioned were difficulties concerning accommodation and cultural shock due to the difference in values between the Assistant and his/her learners.

**Table 4-6: Obstacles encountered by Assistants**

<b>What obstacles did you encounter with regard to the implementation of your Grundtvig Assistantship?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Difficulty in finding a replacement teacher/member of staff during my absence</b>	7%	5
<b>Opposition to my Assistantship from within my organisation</b>	3%	2
<b>My insufficient language skills</b>	22%	15
<b>Inadequate level of grant provided</b>	41%	28
<b>My lack of adequate preparation</b>	3%	2
<b>Failure of the host organisation to prepare thoroughly for my Assistantship</b>	18%	12
<b>Integration difficulties within the host organisation</b>	16%	11
<b>Visa problems</b>	6%	4
<b>Other</b>	31%	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>147%*</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of Grundtvig Assistantships 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

#### 4.5 Preparation activities carried out before the Assistantship

The Assistantships Action includes funding of the pedagogic, linguistic or cultural preparation of the beneficiaries.

In a survey, the beneficiaries were asked if they had attended preparation activities before the Assistantship. Two out of three respondents confirmed that they had participated in preparation activities. Table 4-7 shows the distribution of answers by activity.

**Table 4-7: Participation in preparation activities**

<b>Participation in preparation activities</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Language-related</b>	37%	20
<b>Cultural</b>	19%	10
<b>Pedagogical</b>	7%	4
<b>Other</b>	37%	20
<b>Total</b>	100%	54

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

Linguistic preparation is the predominant preparation activity followed by cultural preparation. Cultural preparation includes activities such as acquiring knowledge about the country, the lifelong learning system and the host organisation, etc.

There is no significant correlation between gender and participation in preparation activities. Nor is there any significant correlation between the home country of the beneficiaries and participation in preparation activities.

This distribution of preparation activities shown in Table 4-7 is underpinned by the final reports of the beneficiaries, in which they briefly describe how they prepared for the Assistantships. Besides linguistic and cultural preparation, a large share of beneficiaries mentions logistical preparation. Finally, preparation of teaching materials, such as hand-outs and PowerPoint presentations, is also often mentioned.

The 37% of the Assistants who mention other preparation activities report that they have improved their knowledge in the areas of activity of the host organisation by studying the institution’s website and reading relevant literature. Some Assistants also find it relevant to take courses in the management of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Furthermore, Assistants comment that they had to carry out general preparation activities such as research on renting an apartment or a house in the host country, finishing work tasks before being replaced, travel preparations etc.

*Are the preparation activities sufficient?*

Both the National Agencies and the beneficiaries were asked whether they found the preparation activities undertaken by beneficiaries sufficient. The table below shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 4-8: Opinion on the sufficiency of preparation activities**

	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Insufficient</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	78%	22%	37
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	81%	19%	63

Source: Survey among all National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012. Note; The answers from the National Agencies relate both to the Assistantships Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action.

The vast majority of the answers received from both the National Agencies and the beneficiaries find that the preparation activities undertaken by the beneficiaries are sufficient. Regarding the group of respondents who answered “not sufficient”, they primarily mention lack of linguistic preparation. This is supported by the final reports of the beneficiaries in which they are requested to comment on encountered obstacles with regard to the implementation of the Assistantship. 22% of the beneficiaries who filled in this part of the final report mention insufficient language skills as a main obstacle with regard to the implementation of the Assistantship.

### *Should any preparation activity be compulsory?*

The National Agencies and the beneficiaries were asked if some preparation activities should be compulsory before an Assistantship. Table 4-9 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 4-9: Should any preparation activities be compulsory?**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	79%	21%	38
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	51%	49%	80

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012. Note: The answers from the National Agencies relate both to the Assistantships Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action.*

A majority of National Agencies suggest having some compulsory preparation activities before an Assistantship.

Table 4-10 shows the distribution of answers from the National Agencies with regard to the kind of preparation activities that should be made compulsory.

**Table 4-10: Preparation activities that should be compulsory**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Pedagogical</b>	53%	16
<b>Language-related</b>	77%	23
<b>Cultural</b>	57%	17
<b>Other:</b>	17%	5
<b>Total</b>	203%	61

*Source: Survey among National Agencies, February-March 2012. Note; The answers relate both to the Assistantships Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action. More than one answer was possible.*

77% of the answers received from the National Agencies would like to make linguistic preparation compulsory for the beneficiaries before implementing an Assistantship. However, a large share of respondents finds that the linguistic preparation needs to be complemented by cultural and/or pedagogical preparation. The distribution in Table 4-10 is in line with the suggestions of beneficiaries concerning compulsory preparation. Language courses are the most frequently mentioned activity followed by cultural research and special courses related to the specific work at the host organisation.

Several beneficiaries also suggest organising networking meetings as part of compulsory preparation. Network meetings would enable future Assistants to meet other assistants either in their home country to exchange experiences on rules and duties during their Assistantship; or in the host country to create a social network. This type of meetings has already been organised in some countries for Comenius Assistants.

Furthermore, National Agencies and beneficiaries request more communication and cooperation between the host and the home organisation, in particular before the Assistantship. Currently, they consider that there is not enough cooperation, as the contact with the host organisation abroad is mainly established by each individual participant. Very often, home organisations do not know where beneficiaries go and what tasks they will have.

## **4.6 Purposes of the Assistantships**

Table 4-11 shows that the most frequent purposes of Assistantships are carrying out a teaching assignment (77%), providing advice and guidance on certain aspects of adult education/learning (57%), and studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country (79%).

In comparison, studying and/or providing expertise on system-/policy-related aspects (32%) of adult education or providing training for adult education staff (32%) are less frequent purposes.

57% of the beneficiaries indicate other purposes. However, most of these beneficiaries do not specify what the other purposes are as the report layout provides only little space for other purposes. The few beneficiaries who ticked the option "other purposes" indicate language learning in the host country, translation and assistance with a conference. Furthermore, some beneficiaries indicate very specific activities such as visiting prisons and organisations for the disabled as well as attending yoga courses for teachers.

**Table 4-11: Purposes of the Assistantship**

<b>Purpose of the Assistantship</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Carrying out a teaching assignment</b>	77%	85
<b>Providing advice and guidance on certain aspects of adult education/learning</b>	57%	63
<b>Studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country</b>	79%	88
<b>Studying and/or providing expertise on system/policy-related aspects of adult education</b>	32%	35
<b>Providing training for adult education staff</b>	32%	35
<b>Other (please specify):</b>	57%	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>332%*</b>	<b>369</b>

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of Grundtvig Assistantships 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

The following sections describe the purposes and activities in more detail.

#### *Carrying out a teaching assignment*

Reviewing the comments, about half of the beneficiaries note that they had teaching assignments where they had full responsibility for the teaching activities and prepared all necessary materials and presentations. The other half of the beneficiaries mainly assisted with and supported the teaching assignments. Beneficiaries describe that they assisted the teachers at their host organisations in planning and carrying out the teaching and that they “sat in on” various activities.

However, the picture is quite mixed as some beneficiaries have had full responsibility for some teaching sessions and part responsibility for other activities.

#### *Profiles of learners*

According to the beneficiaries’ descriptions, the learners had very different profiles, age levels and levels of ability. In many cases, the beneficiaries taught students of different grades with very different skill levels. One beneficiary describes how he undertook language conversation classes where most of the 50 students were Spanish aged 18-50 years including 33 at basic level, 10 at intermediate and 7 at advanced level. Another beneficiary reports having been fully responsible for 12 learners, some with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities, while the level of knowledge was quite different from learner to learner.

#### *Many assignments concern foreign language learning*

The teaching assignments covered a wide range of themes. However, foreign language learning is the most frequent assignment. Some of the beneficiaries indicate the level of language learning on the



CEFR scale. Example: “I was teaching French: A1, A2, B1” and “I was teaching an individual English student level B1”.

### *Provision of advice and guidance*

Concerning the provision of advice and guidance beneficiaries reported the following activities:

- language teaching methods;
- advice on language grammar to teaching staff;
- preparation of promotional and educational materials;
- job-searching for immigrants;
- pedagogic and organisational strategies, for example, how to assist adult students in their learning process to achieve their full learning potential;
- how to support integration of minorities; and
- guiding students, for example, on further education and possibilities for qualification regarding the special needs of women living in the countryside.

Overall, the most frequent target group of the beneficiaries’ advice and guidance is the teachers at the host organisation. In a few cases, the target group are learners.

### *Studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country*

79% of the beneficiaries have studied aspects of adult education/learning in the host country. The studied aspects represent a very diverse list, and it is difficult to deduct common patterns. However, the trend is that most aspects tend to concern provision of adult education at system level or societal level – and not so much pedagogical aspects and practices at “classroom” level.

The following are some of the aspects mentioned by beneficiaries:

- social work and social assistance;
- gender issues;
- non-formal education system in France;
- sustainable living;
- aspects of adult education systems in general;
- effects of foreign culture on learning English;
- sociolinguistic aspects;
- dynamics of social communication and nature-based learning;
- cognitive capabilities of adults;
- organisation and advertising of language courses for adults and students as well as the normative and legal base for organising and carrying out language courses;
- observing the special education that the performing arts require;
- adult learning of ethnic minorities; and
- informal adult education systems, for example, the network of folk high schools in Denmark.

The aspects tend to concern adult education systems and provision of adult education at system level, for example, informal education systems and adult learning of ethnic minorities.

### *Activities related to system- and policy-related aspects of adult education*

Overall, the activities under this purpose mainly concern organising conferences, workshops, seminars, and building communities on various aspects of adult education policies.

The themes include:

- promotion of art, cultural diversity and equal opportunities in adult education;
- intercultural workshops aimed at strengthening tolerance;
- how to manage cultural centres;
- minority business communities and how these can be strengthened by adult education;
- reducing the digital divide;
- enhancing antidiscrimination and equal opportunities at work; and
- compulsory use of e-learning in teacher education.

Even though diverse aspects are indicated, the descriptions show that the aspects tend to concern inclusion, i.e. how to reduce social exclusion/discrimination and the digital divide.

### *Provision of training for adult education staff*

32% of the beneficiaries have provided training activities for the adult education staff of their host organisations which include:

- teaching English tutors;
- assisting the supervisor of a parent training programme;
- helping with daily administrative tasks and website content, graphic design assistance and film editing;
- provision and assisting to the IT staff;
- supervision for an intercultural communications workshop;
- assisted artistic therapeutic workshops with and for addicts in a rehabilitation centre with 18-20 addicts; and
- teaching English courses to colleagues.

The above-mentioned activities indicate that the training directed at adult education staff mainly has the form of assistance and practical help for teachers and other groups of staff at the host organisation. In other words, the training is mainly informal, taking place through daily interaction and shared relationships between the beneficiary and staff at the host organisation.

### *New purposes*

Almost all respondents among the National Agencies (98%) do not think that there are any other purposes and activities that the Grundtvig Assistantships Action should support. Among the beneficiaries of Assistantships the result is similar. A few beneficiaries, however, suggest that the Assistantships Action should support the following activities in the future:

- learning languages;
- cooperation in the field of sport;
- social entrepreneurship in the context of non-formal adult education; and
- mobility schemes for mature applicants, who would like to have a work experience abroad. The beneficiary's argument for this proposal is that there are plenty of opportunities for young professionals, but not for professionals over 40.

Furthermore, beneficiaries add that the Assistantships Action should retain its open-minded understanding of the terms "education" and "learning" so that the Action also encourages non-formal learning and learning experiences that take place outside the classroom or formal teaching environment.

## 4.7 Educational background

The Action addresses present or future teachers, trainers or other staff with experience from the adult education sector. According to a survey among the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action, 44% of the respondents were adult education teachers before their Assistantship. The remaining 56% of beneficiaries had other educational backgrounds such as cultural management, psychology, pedagogy, art, music, literature, journalism, foreign language teaching, linguistic, political science and many others. Furthermore, many indicate a background related to cultural fields such as theatre, drama, ballet or music.

The educational background of the participants in the Assistantships Action ranges from bachelor to post-doctoral level.

Table 4- 12 shows the beneficiaries' level of education before their Assistantship.

**Table 4-12: Beneficiaries' educational level before an Assistantship**

<b>What level of education did you have before your Assistantship?</b>		
<b>Educational level</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Secondary education</b>	0%	0
<b>Bachelor</b>	23%	18
<b>Master</b>	71%	56
<b>Doctor</b>	5%	4
<b>Post-doctoral</b>	1%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

The table shows that the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action have a high level of education. The vast majority has a Master's degree, while none of the respondents in the survey only had a secondary education as his/her highest educational level. Master's degrees awarded to beneficiaries are primarily within the fields of arts and social sciences.

#### 4.8 Employment status of beneficiaries

According to the survey, 70% of the beneficiaries of Assistantships were employed before the Assistantship, most of them (65%) in an adult education organisation.

The other 35% of the beneficiaries were employed in different types of organisations such as

- self-employed people in the field of training and learning, mental health, etc.;
- project development trainer in the field of adult education;
- freelance lecturer at high schools and different adult education institutions;
- part time lecturer;
- NGOs, typically as volunteers; and
- private companies outside adult education, such as marketing company, shopping centre, etc.

In general, beneficiaries employed outside adult education organisations are self-employed or part-time employed persons in positions related to the field of education or volunteering.

30% of the beneficiaries were unemployed before their Assistantship, but the share of unemployed beneficiaries varies considerably across countries. Most unemployed beneficiaries come from Italy, Portugal and Turkey. Nevertheless, the low number of beneficiaries when cross-tabulating the results does not allow for generalisations.

**Table 4-13: Employment status before the Assistantship**

<b>What was your employment status before the Assistantship?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	30%	24
<b>Employed</b>	70%	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>81</b>

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

The high share of unemployed people may be logical, as unemployed people do not have the same hesitations as employed people about leaving a job for almost one year.

*Assistantships enhance beneficiaries' employment perspectives and professional development*

According to the survey, 69% of the beneficiaries were working when they participated in the survey, and many of them (54%) think that their Assistantship helped them find a new job.

**Table 4-114: The Assistantship helped beneficiaries find a new job**

<b>Did the Assistantship help you find a new job?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Yes</b>	54%	27
<b>No</b>	46%	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

Furthermore, 91% of the beneficiaries of Assistantships who participated in the survey think that their Assistantship helped them to improve their career in adult education and their professional development in the following ways:

- participating in new international networks and cooperation activities in Europe;
- improving language competences;
- improving professional competences in specific fields, e.g. in the field of audio lingual methods of teaching; and
- broadening cultural horizons.

*Attraction of the intended target groups*

Based on the compiled statistics of the final reports and surveys among beneficiaries, the study team concludes that, the Assistantships Action has generally attracted the intended target groups. The Action has attracted persons of various employment statuses, who have work experience in the field of adult education. The Action has also attracted a considerable percentage of unemployed persons and helped many of them to find a new job in adult education.

The table below presents the arguments for this conclusion point by point.

**Table 4-15: Attraction of the intended target groups by the Assistantships Action**

<b>Description of target group</b>	<b>Has the intended target group been attracted?</b>
"Persons at any stage in their career who are already working on a part- or full-time basis in any part of the adult education sector (formal, non-formal or informal), including volunteer staff as well as those who are formally employed. "	Yes. According to the survey, most of the beneficiaries (65%) were employed in an adult education organisation. The remaining 35% were employed outside adult education organisations and were self-employed or part-time employed in positions that are related to the field of education or voluntary work. For example, self-employed people in the field of training, learning and mental health, part time lecturer or NGOs.
"Persons involved in the training of adult education staff."	Yes. According to the survey, 32% of the beneficiaries had indicated the purpose "Providing training for adult education staff". However, data provide no quantitative information on training of adult education staff before the Assistantship.
"Persons who can demonstrate a clear intention of working in adult education but who are currently in some other labour market situation (work in another field, retirement, absent from	Yes. According to the survey, 30% of the beneficiaries were unemployed before their Assistantship, and more than half of them could find a job later due to the Assistantship. Many of them started working in adult education institution and universities after their Assistantship.

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professional life due to family responsibilities, unemployment, etc.), whether or not they have worked in adult education before.”

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“Persons who have completed a qualification leading to a career in adult education and who intend to start working in adult education.”

Yes. 44% of the beneficiaries have completed a qualification in the field of adult education.

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“Students who have completed at least two years of study leading to a degree or equivalent qualification in adult education/andragogy or who are enrolled in master level studies in this field.”

Yes. 44% of the beneficiaries have completed a qualification in the field of adult education. 30% of these have completed an education at bachelor level and 70% at master level or higher.

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The high share of beneficiaries with a Master’s degree (71%) may indicate that the Action is not reaching those who should generally benefit from additional learning opportunities. In most countries, a Master’s degree is not a formal requirement for becoming an adult educator and it appears that Assistantships beneficiaries are atypical compared to the general population of adult educators. A similar finding has been identified in the study of the Grundtvig In-Service Training Action.

The decision to apply for an Assistantship is often not the result of an institutional strategy but rather the beneficiaries’ own idea, as most of the beneficiaries (72%) were self-motivated to participate in an Assistantship.

According to the survey, almost a third of the beneficiaries (30%) were unemployed before the Assistantship, presumably because interrupting their career for almost one year is not an impediment for this target group. From an economic point of view, many beneficiaries are hesitant about applying for an Assistantship and interrupting their career for almost one year, and many report that the level of grant is insufficient, as some countries have a high cost of living. Consequently, in order to motivate more employed applicants to apply for an Assistantship, it may be appropriate to amend the level of funding.

## 5. Certification of the Assistantships

Learning that takes place in formal education and training systems is traditionally the most visible and recognised in the labour market and by society as a whole. However, there is agreement that non-formal and informal learning contributes considerably to personal and professional development. Validation of non-formal or informal learning is a key element of the European Agenda for Adult Learning aimed at putting in place fully functional systems for validating non-formal and informal learning and promoting their use by adults of all ages and at all qualifications levels, as well as by enterprises and other organisations.<sup>13</sup>

The Assistantships Action promotes formal, informal and non-formal learning activities that provide beneficiaries with new knowledge, skills and competences. With a view to the European Commission's priority accorded to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, it is important that skills and competences acquired during Assistantships are validated and recognised.

This chapter analyses what kind of certification or recognition the beneficiaries have received after their Assistantship. Furthermore, we analyse beneficiaries and National Agencies' proposals on how the certification and recognition could be improved.

### 5.1 Type of recognition

The survey of the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action indicates that most of them (70%) received some kind of certification/recognition/credit for the activities carried out during their Assistantship. However, most of the beneficiaries (91%) of the survey consider that it is important to receive a document of certification. These results indicate that certification and recognition of the learning outcomes achieved during the Assistantship should be improved. Most of the beneficiaries (82%) who received a certificate were satisfied with the document and think that the certification/recognition document provides useful and clear information on their Assistantships.

Table 5-1 shows that the majority of beneficiaries (80%) received a certificate of participation from the host organisation/conference organiser, while only 14% of beneficiaries received a recognition document such as the Europass Mobility document or other recognition documents on their return to their home organisation (11%). 20% of the respondents indicate other types of certification/recognition. Some of these include certificates from other specific programmes such as the VOICE training projector e-SPICES training course (Electronic Social Promotion of Intercultural Communication Expertise and Skills). Other Assistants indicate that they have received a transfer of 21 credits for the third year Professional Bachelor Secondary Education. Furthermore, other Assistants have received a "recommendation letter" or "letter of confirmation" from their host organisation, confirming the activities carried out during their Assistantship.

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<sup>13</sup> Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (2011/C 372/01) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:372:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

**Table 5-1: Certification/recognition**

<b>Please specify the type of certification/recognition/credit received for activities carried out during the Assistantship</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Europass Mobility document</b>	14%	15
<b>Certificate from host organisation/conference organiser</b>	80%	84
<b>Recognition on return to your home organisation</b>	11%	12
<b>Other (please specify):</b>	20%	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>126%*</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

## 5.2 Improvement in the certification and recognition

The beneficiaries of Assistantships who participated in the survey suggest that the certification could be improved by establishing a European standard document to be used for the certification and recognition of the learning outcomes achieved from all Grundtvig Staff Mobility Actions. They suggest that the certification/recognition tool should have a common format and describe the activities carried out during the staff mobility Action in question. Some beneficiaries suggest that the Europass Mobility document should be made compulsory and be awarded to all beneficiaries who have completed their Assistantships.

Table 5-1 shows that only 14% of the beneficiaries of the study received a Europass Mobility document, and thus the number of beneficiaries who have received a Europass Mobility document is rather modest, and a conclusion cannot be drawn as to which countries mainly issue Europass Mobility documents.

The Europass Mobility document may need more promotion, as some beneficiaries state that they did not know about the possibility of receiving a Europass Mobility document. Furthermore, they comment that many host organisations do not know about the Europass Mobility document either.

## 6. Impact of the Assistantships Action

Strengthening the monitoring and impact assessment of the development and performance of the adult learning sector and making better use of existing instruments where possible, is one of the objectives of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.<sup>14</sup> With a view to this priority area of monitoring the adult learning sector, the analysis of the impact of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action focuses on the extent to which the Action has achieved its objectives.

The overall objectives of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action are to give participants the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the European dimension to adult learning, enhance their knowledge of foreign languages, other European countries and their adult education systems, and improve their professional and intercultural competences.

This chapter analysis the following types of impact of the Assistantships Action at individual and institutional level:

- Impact on beneficiaries' personal and professional development: To what extent has the Assistantship had an impact on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary?
- Impact on the home organisation and its local community: To what extent has the Assistantship had an impact on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community?
- Impact on the host organisation and its local community: To what extent has the Assistantship had an impact on the host organisation and its local community?

The analysis of these three types of impacts is based on data from beneficiaries' final reports and surveys among beneficiaries. In addition, surveys and additional interviews have been carried out with home organisations of beneficiaries.

### 6.1 Impact on beneficiaries' personal and professional development

Table 6-1 shows the impact of the Assistantships Action on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary.

Table 6-1: Personal and professional development of the beneficiary

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>Refreshed my interest in the subject(s)</b>	1%	1%	8%	25%	65%	110
<b>Improved my foreign language competence</b>	2%	2%	8%	24%	64%	112
<b>Encouraged me to adopt a more reflective approach to the way I teach/carry out my duties, or to the teaching/working methods used in my organisation</b>	3%	2%	12%	28%	56%	111
<b>Improved my knowledge of the subject taught (or of my professional area)</b>	2%	5%	13%	33%	48%	109
<b>Gave me a wider range of teaching approaches/methods/techniques/materials to choose from</b>	5%	1%	15%	25%	54%	112
<b>Increased my awareness of new methods of assessing/giving credit for skills or competences acquired in non-formal/informal learning contexts</b>	4%	2%	18%	32%	44%	112

<sup>14</sup> For further information about the European Agenda for Adult Learning, please follow the link: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-adult\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-adult_en.htm)



Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>Encouraged me to read more about latest research in teaching/in my subject</b>	1%	6%	23%	33%	37%	109
<b>Enhanced my organisation/management/leadership skills (classroom management, counselling...)</b>	3%	1%	18%	40%	38%	109
<b>Encouraged me to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the classroom</b>	8%	17%	16%	25%	34%	108
<b>Upgraded my knowledge of other countries/cultures/education systems</b>	0%	0%	5%	19%	77%*	111
<b>Increased my awareness of European funding mechanisms for adult education projects/org.</b>	1%	3%	13%	29%	55%*	111
<b>Encouraged me to participate in other Grundtvig activities or activities under other parts of the LLP</b>	2%	3%	9%	22%	65%*	110
<b>Motivated me to carry on developing my professional skills in the future</b>	0%	0%	1%	12%	87%	111
<b>Enhanced my career prospects</b>	0%	2%	10%	28%	60%	110

\* The percentages add to 101% due to rounding.

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action 2009-2011

Table 6-1 shows that the highest shares of beneficiaries indicating strong impact (level 5) are related to the following aspects:

- Motivated me to carry on developing my professional skills in the future (87%);
- Upgraded my knowledge of other countries'/cultures'/education systems (77%);
- Refreshed my interest in the subject(s) (65%);
- Encouraged me to participate in other Grundtvig activities or activities under other parts of the LLP (65%).

In contrast, relatively moderate shares of beneficiaries have indicated "strong impact" (level 5) of the following aspects:

- Encouraged me to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the classroom (34%);
- Encouraged me to read more about latest research in teaching/ my subject (37%);
- Increased my awareness of new methods of assessing/giving credit for skills or competences acquired in non-formal/informal learning contexts (44%).

In conclusion, at the level of personal and professional development, the Assistantship primarily enhances the beneficiaries' motivation to carry on their professional development within a European context and gain an insight into other countries' educational systems. In addition, participation in Assistantships activities enhances beneficiaries' interest in participating in other Grundtvig Actions or activities under other parts of the LLP. According to the final reports, beneficiaries have particularly improved their teaching competences in relation to teaching in another language and improved their international/European perspective on subjects.

#### *Impact of the Assistantships Action in relation to European priorities*

The policy initiatives 'Agenda for new skills and jobs'<sup>15</sup>, 'Innovation Union'<sup>16</sup> and 'A Digital Agenda for Europe'<sup>17</sup> underline the importance of raising the level of basic skills and promoting transversal

<sup>15</sup> COM(2010) 682 final  
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competences such as entrepreneurship, digital literacy and multilingual skills. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) stresses the importance of transversal competences such as entrepreneurship, digital competence and multilingualism.

Table 6-1 indicates that the Assistantships Action to a large extent has contributed to the development of skills and competences that are in line with these European priorities.

*Assistantships improve foreign language learning.* Many beneficiaries report that they have improved their foreign language competences (65% report very strong impact). In their comments, many beneficiaries report that they have improved their foreign language teaching competences and that their cultural experience has enriched the content of their courses.

*Assistantships improve ICT-skills.* More than one third of the beneficiaries (34%) indicate in their final report that the Assistantships activities have strongly encouraged them to use more ICT in the classroom. Similarly, 37% answer that they have improved their competence in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments, i.e. being an ICT-facilitator. The improved ICT-facilitator competences are important viewed in relation to the objective of enhancing digital literacy.

*Assistantships improve competences related to the provision of basic skills.* An analysis of the content and purpose of the Assistantships Action indicates that many beneficiaries have acquired competences related to new ways of organising learning and educational provision of basic skills to disadvantaged learners. Improving basic skills is a key objective of Europe 2020 and an adequate level of skills is a prerequisite for the further updating of skills. Updating of skills is considered important to counter the increasing income polarisation in the labour market and because low-skilled occupations increasingly require additional competences.

*Assistantships improve intercultural competences in education.* A large share of beneficiaries report (77% report very strong impact) that they have upgraded their knowledge of other countries, cultures and education systems. In their comments, many beneficiaries emphasise that they have been enriched with an international/European perspective on their subjects. They report that the experience of being away from family, friends and colleagues offers the opportunity to immerse oneself completely in another country's educational culture and specific professional themes.

In their final reports and in the survey, beneficiaries mentioned further types of impact of the Assistantship on their personal and professional development:

- Improved competences for teaching in another language.
- Revitalisation of professional development. Some beneficiaries describe prevention of “occupational burnout”, and that they have explored new areas where their skills can be used.
- International/European perspective on subjects. Beneficiaries report that their cultural experience has enriched the content of their courses. They report that they have acquired more knowledge on how to conceive European projects and to apply for them.
- Better skills/IT-skills related to the development of teaching materials for adult learners.

### *Many Assistants motivate their colleagues to apply for an Assistantship*

63% of the beneficiaries in the survey answer that their Assistantship has inspired other colleagues in their home organisation to apply for a Grundtvig Assistantship. On average, beneficiaries from a Grundtvig Assistantship have inspired 1-2 colleagues. This result confirms the general conclusion that the main impact of the Assistantships is on the personal and professional development of the beneficiaries, but there is also an impact on the home organisation as beneficiaries share their experiences with colleagues and motivate them to apply for an Assistantship.

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<sup>16</sup> COM(2010) 546 final

<sup>17</sup> COM(2010) 245 final/2

## 6.2 Impact on beneficiaries' home organisation and its local community

Table 6-2 shows the impact of the Assistantships Action on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community.

**Table 6-2: Impact on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community**

Type of impact The Assistantship:	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
Helped me better motivate learners in the subject I teach	3%	7%	8%	36%	46%	74
Helped me increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics	0%	1%	18%	35%	46%	74
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities	0%	7%	12%	32%	49%	74
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes	1%	4%	9%	36%	49%	74
Led or will lead to the use of new teaching methods/approaches in my organisation	4%	3%	16%	33%	44%	75
Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching subject(s) in my organisation	9%	12%	22%	31%	26%	74
Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way my organisation is managed	24%	11%	41%	9%	15%	74
Extended the range of services provided by the organisation	10%	15%	31%	25%	19%	72
Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of my organisation	1%	5%	26%	31%	36%	74
Helped me open my organisation to new groups of adult learners	15%	7%	32%	25%	22%	73
Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself	8%	6%	32%	33%	21%	72

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action 2009-2011

Table 6-2 shows that the highest shares of beneficiaries indicating a "strong impact" (level 5) are related to the following aspects:

- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities (49%)
- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes (49%)
- Helped me better motivate learners in the subject I teach (46%)
- Helped me increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics (46%)

In contrast, relatively moderate shares of beneficiaries have indicated a "strong impact" (level 5) related to the following aspects:

- Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way my organisation is managed (15%)
- Extended the range of services provided by the organisation (19%);
- Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself (21%).

All in all, the Assistantships helped beneficiaries become better at motivating their learners in the subjects they taught and motivating their colleagues and learners to participate in European educational programmes. In comparison, there is a moderate organisational impact such as

introduction of changes in the way the home organisation is managed or the range of services provided by the organisation.

In their final reports and in the survey, beneficiaries were requested to describe the impact of the Assistantship on their personal and professional development. Some 30% of the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action report that they were not employed in an organisation before the Assistantship. Some of these applicants applied for an Assistantship as freelancers and could not report any impact on their home organisation. Consequently, due to the high share of unemployed participants or freelancers, who cannot comment on the impact of the Assistantship on their home organisation, the impact of the Assistantships Action on beneficiaries' home organisations is rather moderate according to the results of the analysis.

In general, beneficiaries report the following types of impact on their home organisations:

- The home organisation has been exposed to new ways of working/methodologies and practices within the field of adult education, e.g. as regards non-formal learning opportunities, new ways to support learners with the application for EU projects.
- Beneficiaries motivated their colleagues to participate in other European Grundtvig Actions or projects.
- Home organisations improved their international networks and collaboration with other adult education organisations.

### 6.3 Impact on beneficiaries' host organisation and its local community

Table 6-3 shows the impact of the Assistantships Action on the host organisation and its local community.

**Table 6-3: Impact on the host organisation and its local community**

Type of impact	1= No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
Helped to better motivate learners in the subject I teach	6%	4%	19%	31%	40%	103
Helped to increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics	3%	4%	17%	43%	33%	105
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities	2%	6%	25%	33%	34%	105
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes	4%	3%	20%	32%	41%	102
Led or will lead to the use of new teaching methods/approaches in this organisation	13%	8%	24%	30%	25%	103
Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching subject(s) in this organisation	20%	14%	23%	24%	18%	103
Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way this organisation is managed	29%	17%	30%	17%	7%	103
Extended the range of services provided by the organisation	15%	14%	23%	28%	20%	103
Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of the organisation	2%	10%	13%	34%	41%	105
Helped open the organisation to new groups of adult learners	16%	10%	25%	30%	19%	103
Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself	9%	14%	23%	25%	29%	103

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action 2009-2011

Table 6-3 shows that the highest shares of beneficiaries that indicate a “strong impact” (level 5) are related to the following aspects:

- Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of the organisation (41%)
- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes (41%)
- Helped to better motivate learners in the subject I teach (40%).

In comparison, relatively moderate shares of beneficiaries have indicated a “strong impact” (level 5) related to the following aspects:

- Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way this organisation is managed (7%);
- Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching subject(s) in this organisation (18%);
- Helped open the organisation to new groups of adult learners (19%).

In general, the highest shares of beneficiaries report a considerable impact of their Assistantship on learners and colleagues from their host organisation, while moderate shares of beneficiaries report organisational impacts such as changes in the way the organisation is managed or the introduction of new teaching subjects in the host organisation.

Some beneficiaries mention the following impacts of their Assistantship on their host organisation:

- Assistants bring knowledge and new insights into the host organisation in specific fields. For example, a beneficiary reports that “I demonstrated to students that having a disability should not be an obstacle for learning foreign languages.”
- Assistants introduce new subjects in the host organisation. For example, a beneficiary reports that “before my work as a Grundtvig Assistant, the host organisation provided only English lessons.”
- Host organisations extend their international contacts and networks.

In some cases, Assistants could not have much impact on the host organisation due to the economic and financial crisis. For example, a beneficiary reports that the economic crisis impeded the realisation of his proposal at a host organisation in Spain.

## 6.4 Development of competences related to adult learning

Table 6-4 shows to what extent the Assistantships have improved the competences needed by adult learning professionals. The present study uses the framework of competences developed by Research voor Beleid in the study “Key competences for adult learning professionals” in 2010.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, the framework of competences distinguishes between: a) competences related to being directly involved in the learning process and b) competences related to being supportive for the learning process.

Table 6-4 shows the **most** frequently improved competences in the framework of a Grundtvig Assistantship:

- Competence in assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivations and wishes of adult learners: being able to assess adult learners’ learning needs (81%).
- Competence in selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods and content for the adult learning process: being able to design the learning process (81%).
- Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and stimulating an adult learner’s own development (76%).

The **least** frequently improved competences after a Grundtvig Assistantship are:

- Competence in managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of the provision: being financially responsible (14%);

<sup>18</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/keycomp.pdf>

- Competence in managing and leading the adult learning institute in general and managing the quality of the provision of the adult learning institute: being a general manager (17%);
- Competence in managing human resources in an adult learning institute: being a (people) manager (24%).

As a whole, the competences most improved by the Assistantships Action are competences related to being directly involved in the adult learning process, whereas competences supportive for the adult learning process, such as management, finances and human resource management, are relatively less improved.

**Table 6-4: Improvement in competences related to adult learning**

<b>Please indicate below which of the following types of competences your Assistantship helped to improve</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Competence in assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivations and wishes of adult learners: being able to assess adult learners' learning needs.	81%	63
Competence in selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods and content for the adult learning process: being able to design the learning process.	81%	63
Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and stimulating an adult learner's own development.	76%	59
Competence in continuously monitoring and evaluating the adult learning process to improve it: being an evaluator of the learning process.	55%	43
Competence in advising on career, life, further development and, if necessary, the use of professional help: being an advisor/counsellor.	35%	27
Competence in designing and constructing study programmes: being a programme developer.	50%	39
Competence in managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of the provision: being financially responsible.	14%	11
Competence in managing human resources in an adult learning institute: being a (people) manager.	24%	19
Competence in managing and leading the adult learning institute in general and managing the quality of the provision of the adult learning institute: being a general manager.	17%	13
Competence in marketing and public relations: being able to reach the target groups and promoting the institute.	36%	28
Competence in dealing with administrative issues and informing adult learners and adult learning professionals: being supportive in administrative areas.	40%	31
Competence in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments: being an ICT-facilitator.	37%	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>545%*</b>	<b>425</b>

Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

Overall, the Assistantships Action has impact at all levels; however the impact mainly tends to improve the professional development of the beneficiary and the internationalisation of home organisations in the form of more new projects, exchanges and partnerships. The Assistantships Action has helped the

beneficiary to better motivate the learners in his/her subjects. However, we do not have much information on how and to what extent the impact is beneficial to the learners of adult education.

## 6.5 Dissemination and follow-up activities

In general, dissemination activities are essential for enhancing cooperation and partnership between all stakeholders relevant to adult learning such as public authorities, providers of adult learning opportunities, social partners and civil society organisations.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the Assistantships Action, dissemination and follow-up activities insure the transfer of good results from beneficiaries to their colleagues and learners in their home organisations, host organisations and their local communities as well as to other stakeholders at national or international level.

Before the Assistantship, beneficiaries of a Grundtvig Assistantship are requested to provide a dissemination plan in their application forms and describe to whom they will provide feedback on the Assistantship concerning the new knowledge and skills they will acquire. After their Assistantship, beneficiaries have to describe in their final reports what dissemination and follow-up activities they have provided or plan to provide in connection with their Assistantship.

Beneficiaries' comments from their final reports concerning the scope of their dissemination cover the following categories of dissemination: dissemination at the host organisation, dissemination at the home organisation and dissemination at national and international level.

### *Dissemination and follow-up activities in the host organisation*

About 10-15% of the beneficiaries has plans for or has carried out dissemination activities targeting the host organisation and its local community. Some have written newsletters to the host organisation or have been interviewed by the local media.

### *Dissemination and follow-up activities in the home organisation*

More than 60% of the beneficiaries report that they intend to carry out or have carried out dissemination activities in their home organisation, in particular by sharing their experiences with colleagues and students. Many beneficiaries also describe their experiences in reports, articles and newsletter published on the home organisations' website. In some cases, the same beneficiary disseminates articles and newsletter for both the host and the home organisation.

### *Broader dissemination at national and international level*

About 30% of the beneficiaries report that they have carried out dissemination at national and/or international level targeting National Agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, etc. For example, beneficiaries have disseminated information/reports in their home and host organisation and in the National Agency of their home countries. Other beneficiaries have disseminated articles to NGOs such as organisations specialising in tackling social inclusion. Other beneficiaries report at national level via associations of educational institutions. In Portugal, for example, a beneficiary reports to have disseminated information via RUTIS, an association that has 143 associate third age universities in Portugal and the Portuguese islands (Azores and Madeira). The report describing the knowledge and experiences acquired during the Assistantship was sent to 143 universities, corresponding to 20,000 students, 2,800 volunteer researchers and 600 directors.

In general, beneficiaries describe comprehensive dissemination activities targeting multiple information channels and target groups. However, as mentioned in section 4.8, significant shares of beneficiaries were not employed in an organisation, worked as freelancers or were unemployed. These beneficiaries mostly disseminate information at national level.

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<sup>19</sup> Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (2011/C 372/01): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:372:0001:0006:EN:PDF>



## 7. European added value

The European Added Value describes the results of the synergy which emerges from European cooperation and which constitutes a distinctive European dimension in addition to actions and policies at Member State level.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the European Added Value is understood as the ‘European dimension’ of a project or an Action such as the Grundtvig Assistantships Action. In the context of adult education, the European dimension of a learning activity refers to the added value of an activity carried out in a European country other than that in which participants normally work or live.

With this starting point, this chapter focuses on the following issues:

- Has the Assistantship in another country been more valuable than a similar activity in the beneficiary’s home country?
- What are the benefits of carrying out an Assistantship in a European country other than that in which participants normally work or live?

Concerning the first question, about half of the beneficiaries (47%) of the survey answered “yes”. Among the National Agencies, all respondents (100%) believed that an Assistantship in another country is more valuable than a similar activity in the beneficiary’s home country.

Beneficiaries have described the European Added Value of their Assistantship as follows:

- Increased internationalisation of their home organisations, which includes new cooperation activities and new projects between home organisations and host organisations.
- Other beneficiaries report that their Assistantships have led or are expected to lead to Grundtvig Learning Partnerships.

Furthermore, host and home organisations have started to collaborate on new activities such as development of teaching and e-learning materials.

- Use of Europass tools. Some of the beneficiaries, approximately 15%, report that they have used Europass tools in relation to their Assistantship. In general, they have used the Europass CV and/or the Europass Language Passport to make their skills and qualifications easily and clearly understood.
- Beneficiaries inform colleagues at their home organisations about international networks in which they participate or to which they subscribe.
- The Assistantship has given the beneficiary access to educational programmes/projects that were not available in the beneficiary’s home country.
- Assistantships increases beneficiaries’ motivation to learn. Being away from family, friends and colleagues offers the opportunity to completely immerse in another culture and adult education system.
- The Assistantship has given the beneficiary access to broader international networks of teachers that are not too frequent, for example, language teachers for disabled learners.

An increased European dimension of the subject.

- New comparative insight. Many beneficiaries report that their Assistantship has given them the possibility to compare educational systems, methods and cultures and that this enriches their learning.

Comments from beneficiaries show that they have experienced that visiting an adult education organisation abroad has a European added value due to the increased international collaboration on new projects between the home and the host organisation as well as other adult education stakeholders, and extends the beneficiaries’ perspective with an international, European perspective.

<sup>20</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/guide/glossary\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/guide/glossary_en.html)

These results on the European added value of this study are very similar to the findings of the study on the In-Service Training Action, in which more than 75% of beneficiaries found that they became more aware of the European dimension and applied it in their teaching.

## 8. Management of and future improvements in the Assistantships Action

The management of the Assistantships Action refers to the way the Action is organised, the application procedure, the grant level, the scope of activities and the cooperation between home and host organisations.

This chapter analyses proposals and comments received from beneficiaries and National Agencies on the future improvements in the Assistantships Action to make it more attractive and to improve its management and implementation. In order to achieve genuine and unbiased proposals, the study team addressed National Agencies and beneficiaries with open questions concerning the most needed possible improvements. The analysis of the proposals received is based on the following main issues:

- New purposes: Is the present scope of activities funded by the Assistantships Action sufficient? Should the Assistantships Action support new purposes?
- Management and administration: How could management and administrative procedures of the Action be improved?

### 8.1 The application procedure for an Assistantship

Both beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action and the National Agencies were asked about their opinion on the present application procedure. Table 8-1 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 8-1: Opinion about the application procedure by respondent group**

<b>Do you think that the application procedure for Assistantships works well?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	62%	38%	39
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	93%	7%	82

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.*

There is a significant difference in the distribution of answers between the two groups. While most of the beneficiaries think that the application procedure works well, 38% of the answers received from the National Agencies are negative. The most common statements about why the application procedure does not work well are listed below:

- The application form is too long and complicated. Most of the respondents with this opinion argue for an online application procedure.
- Some important questions in the application form are missing (What do you do professionally and/or what are your everyday tasks in the organisation?).
- A European database containing contact information on potential host organisations would facilitate the application procedure.
- The present application procedure is an administrative burden for the National Agencies, as information from the application forms needs to be entered manually into the LLPLink.

#### *Submitting applications through an organisation in the future*

In the future, the EU's education programme 2014-2020 proposes that applications be submitted by organisations instead of individuals. Beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action and the National Agencies were asked about their opinion about this change in the application procedure. Table 8-2 summarises the main views of both groups of respondents.

**Table 8-2: Opinion about leaving the individual application procedure by respondent group**

<b>What do you think that the advantages of not having an application procedure for individuals could be?</b>			
<b>What do you think that the disadvantages of replacing the application procedure for individual applicants by an application procedure through organisations could be?</b>			
	<b>Advantages of not having application procedure for individuals</b>	<b>Disadvantages of changing the application procedure for individuals</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearer link to adult education and an opportunity to target certain themes.</li> <li>▪ Higher quality of applications</li> <li>▪ Reduced administrative burden for National Agencies</li> <li>▪ Better usage of funds</li> <li>▪ The impact would be more evident.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unemployed people will not be able to apply.</li> <li>▪ Freelancers will be excluded, unless they can find a sending organisation.</li> <li>▪ Future adult learning providers are excluded.</li> <li>▪ Such a procedure inhibits individual freedom and initiative.</li> <li>▪ Large organisations will often have an advantage compared to smaller organisations.</li> </ul>	<b>34</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dissemination of the lessons learnt during the Assistantship will improve.</li> <li>▪ Organisations can consider their own priorities in order to send their employees/members abroad.</li> <li>▪ Organisational support for the application procedure is an advantage. Less administrative work for the individual means more time for preparation.</li> <li>▪ Organisations will promote the action more if the benefits are clearer from an organisational perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The employability dimension of an Assistantship is lost.</li> <li>▪ Volunteers working in organisations will often be better at handling an application than the organisation.</li> <li>▪ Takes away the personal responsibility and engagement</li> <li>▪ Freelancers are excluded.</li> <li>▪ Applicants from organisations already have other opportunities to go abroad.</li> <li>▪ Many organisations have no interest in sending employees abroad and will not pass the information about the action to potential applicants.</li> <li>▪ Unemployed people are excluded.</li> </ul>	<b>55-59</b>

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.*

Summarising the table above, both groups of respondents see advantages of the organisational application procedure. The main advantages mentioned by National Agencies refer to less paperwork for beneficiaries, higher quality of the Action, and more focus on the organisational impact of the Action and its activities. Home organisations will be able to use the Action more strategically, by deciding on the staff to be sent abroad, and establishing more systematic follow-up to ensure that the staff, learners and the organisations involved mostly benefit from the undertaken activities. In conclusion, an organisational application procedure would enable a more systematic use of the Action based on institutional strategy. With regard to the impact of Assistantships, having a sending organisation would also enhance the dissemination of the lessons learnt. However, both groups of respondents have strong opinions about changing the procedure, as it will exclude vulnerable groups, such as unemployed people and freelancers, and take away the personal commitment from potential beneficiaries.

## 8.2 Promotion of the Action

There is a mixed perception with regard to the number of applications attracted for Assistantships.

The main explanations put forward for the unsatisfactory number of applications are:

- The budget for the Action is very limited. Hence, other actions with a potential larger number of beneficiaries are promoted more intensively; some Agencies express the view that they prefer to allocate the budget to a lot of Visits and Exchanges instead of few Assistantships that are more expensive.
- The minimum duration of an Assistantship is a major barrier for employed adult education providers. The rationale of this argument is that for some home organisations it is considered a barrier to find replacements for teachers who are abroad for a minimum of 13 weeks. Even a 13-week period is considered a long absence.
- The Assistantships Action is still quite new, and promotion takes time.

### *Promotion of the Assistantships Action*

Both beneficiaries of the Assistantships and National Agencies were asked if the Assistantships Action needs more promotion to become better known. Table 8-3 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 8-3: Promotion of the Action by respondent group**

<b>Do you think that the Grundtvig Assistantships Action needs more promotion to become better known?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	51%	49%	39
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	75%	25%	81

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.*

There is a significant difference in the distribution of answers between the two groups. While almost half of the National Agencies do not see a need for more promotion of the Action, 75% of the beneficiaries think that more promotion is needed.

A possible explanation for this difference is that despite the relatively few applications for the Assistantships Action there is not enough funding for all applications. Attracting more applications through promotion would mean a lower selection ratio. The beneficiaries do not have this perspective in mind. Some of them discovered the Assistantships Action by coincidence and would like others to become aware of the opportunities offered through the Action.

Even though there is a significant difference between the views on promotion from beneficiaries and National Agencies, there seems to be consensus between the two groups concerning what should be promoted. The most common statements refer to:

- promoting the Assistantships Action through the mass media;
- using good examples of successful Assistantships to promote the Action – both from an individual and an institutional point of view;
- establishing a European database containing potential host organisations; and
- promoting increasing employability perspectives after the participation in a Grundtvig Assistantship.

### *Are the intended target groups attracted?*

Both beneficiaries from the Assistantships Action and National Agencies were asked if the Assistantships Action reaches the expected target groups. Table 8-4 shows the distribution of answers:

Table 8-4: The degree of reaching the expected target group of the Assistantships Action

<b>Do you think that the Grundtvig Assistantships Action reaches the expected target groups?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	60%	40%	40
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	86%	14%	79

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

A majority from both groups of respondents thinks that the Action reaches the expected target groups. However, there is a significant difference in the distribution of answers. 40% of the answers received from National Agencies are negative and indicate that the action does not reach the expected target groups to a great extent. From the group of beneficiaries, only 14% of respondents answered “no” to the same question.

From the National Agencies' perspective, the main explanation for not reaching the expected target groups (i.e. people already employed in the adult learning sector) is that this group has difficulties with finding replacements or faces a salary loss. Lack of language skills might be a barrier too. The National Agencies mostly receive applications from young people or even undergraduates who are in a better position to go abroad. Often, the applicants are former Erasmus students or Comenius Assistants. It is also difficult to assess whether applicants really intend to work in the adult learning sector after their Assistantship.

From the beneficiaries' perspective, reaching the expected target groups is mostly a matter of promotion.

*How could the Assistantships Action be made more attractive?*

The proposals for making the Assistantships Action more attractive can be categorised into four groups.

Table 8-5 shows the four categories and includes statements from both beneficiaries and National Agencies:

Table 8-5: Proposals for making the Grundtvig Assistantships more attractive

<b>Category</b>	<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Support from the EC</b>
<b>Increase funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the grant would lower the participation barrier for employed people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More funding for grants and promotion</li> </ul>
<b>Make the opportunities more visible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disseminate success stories and results of Assistantships more effectively</li> <li>Establish a central database for organisations willing to host an Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create information material for dissemination</li> <li>Create a central database containing contact details of host organisations willing to host Assistants</li> </ul>
<b>Lower the administrative burden</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplify the application form and create electronic application and final report forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create e-forms</li> </ul>

Category	Proposals	Support from the EC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rolling application deadlines</li> </ul>	
<b>Changing the action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Assistantships Action is tailored to the needs of formal education institutions which makes it difficult for applicants from the non-formal sector</li> <li>Promoting language learning as a separate purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merge some of the 7 Grundtvig Actions</li> </ul>

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Assistantships Action, February-March 2012.

In the survey targeting the National Agencies, 45% of the answers are in favour of further support from the European Commission (EC) to enhance the implementation of the Grundtvig Actions. According to the respondents, the European Commission could offer support within all four categories:

- increasing the funding;
- increasing the visibility of the Action;
- lowering the administrative burden; and
- changing the Action.

### 8.3 Future improvements

The main proposals for improvement indicated concern the following aspects:

#### *Administration and level of funding*

Proposals for improvement concern the level of funding at national level as well as the Assistantships individual grants.

As regards the funding at national level, most of the respondents from the National Agencies (67%) think that the budget available for the two Grundtvig Actions – Assistantships and Visits and Exchanges is insufficient compared to the needs of their country. Some National Agencies report that the demand has increased and they receive many qualified applications that they cannot support. Consequently, most National Agencies request more funding to meet the needs.

As regards the individual grant awarded to beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action, beneficiaries request a more flexible grant which takes the individual beneficiary's situation more into account.

National Agencies and beneficiaries emphasise that employed and unemployed applicants may have different financial needs, as employed beneficiaries have to interrupt their careers for almost one year.

Some beneficiaries argue that the programme should take into account that they have families to support, which is vital when granting funds for an Assistantship. Some of the beneficiaries report that they experienced difficulties during their Assistantship due to insufficient funding. They suggest that appropriate financial advice on various issues be given, such as exchange and transfer of money, level of budget required for daily cost of living in the host country, etc. Another beneficiary suggests that Assistants should receive the grant on a monthly basis instead of as a lump sum payment. However, other beneficiaries say that the lump sum received for the entire period of the Assistantship has taught them to administrate their finances.

Some beneficiaries also suggest that the level of funding should vary according to the cost of living in a location. Furthermore, a beneficiary proposes that the decision about funding should be made at least three months before the exchange, so that there is more time to arrange accommodation and inform the employer at the home organisation about the career interruption during the Assistantship.

### *More monitoring and feedback during the Assistantship*

The monitoring should particularly ensure that the host organisations fulfil their objectives and provide good learning conditions. Overall, the beneficiaries think that there is not enough monitoring and follow-up during the Assistantship to ensure that the host organisation fulfils the objectives of the Assistantship and provides appropriate learning conditions. Some beneficiaries suggest interim evaluation meetings with other Assistants in the host country. Other beneficiaries suggest that National Agencies should be in contact with the host and home organisations more often in order to monitor the implementation of the planned activities.

### *More regulation of the Assistantship*

Some beneficiaries believe that the European Commission should be aware that there is a lack of regulations concerning the protection of Assistants during their stay in other European countries. In particular, the Commission should establish some minimum regulations concerning medical security and a contract of employment giving beneficiaries some basic rights. Furthermore, beneficiaries propose that a pre-agreement in English as well as in the language of the host country be signed by the host organisation to ensure transparency and to help Assistants obtain a visa and a residence permit, etc., more easily. Beneficiaries also suggest a better screening of host organisations by the National Agencies in the respective countries.

Moreover, beneficiaries also suggested that:

- A database/platform for all Grundtvig Assistants be created. Such a database could allow host and home organisations to contact each other and exchange information before their beneficiaries begin their Assistantship.
- There should be more promotion of the Assistantships Action.

### *Simplification and merging of actions*

Beneficiaries and National Agencies propose that instead of separate actions, the Assistantships Action should merge with the In-Service Training Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action on only one Staff Mobility Action. They argue that there is no need to have three different actions for individual mobility but only one action for Grundtvig staff mobility, and applicants should choose the type of activity (course, seminar, conference, short-term job-shadowing, long term job-shadowing, etc.) and the duration they want. It is argued that merging the three Staff Mobility Actions would simplify administration and increase the attractiveness of the Action for applicants.

### *Proposals of the National Agencies*

In general, the National Agencies suggest the following improvements of the Assistantships Action:

- **Digitalisation.** The National Agencies propose that application forms, final reports, and all other documentation be submitted electronically.
- **Simplification.** Applications forms should be shorter and the Assistantships Action should merge with the In-Service Training Action. Similarly, some National Agencies suggest that Visits and Exchanges should merge with the In-Service Training Action. Some National Agencies propose the same deadlines for these actions including the Visits and Exchanges Action in all countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme.
- **Database.** Similar to the beneficiaries, some National Agencies suggest creating a database where interested stakeholders could find information on potential host organisations and suitable partners involved in the field of adult education. Furthermore, the database could provide information on on-going and finished Assistantships. National Agencies propose that the European Commission work with the National Agencies to formally integrate host organisations into the database. This would support applicants in finding placements and ensure that quality control mechanisms are in place to support the delivery of activities.
- **Pre-agreement signed by host organisations.** National Agencies propose that the host organisation and the National Agency concerned should sign an official commitment obliging the host organisation to ensure a good realisation of the Assistantship activities. Some National



Agencies propose that the host organisation sign a pre-agreement when hosting the Assistant and that the document should be sent to the National Agencies involved in order to formalise the Assistantship and to ensure adequate follow-up. Furthermore, they suggest that National Agencies monitor the preparation activities closely before hosting the beneficiary and the realisation of activities at the host organisation.

- **Guidelines for home and host organisation.** National Agencies suggested that the European Commission and the National Agencies should develop guidelines for home and host organisations.
- **Better cooperation between host and home organisation.** National Agencies think that the communication between the home and host organisation prior to the Assistantship should be improved. Normally, the home organisation does not know where the beneficiary is going and what his/her job will be. Currently, there is insufficient cooperation between organisations, as the contact with the host organisation abroad is mainly established by the individual beneficiaries or applicants.
- **Compulsory recognition of the Assistantship by the home organisation.** National Agencies suggested that the home organisation should be obliged to assist beneficiaries in the search for a host organisation and in the application procedure and recognise the Assistantship on their return. A National Agency proposes that the home organisation should be obliged to use the knowledge and new skills gained by beneficiaries and develop an action plan describing how learners will be actively involved.

Overall, the views of National Agencies and beneficiaries indicate that the Assistantships Action so far has gone through three “pioneer” years, and gained useful experiences. However, more formalisation and regulation of the Action required. The purposes and activities promoted by the Assistantships Action are regarded as sufficient, as none of the respondents among the National Agencies and beneficiaries think that there are other purposes and activities that the Grundtvig Assistantships Action should support.

## **Part III - THE GRUNDTVIG VISITS & EXCHANGES ACTION**

## 9. Profile of beneficiaries from Visits and Exchanges

This chapter analyses the profiles of beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action. The analysis focuses on the following main issues:

- Motivation to apply for a grant. What motivated the beneficiaries to apply? Were they self-motivated or were they inspired by the management of the home organisation or others? Did the beneficiaries have any hesitations to apply?
- Employment status and educational level of beneficiaries. What was the beneficiaries' employment status before the Visit? Did the Visit improve the beneficiary's employment status and career?
- Purpose and duration of the Visit. What are the most common purpose and duration of Visits?
- Preparation activities of the Visit. What preparation activities were carried out before the Visit? Were the activities carried out sufficient for the preparation of beneficiaries?
- Satisfaction of beneficiaries with the host organisation. Did the host organisation ensure a successful Visit?
- Obstacles encountered by beneficiaries. What were the typical obstacles?
- The promotion of the Visits and Exchanges Action. How can the Visits and Exchanges Action be better promoted?

Based on the analysis of these issues we draw conclusions on the extent to which the Visits and Exchanges Action has attracted the intended target groups.

### 9.1 Purposes of the Visits and Exchanges Action

Table 9-1 shows the selection of purposes and activities of the Visits and Exchanges Action based on the beneficiaries' final reports.

**Table 9-1: Purposes and activities of the Visits and Exchanges Action**

<b>Purpose of the Visit</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Visiting an adult education organisation in the broadest sense (formal or non-formal) for the purpose of carrying out a teaching assignment	6%	71
Visiting an adult education organisation in the broadest sense (formal or non-formal) for the purpose of providing advice and guidance on certain aspects of adult education/learning	10%	125
Studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country	28%	359
Studying and/or providing expertise on system/policy-related aspects of adult education	11%	140
Providing training for adult education staff	3%	35
“Job-shadowing” (observation) in an adult education organisation in the broadest sense (formal or non-formal) or other non-formal type of training for adult education staff	17%	213
Attending a conference or seminar	57%	719
Attending a European Grundtvig Event organised by or in cooperation with the European Commission	8%	100
Other (please specify):	7%	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>146%*</b>	<b>1 846</b>

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of Visits and Exchanges 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

*Attending a conference or seminar is the most frequent purpose of a Visit*

Overall, the table shows that some purposes and activities of the Visits and Exchanges Action are more popular than other purposes and activities. The beneficiaries mainly cluster around three purposes. Thus, attending a conference or a seminar is the most frequent purpose, as 57% of the beneficiaries’ responses indicate this purpose. Studying aspects of adult education/learning in the host country is the second most frequent activity (28%). The third most frequent activity is job-shadowing, accounting for 17% of the beneficiaries’ responses.

7% of the beneficiaries indicate “other purposes”. The purposes mentioned mainly include specific activities, projects or programmes that the beneficiary has attended. For example, beneficiaries mention that they have participated in an AIUTA-meeting, Golden Threads (a professional development scheme for artist-educators working in informal education), a European Prison Education Conference, the festival "Third Age" or the storytelling festival for the project "Tales from the past,

Stories for the future". Furthermore, many beneficiaries mention that they have visited certain types of institutions or organisations for elderly or disadvantaged people.

When analysing the responses across host countries (the visited country), we find the same rough pattern. Attending a conference or seminar is the most frequent purpose regardless of host country.

The following sections provide a qualitative analysis of the purposes and activities carried out under the Visits and Exchanges Action. For each purpose and activity we have analysed and grouped the main types of activities carried out.

### *Teaching assignments addressing adult learners*

According to Table 9-1, only 6% of the beneficiaries have visited an adult education organisation for the purpose of carrying out a teaching assignment, and 81 beneficiaries have provided comments describing their assignments. The beneficiaries have described a great variety of subjects of their teaching including language teaching, crafts and artwork, design, history, environmental subjects such as recycling and landscape maintenance, and ICT. Language teaching is the most frequent subject.

### *The teachers' responsibilities and autonomy*

Most of beneficiaries comment that they had full responsibility for planning and carrying out their teaching, normally in collaboration with colleagues. Fewer teachers had a supportive function assisting teachers of the host organisation. Some were responsible for carrying out a specific task such as a workshop or a paper presentation, while others were responsible for more comprehensive teaching tasks.

Other teachers had a supportive function and assisted the teachers of the host organisation.

### *A great variety of learners and innovative learning contexts*

The learning contexts vary considerably and involve many different target groups of adult learners of different ages and vulnerable groups such as unemployed people, minority groups, disabled people or prisoners. The learning contexts do not just represent a traditional, teacher-led approach. Many beneficiaries' comments indicate that their teaching assignments involved innovative pedagogical learning contexts.

Other beneficiaries describe how their teaching included artistic activities that contributed to therapeutic activities in social centres, psychiatric hospitals, etc.

### *Provision of advice and guidance*

According to Table 9-1, 10% of the beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action have visited an adult education organisation for the purpose of providing advice and guidance on certain aspects of adult education/learning. 130 beneficiaries have provided comments describing the aspects of the guidance.

Most beneficiaries describe the subject or issue on which they have provided guidance. In general, the provision of guidance is not a unidirectional process where the visiting beneficiary has the role of an expert. This is a two-way process involving exchanges of experience on given issues.

The guidance activities carried out by beneficiaries cover the following issues:

- *Administration and institution management.* Beneficiaries have provided guidance on management of educational institutions, including guidance on marketing, identification of needs, educational planning, educational process management and strategy definition. Furthermore, beneficiaries have provided guidance on management to many different types of organisations such as adult education intuitions, women's shelters, museums, and libraries. The extent to which the applicant has actively taken part in the process differs from case to case, from direct delivery of knowhow, to simply assisting in the work of the host organisation.
- *Educational and pedagogical methods.* Beneficiaries have provided guidance on many different pedagogical methods and teaching approaches – covering the traditional teacher-led approach as well as other more interactive approaches.
- *Guidance on teaching disadvantaged students,* such as illiterate immigrant adults and disabled students, e.g. those who are blind or have a manual impairment or speech and language impairments. For example, a beneficiary showed how it is possible for disabled

learners to use Skype in many applications of distance learning and how screen reader software can be adapted to identify whether users are on line at the same time.

- *Libraries.* Developing adult education services in libraries and cooperation with educational centres and adult learners.
- *Work experience placements.* Sourcing, management and administration, where one beneficiary was able to give advice on good practice and suggested successful approach methods for potential employers.
- *Crafts, guidance related to artwork and crafts.* Some beneficiaries have provided guidance on creativity as a vehicle for learning.
- *Physical education activities* such as sports and dances.
- *Technology.* ICT, e.g. internet-based or computer based learning systems, including e-learning/distance-learning.

### *Studying aspects of adult education and learning*

According to Table 9-1, 28% of the beneficiaries have studied aspects of adult education in the host country. The most common aspects studied are:

- *Studied how adult learning is organised in the country at society level.* Some beneficiaries report that they were informed about the host countries' education systems and the lifelong learning opportunities. Other beneficiaries have studied the dual system of school-based and work-based learning.
- *Pedagogical and methodological aspects of education concerning approaches to supporting vulnerable adults with learning difficulties.* For example, didactic approaches and assessment systems for adults who need to enhance their key competences through embedded learning. Others have studied how physiotherapy, psychotherapy, and physical education are used to help the development of personal skills among adults with learning difficulties or at risk of social exclusion.
- *The use of ICT tools in education* is also a frequent aspect - for example, how virtual learning environments can be supported by using tools such as Moodle.
- *New ways of organising learning and educational provision,* for example, elderly people reading for children and afternoon lessons for seniors. Another example is studying the aspects of event organising in the adult education field, PR and communication, and community building.
- *Libraries' role in adult learning,* for example, how public libraries offer their local communities various forms of non-formal education and free access to information and resources of knowledge.
- *Art galleries' role in adult learning,* for example, how to develop and test new types of strategies for involving adults in lifelong learning in galleries as well as other sites linked to major international events.

All in all, the beneficiaries' main focus is to study the provision of adult education/learning, especially that of disadvantaged learners with learning difficulties. The focus on provision of adult education is driven by an interest in gaining and sharing experiences on innovative ways of educational provision, for example, by using ICT tools or by establishing new learning contexts involving new institutions such as libraries and art galleries or cultural events.

### *System and policy-related aspects of adult education*

According to Table 9-1, 11% of beneficiaries have studied or provided expertise on system/policy-related aspects of adult education. These are the most frequent aspects mentioned by the beneficiaries:

- *Quality assurance,* e.g. how to organise quality assurance systems, inspection/recognition schemes, teacher training and teacher qualifications requirements.

- *How to manage financing and funding of educational activities.* For example, some beneficiaries report that they have to cope with decreasing public funding, which makes it even more important to involve volunteers.
- *Innovative didactics in adult education,* for example, how the education of low-skilled people is embedded in adult education and provision of adult education in prisons.
- *Organising continuous training of teachers on various subjects,* for example, training of the teachers of illiterate immigrant adults.
- *Development of innovative practises in libraries and the libraries' role in the provision of education.*

### *Provision of training for adult education staff*

Only 3% of the beneficiaries provided training for adult education staff.

Overall, the comments show that the training provided for adult education staff usually had the form of assistance, consultation, and collaboration in connection with the teaching activities for classes. The beneficiaries describe how they planned the teaching activities in collaboration with the teacher staff of the host organisation.

The aspects on which they have provided training to the adult education staff cover a wide range of subjects. The following examples illustrate the diversity:

- language teaching;
- permaculture;
- approaches to teaching beginner level etching;
- topics related to information in libraries and literacy;
- dyslexia;
- landscape maintenance;
- environmental interpretation;
- eco-villages and sustainability;
- consultation on human resources;
- non-verbal and visual aspects of intercultural communication strategies;

### *Non-formal training in the form of "job-shadowing"*

17% of the beneficiaries have participated in a non-formal type of training for adult education in the form of "job-shadowing". Job-shadowing enables new staff, in this instance visiting beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action, to spend some time under the supervision of an experienced staff from the host organisation and to observe his or her work-related activities. In such a relationship, the visiting staff can be called "observer" and the experienced one "mentor".

### *"Job-shadowing" is a tool applied in many different job-profiles in host organisations*

The beneficiaries' comments show that their job-shadowing activities have taken place in a very wide range of job-profiles and at different levels of the host organisation. Many beneficiaries report that they have participated in job-shadowing in multiple functions, meaning that they have followed different mentors. For example, in some cases the same beneficiary has shadowed a teacher for some time and then shadowed someone at management level at the host organisation.

Beneficiaries have participated in the following job-shadowing activities and institutions:

- *Higher management level/chief-executive level.* For example. job-shadowing of the chief executive function at a national qualifications authority. Such job-shadowing gave insight into teacher training, management and administration procedures. Similarly, beneficiaries have job-shadowed managers in adult education schools.
- *NGOs.* Job-shadowing in an NGO providing help to children and adults by offering them services such as telephone counselling, chatting, e-mailing, and discussion forums. These services were provided to children and adults by the volunteers of the organisation. Job-

shadowing in NGOs often focuses on promotion and management activities of the voluntary work such as how volunteers are recruited and how the NGO supervises their volunteers.

- *Teachers.* Beneficiaries have job-shadowed teachers by attending their classes. This type of job-shadowing covers a great diversity of subjects. Some beneficiaries job-shadowed teachers working with disabled learners. One beneficiary followed a teacher in an acting school applying the Meisner technique.
- *Project coordinators.* Beneficiaries job-shadowed coordinators of Grundtvig Senior Volunteer Projects or projects funded by the European Social Fund.
- *Educational Agencies.* Beneficiaries job-shadowed officers working in agencies developing policies in adult education. For example, a beneficiary helped prepare seminars on tests of adult basic skills.
- *Staff function in educational institutions.* For example, job-shadowing of a psychologist sitting in on activities with students.
- *CEV – European Voluntary Centre.* Many beneficiaries report that they visited CEV or participated in CEV workshops or presentations.

#### *Conference/seminar*

The most frequent activities of the Visits and Exchanges Action are conferences and seminars, representing 57% of the beneficiaries' responses. Over 600 beneficiaries have provided comments describing the subjects of the conferences/seminars and their role in it. Based on a counting of the beneficiaries' comments on their role, we estimate that the participants' roles have the following approximate proportions:

- **50% have been attending participants**, where they label themselves as “rank and file” participants who have not contributed as speakers or chaired discussions.
- **22% have been speakers** at conferences/seminars or chaired discussions.
- **12% have been active participants**, where they emphasise that they were active in various ways such as taking part in discussions in workshops, creating networks, or taking notes and preparing presentations based on the conference/seminar.
- **14% have been assistants**, i.e., been involved in planning and implementing conferences/seminars.

All in all, beneficiaries provide very detailed descriptions of the content of the conferences/seminars they have attended. The details in their recollections indicate that they have been active participants and that their participation has generated new insights.

## 9.2 Duration of the Visit

The minimum duration of a Visit under the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action is currently one day for certain activities and maximum 90 calendar days for other activity purposes.<sup>21</sup>

The following table shows the duration of the completed Visits and Exchanges from 2009 to 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Fiche N°/File Nr 37: GRU-Mob:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2_en.pdf)



**Table 9-2: Duration of Visits and Exchanges 2009-2011**

Days	<7	7-13	14-29	30-90	N
%	66%	23%	7%	4%	1291

Source: Final reports from beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011

According to the reports from the beneficiaries that we received for this study, the vast majority of Visits (66%) last less than one week which explains the popularity of the conference and seminars. Only 4% of the beneficiaries have participated in a Visit lasting more than 30 days.

#### Minimum duration

Both National Agencies and beneficiaries were asked about the appropriate minimum duration of a Visit. Table 9-3 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 9-3: Appropriate minimum duration of a Visit by group of respondents**

Days	1	2	3	4-6	7-14	14 <	N
Beneficiaries	5%	12%	25%	32%	14%	12%	279
NA	35%	6%	9%	26%	24%	-	34

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

35% of the answers received from the National Agencies are in favour of the present 1-day minimum duration. This is only the case for 5% of the beneficiaries. More than half of the beneficiaries (57%) consider that a period of 3-6 days would be an appropriate minimum duration of a Visit, while most the National Agencies (50%) tend to prefer a minimum duration of 1-3 days.

The general argument of both the beneficiaries and the National Agencies is that the appropriate minimum duration depends on the character of the Visit. Conferences and seminars only last a few days. The 1-day minimum duration makes the Visits and Exchanges Action very flexible. Nevertheless, with regard to job-shadowing, several respondents from both groups argue that at least 5 days are needed to integrate into a new environment.

#### Maximum duration

In the same survey, both National Agencies and beneficiaries were asked about the appropriate maximum duration of a Visit. Table 9-4 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 9-4: Appropriate maximum duration of a Visit by group of respondents**

Days	<7	7-13	14-29	30-90	90 <	N
Beneficiaries	26%	31%	12%	19%	12%	255
NA	15%	18%	18%	48%	-	33

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

All in all, very few beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action exploit the allowed maximum duration. The majority of answers received from beneficiaries and National Agencies are in favour of a shorter maximum duration than the present maximum duration of 90 days. Concerning the appropriate minimum duration both groups argue that this depends on the character of the Visit. Some respondents argue that the maximum duration should be adapted to the duration of the activity. Thus, there should be a maximum duration for short-duration activities such as seminars and conferences and a maximum duration for long-duration activities such as job-shadowing and placements.

The National Agencies argue that changes in the maximum duration of the Visits and Exchanges Action should take into consideration the maximum duration of the Assistantships Action, as it is very important not to create a gap between the two actions. Some argue that the Assistantships and the

Visits and Exchanges Actions should merge. Finally, it should also be noted that extending the maximum duration of an Action is a matter of funding.

### 9.3 Motivation to apply for a Visits and Exchanges grant

Table 9-5 shows the distribution of answers from a survey among beneficiaries regarding the motivation to apply for a Visits and Exchanges grant.

**Table 9-5: Motivation to apply for a Visits and Exchanges grant**

<b>How did you get the idea to apply for a Grundtvig Visit?</b>		
<b>Motivation</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>It was my own idea</b>	39%	147
<b>My workplace colleagues</b>	22%	84
<b>My workplace management</b>	11%	40
<b>Others:</b>	28%	103
<b>Total</b>	100%	374

*Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.*

The largest share of beneficiaries is self-motivated to apply for a Visit (39%). Only 22% of the respondents indicate that they were motivated to apply by their colleagues and 11% by the organisation management. The 28% of beneficiaries who indicate other motivating factors for applying, received recommendations about the Action from friends or family, had participated in conferences where the Visits and Exchanges Action had been promoted, or had received an invitation from their National Agency to attend an event.

Overall, these results indicate that the decision to apply for the Visits and Exchanges Action is typically not the result of an institutional strategy but rather the beneficiaries' self-motivation or inspiration from personal or professional networks.

10% of the respondents in the survey indicate that they hesitated to apply for a grant. Most of these beneficiaries pointed out that they found it difficult to understand the general eligibility rules and deal with the bureaucratic formalities of the Action. Unlike the beneficiaries from Assistantships, no beneficiary of the Visits and Exchanges Action mentioned a potential conflict with the management of his or her organisation as a reason for hesitating to apply for a Visit.

### 9.4 Satisfaction with the host organisation

There is an overall satisfaction with the host organisations' participation in the Visits and Exchanges Action. 97% of National Agencies' respondents and 92% of beneficiaries consider that the host organisations are generally good at ensuring a successful Visit.

**Table 9-6: Satisfaction with host organisation**

<b>Do you think that the host organisations are generally good at ensuring a successful Visit and Exchange?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	97%	3%	36
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	92%	8%	367

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012*

With regard to aspects that host organisations could improve, National Agencies and beneficiaries mention the following aspects:

The **beneficiaries** think that host organisations could improve the following:

- Clearer information on accommodation. This request normally concerns accommodation during conferences or seminars.
- Better organisation of conferences and more participant involvement. Too much time is spent on individual presentations, and there is not enough time for discussing topics of common interest.
- Clearer decisions and information on the working language of conferences, i.e. English or other working languages.
- Better updated information on programme changes.
- Sending the list of participants before the conference since networking is an important part of the participation in a conference.

Most of the beneficiaries make improvement suggestions in relation to conferences, as conferencing is the most frequent activity under the Visits and Exchanges Action. Generally, the beneficiaries request thorough planning and management of conferences and updated information on the conference programme and accommodation.

The **National Agencies** comment that they have too limited contact and experience with host organisations to assess their quality. They emphasise that it is the beneficiaries' responsibility to find and select a host organisation. Some National Agencies add that in general they receive only positive feedback from their beneficiaries. One of the National Agencies comments that home organisations should encourage people to apply for a Visit, organisations should also network with each other and send their staff to Visits and Exchanges events. This would also help the staff intending to carry out a Visit to find an appropriate host organisation.

## 9.5 Obstacles encountered by beneficiaries

The three most frequently reported obstacles are insufficient language skills (29%), inadequate level of grant provided (19%) and difficulty in finding a replacement teacher/member of staff during absence (18%). (See Table 9-7 below).

Other obstacles, representing 35% of the responses, are mainly related to funding and the transfer of the grant, especially to receipt of funding as well as to receiving an approval for a Visit from the home organisation. A beneficiary reports that he does not have a finance department, therefore the application and evaluation procedure was very time-consuming. Another beneficiary reports that he had to give the bank account data of the organisation he worked for, since it was not possible to give the data of a private bank account. Furthermore, some beneficiaries report technical difficulties and time-consuming procedure to submit the application to the National Agency.

Table 9-7 shows the obstacles encountered by beneficiaries during their Visits. Overall, only a moderate share of beneficiaries reports obstacles, i.e. only 427 out of 1366 possible responses in total.

**Table 9-7: Obstacles encountered by beneficiaries**

<b>What obstacles did you encounter with regard to the implementation of your Grundtvig Visit (please tick as appropriate)?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Difficulty in finding a replacement teacher/member of staff during my absence</b>	18%	65
<b>Opposition to my Visit from within my organisation</b>	2%	9

<b>My insufficient language skills</b>	29%	104
<b>Inadequate level of grant provided</b>	19%	68
<b>My lack of adequate preparation</b>	3%	11
<b>Failure of the host organisation to prepare thoroughly for my visit</b>	7%	26
<b>Problems in integrating with staff at the host organisation</b>	3%	12
<b>Visa problems</b>	1%	3
<b>Other (please specify):</b>	35%	129
<b>Total</b>	<b>117%*</b>	<b>427</b>

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

## 9.6 Preparation carried out before the Visit

The Visits and Exchanges Action enables participants to receive financial support for pedagogic, linguistic or cultural preparation.<sup>22</sup>

In a survey, the beneficiaries were asked if they had attended preparation activities before the Visit. 43% of respondents confirmed that they had attended preparation activities. Compared to the percentage of beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action (66%) who carried out preparation activities, this is a significantly lower percentage.

27% of the beneficiaries tick other preparation activities, which often include general preparation activities such as correspondence with the host organisation, consultation with colleagues and websites of the host organisation, reading material or guidelines of the conference, updating knowledge of the education system of the host country as well as correspondence with other participants and the hosting association/institution.

Table 9-8 shows the distribution of answers by type of activity from the beneficiaries who attended preparation activities.

**Table 9-8: Participation in preparation activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Pedagogical</b>	30%	49
<b>Language-related</b>	52%	84
<b>Cultural</b>	46%	75
<b>Other:</b>	27%	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>155%*</b>	<b>252</b>

Source: Survey among the beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

<sup>22</sup> Fiche N°/File Nr 37: GRU-Mob:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call12/fiches/grund2_en.pdf)

Linguistic preparation is the predominant preparation activity followed by cultural preparation. This was also the result for the Assistantships Action. However, pedagogical activities in the Assistantships are carried out more often than pedagogical preparation in the Visits and Exchanges Action.

There is no significant correlation between gender and participation in preparation activities under the Visits and Exchanges Action. Nor is there any significant correlation between the home country of the beneficiaries and their participation in preparation activities. However, participation is closely linked to the purpose of the Visit. If participants have to play an active part in the Visit – e.g. by carrying out teaching assignments or providing training or expertise – a higher share of beneficiaries undertakes preparation activities compared to the share of beneficiaries attending a seminar or a conference.

In their final reports, beneficiaries describe briefly how they prepared for the Visit. Besides pedagogic, linguistic and cultural preparation, the other main preparation activities undertaken are logistical preparation including travel, visa, accommodation and networking with contact persons in the host country.

### *Are the preparation activities sufficient?*

Both National Agencies and beneficiaries were asked if they found the preparation activities undertaken by the beneficiaries sufficient. Table 9-9 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 9-9: Opinion on the sufficiency of preparation activities**

	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Insufficient</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	78%	22%	37
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	89%	11%	268

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and the beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012. Note: The responses from the National Agencies relate to both the Assistantships Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action*

89% of beneficiaries find that the preparation activities they undertook before implementing the Visit were sufficient. This is 8 percentage points higher than that of the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action. This can probably be explained by the shorter duration of the activities under the Visits and Exchanges Action. Respondents who think that the preparation activities were insufficient usually mention the lack of linguistic preparation as the main problem.

### *Should any preparation activities be compulsory?*

The National Agencies and beneficiaries were asked if some preparation activities should be compulsory before a Visit. Table 9-10 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 9-10: Should any preparation activity be compulsory?**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	79%	21%	38
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	29%	71%	354

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012. Note: The answers from the National Agencies relate both to the Assistantships Action and the Visits and Exchanges Action.*

A significantly lower proportion of the beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action finds it necessary to make preparation activities compulsory compared to the National Agencies and the beneficiaries of the Assistantships Action.

According to the beneficiaries, the most frequently mentioned preparation activity that should be compulsory is language courses – either general courses or courses concerning the specific vocabulary related to the topic of the Visit. Cultural and pedagogical preparation is mentioned very often as well. Hence, beneficiaries and National Agencies agree with each other regarding this issue.

## 9.7 Educational background

The Visits and Exchanges Action addresses present or future teachers or other staff in adult education including voluntary work. According to a survey among the beneficiaries of the Action, 39% of beneficiaries had an educational background as an adult education teacher before the Visit, while the rest (61%) had other educational backgrounds. 61% of the beneficiaries are a very heterogeneous group working in various educational fields as librarians, pedagogues, sociologists, psychologists, ethnologists, training consultants, language teachers, artist educators etc. Furthermore, many beneficiaries indicate a background related to art galleries, museums and cultural institutions.

Table 9-11 shows the education level of the beneficiaries before the Visit.

**Table 9-11: Education level of beneficiaries before a Grundtvig Visit**

<b>What level of education did you have before your Visit?</b>		
<b>Educational level</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Secondary education</b>	7%	24
<b>Bachelor</b>	20%	71
<b>Master</b>	61%	218
<b>Doctor</b>	9%	34
<b>Post-doctoral</b>	3%	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>359</b>

*Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.*

Similar to the Assistantships Action, the beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action have a high level of education. The vast majority has a Master's degree or a higher degree (61%), while only 7% of the respondents in the survey have a secondary education as their highest educational attainment. The Master's degrees achieved by beneficiaries are primarily within the fields of the arts and social sciences. The Visits and Exchanges Action seems to attract psychologists, librarian, and museum educators in particular.

We cannot establish any relationship between the educational profile of beneficiaries and the purposes of their Visits. However, adult education teachers undertake teaching assignments (14%) more frequently than beneficiaries with other educational backgrounds. For the other purposes of a Visit, there are no significant differences between beneficiaries with different educational backgrounds.

## 9.8 Beneficiaries' employment status

According to the survey, most of the beneficiaries (90%) were employed before their Visit. Across the countries, the share of employed people is roughly the same, except for France where about 25% of the beneficiaries participating in the survey were unemployed.

**Table 9-12: Employment status before the Visit**

<b>What was your employment status before the Visit?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	10%	35
<b>Employed</b>	90%	333
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>368</b>

*Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.*

Most of the employed beneficiaries who participated in the survey worked in an adult education organisation (62%). The rest (38%) worked in many different types of organisations, including:

- museum;
- library;
- art gallery, foundation of contemporary art;
- artist education, for example, “education department in a contemporary art gallery”;
- NGO, non-profit association;
- international development organisation based on volunteering;
- artist education;
- public authority, municipality or ministry of education;
- research centre, for example, in an institute of educational research.

In general, beneficiaries employed outside adult education organisations were self-employed or part-time employed in positions related to the field of education and training or working in NGOs.

#### *The Visits and Exchanges Action enhances employment*

According to the survey, about 10% of beneficiaries were unemployed before their Visit. After the Visit 50% of the previously unemployed found employment. 42% of beneficiaries report that the Visit helped them to find a new job.

#### *The Visits and Exchanges Action enhances beneficiaries’ career development*

Most of the beneficiaries (76%) participating in the survey answer that their Visit helped them improve their careers in adult education as follows:

- The Visit helped them to improve their networking opportunities.
- The Visit helped them to learn about and submit applications for new projects such as research projects and PhDs. They acquired new knowledge about the country they visited for future projects. The Visit promoted professional exchanges.
- The Visit contributed to better international understanding and cross-cultural experiences.
- The Visit improves professional skills, knowledge and reflections. Some beneficiaries state that the Visit encouraged them to adopt a more reflective approach to their working methods and read more new research studies in their field.
- The Visit widened the scope of professional activities. Some beneficiaries state that the Visit improved their competences and that they got the opportunity to begin new activities in the field of adult education.

Overall, the comments of the beneficiaries show that the Visits and Exchanges Action improves career development in two main ways: 1) Improved networking, e.g. the beneficiary establishes new professional relationships and increases his or her job-opportunities; 2) Improved professional skills, knowledge and competences in the field of adult educations as regards international and cross-cultural experiences.

Based on the compiled statistics of the final reports and the survey among beneficiaries we conclude that overall, the Visits and Exchanges Action has only partly attracted the intended target group. The Action attracted some of the intended target groups fairly well. However, persons involved in the training of adult education staff were only partly or to a moderate extent attracted. Overall, the Action has attracted persons of various employment statuses who have work experienced in the field of adult education. Table 9- 14 presents reasons for these conclusions point by point.

**Table 9-13: Attraction of the intended target groups**

<b>Description of target group</b>	<b>Attracted?</b>
<i>“Persons at any stage in their career who are already working on a part- or full-time basis in any part of the adult education sector (formal, non-formal or informal), including volunteer staff as</i>	Yes. According to the survey, the Action has attracted many beneficiaries (62%) working in an adult education organisation. Most of them are experienced employees, who have been employed for 12.5 years on average in an adult education organisation.

<i>well as those who are formally employed.”</i>	
<i>“Persons involved in the training of adult education staff.”</i>	No, only to a moderate extent. 39% of the attracted target group are trainers of adult educators, and only 3% of the purposes of Visits and Exchanges concern providing training for adult education staff.
<i>“Persons who can demonstrate a clear intention of working in adult education but who are currently in some other labour market situation (work in another field, retirement, absent from professional life due to family responsibilities, unemployment, etc.), whether or not they have worked in adult education before.”</i>	Yes. The Action has attracted persons who belong to this category, as beneficiaries include a mixed group who are currently unemployed (10%) or working outside the formal adult education sector (38%) in many different types of organisations, usually “cultural” organisations such as libraries, art schools, galleries, non-formal education institutions, and NGOs. In general, beneficiaries employed outside adult education organisations are self-employed or part time employed in positions that are related to the field of education and training.
<i>“Persons who have completed a qualification leading to a career in adult education and who intend to start working in adult education”.</i>	Yes. 39% of the attracted target group have completed a qualification in the field of adult education.
<i>“Students who have completed at least two years of study leading to a degree or equivalent qualification in adult education/andragogy or who are enrolled in master level studies in this field”.</i>	Yes. 39% of the attracted group have completed a qualification in the field of adult education. Only 8% of these have a secondary education level as their highest educational level. The rest of beneficiaries have a bachelor (18%), a master degree or a higher degree (74%).

Overall, the Visits and Exchanges Action has only partly attracted the intended target groups, i.e. persons of various employment statuses who are experienced workers in the field of adult education. However, the high share of beneficiaries with a Master’s degree (66%) may indicate that the Visits and Exchanges Action is not reaching those who could benefit more from additional learning opportunities. Furthermore, a moderate share (39%) of the attracted target group has an educational background in adult education, and only 3% of beneficiaries have provided training for adult education staff.

Consequently, the decision to apply for a Visit is generally not the result of an institutional strategy, as only 11% were motivated to apply for a Visit by their organisation management while 39% were self-motivated.



## 10. Certification of the beneficiaries from Visits and Exchanges

Learning that takes place in formal education and training systems is traditionally the most visible and recognised in the labour market and by society in general. However, recently, there has been a growing appreciation of the importance of learning in non-formal and informal settings. The validation of non-formal or informal learning is a key element in the EU's actions to support education and training.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, the Visits and Exchanges Action can be regarded as non-formal learning activities which provide beneficiaries with experience-based new knowledge, skills and competences. With a view to the EU's emphasis on validation of non-formal learning, it is important that the skills and competences acquired through Visits and Exchanges become validated and recognised.

This chapter analyses what kind of certification or recognition the beneficiaries have received after their Visit. Furthermore, we analyse the beneficiaries' and National Agencies' comments on how the certification and recognition could be improved.

### 10.1 Type of recognition

Based on information from the final reports, 78% of beneficiaries received some kind of certification/recognition for the activities carried out during the visit. Table 10-1 shows what types of certifications/recognition that 47% of the beneficiaries of Visits and Exchanges have received.

**Table 10-1: Certifications/recognition of Visits and Exchanges**

<b>Please specify the type of certification/recognition/credit received for activities carried out during the Visit</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Europass Mobility document</b>	2%	20
<b>Certificate from host organisation/conference organiser</b>	81%	830
<b>Recognition on return to your home organisation</b>	9%	94
<b>Other</b>	13%	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>105%*</b>	<b>1075</b>

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

Most of the beneficiaries (81%) have received a certificate from the host organisation/conference organiser, while 9% have received recognition after returning to their home organisation. The results show that the Europass Mobility document still has a relatively low share of the recognitions issued, as only 2% of the responses indicate this type of certification.

<sup>23</sup> Validation of non-formal and informal learning: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/informal_en.htm)

13% of the beneficiaries indicate the category “other”. This category includes various alternative forms of certification/recognition. The most typical form is a letter of recommendation from the host organisation describing the activities carried out by the beneficiaries and their areas of responsibility. The comments from beneficiaries indicate that the certification/recognition can have many different forms, such as

- certificate of participation;
- certificate of attendance including the conference or seminar programme;
- letter or e-mail from host certifying attendance;
- document with names and addresses of all the people the participants have met;
- minutes from sessions and meetings;
- letter of recommendation from the host organisation;
- publication of paper given at the conference.

*Most beneficiaries satisfied with certification/recognition procedure*

Most of the beneficiaries (91%) and 87% of the National Agencies find that the certification/recognition procedure works well.

**Table 10-2: Certification/recognition procedure**

<b>Do you think that the certification/recognition procedure for Visits and Exchanges works well?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	87%	13%	39
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	91%	9%	316

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

In addition, most beneficiaries (85%) think that the certification/recognition document provides useful and clear information about their visit.

Beneficiaries who do not think that the certification/recognition procedure works well are mainly beneficiaries who have not received any kind of certification/recognition. They describe the lack of a procedure for certification or recognition of their Visit.

Furthermore, some beneficiaries describe how they had to spend a lot of time on obtaining some kind of certification from the host organisation. Other beneficiaries express their dissatisfaction with the type of certification they received. In particular, they are not satisfied with receiving a certificate of attendance. They think that a certificate of attendance does not sufficiently validate the content and activities of the Visit and Exchange.

Similarly, other beneficiaries are dissatisfied with a letter of recommendation. A letter of recommendation is not regarded as a formal certification.

Some beneficiaries suggest that the Grundtvig Programme should provide a formal recognition providing a more thorough validation of the content and activities of the visit in another country.

*Certification/recognition is regarded as important*

Most of the survey beneficiaries (79%) believe that certification/recognition is important, and they typically give the following reasons for this:

- it is good to have documentation to supplement your CV;
- it can be useful for continuing professional development;
- it improves and gives credit to life-long learning;

- it documents the European dimension;
- a certificate is proof having participated in a scheme such as Grundtvig and demonstrates European partnerships;
- it is a proof of past work experience for future employers; and
- it motivates the participant in Grundtvig Actions to have a broad perspective on professional issues.

Hence, most beneficiaries regard certification/recognition as important in relation to their future employers and job mobility. A certificate serves as documentation of the content of their CVs, and this is important for their continuing professional development. Some of the beneficiaries add that the certificate must preferably document what they have learned.

The beneficiaries who do not regard certification as important often comment that they do not need it or understand the purpose of recognition. For example, one of the beneficiaries does not understand the purpose of a certification: Is the purpose to show the certification to the National Agency to confirm the attendance at the conference? Or is the purpose to document what has been learned in relation to professional personal development?

These comments illustrate that certifications can have different purposes:

1. A control purpose, i.e. to confirm the activity took place so that the National Agency can issue the payment.
2. A quality purpose, i.e. the certification document motivates organisers to provide good conferences/activities
3. A professional development/life-long learning purpose, i.e. describe and document what has been learned.
4. A job mobility purpose, i.e. the certification provides information to future employers on the work experiences of the beneficiaries.

To some of the beneficiaries, purpose 1 (control), is the most important.

The comments of the beneficiaries who are dissatisfied with their certification indicate that their certification does not sufficiently fulfil purposes 2 and 3. These beneficiaries want a more thorough documentation of the activities they have carried out and what they have learned.

In relation to purpose 2 (professional development/life-long learning purpose), the certification can also enhance complementarity and synergy when beneficiaries apply for other actions.

## 10.2 Improvement in the certification

Most of the beneficiaries think that the current certifications/recognition procedure works well. However, in the survey many of them contribute with ideas and comments on how the procedure could be improved. Based on these comments the certification should have the following qualities:

- be a uniform certification which is acknowledged by the Commission;
- be a standardised Grundtvig certificate for all types of Visits and Exchanges events to be completed by the host;
- provide a detailed description of the activities, skills, experiences gained and achievements, as this would be useful for future employability;
- show which conferences/sessions the beneficiaries attended;
- show visit duration;
- contain basic information such as title, dates, and location of the activities/topics/workshops attended; and
- be accessible and able to be completed on-line.

Beneficiaries request a standardised certification document.

Many beneficiaries suggest a European-wide standardised certification document that is acknowledged by the Commission. Some beneficiaries suggest that if a common European standard certification became compulsory, then the Europass Mobility document would become a relevant tool. The Europass Mobility document could serve as the document to be used for such international exchanges. Furthermore, some of the beneficiaries emphasise that the certification should document

what they have learned. In order to make document completion easy, some suggest that the document could contain some predefined types of competences which the host organisation could tick and comment on.

However, in relation to validation of non-formal learning and informal learning, some beneficiaries caution that a too formal approach must be avoided, as it appears to be unsuitable for validating informal learning. Instead, a requirement to provide validation in the form of a flexible narrative would probably be more appropriate. In order to ensure quality, beneficiaries suggest that the certificate should be completed by the people the beneficiary has worked with.

In addition, some beneficiaries suggest that the certificate should document that the competences/learning acquired have been tested.

Overall, the beneficiaries' ideas for improving certification/recognition of Visits and Exchanges indicate that they are requesting more thorough documentation of the content/activities and what they have learned. They request a certification which goes beyond a certificate of attendance.

## 11. Impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action

This chapter analyses to what extent the Visits and Exchange Action has produced the intended impact. The intended impact can be deduced from the overall objective of the Action which is to help improve the quality of adult learning in the broadest sense - formal, non-formal or informal - by enabling present or future staff working in this field, or persons who are engaged in the in-service training of such staff, to undertake a work-related visit to a country participating in the Lifelong Learning programme (LLP) other than that in which they normally live or work.

The intended impact stipulates that the participants must gain a broader understanding of adult learning in Europe and, depending on the purpose of the visit, improve their practical teaching/coaching/counselling/management skills and/or support the work of the host organisation by providing expertise in the area of teaching, management or other related activities.

With this intended impact as a frame of reference, this chapter analyses the impact of Visits and Exchanges:

- On personal and professional development of beneficiaries: To what extent has the Visit had impact on the personal and professional development of the beneficiary?
- On the home organisation and its local community: To what extent has the Visit had impact on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community?
- On the host organisation and its local community: To what extent has the Visit had impact on the host organisation and its local community?

The analysis on the impact of the Visits at individual and institutional level is based on data from beneficiaries' final reports and surveys among beneficiaries. In addition, surveys and interviews have been carried out among home organisations of beneficiaries.

### 11.1 Impact on beneficiaries' personal and professional development

Table 11-1 shows to what extent the Visits and Exchanges Action has had an impact on various aspects of the personal and professional development of the beneficiary.

**Table 11-1: Personal and professional development of beneficiaries**

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>Refreshed my interest in the subject(s) I teach (or the aspects of adult education which I manage)</b>	3%	3%	9%	40%	45%	1212
<b>Improved my foreign language competence</b>	17%	14%	23%	27%	20%	1228
<b>Encouraged me to adopt a more reflective approach to the way I teach/carry out my duties, or to the teaching/working methods used in my organisation</b>	3%	7%	22%	38%	30%	1214
<b>Improved my knowledge of the subject taught (or of my professional area)</b>	3%	6%	20%	38%	22%	1224
<b>Gave me a wider range of teaching approaches/methods/techniques/materials to choose from</b>	5%	9%	23%	36%	27%	1196
<b>Increased my awareness of new methods of assessing/giving credit for skills or competences acquired in non-</b>	11%	12%	26%	31%	21%	1201

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>formal/informal learning contexts</b>						
<b>Encouraged me to read more about latest research in teaching/in my subject</b>	6%	10%	24%	34%	27%	1204
<b>Enhanced my organisation/management/leadership skills (classroom management, counselling...)</b>	11%	15%	29%	28%	17%	1202
<b>Encouraged me to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the classroom</b>	27%	20%	24%	16%	13%	1181
<b>Upgraded my knowledge of other countries/cultures/education systems</b>	2%	4%	11%	31%	52%	1254
<b>Increased my awareness of European funding mechanisms for adult education projects/organisations</b>	6%	10%	17%	34%	34%	1237
<b>Encouraged me to participate in other Grundtvig activities or activities under other parts of the LLP</b>	3%	4%	11%	28%	56%	1247
<b>Motivated me to carry on developing my professional skills in the future</b>	1%	1%	7%	28%	63%	1250
<b>Enhanced my career prospects</b>	11%	12%	26%	27%	24%	1226

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011

Table 11-1 shows that the largest share of beneficiaries has experienced a strong impact (at level 5 or 4) as regards the following areas of competences:

- Motivated me to carry on developing my professional skills in the future (91% at level 5 or 4)
- Encouraged me to participate in other Grundtvig activities or activities under other parts of the LLP (84%)
- Upgraded my knowledge of other countries/cultures/education systems (83%)

In contrast, relatively lower shares of beneficiaries have indicated a strong impact (at level 5 or 4) as regards the following competence areas:

- Enhanced my organisation/management/leadership skills (classroom management, counselling...) (45%)
- Encouraged me to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the classroom (39%)

Overall, the results indicate that the Action has particularly improved beneficiaries' motivation for professional development and knowledge of other countries' educational systems, while supportive competences such as organisation/management and the use of ICT are less frequently improved.

### *Impact in relation to European priorities*

Table 11-1 indicates that the Visits and Exchanges Action has enhanced skills that are in line with European priorities. The impact of the Visits and Exchanges Action is, however, more moderate than the impact of the Assistantships Action. This may be explained by the fact that most Visits and Exchanges are short-duration, i.e. less than a week, and the most frequent activity of the Action are

conferences and seminars (57%), while only 6% of the beneficiaries have visited an adult education organisation for the purpose of carrying out a teaching assignment.

*Visit and Exchanges improve foreign language learning.* 20% of the beneficiaries report very strong impact as regards improvement in their foreign language competences. In their comments many beneficiaries report that they have improved their competences for teaching in another language and that their cultural experience has enriched the content of their courses.

*Visit and Exchanges improve ICT-skills.* In their final reports, 13% of the beneficiaries indicate a very strong impact as regards having been encouraged to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the classroom. Similarly, in the survey, 15% answer that they have improved their competences in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments. In other words, being an ICT-facilitator. The improved ICT-facilitator competences are important viewed in relation to the objective of enhancing digital literacy.

*Visit and Exchanges improve competences related to the provision of basic skills.* An analysis of the content and purpose of Visits and Exchanges indicates that many beneficiaries have studied pedagogical and methodological aspects concerning supporting vulnerable adults with learning difficulties. For example, didactic approaches and assessment systems for adults who need to enhance their key competences through embedded learning. These activities have improved the beneficiaries' competences related to the provision of basic skills to disadvantaged learners. Improving basic skills is a key objective of Europe 2020 and an adequate level of skills is considered a prerequisite for the further updating of skills.

*Visit and Exchanges improve intercultural competences in education.* Many beneficiaries report (52% report very strong impact), that they have upgraded their knowledge of other countries, cultures and education systems. 28% of the beneficiaries also report that their Visit has helped them increase the interest of their learners and colleagues in European topics.

## 11.2 Impact on the home organisation and its local community

In their final report the beneficiaries have described the impact of the Visits the Exchanges on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community.

**Table 11-2: Impact on the beneficiary's home organisation and its local community**

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>Helped me better motivate learners in the subject I teach</b>	13%	6%	21%	35%	25%	1060
<b>Helped me increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics</b>	5%	6%	22%	38%	28%	1113
<b>Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities</b>	4%	4%	19%	35%	38%	1138
<b>Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes</b>	4%	7%	20%	35%	34%	1134
<b>Led or will lead to the use of new teaching methods/approaches in my organisation</b>	6%	11%	23%	37%	24%	1104
<b>Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching</b>	13%	13%	27%	31%	16%	1079

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
<b>subject(s) in my organisation</b>						
<b>Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way my organisation is managed</b>	23%	20%	27%	22%	8%	1109
<b>Extended the range of services provided by the organisation</b>	14%	18%	29%	26%	13%	1111
<b>Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of my organisation</b>	5%	5%	18%	37%	34%	1143
<b>Helped me open my organisation to new groups of adult learners</b>	14%	15%	24%	28%	18%	1103
<b>Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself</b>	11%	15%	27%	29%	18%	1108

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011

Table 11-2 shows that the largest share of beneficiaries has experienced a strong impact (at level 5 or 4) as regards the following competence areas:

- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities (73%)
- Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of my organisation (71%)
- Helped me increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics (67%)

In contrast, relatively lower shares of beneficiaries have indicated a strong impact (at level 5 or 4) as regards the following competence areas:

- Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way my organisation is managed (30%)
- Extended the range of services provided by the organisation (39%)

Overall, the results show that the impact on the home organisation concerns people more than structures and procedures. The impact on the home organisation mainly concerns the inspiration of colleagues who are encouraged to participate in the European educational programmes, while changes to the way the home organisation are managed or its range of services is less frequently reported.

The survey of beneficiaries of the Visit and Exchanges Action confirms that the Action had an impact on the home organisation as 71% of the beneficiaries who participated in the survey consider that their Visit had an impact on their home organisation and the local community after they returned.

**Table 11-3: Impact on home organisation and its local community**

Did your Visit have an impact on your home organisation and the local community after you returned?	%	N
<b>Yes</b>	71%	255
<b>No</b>	29%	104
<b>Total</b>	100%	359



Source: Survey among beneficiaries of Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action conducted in February-March 2012

In the survey, the beneficiaries have been asked to describe in their own words the impact of their Visit. Their comments indicate many different types of impact on their home organisation.

- **Development of new partnerships for the home organisation.** Beneficiaries describe that they could recommend people they had met during their Visits and develop partnerships and collaboration between countries.
- **Enhanced the home organisation's interest in more EU projects.** One beneficiary describes that the home organisation expressed great interest in putting more emphasis on working with other European countries through EU projects, especially in the fields of volunteering and working with disadvantaged people. Another beneficiary describes that the home organisation became more aware of the opportunities offered by the 2012 Year of Active Ageing. Another beneficiary developed an EU guide on organisations involved in adult education and funding possibilities for a network of organisations in the home country.
- **Inspired beneficiaries' colleagues to participate in Grundtvig projects.** Some beneficiaries describe that colleagues were inspired to participate in Grundtvig projects and develop new activities in their daily work.
- **Dissemination of results to the local community.** Many beneficiaries indicate that they have shared the new knowledge with colleagues and learners in their home organisation. Furthermore, many beneficiaries have disseminated their experiences in newsletters, articles or interviews in the local newspaper, etc.

The comments indicate that the return of the beneficiary has a sustainable impact on their home organisation. Most of the home organisations (74%), which participated in the survey, indicate that their organisation benefitted from sending staff to an organisation in another country. In general, the beneficiary becomes a "resource" for the home organisation by providing access to new international partnerships and knowhow on participation in further EU projects.

Interviews with home organisations indicate that one of the main impacts is that the organisation has improved its international dimension. Home organisations consider Visits beneficial as they exchange experiences and new ideas from similar institutions abroad. One of the home organisations reports that it uses ideas from abroad to influence policy makers in their own government in connection with designing immigration programmes for example.

Home organisations report that the Visits and Exchanges Action opens up a much wider dimension of experience and best practice in the field of adult education in general and as regards specific issues. For example, a home organisation emphasises that many countries need to know different approaches in prison education implementations in other countries. Home organisations also report that other educational systems outside the participant's home country have an inspirational influence on innovation and differences.

Home organisations emphasise that the organisation benefits enormously from establishing links with other countries, especially if they teach foreign languages. 81% of the home organisations that participated in the survey think that the participation in the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action contributed to more European cooperation between their organisation and host organisations.

Furthermore, participation in Visits and Exchanges has contributed to establishing lasting international networks and contacts with host organisations, and this has generated new projects and activities. In this connection, some home organisations report that they have used guest teachers from host organisations.

#### *Beneficiaries motivate their colleagues to apply for a Visit*

55% of the beneficiaries who participated in the survey answer that their Visit has inspired colleagues at their home organisation to apply for a Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges grant.

73 beneficiaries who participated in the survey on the Visits and Exchanges Action indicated the number of colleagues they think they have motivated to apply for a Visit. Most of them (57%) have inspired one or two colleagues.

**Table 11-4: Motivation of other colleagues to apply for a Visits and Exchanges grant**

<b>How many colleagues have you inspired?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>1</b>	25%	18
<b>2</b>	32%	23
<b>3-5</b>	34%	25
<b>6-10</b>	8%	6
<b>over 10</b>	1%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>73</b>

*Source: Survey among beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action conducted in February-March 2012*

### 11.3 Impact on the host organisation and its local community

Table 11-5: Impact on the host organisation and its local community

Type of impact	1 = No impact	2	3	4	5 = Very strong impact	N
Helped to better motivate learners in the subject I teach	22%	13%	21%	31%	14%	444
Helped to increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics	9%	5%	22%	36%	27%	469
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities	5%	7%	20%	34%	34%	466
Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes	5%	7%	23%	36%	30%	456
Led or will lead to the use of new teaching methods/approaches in this organisation	15%	18%	28%	23%	17%	486
Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching subject(s) in this organisation	24%	18%	27%	19%	12%	471
Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way this organisation is managed	31%	27%	23%	12%	7%	469
Extended the range of services provided by the organisation	25%	18%	27%	17%	12%	473
Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of the organisation	5%	9%	22%	36%	27%	503
Helped open the organisation to new groups of adult learners	21%	16%	24%	23%	16%	475
Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself	22%	16%	28%	20%	14%	471

Source: Final reports of beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action 2009-2011

Table 11-5 shows that the largest share of beneficiaries has experienced a strong impact (at level 5 or 4) as regards the following areas:

- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in similar individual mobility activities (68%)
- Encouraged my colleagues to participate in the European educational programmes (66%)
- Helped to increase the interest of my learners/colleagues in European topics (63%)
- Helped to increase the European dimension in the work of the organisation (63%).

In contrast, relatively lower shares of beneficiaries have indicated a strong impact (at level 5) as regards the following competence areas:

- Led or will lead to the introduction of changes in the way this organisation is managed (19%)
- Extended the range of services provided by the organisation (29%)
- Led or will lead to the introduction of new teaching subject(s) in this organisation (31%)
- Had or will have an impact on the local community beyond the organisation itself (34%)

Overall, the impact on the host organisation mainly concern increasing internationalisation and is similar to the impact on the home organisation. Overall, the impact on the host organisation leads to the inspiration of colleagues who are encouraged to participate in the European educational programmes, while changes to the way the home organisation is managed or its range of services provided are less frequently reported.

#### 11.4 Development of competences related to adult learning

Table 11-6 shows to what extent the Visits and Exchanges programme has improved the competences related to adult learning. The framework of competences was developed by Research voor Beleid in the project “Key competences for adult learning professionals” in 2010.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the framework of competences distinguishes between a) competences related to being directly involved in the learning process and b) competences related to being supportive for the learning process.

The **most frequent competences** that have been improved are competences related to:

- selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods and content for the adult learning process: being able to design the learning process (52%); and
- facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and stimulating an adult learner’s own development (55%).

In contrast the **least frequent competences** that have been improved are competences related to:

- managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of the provision: being financially responsible (12%); and
- facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning; and professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments: being an ICT-facilitator (15%).

With reference to the framework of competences, Table 11-6 shows that the Visits and Exchanges Action mainly improves competences related to being directly involved in the learning process, and less so the competences supporting the learning process, such as managing financial matters and IT-facilities.

<sup>24</sup> Research voor Beleid (2010): “Key competences for adult learning professionals – Final report”. Study available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/keycomp.pdf>

**Table 11-6: What competences have been improved during the Visit?**

<b>Please indicate below which of the following types of competences your Visit helped to improve</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Competence in assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivations and wishes of adult learners: being able to assess adult learners' learning needs.</b>	49%	169
<b>Competence in selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods and content for the adult learning process: being able to design the learning process.</b>	52%	177
<b>Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and stimulating an adult learner's own development.</b>	55%	190
<b>Competence in continuously monitoring and evaluating the adult learning process to improve it: being an evaluator of the learning process.</b>	31%	108
<b>Competence in advising on career, life, further development and, if necessary, the use of professional help: being an advisor/counsellor.</b>	23%	78
<b>Competence in designing and constructing study programmes: being a programme developer.</b>	42%	144
<b>Competence in managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of the provision: being financially responsible.</b>	12%	42
<b>Competence in managing human resources in an adult learning institute: being a (people) manager.</b>	20%	68
<b>Competence in managing and leading the adult learning institute in general and managing the quality of the provision of the adult learning institute: being a general manager.</b>	17%	59
<b>Competence in marketing and public relations: being able to reach the target groups and promoting the institute.</b>	27%	92
<b>Competence in dealing with administrative issues and informing adult learners and adult learning professionals: being supportive in administrative areas.</b>	20%	70
<b>Competence in facilitating ICT-based learning environments and supporting both adult learning professionals and adult learners in using these learning environments: being an ICT-facilitator.</b>	15%	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>364%*</b>	<b>1248</b>

Source: Survey of the beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action.

\* Note: The percentage sum exceeds 100% as multiple answers were possible.

Despite the great diversity of comments, language competences are the most frequently reported to be improved. Many beneficiaries describe that their language competences and their abilities for

intercultural communication improved significantly. Similarly, beneficiaries report that they have improved their communicative skills and confidence level.

## 11.5 Dissemination and follow up

In their final reports, the beneficiaries described in qualitative terms what follow-up and dissemination activities they have provided or plan to provide on their Visit and Exchanges.

Overall, the beneficiaries provide very detailed and thorough descriptions of their completed and planned dissemination activities. We have categorised and counted the hundreds of comments of beneficiaries as regards to the scope of their dissemination.

Many of the beneficiaries indicate that they start with the internal dissemination to their colleagues and then develop articles or presentations for local/regional or national dissemination.

- Approximately 70% of the beneficiaries have carried out or plan dissemination to the management and colleagues in their home organisation, such as holding internal meetings where they present and discuss their experiences and pass on materials and presentations from their Visits and Exchanges.
- Approximately 20% of the beneficiaries have carried out or plan dissemination to the local/regional community in the form of articles or interviews in local media or on the websites of local organisations, etc.
- Approximately 30% of the beneficiaries have carried out or plan dissemination at national level, typically to national networks and professional organisations with specific relations to the field. Many beneficiaries have written or plan to write articles/reports for countrywide dissemination.
- Approximately 10% of the beneficiaries mention that they apply their experiences of their Visits and Exchanges in their work.

Overall, the most frequent target groups of the beneficiaries' dissemination are their colleagues and personal professional networks. Often colleagues are informed at regular staff meetings where they discuss the beneficiaries' experiences. Some beneficiaries mention that they use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and/or other social media to inform their personal networks about their visit, using pictures/films and short stories. Such social media may be quite efficient for inspiring colleagues.

In conclusion, the compilation of these data shows that the Visits and Exchanges Action has had impact on the personal and professional development of the beneficiaries, on home organisations and their local communities, as well as host organisations and their local communities.

Furthermore, the impact has spiralling effects as the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges contribute to the creation of international networks that pave the way for new projects, partnerships and exchanges. Most of the home organisations (91%) that participated in the survey report that they want to send more staff to another country in the future. 55% of the beneficiaries who participated in the survey indicate that their Visits have inspired colleagues at their home organisation to apply for a Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges grant. Beneficiaries and home organisations also note how the Action has enhanced the home organisation's interest in more EU projects.

## 12. European added value

European added value is a relatively broad term, which does not have a strict definition. Basically, it signifies what is generally understood as the ‘European dimension’ of a project or an action like Visits and Exchanges e.g. its relevance for the EU, its institutions and policies. Consequently, this means that the Visits and Exchanges’ methodology, goals and effects should apply not only to a specific local or regional context, but to the European arena as a whole. Seen in this perspective, a Visit at an organisation abroad may not only be beneficial to the single beneficiary’s career and home organisation, but also create international, European benefits beyond national level.

With this starting point, the analysis of this chapter’s focuses on the following issues:

- What are the benefits of carrying out such activities in another country and supported by a European programme?
- Has the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges in another country been more valuable than a similar activity in the beneficiary’s home country?

For the latter question, the answer is “yes”, according to the survey among beneficiaries. 82% of the beneficiaries who participated in the survey answer that it was more valuable than a similar activity in their home country.

**Table 12-1: The European added value of visiting another country**

<b>Has your Grundtvig Visit in another country been more valuable to you than a similar activity in your home country?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Yes</b>	82%	296
<b>No</b>	18%	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>361</b>

*Survey among beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action conducted in February-March 2012*

The beneficiaries typically indicate the following reasons:

- Visiting another country broadens the beneficiaries’ horizon on professional issues by exchanging experiences with colleagues in other countries
- Visiting another country develops professional partnerships across countries providing international experience on given issues of adult education, such as immigration.
- Visiting another country strengthens foreign language and intercultural competences.
- Visiting another country enables benchmarking.
- Visiting another country gives much better insight into its educational systems, organisation, and how its employees relate to each other.
- Visiting another country can provide experiences in fields that may not be so advanced in one’s home country:

The comments show that there is an evident European added value of visiting another country instead of carrying out the same activity at national level. The international dimension enables a more fruitful exchange of ideas and reflections across countries and strengthens the intercultural competences of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, visiting another country gives access to new professional connections and methodologies in relation to adult learning. Each country has its strengths and weaknesses and many beneficiaries claim that they have experienced new ideas and methodologies in areas that are more advanced than in their home country. Hence the Grundtvig Actions enhance the complementary exchange of ideas and competences.

Home organisations think that Visits and Exchanges open up a much wider dimension of experience and best practice in the field of adult education and that other educational systems have an inspirational influence on innovation. The Visits and Exchanges Action gives a more diverse perspective on different cultural approaches to learning that could not be achieved by inviting speakers from abroad to give presentations in the home country.



## 13. Management of and future improvements in the Visits and Exchanges Action

In this context, the notion “management” refers to the way the Action is organised and the terms and conditions for the beneficiaries, such as the application procedure, the grant level, the scope of activities allowed for, the cooperation between home and host organisations.

This chapter analyses comments and ideas from beneficiaries and National Agencies on the future improvements in the Visits and Exchanges Action. In order to achieve unbiased proposals, the National Agencies and beneficiaries have been asked quite openly and unspecified what improvements they think are most needed. The analysis of their proposals focuses on the following main issues:

- New purposes: Is the present scope of activities that the Visits and Exchanges Action allows for sufficient? Or should new purposes be supported?
- Management and administration: How could management and administrative procedures of the Action be improved?

### 13.1 Application procedure for a Visits and Exchanges grant

Both beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action and the National Agencies were asked about their opinion about the current application procedure. Table 13-1 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 13-1: Opinion on the application procedure by respondent group**

<b>Do you think that the application procedure for Visits and Exchanges works well?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	58%*	43%*	40
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	89%	11%	370

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012. The percentages add to 101% due to rounding.*

There is a significant difference in the distribution of answers between the two groups. While most of the beneficiaries (89%) think that the application procedure works well, 43% of the answers received from the National Agencies are negative. This distribution of responses is similar to the distribution of responses for the Assistantships Action, and the main explanations for the difference of opinion between beneficiaries and National Agencies are the same as well:

- The survey sent to beneficiaries includes only successful applicants. This group might have been more critical if they had not belonged to the selected applicants.
- The present application procedure is an administrative burden on National Agencies, as data from paper application forms has to be entered manually into the LLPLink.

The responses to the question “Why the application procedure does not work well?” refer to the following aspects:

- The application form is too long and complicated.
- The requirements concerning additional documents that must be attached to the application form for conferences and seminars could be more flexible. Often, applicants have to submit their application forms for the Visits and Exchanges Action without the conference or seminar programme as these are sent at a later stage by the seminar or conference organiser.
- A European database containing information on potential host organisations should be created to help applicants find host organisations and apply for a Visit.
- Feedback on unsuccessful applications is not provided, according to a respondent, making the selection process non-transparent.

*Applications submitted by organisations in the future*

In the future, the EU's education programme 2014-2020 proposes that applications be submitted by organisations instead of individuals. Both beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action and the National Agencies were asked about their opinion about this change in the application procedure. Table 13-2 summarises the main views of both groups of respondents.

**Table 13-2: Opinion on changing the individual application procedure by respondent group**

<b>What do you think that the advantages of not having an application procedure for individual applicants could be?</b>			
<b>What do you think that the disadvantages of replacing the application procedure for individual applicants by an application procedure through organisations could be?</b>			
	<b>Advantages of not having an application procedure for individual applicants</b>	<b>Disadvantages of changing the application procedure for individual applicants</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearer link to adult education and an opportunity to target specific themes.</li> <li>▪ Higher quality of applications</li> <li>▪ Less administrative workload for National Agencies</li> <li>▪ Better usage of funds</li> <li>▪ The impact would be more evident.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unemployed people will not be able to apply.</li> <li>▪ Freelancers are excluded unless they can find a sending organisation.</li> <li>▪ Future adult learning providers are excluded.</li> <li>▪ Such a procedure inhibits individual freedom and initiative.</li> <li>▪ Large organisations will often have an advantage compared to small organisations.</li> </ul>	<b>34</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less paperwork</li> <li>▪ Applications for a group of participants will be easier.</li> <li>▪ Organisational impact will gain more focus.</li> <li>▪ Finding a host organisation might be easier for an organisation. Hence, the possibility of work placement will be strengthened.</li> <li>▪ The Action will be better promoted as organisations have more interest in the Action than individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Freelancers are excluded.</li> <li>▪ Unemployed people are excluded.</li> <li>▪ It takes away the individual motivation and commitment.</li> <li>▪ Organisation managers have the power to decide who will be allowed to apply.</li> <li>▪ More bureaucracy as the new procedure adds an extra layer.</li> <li>▪ Employees or organisation members will face difficulties in convincing managers with no European outlook about the benefits of participating in the Action.</li> <li>▪ Bottom-up internationalisation will be blocked.</li> </ul>	<b>239-243</b>

Source: Survey among all National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

Summarising Table 13-2, both the National Agencies and the beneficiaries see the advantages of not having individual application procedures mostly connected to the application itself, as this will lead to

higher quality of the applications, less paperwork and more efficiency. In addition, the organisational impact will increase, and it will be easier for a group to apply. Each home organisation will be able to use the Action more strategically, deciding what staff to send abroad and establishing more systematic follow-up procedures to ensure that beneficiaries benefit from the Action. An organisational application procedure would ensure a higher impact of the Action based on institutional strategy.

The disadvantages that most respondents point out are the danger of excluding vulnerable groups (unemployed people, freelancers), taking away the individual commitment and losing the bottom-up approach. Many comments from beneficiaries reflect very strong opinions against changing the application procedure and words like “disaster” are often mentioned.

## 13.2 New purposes

Overall, the analysis indicates that the present scope of activities that are allowed for Visits and Exchanges is regarded as sufficient by National Agencies and the beneficiaries.

Most respondents (81%) at National Agencies do not find that there are other purposes and activities that Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges should support. Among the beneficiaries the picture is the same, as most of them answer “no” and think that all relevant areas are covered.

Below we have analysed and grouped the ideas for new purposes and activities from National Agencies and beneficiaries.

### Ideas from **National Agencies:**

- The action could support language courses as a separate purpose.
- The action could support administrative work in adult education or the management of European projects focused on adult learning.
- The action could support research projects, especially for students of adult education programmes.

### Ideas from **beneficiaries:**

- The action could support placement in private companies, where the beneficiary can experience adult education in a business context. The argument is that non-formal education is done at a much more professional level in companies (both HR Departments and in training Agencies) rather than in NGOs or public institutions.
- The action could support language learning/reinforcement.
- The action could support artists’ exchange visits that have an educational element and/or can be used for adult educational purposes.
- The action could support events that are not necessarily conferences, but are relevant to meet others in the same field and doing the same work - with different cultures. This could be a networking event or a festival, as long as there is a structured method for people of different cultures to meet and exchange ideas.
- The action could support senior job exchange. The argument is that when you are retired you can transfer some knowledge or be beneficial in a learning environment. There is a rapid growth in the number of elderly people in Europe, but it is hard to find funding for the elderly.

Both National Agencies and beneficiaries propose that Visits and Exchanges should allow language learning courses as a separate purpose. Another common proposal is that the action should allow administrative work in an organisation. In this regard, beneficiaries propose to broaden the scope of host organisations to include private companies where the beneficiaries could work with HR-management.

### 13.3 The promotion of the Action

In general, there is a good perception amongst the NAs on the number of applications submitted. The main explanations from the unsatisfied National Agencies in this respect are:

- the Visit and Exchanges Action is too similar to the Grundtvig In-Service Training;
- the target groups have problems finding a potential host organisation for a Visit.

#### *Promotion of the Action*

In the survey, beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action and National Agencies were asked if the Action needs more promotion to become better known. Table 13-33 shows the distribution of answers.

**Table 13-3: Promotion of the Action by respondent group**

<b>Do you think that the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action needs more promotion to become better known?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	43%	57%	42
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	63%	37%	366

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.*

There is a significant difference between the responses received from beneficiaries and those from the National Agencies. However, compared to the Assistantships Action, there is less need for more promotion. Less than half of the National Agencies consider that there is more need for promotion of the Visits and Exchanges Action.

Asked about what could be better promoted, the most common statements of National Agencies and beneficiaries refer to the **Action itself**. The statements include:

- targeted promotion towards potential beneficiaries using existing forums, unions, organisations, etc.;
- general promotion using the web, including links to websites for adult education staff, adult literacy, etc.;
- establishing a database or a platform to inform about good examples and successful experiences. The database could also include a list of potential host organisations; and
- raising the awareness on the "Visit" aspect of the Action.

#### *Are the intended target groups attracted?*

Both beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action and National Agencies were asked if the Action attracts the intended target groups. Table 13-44 shows the distribution of answers:

**Table 13-4: The target group of the Visits and Exchanges Action**

<b>Do you think that the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action attracts the intended target groups?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>National Agencies</b>	86%	14%	42
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	89%	11%	355

*Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.*

A vast majority of beneficiaries as well as National Agencies find that the Action attracts the intended target groups. Unlike the Assistantships Action, there seems to be a consensus among National Agencies that there is a match between the intended target groups and the selected beneficiaries. The main explanation for this difference is that the minimum short-duration of a Visit allows more employed adult education staff to participate in the Action.

With regard to the target groups that are not reached by the Action, both groups of respondents agree with the following suggestions:

- Better promotion of the Action. The majority of people in the core target group are unaware of the Action.
- The promotion of the Action is often too focused on formal adult education. It is important to target the non-formal and informal adult learning sector as well. The informal learning sector includes libraries, museums and other cultural institutions.
- The application procedure that takes place through an organisation is a major barrier for applicants who do not have an organisation to support them. In addition, many freelancers and training providers are employed only part-time in the adult learning sector.
- Employers can have a negative influence on the attraction of the intended target groups, as they might not see the benefits from an organisational point of view to send employees on trainings abroad.

*How could the Action be made more attractive?*

The proposals to increase the attractiveness of the Visits and Exchanges Action can be categorised into three groups. Table 13- 5 shows the three categories and includes statements from both beneficiaries and National Agencies.

**Table 13-5: Proposals for making the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action more attractive**

Category	Proposals	Support from the EC
<b>Make the opportunities more visible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disseminate the experiences and results of the Visits and Exchanges Action more effectively.</li> <li>▪ Establish an EU-database for organisations and/or individuals who wish to carry out job-shadowing or work placement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create and distribute information material on the Action.</li> <li>▪ Create a central EU-database for host organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>Lower the administrative burden</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Simplify the application forms and establish online application and reporting procedures. The In-Service Training e-form can be taken as a good example.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create e-forms.</li> </ul>
<b>Changing the action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Merge the In-Service Training Action (IST) and the Visit and Exchanges Action into one Action, or moving conferences and seminars to the In-Service Training Action and keeping only the job- shadowing under the Visits and Exchanges Action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Merge some of the 7 Grundtvig Actions</li> </ul>

Source: Survey among National Agencies and beneficiaries of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action, February-March 2012.

In the survey that targeted the National Agencies, 45% are in favour of further support from the European Commission to enhance the implementation of the Grundtvig Actions. The proposals for further support from the European Commission include both the Assistantships and the Visits and Exchanges Action. However, it should be noted that unlike the Assistantships Action, not as many National Agencies are requesting more funding for the Visits and Exchanges Action.

### 13.4 Future improvements

In the survey and in the final report beneficiaries of Visits and Exchanges have been asked to comment on ideas for the future improvements of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action.

The following points summarise the most typical comments of beneficiaries:

- **Continue the action as it is.** This is the most frequent comment. About 50% of the 129 respondent beneficiaries answer “no” when asked whether they have any ideas for future improvements of the Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges Action. Many beneficiaries emphasise that the action should not be changed. They argue that continuity enhances quality and that it is important not to change regulations too fast.
- **Continue the individual application.** Many beneficiaries’ comments are warnings that it would be very disadvantageous if only organisations can apply and not individuals. Their main argument is that many potential beneficiaries are self-employed and not directly connected to an institution. Consequently, many self-employed people will not have the same opportunities to apply.
- **More publicity about the action.** Some beneficiaries comment that it is hard to find out about the action. They comment that the application process is rather easy, but that it should be better known.
- **Better follow-up and quality assurance in all steps.** Some beneficiaries suggest more follow-up and quality assurance as regards the selection of applicants, checking of candidates’ educational and professional backgrounds, and obstacles during the exchanges. They suggest that there should be a formal possibility to renew the contract if the home and host organisations agree to do so. Solutions and procedures should be in place if the visitor has problems with the host organisation.
- **Accumulate and use experiences of participating beneficiaries and organisations.** Some beneficiaries suggest that experienced organisations should be asked to include organisations without such experience when they apply for a second funding. Furthermore, beneficiaries suggest that an alumni club of beneficiaries and home/host organisations be established.
- **Change the name of the action.** Some beneficiaries think that the term “Exchange” misleads people into thinking that the action concerns some “reciprocity provision”.
- **Increase digitalisation of all documentation of the action’s activities.** Beneficiaries suggest that the application process should be handled digitally and that a central database for conferences held be established.

The National Agencies have also commented on future improvements in the Visits and Exchanges Action. The following are typical examples of their ideas and comments :

- **Increase digitalisation of administration and documentation.** Electronic and web-based forms are suggested for applications and final reports. The National Agencies argue that on-line applications and reports are very important for the management of the action.

- **An EU-database of host organisations for partner search.** Some National Agencies suggest a European database of institutions willing to host a Visitor or Assistant. The National Agencies request that the EU-Commission make documents web-based (the application form and the report form) and that the Commission work with the National Agencies to formally integrate host organisations into the LLP to support applicants in finding placements and ensure that quality control mechanisms are in place to support the delivery of the programme activities.
- **Organisation-based application process.** Some National Agencies comment that the non-individual application approach is much appreciated because it implies less administration and gives better opportunities to target the available funds at certain themes, sectors, and regions.
- **Simplification of actions and their management.** Overall, the National Agencies think that the Grundtvig Actions are too closely related and target some of the same types of mobility activities. Instead of separate actions, they suggest merging the In-Service Training Action, the Visits and Exchanges and the Assistantships Action in one Staff Mobility Action. In particular, the National Agencies indicate that it is unnecessary to require beneficiaries of the Visits and Exchanges Action to fill in long application forms and final reports if they only attended a conference for a few days and suggest shorter application forms. The National Agencies suggest that there should be one Grundtvig Action for individual mobility with the same application form and application round, enabling beneficiaries to choose the duration and the purpose (course, seminar, conference, short-term job-shadowing, long-term job-shadowing, etc.). Some National Agencies describe such a merger as extending the purposes of the In-Service Training Action to include study visits, job-shadowing and participation in conferences. The National Agencies argue that merging actions would ease the administration and make the Action simpler and easier to understand for applicants.
- **More cooperation between home and host organisations.** Some National Agencies suggest that the communication between home and host organisations should be strengthened. It is argued that there is currently insufficient cooperation, as the contact with the host organisation abroad is made largely through the individual participant. Ideally, the managers of the home and host organisations respectively should exchange information and expectations on what the beneficiary will gain from staying in the host organisation. And the host organisations could identify activities/tasks to be carried out. Currently, the home organisations do not know where the beneficiary is going and what his/her task(s) will be.
- **A digital platform should support cooperation between the home and the host organisation.** Some National Agencies suggest that a digital platform could support the cooperation and the exchange of information throughout all steps of the Visits and Exchanges. Furthermore, a digital database containing previous host/home organisations could enhance the selection process for applicants.
- **More formal contract with the host organisation.** Some National Agencies suggest that there should be contract either between the host organisation and the National Agency or between the host and the sending organisations.
- **The host organisation should be monitored and have some obligations.** The obligations mainly concern what information the host organisation should provide. National Agencies suggest that the host organisation should provide feedback to the sending organisation, including feedback on preparation activities for hosting the beneficiary and a detailed programme of activities.

In general, the National Agencies suggest that the host organisations should be monitored more systematically and follow some minimum criteria specified by the Actions. Furthermore, it is suggested that only "established" adult education organisations, which work on a regular basis with support of general adult education, should be eligible host organisations.

- **More guidance material for host organisations.** Some National Agencies suggest that the Grundtvig Programme should offer more guidance material for host organisations.
- **Obligations of home organisations.** While requesting more systematic monitoring of host organisations, the National Agencies only have few ideas and comments on the obligations of home organisations. Some Agencies suggest that the home organisations' main task is to support the beneficiaries during the application process. Furthermore, it is regarded as necessary that the home organisations use new knowledge and skills gained by the beneficiaries.
- Ensure that impact from the staff mobility benefits the learners.

The above comments mainly concern how to improve the management and the exchange of information between home and host organisations. Some National Agencies comment that it is important to focus on how staff mobility is beneficial to the learners. If the event abroad is a conference, it is suggested that at least 10-20% of the time be devoted to develop an action plan on how the activity should become beneficial to adult learners in the home organisation.