



VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Thu Vo

**SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE
INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS OF AN
ERASMUS+ PROJECT**

Case: Reboot Project

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ABSTRACT

Author	Thu Vo
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Project sustainability is an emerging research area in spite of the fact that sustainability appeared for the first time in the 20th century and has grown since the industrial revolution. The current state of research on project sustainability is relatively interpretive, in which its integration in practice is not specified.

This bachelor thesis aimed to address the existing gap in previous studies. Its purpose was to develop a sustainability plan for the intellectual outputs of the Reboot project by exploring the factors influencing on the project sustainability and studying strategic planning models employed by other projects, including projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme and other programmes.

The research utilised the qualitative method, including varied materials, case studies and interviews. The case studies explored strategic planning models used in ten Erasmus+ funded projects, whereas interviews studied models used in other projects, factors influencing the project sustainability and interviewees' perceptions on the topic.

The results showed that factors influencing the project sustainability vary, they can be divided into project-related and context-related factors. Different strategic models can be considered for Reboot's sustainability plan, including the 5W1H model, alignment model, organic model, and impact model.

Keywords: project sustainability, strategic planning, model, Erasmus+ Programme

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1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction gives an understanding of the research background, objective and research questions, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Research

The terms “sustainability” and “sustainable” appeared for the first time in the Oxford English Dictionary during the second half of the 20th century and have been used in French, German and Dutch for eras. Exploiting resources sustainably has been growing only since industrial revolution. The multiplication of population size and increase in consumption forced humans to come to terms with the depletion of limited available resources (Van Zon 2002, 20-22; Pisani 2007, 85-86). The sustainability is placed against the harmony of the economic pillar, environment pillar and social pillar, which is known as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) (Silvius & Nedeski 2011, 2-3).



Figure 1. Triple Bottom Line (TBL).

The relationship of sustainability and project management was first presented in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. However, the project sustainability is a rather an emerging area. Literature resources on this topic are scarce and only starting 2006 some first studies were offered

(Labuschagne & Brent 2006; Association for Project Management 2006; Taylor 2008; Eid 2009; Gareis et al. 2009; Silvius et al. 2009; Turner 2010; Silvius et al. 2010). Nevertheless, they are only considered “ingredients”.

The current state of research on sustainability in projects and project management is therefore mostly interpretive, giving meaning to how the concepts of sustainability could be interpreted in the context of projects, rather than prescriptive, prescribing how sustainability should be integrated into projects. The studies provide ingredients, but no clear recipe. (Silvius et al. 2012.)

This research addressed developing the “recipe” in project sustainability by exploring different factors that influence on the continuity of project outputs and strategic planning models. The study and reporting were completed in Finland, however, within them were practices that had been carried out in European countries and the United States. The topic of the research was selected as it shifted the focus on the practical application of project sustainability, and what needs to be considered therein.

1.2 Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this thesis was to develop a sustainability plan for the intellectual outputs of the Reboot project by exploring the factors influencing the project sustainability and the strategic planning models used in other projects which included projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme and other programmes. The questions assisting to achieve the objective were:

1. What are factors influencing on the project sustainability?
2. What strategic models are being used in developing a sustainability plan?

Within the qualitative research method, the research questions were answered using the combination of literature – project management, project sustainability and strategic planning models, and empirical study – ten case studies from Erasmus+ funded projects and seven semi-structured interviews.

1.3 Research Structure

This thesis consists of nine chapters. The introduction presents the background of the research, objective and research questions, and the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2–4 are dedicated to the theories collected in project management, project sustainability and strategic planning models, aiming to provide a fundamental understanding of the topic. Chapter 5 introduces the Reboot project for which the study aimed to develop the sustainability plan. Chapter 6 elaborates the research methodology. Findings of ten case studies and seven semi-structured interviews are presented in chapter 7. The discussion in chapter 8 will be based on both the literature and findings. Finally, chapter 9 consists of conclusions and defines topics for further research. Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the research.



Figure 2. Thesis structure.

2 OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS IN ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

A project is defined as a temporary endeavour that is carried out to produce a product, service or outcome. A project should have a starting point and an ending point, which determines the scope and resources of a project (Project Management Institute 2017, 40-41). In another definition, a project is considered a problem scheduled for solution (Juran, n.d.), whereas Wrike defines a project as a set of tasks and activities that need to be accomplished to reach a particular objective (n.d. online).

A project is not repetitive. Although an operation of tasks that are repeated is not seen as a project, repetitive elements are allowable in some of project deliverables and activities as long as they do not alter the unique features of the project. For example, educational programmes can be developed by similar or same project team members, and within identical materials. However, each educational programme is characterised differently, for instance a programme developed for migrant women is differed from a programme for science students. (Project Management Institute 2017, 4-5.)

This chapter presents the theory of project and project management. Information of Erasmus+ Programme and its funded projects is provided. In this regard, readers get to know the term “Intellectual Outputs”.

2.1 Project Life Cycle

Project management is an application of knowledge, skills, methodologies, tools and techniques in the execution of project activities to achieve its goals that are to produce a product; perform a service or deliver an outcome. Project management involves an explicit planning, organising and managing the resources to bring out a successful completion within the given constraints.

In the PMBOK® Guide, project life cycle is defined as a series of phases that a project is undergone. A phase is regarded a collection of relevant activities towards to the completion of one or multiple deliverables. In certain phases, one or multiple project management processes are employed and are more likely in a

sequence. See Figure 3. (Project Management Institute 2017, 18; Heagney 2012, 25.)

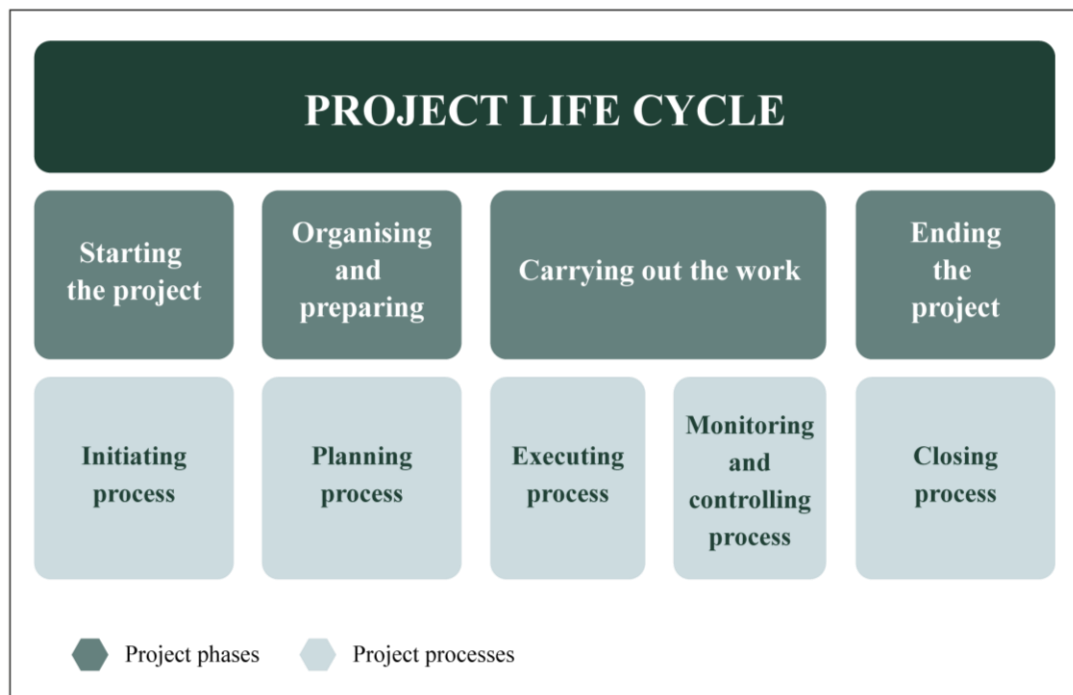


Figure 3. Project life cycle (Project Management Institute 2017, 18; Heagney 2012, 25).

Initiating means that when a project idea appears, project manager and its members are going to start it. The project manager will draft a project charter that defines what need to be accomplished and who are responsible. The contract is formally written and utilised to approve work for the undertakings; determine the authorities and responsibilities of the project members; and establish the limits. (Heagney 2012, 25.)

The second phase is profoundly known as the planning process. The poor conducting of it is one of the main causes of project failures (Heagney 2012, 25). This process aims to establish the scope of the project and project constraints, define the project objectives, and specify the actions that need to be completed to achieve the goals (Project Management Institute 2017, 23). The project planning should place against a background study that presents the needs of the project and the previous work of other projects in the field. This aims to ensure that the defined needs and project objectives will meet during the execution process (MFA

2012b, 19). The project plan gauges the probability for sustaining the project outcomes after its end (UNEP 2005, 10).

Once the plan has been developed and finalised, a set of well-structured activities is executed as determined in the previous processes. The execution process comprises the controlling and monitoring actions to keep track of the progression according to what has been defined in the project plan. Corrections are implemented iteratively, and if there are any unfixable conditions that require to change the plan, the complementary plan is then brought about. (Project Management Institute 2017, 23; Heagney 2012, 22, 25.)

Controlling and monitoring process is a continuous activity throughout the life cycle of the project. It can provide viewpoints on the initial assessment of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability (UNEP 2005, 12). This process requires the project team to track, review, and adjust the performance and identify areas that enforces changes and adaptations (Project Management Institute 2017, 23). In this process, it is important to conduct regular assessments, using established qualities in the planning process as a baseline (Heagney 2012, 26).

The closing process is considered take place when products, results, outcomes or services are delivered. In this process, a lesson-learned review should be thoroughly employed in order to avoid the similar problematic issues or failures in the upcoming projects. The review can be also known as an evaluation to measure the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the project, how the project reaches its objectives (Salla 2014, 15). Upon the completion of the project, an assessment and discussion on how the project outcomes will be continually exploited is held.

2.2 Six Constraints in Project Management

In project management, constraints are regarded as any limitation that dictates the activities throughout the project life cycle (PMTips 2011). They impact on the deliverables, the quality, and the success of the project (Workfront, n.d. online). Beside the triple constraints broadly used, PRINCE2™ introduced the extended version of six project constraints, including time, cost, scope, quality, benefits and

risk. Time and cost are considered standard constraints as they are tangible and easily measured compared to the other elements (Siegelaub 2007). None of these constraints can exist without interlinking to the other five constraints. The six constraints in project management and their respective questions are as seen in the following figure.

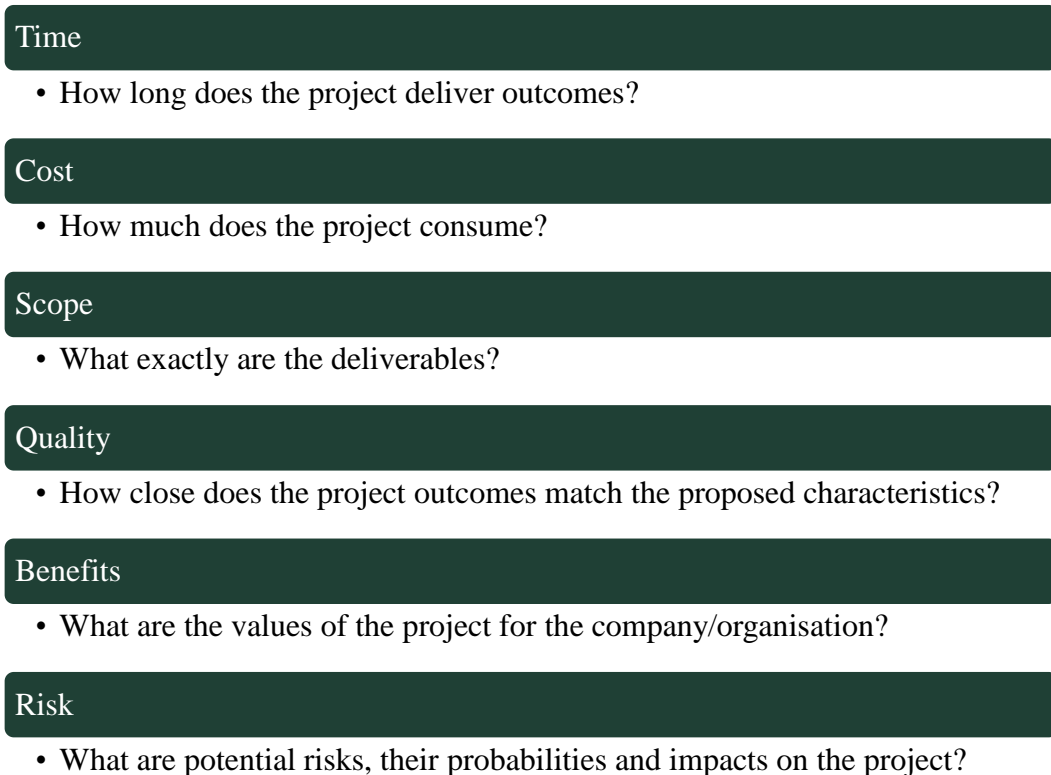


Figure 4. Six constraints in project management.

2.3 Projects in Erasmus+ Programme

Erasmus+ Programme is of the European Commission and has operated since its establishment in 2014, which comprises all the framework programmes, including the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) (Wikipedia 2021). Erasmus+ covers the fields of education, training, youth and sport. These areas are believed to contribute majorly to tackling the current and future socio-economic fluctuations and adversities. Besides, they shall help to support the implementation of the European policy agenda for development, employment, equity and social inclusion. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 5-6.)

In short, the Erasmus+ Programme aims to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy; the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training; the sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education; the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018); the objective of developing the European dimension in sport; the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 7.)

2.3.1 Intellectual Outputs

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the Erasmus+ Programme implement the following key actions: Key Action 1 (KA1) – Mobility of individuals; Key Action 2 (KA2) – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Key Action 3 (KA3) – Support for policy reform. Additionally, Jean Monnet activities and Sport are two separate areas under this programme. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 11-12; UK National Agency, n.d. online.)

Within them are intellectual outputs (IOs) that are developed and delivered. Outputs are directly associated with a project. They are results generated by any project processes and activities in multiple forms: long-written reports, short-written reports, handbooks, approaches, or other verbal means etc. (Project Management Institute 2004). In conjunction with this term, there are outcomes and deliverables. Despite sharing some characteristics, it is necessary to understand the distinction of each term. In brief, they are:

- ***Output***: is the first level of project results, created by processes (one or many of them, depending on each project). It can be intangible, but often tangible and measurable.
- ***Deliverable***: is the second level of project results. It refers to the final output that is transmitted to the third party/parties, such as users, consumers or performing organisations.
- ***Outcome***: is the third level of project results. It is defined as a change caused by the implementation of deliverable(s) into the existing operation of an organisation. It is usually intangible and therefore difficult to assess.

(Office for Government Commerce 2007, 64.)

Under the Erasmus+ Programme, intellectual outputs are defined as tangible results, for example curricula, pedagogical and youth work materials, open educational resources (OER), IT tools, analyses, studies, peer-learning methods, etc. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 120). Intellectual outputs need to be concrete and substantial in quantity. They also need to be aligned with the proposed objectives and address on the needs of the target groups. The intellectual outputs shall be impactful to the target groups and, if possible, to the wider public as it can increase the probability of continuing exploiting the project results after its closure. To some extent, they additionally contain innovative elements (Easy Erasmus 2016, online). See Table 1 to explore some examples of outputs and outcomes in different projects.

Table 1. Examples of output (deliverable) and outcome.

PROJECT/TYPE OF PROJECT	EXAMPLES OF OUTPUT	EXAMPLES OF OUTCOME
<i>Education</i>	Providing advanced trainings to 50 higher education lecturers.	These teachers become actors that enable students to develop their overall competencies and hence increase their employability.
<i>Environment</i>	Developing and publishing a research paper about the impacts of wasting food on the climate change.	Increasing the awareness of community on food waste, enforcing the change of environmental law to be more practical.
<i>Diversity</i>	Offering five free training and one-on-one consultancy on blind recruitment.	Decreasing biases towards ethnicities, minorities, origins, genders, etc.

2.3.2 Important Features of Erasmus+ Programme

The programme funded by European Commission focuses on a certain number of important features. They are recognition and validation of skills and qualifications; open access requirement for educational materials; open access for research and data; international dimension; multilingualism; equity and inclusion; protection and safety of participants; and dissemination and exploitation of project results. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 7-10.)

The sustainability of project outputs is significantly outlined in the feature of dissemination and exploitation. In an Erasmus+ project, dissemination refers to the process of promoting and raising awareness to make the project results visible to the end-users, the target groups and any actors that shall implement the results during the life cycle of a project, whilst exploitation is defined as any actions that convince individuals and stakeholders to use the project results to extend the impacts of the results at different levels during and after the project cycle. (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 7-10.)

Exploitation is closely linked to the project sustainability; through them the project results are ensured to be exploited by the target groups and potentially transferred to another context of uses (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 7; DiVa consortium 2011, 5-6). This exploitation can take place inside the project consortium and outside at local, regional, national and European level. Dissemination and exploitation go hand in hand and are essential parts of the Erasmus+ Programme since they contribute to promoting the agenda of sustainability and qualifying the added values of the programme.

3 PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

This chapter presents the theory of project sustainability, its importance and factors that affect the project sustainability.

3.1 Definition of Project Sustainability

There are various definitions on the concept of project sustainability, but they are profoundly determined by two ways: project sustainability is (1) about integrating the environmental, social and economic aspects in the overall project management and the delivery of outcomes or (2) about the continuity of project results beyond its disposal. Within the first insight is the solid connection with the Triple Bottom Line placed against the three pillars. However, the success of a single project is often restrained by cost or profit element, and it is therefore challenging to reflect how the project is managed as the other elements are less considered. The second insight developed by Labuschagne and Brent (2006) indicated that along with the project life cycle, the project result life cycle and resource life cycle should be substantially taken into account. Integrating this approach hence stretches the project constraints (Project Management Institute 2008; Silvius 2010).

The Association for Project Management (APM) and the University School of Management IAE de Lille (IAE Lille) defines the project sustainability is the harmonisation and the balance of three key pillars to achieve the goals of a project without creating burdens for later generations; whilst the DiVa project determines it as a capacity of the project to continue its existence and functioning after its closure (DiVa consortium 2011, 6). Three dimensions of project sustainability proposed by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are (1) continuation of positive benefits, (2) probability of maintaining the benefits and the institutional structures achieved in a project and (3) the ability to resist any internal and external risks (ADB 2010, 4).

Incorporating sustainability in projects impacts on several areas. In general, it enforces a more intensive and comprehensive consideration on the context of that project in both time and scope boundaries, and therefore stretches the limits of the project (Eid 2009; Maltzman and Shirley 2010; Silvius et al. 2012; Tharp 2013).

The principles of sustainability, such as Triple Bottom Line (TBL) likely increase the involved actors (Eskerod & Huemann 2013; Tharp 2013).

3.2 Factors Affecting the Project Sustainability

There are a variety of factors that affect the sustainability of project outputs after its funding termination. Project team shall early consider and identify those factors, both internally and externally (Salla 2014, 19). Nelke (2012) defines internal factors as strengths and weakness within an organisation, whilst external factors are considered threats and opportunities of the environment to an organisation. Besides, BBC proposes that internal factors are within an organisation and can be controlled, whereas external factors are outside an organisation and have impacts on the operation either positively or negatively (n.d. online). Forces from the environment are uncontrollable, and therefore business can only react to their occurrences.

The factors can be categorised in multiple means. In this study, they are divided into two main classifications: project-related factors and context-related factors, in the correlation with internal and external factors (see Table 2).

3.2.1 Project-related Factors

3.2.1.1 Financing

Along the other aspects, sustainability relies considerably on an adequate financing base to successfully cover up the maintenance and continuation of project outputs and benefits. Most projects are operated within a defined grant funding and therefore the termination of financing upon the project closure causes numerous challenges to the project team to maintain the exploitation of project outputs. (Nepal 1994; Clarizen 2018.)

According to Nepal (1994), most projects confront major funding-flow issues due to an arbitrary pricing policy, a lack of competitiveness, and inadequate supply networks. This is assumed differently by Clarizen (2018), which indicates the

problems are likely caused by a miscalculation, an ill judgement or a lack of accurate estimation on budget allocation.

3.2.1.2 Nature of a Project in Design and Management Strategy

An early defined set of long-term goals and objectives that reflects the extended vision beyond the duration of each project is believed to affect the continuity of project outputs. Besides, it is studied that in-depth research of project areas and the application of project results on broader context can sustain the project results. A detailed and effective preparation for the replication and extension of project outputs in other departments and/or other organisations may additionally support the longevity of project benefits and impacts. (Burdick, Friedman & Loh 2014, 34-35.)

3.2.1.3 Relevance of Project Outputs

Alongside the financing, the relevance of project outputs is considered a key approach to prolong project impacts in its beneficiaries and in the wider public. This is achieved when the project is able to satisfy the particular and persistent needs of its users or offer certain unique benefits to the direct target groups or other institutions (Burdick et al 2014, 35). Some outputs therefore are sustainable while other outputs are not considerably necessary to maintain (DiVa consortium 2011, 6). As a result, the management of projects must be able to respond to any shifts in project demands and priorities (AusAID 2000, 5).

3.2.1.4 Capacity for Self-sustaining

Self-sustainability refers to a sustainable existence which has a little or no other consumption than what have been already created (Wikipedia 2021). Capacity for a project to be self-sustainable can be built by creating other materials, using developed project outputs and/or developing the capacity within available materials and tools. One of evidence for a project sustainability is highlighted in the technological factors, such as Moodle and training websites (Burdick et al

2014, 35-36). For the capacities and project aims, the choice of the right technological level is crucial. A complex technological selection will hinder users from fully experience the tools in the appropriate time and at a reasonable price, which will eventually dissatisfy their interest and requirements (Nepal 1994, 11). Moreover, generating a sense of belonging is essential in technological facility sustainability. Therefore, stakeholder involvement is critically needed in responding to the demands (Sunderland et al. 2013).

3.2.2 Context-related Factors

3.2.2.1 Stakeholder and Community Involvement

The participation of all stakeholders and the community plays a huge role in sustaining project outputs. Their participation improves capability and interest in the operation of a project, resulting in an increased sense of ownership and therefore their willingness to be part of the project (McConville 2006, 14). The sense of ownership amongst the community and stakeholders therein can be enhanced by taking into account the values of the beneficiaries, at both cultural and social levels. The project hence ends up mobilising substantial concern and support in dissemination and exploitation of project outputs; through which it guarantees the long-term impacts (Nepal 1994, 10-11; Salla 2014, 21).

3.2.2.2 Support from External Institutions and Government Policy

Concerning the contextual factors, the support from external institutions is obviously crucial to the project sustainability. External institutions denote stakeholders that are not directly involved in project development and execution, however, are affected by or benefited from the project. The project impacts can be extended in favour of the support from the institutions, the implementation of project outputs in their operations, or the enhancement of institutions' own projects based on developed materials or suggestions (Burdick et al 2014, 36).

Moreover, the importance of government agenda is significantly highlighted. In this regard, the project implementation gains a great advantage from associated

government policy and programmes. On the other hand, the support seems to be distributed unevenly: enthusiastic and active in the planning phase, and loose in the later phase, particularly in the execution. (Burdick et al 2014, 36; Nepal 1994, 10.)

3.2.2.3 Demographic, Social and Cultural Factors

Other factors, including demographic, social and cultural aspects of a country in which the project is operated, should be delicately taken in account. These factors can be presented in social media preference and social cultural aspects, including but not limited to religion, ethnic and language differences. Perceptions of men and women roles in the society are necessary to consider, as well as the general population characteristics, political views, education level (Burdick et al 2014, 36). The national economy and level of research and innovation additionally determine the dissemination and participation methods preferred by the population. Besides, political instability and frequency of natural disasters are counted, depending on type of projects and their contents (Nepal 1994, 11).

Table 2. Factors affecting project sustainability.

PROJECT-RELATED FACTORS	CONTEXT-RELATED FACTORS
<p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>An adequate grant to cover up the maintenance activities.</i> 	<p>Stakeholder and community involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A presence of ownership feeling among the stakeholders and community.</i> - <i>A consideration on stakeholders' cultural and social values.</i>
<p>Nature of project design and management strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>An early establishment of long-term goals and objectives.</i> 	<p>Support from external institutions and government policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A support from external institutions and organisations.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In-depth studies on project areas.</i> - <i>An application of project results on broader contexts.</i> - <i>A preparation for the replication and extension of project outputs in other departments and/or other organisations.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>An implementation of project outputs in their operations.</i> - <i>An enhancement of own projects based on developed materials.</i> - <i>An alignment of government policy and programmes with a project.</i>
<p>Relevance of project outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>An ability to satisfy project output users' needs.</i> - <i>An ability to offer unique benefits to users and stakeholders.</i> 	<p>Demographic, social and cultural factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Demographic, social and cultural aspect of the country where the project is implemented.</i> - <i>Social media preference.</i> - <i>Religion, ethnic and language differences.</i> - <i>Perceptions of men and women roles in the society.</i> - <i>General characteristics of the population.</i> - <i>Etc.</i>
<p>Capacity for self-sustaining</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A development of other materials using available project outputs.</i> - <i>An ability to develop the capacity within available materials and tools.</i> - <i>A correct and suitable selection of technological level.</i> - <i>An active engagement with stakeholders to create a belonging sense.</i> 	

4 STRATEGIC PLANNING MODELS FOR PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This chapter provides an understanding on strategic planning and its models. Definition of strategic planning is firstly presented and henceforth the indication of five models.

4.1 Definition of Strategic Planning

Planning refers to a decision-making process to define what need to be completed and how to complete them. This process is executed in numerous levels, from daily normal issues to more critical problems (Litman 2020, 1-2). Mintzberg (1994) defines planning as a structured procedure that delivers a result in a unified system of decisions. This activity is a basic responsibility in an organisation and needs to be implemented at all levels therein. It is crucial to understand the importance of timeframes, cycles, and sequences of institutional life in planning to avoid the disconnection of it and the organisation (Norris & Poulton 1991, 12-14).

Strategic planning is one type of planning, among others, such as long-range, tactical, and operational planning types (Norris & Poulton 1991, 16). Strategic planning is an integral part of organisation's strategies and is widely applied in different contexts (Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 27). According to Bryson (1995), it is an approach to position an organisation by prioritising the resource usage correspondingly to the established goals, to steer its development over a period. Strategic planning focuses on the future of an organisation and responds to these questions: (1) where we are, (2) where we want to be, (3) how to get there, (4) how to evaluate the progress. See Figure 5. (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 2-3.)



Figure 5. Strategic planning focuses. (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 2-3.)

4.2 Strategic Planning Models

A model is considered a logic diagram that guides the strategic planning process. It is not only supportive in clarifying tasks to be accomplished, but it also contributes to reduce an excessive effort by steering attentions on prioritised activities (Trainer 2004, 130-131). There is a variety of strategic planning models. The choice of models is made based on demands, type and size of an organisation, and mainly on the stakeholders involved (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 4). In this research, five strategic planning models are introduced and can be served as different alternatives in a variety of contexts, including but not limited to developing a project sustainability plan.

4.2.1 5W1H Model

5W1H was introduced the first time in the tale “Elephant’s Child” (Just So Stories) by Rudyard Kipling in 1902 and is also known as the second name Kipling Model (Markov 2019). 5W1H is an abbreviation of what, why, who, when, where, and how. The model refers to a set of six questions, in which five questions start with W-letter and one question starts with H-letter. This model has been employed broadly in tourism, education, heritage management applications and even in software and application development (Ahn, Kim, Lee & Woo 2019, 1-2).

Han, Kim and Lee (2020, 4) define 5W1H as a basic writing principle that has been utilised explicitly in journalism. The essence of this approach places on the correctness, clearness, and conciseness. Answers to these questions are detailed, direct and focused, which gives an opportunity to analyse comprehensively the posed problems and allows a better decision-makings and solutions (Markov 2019). The model, however, is assumed to be a disadvantaged option when the information is strictly limited or inadequate to answer the 5W1H questions. This issue enforces more inquiries established to be capable of solving a complex matter (Han et al 2020, 4).

What-question starts the knowledge of the fundamental aspects of the problem, of the difficulty or a scenario. In a Why-question, the difficulty or consequences of an action are clarified, and the reasons for the presence of an object or an activity are mapped out. “Who” seeks to determine the roles of people that directly and indirectly participate in the happenings. When-question refers to the time aspect and aims to find the connection of multiple occurrences with the current issue. Where-question is used to locate the occurred events, which provides insights for identifying involved individuals or other relevant pieces. The H-letter in the model strives for understanding the sequence of activities that result in a problem or in a solution. (IPMA 2018.)

Table 3. Summary of concepts and example questions of 5W1H model.

SUBJECT	CONCEPT	EXAMPLE QUESTIONS
---------	---------	-------------------

WHAT	Object	What applications are used in developing contents?
WHY	Reason	Why didn't the application fail to run in the previous times?
WHO	Subject	Who was in charge of maintaining the application?
WHEN	Time	When was the problem detected the first time?
WHERE	Place	Where has the application been used?
HOW	Method	How had the sequence of events happened before the problem was detected?

4.2.2 Alignment Model

Alignment appearing in the arguments of Andrews (1971), Chandler (1962), Camillus and Venkatraman (1984) refers to an organisation whose capabilities match, fit and align with the environment where that organisation operates. This is defined by Nadler and Tushman as a degree to which goals, needs and structure of one party are aligned with those of another party (1980, 40).

In this regard, an alignment model is a supportive tool for organisations to create or enhance the alignment of resources with operations (Hiba, n.d.). This model is considerably beneficial in helping the organisations to identify the major causes of unachievable goals, and to realign or revise the established objectives. Organisations that have experienced a significant number of internal inefficiencies may find this strategic planning model an appropriate choice. (Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31; McNamara, n.d.; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 4-5.)

The main stages of an alignment model are (1) outlining visions, missions, resources of an organisation and support needed; (2) identifying areas that

function efficiently and areas that require improvements; (3) determining the approaches to implement improvements; and (4) incorporating the improvement activities as strategies (Bush 2016; Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31). An elaborated version of these stages developed by World Meteorological Organization additionally includes an assessment on organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) after stage (1); a development of action plan to breaking down the strategies defined in stage (4) into detailed actions; a budget plan; and a system of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5). These enhanced stages are summarised in Figure 6.

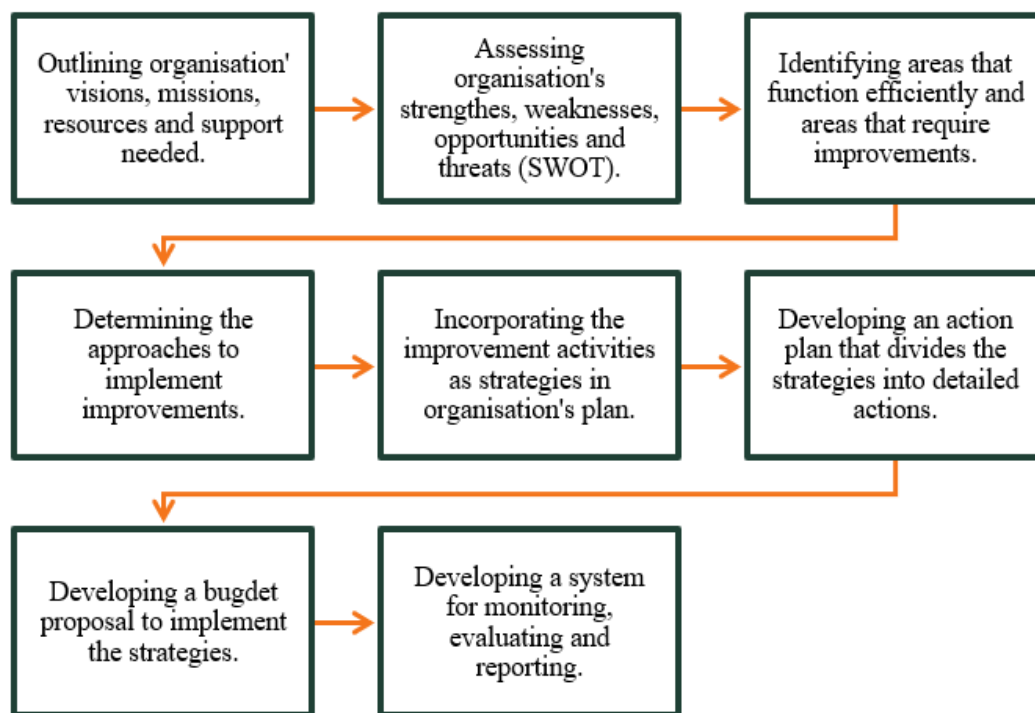


Figure 6. Stages of an alignment model (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5).

4.2.3 Balanced Scorecard Model

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model was developed in 1992 by David Norton and Robert Kaplan and has been one of the most frequent used strategic planning models since (Tarver 2021). The model was first intended to be employed in for-profit companies, yet it was later found favourable to non-profit organisations (Tarver 2021). BSC is served as a performance measurement programme, however Evans argued that it should be considered a management system as the

model pulls all components of an organisation together. As an example, an organisation that aims to gain great profit must excel its customer service to provide them with an outstanding experience. (Evans 2002, 3.)

This system is designated to “tell you the knowledge, skills, and systems that your employees will need (their learning and growth) to innovate and build the right strategic capabilities and efficiencies (the internal processes) that deliver specific value to the market (the customers), which will eventually lead to higher shareholder value (the financials)” (Kaplan & Norton 2000, 3). BSC measures an organisation’s performance in four perspectives that are named as customer, internal processes, innovation and learning capability, and finance. Briefly summarised, customer perspective refers to customer concerns majorly about time, quality, performance and service, and cost; internal business perspective refers to processes within the business that greatly impact on customer satisfaction; innovation and learning perspective indicates the capability of a company to invent on or continually improve the existing products and services; financial perspective presents a degree to which strategies contribute to its profitability, growth and shareholder values. (Kaplan & Norton 1992, 4-11; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 7.)

The BSC model is often used in the strategic planning phase of companies and organisations to guarantee the alignment of its strategy and visions, and its operation (Smartdraw, n.d.). Although it has been favoured for years in a variety of organisation types and contexts, the framework deems complicated to be applied in, for example, small organisations, minor requirement of changes, or urgent affairs, as it needs time and effort dedication. Due to the distinction in purpose of use, the system is entitled to a customisation and adjustment accordingly to the situations and the demands (Dannert 2020).

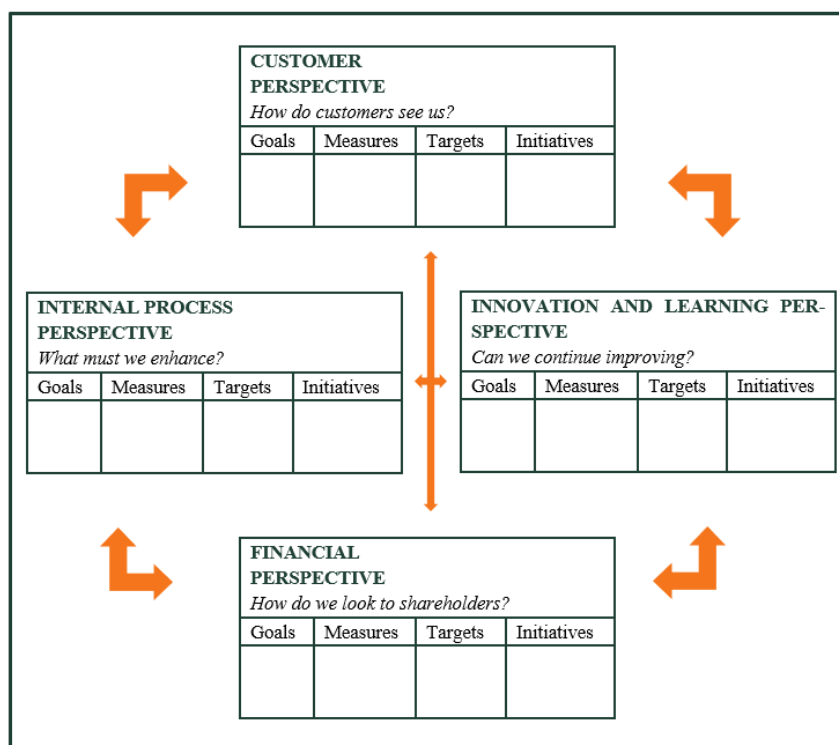


Figure 7. Balance Scorecard (BSC) template, adapted from Kaplan and Norton (1992) and World Meteorological Organization (2016).

4.2.4 Organic Model

Companies and organisations nowadays pay more attention on the naturalistic approaches, one of which is organic model. This refers to a model that would rather centralise on common values than on a specific, well-structured, and disciplined procedure (McNamara 2010). The organic model in strategic planning is also a self-organising model. Contrast to the organic planning model, the traditional approach is rather linear and mechanistic (Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 32). Despite being favoured largely in organisational applications, this systematic model is not always advantageous to some contexts in which all opinions are prioritised (McNamara 2010).

The organic model places the common values in the centre of continual and regular dialogues among involved stakeholders. It comprises an iterative and interactive updates and reflections. The interaction among parties adhering to the shared avails is an essence, over the achievements. Organisations may find this model favourable when their nature and culture address on the importance of visions and values. The self-organising model is suitable in situations where

diverse opinions are engaged; values target at a large group or community; and the common visions can only be achieved in the distant future. (Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 32; McNamara 2010; Metheny 2011, 13; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5-6.)

Stages are generally: (1) clarify and communicate the organisation's visions and values to the group of stakeholders and vice versa; (2) carry out frequent dialogues to determine the processes and actions that help to achieve the articulated visions; (3) continually remind all parties about the iterative feature of this method, and encourage each group to conduct their own clarification of visions, values, reflections and updates; (4) focus on learning than on the method, reflect on how the plan will be presented to stakeholders, develop a detailed action plan; (5) develop a budget plan; and (6) develop a monitoring, evaluating and reporting system. See Figure 8. (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5-6.)

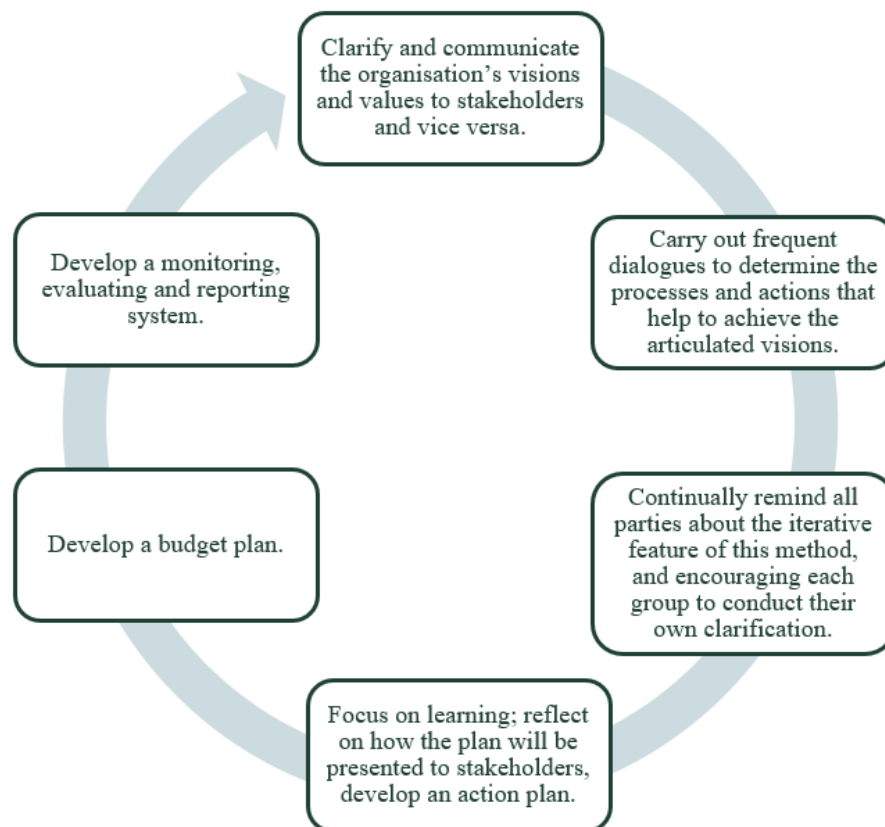


Figure 8. Organic (self-organising) planning model (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5-6).

4.2.5 Theory of Change Model

A theory of change model helps organisations to illustrate the changes (outcomes) they aim to achieve and the activities that are planned to do. It centralises on the process of mapping out the intermediaries between what initiatives do and how they feed forward the achievement of established goals. Theory of change was popularised in 1995 by Weiss and has been used increasingly and enormously among governmental agencies, non-profit and for-profit organisations. Although the concept is rather simple, there are variations of this model. Therefore, the understanding of the approach and the methods used are not identical. Each organisation is subject to use the method that fits its needs the most. (Center for Theory of Change, n.d. online; Harries, Hodgson & Noble 2014, 5; Organizational Research Services 2004, 1.)

A theory of change can be used as a strategic planning in the beginning of any project or work or can be employed to evaluate an existing procedure as it is served as a framework for assessing milestones, or as a comprehensive report for the organisation's stakeholders (Center for Theory of Change, n.d. online; NCVO Knowhow 2020). The model additionally provides a solid ground for commitments among stakeholders as the perception of success and how to get there are collected from them (Center for Theory of Change, n.d. online; Harries et al. 2014, 6).

The involved actors are supposed to identify together the provisions that contribute to the achievement of long-term goals. The provisions are then considered and made as outcomes that are illustrated in the form of charts or graphics in a causal relation. The initial steps should always start with making a profile of people with whom the organisation works and determining the final goals that refer to the change in users and beneficiaries. Once the final or long-term goals are clarified, the group will move backward to identify the intermediate outcomes. Those can be comprehended as changes in users and beneficiaries, which leads to the final achievement. Next, a list of activities that are believed to make the changes happen is developed. It is essential to implement a stage of identifying the internal and external enablers that are factors to be brought about for the theory of change to work. During the process, evidence relevant to organisations' own theory of change should be included, and if not

possible, assumptions around the theory must be made to be tested and measured. See Figure 9. (Center for Theory of Change, n.d. online; Harries et al. 2014, 5-8.)

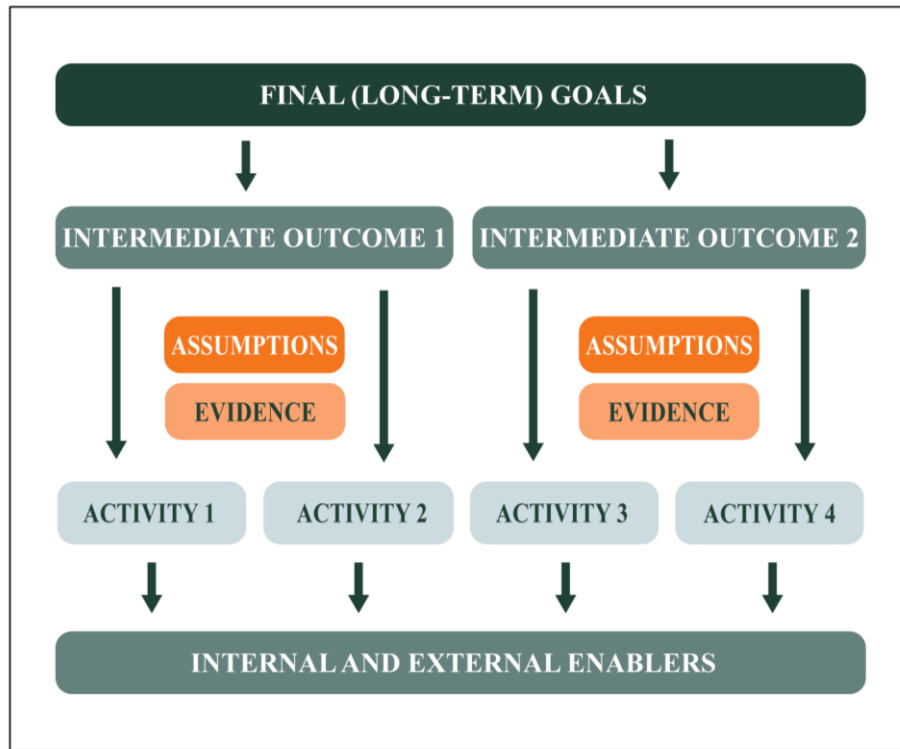


Figure 9. Theory of Change model (Center for Theory of Change).

5 REBOOT PROJECT

This chapter provides an understanding of the Reboot project to which the study aimed to develop the project sustainability plan.

5.1 Background of the Project

Underemployment occurs when highly skilled individuals are forced to work in low-paying or low-skill jobs, and/or work only part-time, which means the employees are not able to work at their fullest capability (Chen 2021). This concept is usually confused with the unemployment that indicates people in the working age, available for work, yet unable to get employed.

During the past decade, the unemployment and underemployment among European higher education (HE) graduates have noticeably increased, distributing unequally among the educational sectors, countries and graduates' origins. The unemployment rate of higher education graduates in the EU28 was recorded 4.2% in 2017 whereas that of recent higher education graduates, in 20-34 years old, was more than tripled. The underemployment rate reached 24.4% in 2017. (Eurostat 2018; OECD 2018.)

In Reboot project's partner countries, the most concerning unemployment situation was in Greece with 15.7%, followed by Finland with 4.9%, Belgium with 3.8% and the United Kingdom with 2.3% (OECD 2018). The United Kingdom had the most optimistic unemployment situation. In terms of the underemployment, Belgium indicated a relatively low underemployment, Finland indicated a low underemployment, Greece represented a country with high underemployment whereas the United Kingdom shown a high underemployment (Cedefop 2015).

There are a variety of reasons for the unemployment and underemployment in higher education graduates. The first challenge is incited by the highly saturated labour market. This leads to the oversupply of higher education graduates and therefore a highly competitive environment. Consequentially, working experience challenge occurs: the lack of experience may not provide graduates with adequate skills to be successful at work, whereas having too much experience makes

graduates too expensive to get hired. Skill mismatch is the third major obstacle for higher education graduates to be employed. This type of barrier considerably reflects the gap between skills taught at higher education institutions and skills required by the employers. Skill mismatch may lead to the lack of necessary competences for graduates to transfer from the academic environment to the vibrant industry, from the temporary unstable employment to long-term positions, and even to seek for opportunities. Personal factors might also contribute to the probability to get a job in graduates. Additionally, the reputation of education institutions may also inhibit graduates from achieving their dream occupations. Finally, employment and training services pay no or too little attention to the special needs of higher education graduates. (Reboot consortium 2019.)

5.2 Project Objectives

More highly skilled individuals are replaced due to the digitalisation and more professions are going to evolve or disappear. There is a need to bring about new work-life-oriented skills and competencies that enables higher education graduates' own continual adaptation and transferability of their skills and professions. These are considered non-cognitive skills or Work 4.0 skills and competencies. In this respect, the Reboot project was kickstarted. (Reboot consortium 2019.)

“Rebooting, Re-rooting and Re-skilling Unemployed and Underemployed Higher Education Graduates for Work 4.0” or Reboot project was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project is of Key Action 2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, under the sub-programme Strategic partnership for Adult Education. In the duration of 2018-2020, the Reboot project was coordinated by Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, at the department of Western Finland Design Centre MUOVA, and was implemented in the cooperation with four partners: CONEXX – EU (Belgium), Inova Consultancy Ltd. (United Kingdom), Militos Consulting S.A. (Greece) and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (Finland). (Reboot consortium 2019.)

The main beneficiaries of the project were unemployed and underemployed higher education graduates in Europe, especially young higher education

graduates, women who have taken parental leaves, over 45-year-old employees who have been made redundant, and migrants including young EU migrants. Besides, the project targeted at higher education institutions, career counsellors, continuing education and training and unemployment training organisations and their representatives, unemployment offices, higher education professors and teachers, actors in human resource management and employment, and other relevant stakeholders. (Reboot consortium 2019.)

The Reboot project aimed to promote the re-integration of unemployed and underemployed higher education graduates by developing relevant and top-notch Work 4.0 skills and competencies. The project goal was to enrich the ability of higher education graduates in recognising and demonstrating these skills in working place and in job-seeking process, in productising their own skills and experiences, as well as in adapting and transferring them in their own career paths and development. (Reboot consortium 2018; Reboot consortium 2019; European Commission 2020.)

5.3 Implementation and Intellectual Outputs

Within the two-year implementation of Reboot project was the development of the following intellectual outputs:

- Output 1 – Validation of Reboot Competency Clusters for Work 4.0 (available in English with the executive summary in Finnish, French and Greek);
- Output 2 – Reboot Online Training Programme, including the online training platform and related materials (available in English, Finnish, French and Greek);
- Output 3 – Reboot Competence Self-testing Tool (available in English);
- Output 4 – Handbooks for Implementing Reboot Training, including a handbook for the learners (unemployed and underemployed higher education graduates) and a handbook for the trainers (both handbooks are available in English, Finnish, French and Greek).

Output 1 collated the obtained information into a report that indicated in detail the competencies and other areas, and development drivers to be used in development of curriculum and training programme, self-testing, handbooks for users and piloting. In this report, the national context and cultural variations among partner countries and other countries were considered. (Reboot consortium 2018; Reboot consortium 2019; European Commission 2020.)

Output 2, Reboot Online Training Programme, was an online non-formal training programme targeted at unemployed and underemployed higher education graduates. The training programme was considered an open and free-of-charge online education that reinforced the e-learning of the users. The Reboot training aimed to enable participants independent of time, place and financial restrictions. (Reboot consortium 2018; Reboot consortium 2019; European Commission 2020.)

The third output, namely the Reboot Competence Self-testing Tool, was made in the narration and scenario types and under the multiple-choice format. Reboot self-test on soft skills helps to measure the level of understanding their soft skills, their strengths and weaknesses as well as obtain the tailored guidelines on which soft skill areas learners should focus on. It also helps learners gauge their own development in soft skills. (Reboot consortium 2018; Reboot consortium 2019; European Commission 2020.)

Output 4, Handbooks for Implementing Reboot Training, aimed to support the training and learning process of both target groups. The handbooks provided instructions to take the Reboot training and the self-testing tool. (Reboot consortium 2018; Reboot consortium 2019; European Commission 2020.)

On the Reboot Online Training platform (<http://reboot-project.eu/>), all training materials can be freely accessed in different language options. According to the Reboot's report, the training was piloted with 51 underemployed and unemployed higher education graduates, and 14 trainers and facilitators who represented the secondary target group. The Reboot training received positive comments from the participants. The training programme was found satisfying the needs and concerns of most participants for soft-skill development. The satisfaction rates were recorded respectively module 1 – 86.6%, module 2 – 87.2%, module 3 – 92.2%,

and module 4 – 90.1%. The primary target group indicated that they found a new approach to showcase their skills from the training, as well as improved their self-confidence and were empowered. The secondary target group was found pleased especially with the self-testing tool and training materials. The project directly involved 694 individuals and circa 46000 individuals. (European Commission 2020.)

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter elaborates the selection of research method, details the research process and its stages, including the data collection and analysis. Reliability and validity of this qualitative study is also presented.

6.1 Research Method

Research methods are designs and processes for research that translate initial assumptions into detailed steps of data collection, research analysis and interpretation (Creswell 2014, 3). Several decisions are involved (Creswell 2014, 3), which comprise the researcher's "reasoning, interest, critical thinking, experiences and expertise" (Eyisi 2016, 91). The selection of research method is based on the nature of the problem, the addressed issues, the researcher's experience and the audience to whom the research targets (Creswell 2014, 3; Eyisi 2016, 91-92). All in all, research methods help researchers study a topic (Creswell 2014, 3), answer the research questions (Tanja 2016, 66; Vilkkä 2005, 49), investigate the realities, and explore potential solutions for chosen matters (Eyisi 2016, 92).

Researchers can either choose **quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods** to support their studies.

- **Quantitative method** refers to a deductive approach that focuses on testing theories within examination on variables, such as hypotheses. The tested variables are measurable, supporting the analysing purpose.
- **Qualitative method**, on the opposition to quantitative methodology, refers to an inductive approach that focuses on exploring and understanding the topics from individuals' perspective. The research process is majorly alike quantitative method, however, the data is collected in the participant's situation and analysed inductively.
- **Mixed method** combines the other two approaches, which aims to obtain more comprehensive understanding than that of either quantitative method or qualitative method.

(Creswell 2014, 3-5; Eyisi 2016, 92; Streefkerk 2019.)

This research aimed to develop a sustainability plan for the Reboot project by investigating varied factors influencing on the project continuity and exploring different planning models used in other projects. As the development of project sustainability lies on each project's context and implementation, it was important to understand the topic from individual and natural settings. Therefore, qualitative method was selected for this thesis research. Metsämuuronen (2006, 88) stated that the qualitative method allows researchers to comprehend the cause-and-effect relationships that are not able to obtain through quantitative approach. Since qualitative method does not focus on testing the theories, theories may complementarily emerge during the research and researchers can construct and reconstruct theories where appropriate to support and improve their studies on the topic (Eyisi 2016, 93).

6.2 Research Process

Research process comprises different steps to conduct the research. According to Creswell, the process can be formed in eight steps that shall be adjusted to either quantitative methodology or qualitative methodology (2002). See Figure 10. Each step connects with other steps and proceeds sequentially.



Figure 10. General research process (Creswell 2002).

This research adopted the common structure within several adjustments. Firstly, the research problem was formed in early January 2021. The author started the preliminary understanding on the topic during January to know better about the topic and previous studies as well as narrow down the research areas, focusing on three research questions. A research plan was then conducted and presented to the supervisor for necessary consultation on the remained procedure. Reviewing the literature was rather flexible, iterated and complemented. It was initiated in early February and by May, the core theories had been identified. As the information collection proceeded, there were various considerations on eliminating research areas and some of theories due to their lack of authentication, i.e., scammed websites, and the lack of available studies on the research questions. Hence, in early June, one research question was left out. The literature was continually gathered and evaluated until September to ensure the reliability and validity of the research.

The empirical study started in June with identifying the research design that is to decide by which means the materials are collected. After that, the sampling of case studies and interview participants were determined. From July to August, within some interruptions due to the author's obligations at work, ten case studies were chosen and studied. The understanding obtained from case studies benefitted in generating the interview questions and prompts (Appendix 1). Subsequently, an interview consent form (Appendix 3) was prepared. Interviewees were contacted directly and indirectly (through the author's network); interview dates and times were agreed. Interviews were conducted in August until September, six of which were completed online via Zoom (Appendix 2) and the remained was done through email due to the sudden change in the interviewee's schedule. Prior to the interviews, all consents were delivered to the author and the confidentiality preference of participants was clarified. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, supporting the analysis of the data. Data analysis started as soon as the collection of data was conducted, until September. Reporting and evaluating of the research took place from September to November.

The research process is illustrated in the following Gantt-chart.

Table 4. Research process of this study within a specific timeline (Gantt-chart).

MONTHS (of 2021) STEPS/ACTIVITIES	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.
Identifying the research problem and conducting the preliminary research	■										
Writing the research plan	■										
Reviewing the literature		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Identifying the research design, selecting samplings of case studies and interviewees						■					
Collecting the data							■	■			
Analysing the data							■	■	■		
Reporting and evaluating									■	■	■

6.3 Data Collection

6.3.1 Research Material

This research utilised and referred to varied types of materials, including written materials and online publications, articles, blog writings, websites, other digital sources, as well as case studies and interviews. The theoretical background used literature of project management, project sustainability and strategic planning models. The empirical study employed ten case studies of Erasmus+ projects and seven semi-structured interviews.

Literature is to obtain the necessary understanding about the studied topics. Different sources of literature help figure out what were already conducted in the prior work and identify the need for further studies on this topic (University of South Carolina 2021; Institute for Academic Development 2021). Theories of project management and project sustainability were formed largely from the previous studies of Gilbert Silvius and his colleagues: “Sustainability in IS Projects: A Case Study” (2011), “Taking Responsibility: The integration of Sustainability and Project Management” (2011), “Sustainability in the Business Case” (2012), “Sustainability in Project Management: Reality Bites” (2012), “Sustainability in project management: A literature review and impact analysis” (2014); while literature of strategic planning models refers majorly to “WMO Integrated Strategic Planning Handbook” (World Meteorological Organization 2016) and “Strategic Planning Models in Public and Non-Profit Sport Organizations” (Kriemadis & Theakou 2007).

Empirical study conducted case studies and semi-structured interviews. Case study is a research method to gain a deep and multi-facet understanding of an issue within its natural context. It aims to explain, describe or explore the issue or phenomenon where it is set (Avery, Cresswell, Crowe, Huby, Robertson & Sheikh 2011; Zaidah 2007; Yin 2009). Three types of this method are: intrinsic case study used for studying a unique phenomenon; instrumental case study using one specific case to gain a broader understanding of an issue or phenomenon; and collective case study using multiple case studies to also gain a broader understanding of an issue or phenomenon (Avery, Cresswell, Crowe, Huby, Robertson & Sheikh 2011; Stake 1995). In this study, the author selected collective case studies that were ten sustainability plans of completed Erasmus+ projects to explore strategic models used in planning the project sustainability.

Simultaneously, seven semi-structured interviews were carried out. The design of these interviews comprises a set of predetermined open-ended questions and those emerged during the dialogues (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, 314-316; Fox, Hunn & Mathers 1998, 2-3). Interviews were conducted in person with seven professionals, which aimed to explore strategic models used in Erasmus+ projects and projects funded by other programmes, to study factors influencing on the project sustainability and finally to obtain a larger range of attitudes, perceptions and other views towards the topic (Anttila 1996; Tanja 2016).

6.3.2 Collecting the Data

The theories were collected from online sources. As for the empirical study, sampling was firstly designated. The qualitative study uses small samples to deepen the understanding of the topic (Family Health International, n.d., 6; DeCarlo 2015; Marshall 1996, 523-524). Sample size is appropriate once it adequately answers the research question(s) (Marshall 1996, 523-524). This research reflected the purposive sample that choose the most productive data to answer the research questions based on the preselected criteria (Family Health International, n.d., 6; Marshall 1996, 523-524); and the snowball sample by means of which some of interviewees were contacted through the author's network (Family Health International, n.d., 6-7). See Figure 11.

6.3.2.1 Selection of Case Studies

Collective case studies comprised ten sustainability plans of completed projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme. They were compiled from the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform which is the database to access project information and deliverables. Case studies were selected based on the following criteria: (1) they were developed in completed projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme; (2) their projects were in different actions of the programme; (3) project output types were varied; and (4) material languages included English.

The reason for the first criterion was due to the finalisation of the sustainability plan. The aim of this study was to develop a sustainability plan for Reboot project,

which was funded by Erasmus+ Programme, and therefore exploring what was developed in other equals enabled the author to understand the planning patterns and preferences towards the topic. The second and third criteria aimed bring the broader and more objective views on the topic as different actions of Erasmus+ Programme and different types of outputs may influence on the design of sustainability plan. The last criterion was to serve better the comprehension of the author as she does not speak other European languages.

Eight collected cases were in Key Action 2, while two were in Sport. The categories of cases can be seen in the following table. Regarding addressed areas of cases, language learning and teaching projects and sport projects shared the same percentage of 20% which was recorded the highest proportion of the collected cases. The remained areas were equal in percentage.

Table 5. Categorisation of case studies.

NUMBER OF PROJECTS	PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS (%)	AREAS ADDRESSED IN PROJECTS	KEY ACTION 2					SPORT	
			Strategic Partnerships addressing more than one field	Strategic Partnerships for higher education	Capacity Building in higher education	Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training	Strategic Partnerships for adult education	Collaborative Partnerships	Sector Skills Alliances in vocational education and training
2	20%	Language learning & training							
2	20%	Sport							

1	10%	Geographical science and technology field, SDI and geodesy							
1	10%	Learner-centred approach in teaching							
1	10%	Translational medicine and science							
1	10%	Blue economy							
1	10%	ICT							
1	10%	Volunteering							

In the total of 46 developed outputs, only 33 outputs (71.74%) were considered for sustaining activities. These outputs were clustered in ten categories; one project may develop one or multiple outputs of the same or different categories. The share of output types among sustainable outputs is listed in Table 6.

Table 6. Share of output types among sustainable outputs (largest to smallest).

TOTAL NUMBER OF SUSTAINABLE OUTPUTS		33	100%
	Report, checklist, factsheet	11	33.33%
	Training programmes, courses	7	21.21%
	Handbook, guidelines, manuals	4	12.12%

	Platform, tools	4	12.12%
	Curricula	2	6.06%
	Toolkit	1	3.03%
	OERs (Open Educational Resources)	1	3.03%
	Agreement	1	3.03%
	Methodology and methods	1	3.03%
	Physical unit, department, organisation	1	3.03%

6.3.2.2 Recruitment of Interviewees for Semi-structured Interviews

The research conducted seven semi-structured individual interviews, using the predetermined open-ended questions and prompts (Appendix 1). Interviews aimed to explore strategic planning models used in other Erasmus+ projects and projects funded by other programmes, to study factors affecting the project sustainability and to collect interviewees' perceptions on the topic. Six interviews were conducted online via Zoom (Appendix 2) and the remained one was made via email due to the sudden change of interviewee's schedule. Interview participants satisfied these requirements: (1) coming from different backgrounds; (2) having different years of experience in their industries and in the project development and management; and (3) joining in projects that were either funded by Erasmus+ Programme or by other programmes.

The first criterion enabled the author to collect different views, opinions and insights on the topic as the topic may differ across programmes, sectors, and countries. Interviewees' years of experience can also contribute to the diversity of perceptions on the research areas. The last criterion was to explore the models used in projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme and other programmes as they may have different focuses, features and strategies. Additionally, it helped

discover other aspects of project sustainability that case studies were not able to reveal. Unlike case studies, interviewees were able to choose the projects that, for instance, interviewees were most confident in discussing, or gained the most understanding, or directly took part in planning the project and its sustainability plans. Therefore, some projects were not completed.

The interviews were structured into three parts: general information about the interviewee, information about the programme and the project, and interviewee's experience in sustaining the project outputs. The interviews were one person at a time. All interviews were recorded within the given permissions of interviewees. Most of informants prefer to be quoted and mentioned directly with their names unpublished and made-up names used.

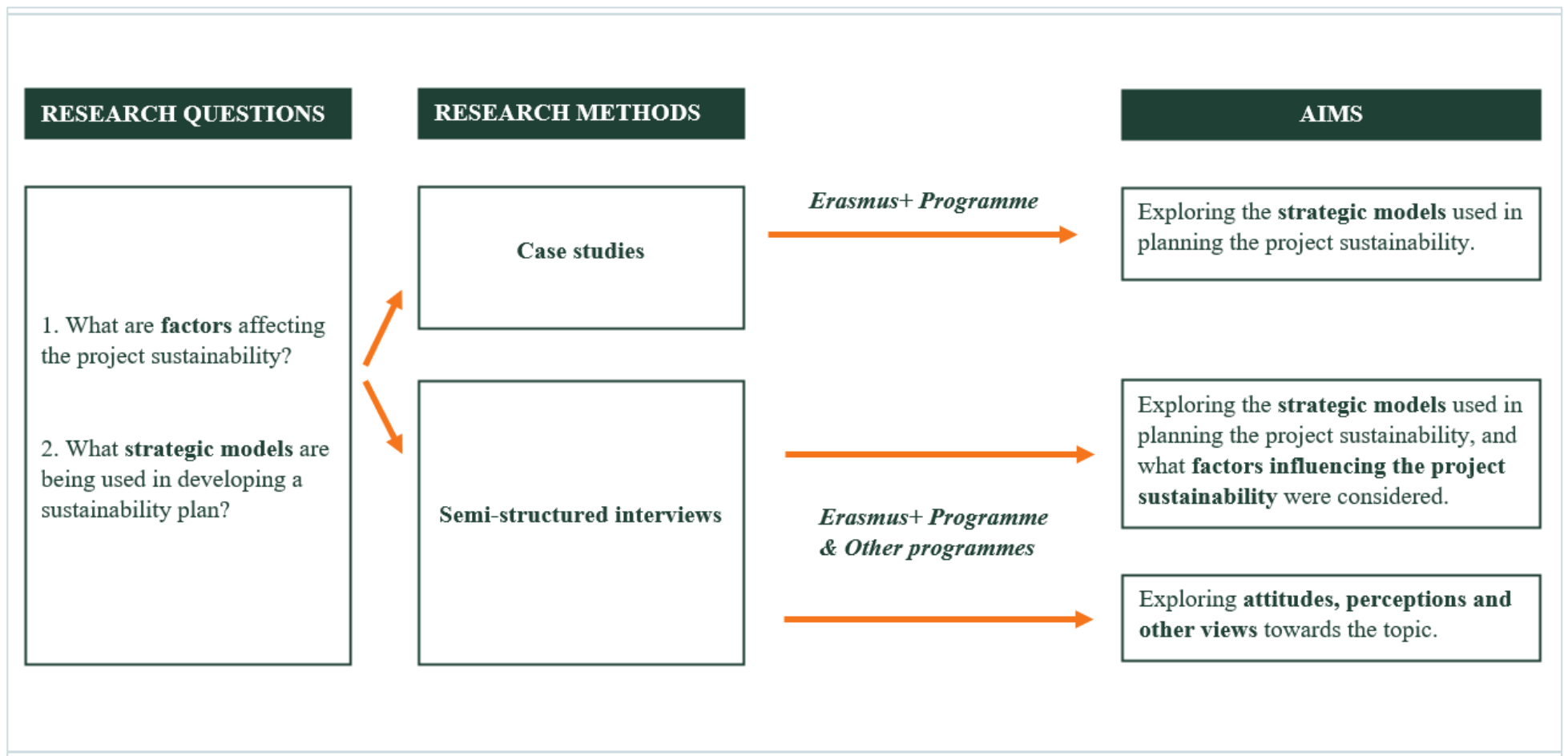


Figure 11. Data collection.

6.4 Data Analysis

Data can be analysed within different approaches. The data analysis of this study followed three main techniques: documentation of the data and the process of data collection, organization/categorization of the data into concepts and reporting the findings (Schutt 2018, 324-328). Case studies were compiled firstly in the Word document, including all information concerning projects, their outputs and sustainability plans. Initial observations and comprehensions were taken notes during the compilation. Based on the documentation of cases, the author then used Excel to conceptualise and categorise the information. Some calculations were completed to understand, for instance, the frequency of contents or mentioned factors. Likewise, documenting started when conducting interviews by writing down any important notes. Semi-structured interviews were firstly transcribed from audio format to text document in Word. The transcription was then displayed on Excel document. For interviews, coding, for instance grouping interviewees and discussed projects with identical numbers, helped the author gain a better overview on the data. Findings from case studies and interviewees were transferred to the thesis and reported in chapter 7.

6.5 Reliability and Validity of the Research

In qualitative research, validity refers to the “appropriateness” of the research logistics (theory collection, research design, sampling, data collection and analysis, research results and findings, conclusions), for instance, whether the research question is effective for the research aims (Leung 2015; Tanja 2016). The validity can be assessed within several approaches: triangulation, a proper documentation of materials and the research process, multidimensional analysis approaches, and respondent verification (Leung 2015). Reliability of the qualitative research lies on the consistency, which can be the trustworthiness of handling of the research materials and analysis, the availability of the materials extracted, the feasibility of the research results, and the readers’ ability to follow the researcher’s logic (Anttila 1996, 408; Leung 2015; Tanja 2016, 72).

This study used the triangulation in different approaches. Triangulation refers to the application of multiple methods and paradigms, which adds the objectivity and depth to a study (Guba 1990, 23; Williamson 2018). This is performed through:

the variety of sources (data triangulation), the use of multiple research methods (method triangulation), the involvement of different researchers (researcher triangulation), and the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a set of data (Williamson 2018). The research made use of varied literature sources and conducted both case studies and semi-structured interviews. The interviewees had different backgrounds and experience, adding broader perspectives on the topic.

Additionally, the research process was described evidently within the detailed timeline throughout the report, enforcing the opportunity for readers to follow the author's reasoning. All materials, including interview consents and records, were documented carefully. Interviewees' information was verified prior to the interviews and archived strictly confidentially. Therefore, part of interview-related materials (interview consent form, and questions) will be available in the appendixes whereas the non-interview materials are easily accessed. Those all contribute to the practicality of the research results.

7 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents the findings in two areas: case studies that are ten sustainability plans of Erasmus+ projects; and semi-structured interviews with seven professionals from different fields that had actively participated in project development and management and in project sustainability planning. Additionally, the chapter incorporates the analysis of the findings. Altogether, these will benefit the next chapter where two sets of outcomes are analysed against theories presented in chapter 2, 3 and 4.

7.1 Findings from Case Studies

Compiled case studies were ten sustainability plans of completed projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme to explore the strategic models used in planning the project sustainability by identifying what contents were covered in case studies. Findings of each case are presented in Table 7 in the order of collection date (oldest to newest). Projects are briefly described to serve the better comprehension for the readers, and their sustainability plans are summarised.

Table 7. Findings of case studies.

	Description of projects	Summary of sustainability plans
Language Massive Open Online Courses (LangMOOCs)	This project aimed to research the potential of MOOCs in language learning, to explore the pedagogical framework of language MOOCs, to develop a toolkit for the creation and management of Language MOOCs and OERs and to test the use of OERs in language MOOCs in a pilot course.	<p>The plan focused on identifying the reasons of project sustainability, sustainable outputs, beneficiaries of the project outputs, responsibility roles, timeline, and approaches to sustain.</p> <p>The plan proposed the evaluation model for the sustainability actions (evaluation system) and two sets of activities on national and European levels for a further development.</p>
Innovation and	This project aimed to	The plan highlighted specific tasks

<p>social learning in HEI (ISOlearn)</p>	<p>support the accessibility to the HEI learning offer addressed to hearing-impaired and visual-impaired individuals.</p>	<p>to be done by partners to sustain the project results, focusing on generally identifying the reasons to sustain, outputs to sustain, responsibilities of partners. The plan was said to be reviewed every two years to adapt any changes.</p>
<p>Western Balkans Academic Education Evolution and Professional's Sustainable Training for Spatial Data Infrastructures (BESTSDI)</p>	<p>This project aimed to improve the quality of higher education in geographical science and technology field, SDI and geodesy and to enhance its relevance for the labour market and society.</p>	<p>In the plan, the main actions were written as chapters and what activities taken place in each action as sub-chapters. A transparent and logical division of tasks among partners was described, focusing on action points, approaches, timeline and responsible roles. Therein the reasons to carry out sustainability in this project and where to maintain the results were also generally mentioned.</p>
<p>DysTEFL2 - Dyslexia for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language</p>	<p>This project aimed to improve the scheme of initial training and continuing professional development of teachers of English as a foreign language to adapt their teaching to special needs of students with dyslexia.</p>	<p>The plan outlined reasons to sustain the project results, reasons to have a sustainability plan, sustainable outputs and thereto materials, approaches, methods, tools to carry our sustaining activities.</p> <p>The division of tasks was not clearly defined among partners as it generally mentioned the whole consortium and their expertise. Timeline and places to find out project and its outputs were not detailed.</p> <p>Networks of partnering organisations were listed as people</p>

		that may be interested in continuing using the results or starting new projects based on them.
Sustainable learner-centred Teaching - Advanced Recourse for Georgia and China (STAR)	This project aimed to build capacity at partner countries institutions for implementing learner-centred teaching.	<p>The plan focused on defining the reasons of the establishment of sustainability strategy and plan, sustainable and non-sustainable outputs, targets of the plan and responsibility roles, places where the activities will be carried out, approaches in sustaining. Timeline was generally said after the project ended.</p> <p>The aims of the plan and outputs to be sustained were identified for all consortium partners, whereas the responsibility roles and tasks were detailed partner by partner.</p>
International career pathways and online curriculum for clinician-scientists (Pathway)	This project aimed to tackle the challenge of translational medicine: the waste of research investments as the current translational medicine fails to bridge the gap of bench and bedside.	<p>The plan focused on two key questions – what to sustain and how to sustain the outputs. The project identified one most potential owner (external party) of the project outputs, and suggested models and actions to sustain them, including the platform host and marketing.</p> <p>The plan outlined the current issues with the platform, and consequently suggested approaches to solve the issues.</p>
BLUe growth connects European Seas	This project aimed to promote the development of blue economy, fill the	The plan addressed on the sustainable outputs, responsibility roles and approaches to sustain.

(BLUES)	skills gap in the sector and raise awareness of blue careers.	Timeline to sustain the outputs was not clearly defined. However, the plan was developed for the context of 2019 – 2022 and beyond. Besides, places to disseminate the outputs were generally described.
Ticket to Mobility in Sport	This project aimed to create the conditions for the sport sector to join mobility activities and raise awareness of such opportunities.	The plan outlined approaches to sustain, responsibility roles and beneficiaries of the outputs. Reasons to sustain were stated as same as the project objectives. The duration of sustaining was outlined, i.e., 6 months after the closure. The plan generally mentioned possible organisations to further use and develop the outputs.
A European Sector Skills Alliance for Sport (ESSA-Sport)	This project aimed to improve the knowledge and understanding of the sport and physical activity labour market and promote a more inclusive workforce.	The plan firstly defined the visions and missions of the project and its outputs, existing resources and supports. It then identified the areas that need to be further improved and developed in the future and suggested activities to improve the outputs within the project consortium and in any organisations that may be interested in continuing the work. An action plan was clearly presented, including timeline, aims, audience, activities and responsibility roles.
Improving Validation in the Voluntary Sector	This project aimed to provide a synthesis of the work undertaken in the EU on the validation of	The plan highlighted the reasons to sustain the outputs, responsibility roles and beneficiaries. The reasons of the sustainability plan were

	volunteering experience.	generally mentioned, but not too focused. Sustainable outputs and sustaining approaches were not separately defined but intertwined in responsibility parts.
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All sustainability plans covered the following contents: identification of sustainable outputs; identification of beneficiaries of project outputs; clarification of reasons of project sustainability; clarification of reasons of sustainability plan; division of responsibility roles; indication of sustaining approaches and activities; designation of timeline; places to sustain or find the sustainable outputs; proposal of the evaluation of sustainability; areas of project to be improved and developed; visions and missions of project and outputs; and existing resources and support. However, some of contents were more repeated than other matters. Contents covered in all cases are demonstrated in the Table 8.

Table 8. Contents covered in case studies.

Projects	Contents											
	Indication of sustaining approaches and activities	Division of responsibility roles	Identification of sustainable outputs	Designation of timeline	Clarification of reasons of project sustainability	Identification of beneficiaries of project outputs	Places to sustain or find the sustainable outputs	Clarification of reasons of sustainability plan	Areas of project to be improved and developed	Proposal of the evaluation of sustainability	Visions and missions of project and outputs	Existing resources and support
Language Massive Open Online Courses (LangMOOCs)	x	x	x	x	x	x				x		

Innovation and social learning in HEI (ISOlearn)	x	x	x		x							
Western Balkans Academic Education Evolution and Professional's Sustainable Training for Spatial Data Infrastructures (BESTSDI)	x	x		x	x		x					
DysTEFL2 - Dyslexia for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Sustainable learner-centred Teaching - Advanced Recourse for Georgia and China (STAR)	x	x	x	x	x		x	x				
International career pathways and online curriculum for clinician-scientists (Pathway)	x		x			x			x			

BLUe growth connects European Seas (BLUES)	x	x	x	x			x					
Ticket to Mobility in Sport	x	x		x	x	x						
A European Sector Skills Alliance for Sport (ESSA-Sport)	x	x		x					x		x	x
Improving Validation in the Voluntary Sector	x	x				x		x				
TOTAL	10	9	7	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	1

The most frequent included contents were the indication of sustaining approaches and activities, division of responsibility roles, identification of sustainable outputs, and designation of timeline. In these most repeated matters, only sustaining approaches and activities were indicated specifically in all ten sustainability plans, whereas other contents were written dedicatedly or on general level. The four least repeated contents were existing resources and support, visions and missions of project and outputs, proposal of the evaluation of sustainability, and areas of project to be improved and developed.

The evaluation model was introduced in project LangMOOCs, whereas existing resources and support and visions and missions of project and outputs were dedicated in project ESSA-Sport. It was noticed that both project ESSA-Sport and Pathway introduced the improvement and development areas in their sustainability plans, and consequently suggested approaches and activities to improve them within the consortium or to the external organisations who may be interested in their outputs. This appears to be different than other eight

sustainability plans as the proposed approaches and activities are mainly tailored to the weaknesses of these two projects and possible solutions to tackle them, as a means of continuing the project outputs. On the contrary, the other eight cases focused on sustaining what had been developed, using the capabilities of the internal parties. The acknowledged difference divided them into two types of strategic planning models. This was discussed explicitly in the following chapter.

7.2 Findings from Semi-structured Interviews

Findings of the semi-structured interviews are presented in the order of interview structure, which comprises three parts: (1) general information about the interviewees, (2) information about programmes and projects, and (3) interviewees' experience in sustaining project outputs. Due to the preference of most informants, this thesis refers to Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, Interviewee 3, Interviewee 4, Interviewee 5, Interviewee 6, Interviewee 7.

7.2.1 General Information About the Interviewees

The information about names, current positions, working experience and years of experience contribute to their views and opinions on the topic. The question to know the informant's name is because some interviewees were referred by the author's networks given the snowball sampling, and thus the author did not get to know them in advance. Table 9 summarises interviewees' current positions and years of experience.

Table 9. Interviewees' current positions and years of experience.

	Current position	Years of experience
Interviewee 1	In between employment	25 years
Interviewee 2	Trainee in delivery management department	1 year and 3 months

Interviewee 3	Specialist in international employment services	11.5 years
Interviewee 4	Project coordinator	2 years
Interviewee 5	Project coordinator and associate professor	22 years
Interviewee 6	Director of innovation, research and development department	20 years
Interviewee 7	International project manager	4 years

Years of experience among informants varied, 1 year 3 months at the shortest and 25 years at the longest. Working experiences of interviewees demonstrated different backgrounds, some interviewees were specialised in multiple areas: Interviewee 1, arts, exhibitions and museum; Interviewee 2, delivery management; Interviewee 3, migration, employment services and work life; Interviewee 4, intercultural awareness, advocacy and communications, international relations and public engagement; Interviewee 5, innovation, ICT, education and entrepreneurship; Interviewee 6, social innovation and education; Interviewee 7, international relations and human rights.

Regarding experience in project development and management, interviewees participated in several phases. Interviewee 1 was involved in organising exhibitions as projects, application writing for art collection conservation, grant writing and long-term planning that included the sustainability of art collections. Interviewee 2 participated in execution and controlling activities. Interviewee 3, 5, 6, 7 shared experiences in project planning, implementation and management; Interviewee 5 and 7 stated their experiences in grant writing. Interviewee 4 was planning and coordinating a project, she previously involved in project execution during her past position and voluntary work.

7.2.2 Information About Programmes and Projects

Each interviewee was asked to describe a programme and therein one project to enable an in-depth discussion. In total, there were seven distinct programmes and

projects. One project was funded by a non-Europe programme (Heritage Preservation – United States) and one project was of Erasmus+ Programme. This assisted in providing broader perspectives on the topic as different contexts defined differently the concept of project sustainability. In the following part, programmes and projects are presented in the order of interviews

1. Heritage Preservation, ReCAP

Interviewee 1 presented Heritage Preservation programme of the American Institute for Conservation and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation which is operated in the America. The programme helped to conserve a variety of cultural and art pieces and through that heritage in the United States. As of 2015, Heritage Preservation and several of its popular programs and publications was transferred to the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation.

Started in 2007, ReCAP (Collections Assessment for Preservation) has targeted at the public audience who is also the main beneficiary of the whole collection conservation work. The project aims at the staff members, board members, funders and organisations. Collections Assessment for Preservation includes multiple assessment steps of the institution's collections, buildings, and building systems, policies and processes relating to collections care. The project is still on-going.

The outputs of the project are delivered in the form of the written reports in which the recommendations on collection care are included.

2. Smart Technology Hub, Life-cycle management project

Smart Technology Hub of Wärtsiä is a new integrated centre of research, product development and production. The Hub is one uniform agile testing facility linking together various Centres of Excellence to improve product and solution development by maximising synergies in maritime and energy industries. Under this programme, there are several sub-programmes and activities to achieve the visions of the Hub.

Life-cycle management project is an internal project that aims to set a preventive maintenance for the equipment. The beneficiaries of the project are employees who will later check and work on the equipment. The project is still on-going. The project compiles measured data in the form of written reports.

3. ERDP, Hyppy maailmalle – Etelä-Pohjanmaan ruokaketjun Euroopan yhteydet

The third interview discussed the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme which aimed to strengthen economic and social unity in the member states of European Union. As the project selected was initiated in 2014, the discussion referred to the programme in 2014-2020. In this period, ERDF focused the investments on innovation and research, digital agenda, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and low-carbon economy.

From 2014-2015, “Hyppy maailmalle – Etelä-Pohjanmaan ruokaketjun Euroopan yhteydet” targeted at universities, businesses, SMEs and organisations of Southern Ostrobothnia. The project aimed to explore the opportunities of the SME sector in Southern Ostrobothnia for research cooperation with universities and the interests in Horizon 2020 for SMEs. It also proposed the international networking and cooperation for SMEs.

The outputs of the project were in form of written reports and a blogpost.

4. STEA, Terkku

Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations, or STEA (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden avustuskeskus), is a state-aid organisation that is operated in the connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland. The funding programme is responsible for the preparation, payment, monitoring, and impact evaluation of funds granted to social and health organisations. The programme aims at increasing the equality and inclusiveness, the tolerance among individuals, and self-capability that helps people look after themselves and others.

The fourth interview focused on discussing Terkku project (2020-2022), aiming to develop “culturally sensitive outreach models to prevent non-communicable diseases among immigrants from African and the Middle Eastern countries”. The second target group is professionals and organisations that work with the first target group.

There are two types of outputs in this project: training programmes and a guide.

5. Erasmus+ Programme, AVAL

The fifth interview was centred on one project funded by Erasmus+ Programme. As the Erasmus+ Programme was introduced in the previous chapter, this part is dedicated to introducing the project discussed. “Added VALue Learning for Preschool Teachers & pedagogical coordinators”, or AVAL, was a two-year project that aimed to provide teachers with tools and guidance to teach children (age 0-3, 3-6, 7-11 years old) how to develop a commitment to values. The outputs designated for sustaining activities were of handbook and guideline category.

6. AMIF, SMART

Interviewee 6 introduced the programme Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of European Commission (AMIF). The programme funds for projects that work towards asylum, migration and integration. For the period of 2014-2020 in which the discussed project was initiated, the programme focused on the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of the approach to asylum and immigration.

“SMART volunteering for female migrants”, or SMART, was a one-year project that aimed to develop, test and implement the innovative practices and initiatives that allow migrant women and refugee women to integrate more efficiently in the European societies. The focus of the project was to use volunteering to support the integration process.

The outputs were categorised into report, guide and programmes that included training and mentoring programmes.

7. DG GROW, ELYME

Interviewee 7 introduced the programme DG GROW, namely the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs of the European Commission. This programme is part of the EU2020 Strategy and the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. The programme aims to enable attractive environment to all potential entrepreneurs, including vulnerable and non-European individuals.

One project was selected for an in-depth discussion, ELYME project or “Entrepreneurial Labs for Young Migrants across Europe”. It was a two-year project (2019-2021) supporting non-European entrepreneurs. The project aimed to support pre-start up and start up participants to develop their entrepreneurial skills, develop their business idea or support their current business. The project targeted at non-Europeans primarily, and stakeholders and intermediaries.

There were four main outputs, divided into four categories: toolkit; programmes; curricula; and platform.

7.2.3 Interviewees’ Experience in Sustaining Project Outputs

Interviewees were asked to describe their experiences in planning project sustainability and in sustaining project outputs after the end of the projects. The questions were kept unguided for respondents to freely formulate their answers. Prompts were used as a guideline, when necessary, as some interviewees were not acquainted with the terminology and the activity. The interviews went from general experience to details, and from planning project sustainability to executing the sustaining activities and to herewith difficulties.

7.2.3.1 Overview

All interviewees demonstrated their contribution to the development of project sustainability plans and involved in sustaining the project outputs. To all respondents, project sustainability is essential, however respondents shared different opinions on the topic. Interviewee 1 addressed the significance of sustainability in her field as it helps preserve the values of the art pieces and culture in general; collection care is one means in sustaining and always an on-going process. Interviewee 6 highlighted that sustainability is an important agenda of AMIF programme to guarantee the continuous usage of what has been developed.

On the other hand, Interviewee 3 claimed that the planning for project sustainability is doable, but sustaining is “not easy to do, but a big problem”, whereas Interviewee 5 revealed that the topic is never considered even though it is on the agenda. She added “when the plan is made, the person who writes it does not know what the project is going to get”, but “the reality of sustainability is different”. To Interviewee 4, only when the project and its materials are easily accessed, would the project sustainability be possible, otherwise what has been developed is all wasted.

7.2.3.2 Factors Affecting the Project Sustainability

Interviewees were asked to present what was considered in planning project sustainability, difficulties that they experienced in sustaining project outputs and possible causes. Respondents additionally suggested ways to sustain project outputs more efficiently. These aimed to investigate factors influencing on the project sustainability. The interviewees were free to choose the challenges in sustaining outputs of mentioned projects or in general.

Interviewee 1 experienced the lack of finance resources (continual expenses for collection care), the non-recognition of public funding organisations of the significance of project values (the importance of collection care to arts and culture) which may lead to potential risks of cutting funds for the sector. She stated that challenges came from on-going needs of using resources to sustain the project outputs as collection care is a continual and expensive process. Project

sustainability may also be affected by the fluctuation of policies and regulations due to economic and societal changes. Furthermore, she stated that to be able to sustain project outputs, its benefits should be foreseeable in a short and long term, which aided in the estimation of resources needed.

Interviewee 2 demonstrated a challenge of assigning resources, including time, budget and human. There was a difficulty to communicate the importance of the project outputs and of their sustainability to stakeholders and beneficiaries. Organisational culture was considered a factor: if the company operation is agile, open and transparent, outputs may be sustained longer. According to her, resources are always limited and hence if the capability of the company is sufficient, the sustainability is deemed better. She suggested to communicate stakeholders on daily basis and find out engagement measurements.

Interviewee 3 proposed an obstacle of finding stakeholders who need the outputs as outputs were considered unrealistic and impractical. She raised the concern on how and where stakeholders who may need outputs and have not known about them yet are able to find them. Output features were considered an important factor as concrete results seem to be sustained more easily, for instance, through commercialisation. She outlined the lack of funding for sustaining activities which should have been financed for one to two years after the project ends. Moreover, as project time was too short, it would be impossible to develop outputs of a high quality. Policy changes and strategies of the funding programme in the upcoming term were noted as influencers on project sustainability, which could not predict. The answer exposed another issue that was the temporary employment of project employees. Some contracts were corresponding to the project duration, employees who closely involved in developing projects could bring project essences with them when they left the organisation. This resulted in a poor sustaining performance.

Interviewee 4 indicated the lack of funding for sustaining activities and the temporary contracts of project workers as similarly as Interviewee 3. Difference of project employees' backgrounds can also influence on the longevity of outputs as a person with a business background may not be the best fit for health-related projects. She stated that a poor accessibility to the project website and its outputs can inhibit the stakeholders from knowing about the initiative. As the project

works with migrants and refugees, the interviewee took into consideration of the migration policy and the preference level of natives towards this target group, which was assumed complicated in Finland and probably disfavoured to the sustainability. She suggested to widen target groups as much as possible and consider how to involve them in the project.

Interviewee 5 considered the challenges of differences in early childhood and primary education among European countries as project outputs should be feasible and applicable to the reality of involved countries. It was mentioned that incorporating stakeholders' feedback into project outputs was important to understand what was needed. She noted that many projects do not aim to make the outputs workable and exploitable beyond their endings, but only aim to enter new projects. The EU funding was considered an obstacle as it does not include sustaining activities. Within the funding are numerous rules to comply with, and therefore project consortiums may not feel a need to polish the project outputs as it is not compulsory, but only deliver what was promised.

Interviewee 6 mentioned unequal commitment of partners in sustaining project outputs due to types of organisations. He explained that small organisations may result in the lack of available internal sources for accomplishing things beyond requirements. He also noted the lack of finance resources for sustaining project outputs as the funding programme was said to not accommodate these types of interests. Other factors should be significantly considered: potential societal risks as the project worked with migrants, institutional changes (within the project consortium) as they affect the contribution of partners in sustaining.

Interviewee 7 stated the lack of funding for sustaining activities and the lack of opportunity to measure the long-term impact of the project as challenges. Besides, she mentioned the lack of opportunities to engage with the target groups, the unequal dissemination efforts of project partners and the immature engagement with the other stakeholders as factors influencing on the continuity of project outputs and their impacts. Relevance of project outputs and their impacts were taken into considerations. National contexts (legal, environmental, political, social context) where the project was operated were analysed. She suggested to engage stakeholders in the project and empower them to use outputs after the project ends. The development of online platforms helped reach a wider audience and

sharing the project results via online platforms contributed to the project sustainability.

7.2.3.3 Strategic Planning Models

Six out of seven interviewees did not clarify specific planning models for project sustainability. Interviewee 5 presented a model used in AVAL project: the impact model. The model entails that if the impact of the project outputs is significant, the sustainability comes as a result. The impact model worked with a lot of numbers as key performance indicators (KPIs). The required indicators encouraged partners to seek for right stakeholders, convince them to use the project outputs and simultaneously ask for feedback. This helped the project consortium multiply the impact, notice improvement areas in their deliverables and modify them during the project lifetime.

From the answers of interviewees, contents covered in sustainability plans are: identification of sustainable outputs; identification of beneficiaries of project outputs; clarification of reasons of project sustainability; clarification of reasons of sustainability plan; division of responsibility roles; indication of sustaining approaches and activities; designation of timeline; places to sustain or find the sustainable outputs; proposal of the evaluation of sustainability; areas of project to be improved and developed; visions and missions of project and outputs; existing resources and support; resources needed in the future for sustaining; identification of potential risks; identification of communication channels and engagement measurements; and analysis of competitors and the national contexts.

Contents aided in identifying planning models used in discussed projects. Table 10 presents the contents according to interviewees and their frequencies. Due to the limited space, projects were written in numbers which are orders of interviews.

Table 10. Contents covered in sustainability plans according to interviewees.

Projects	Contents															
	Identification of beneficiaries of project outputs	Identification of sustainable outputs	Existing resources and support	Resources needed in the future for sustaining	Indication of sustaining approaches and activities	Division of responsibility roles	Identification of potential risks	Clarification of reasons of project sustainability	Places to sustain or find the sustainable outputs	Proposal of the evaluation of sustainability	Designation of timeline	Clarification of reasons of sustainability plan	Areas of project to be improved and developed	Visions and missions of project and outputs	Identification of communication channels and engagement measurements	Analysis of competitors and the national contexts
1	x		x	x	x			x			x	x		x		
2	x	x	x				x		x				x		x	
3	x			x	x					x						
4	x		x	x			x		x							
5	x	x			x	x		x								
6	x	x		x		x	x			x	x					
7	x	x	x			x										x
TOTAL	7	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1

The most frequent included content was the identification of beneficiaries of project outputs, which was the only content covered in all projects. This was

followed by the identification of sustainable outputs, existing resources and support, and resources needed in the future for sustaining. The five least repeated contents were the clarification of reasons of sustainability plan, areas of project to be improved and developed, visions and missions of project and outputs, identification of communication channels and engagement measurements, and analysis of competitors and the national contexts.

According to Interviewee 1, ReCAP's sustainability plan presented two least frequent contents: reasons of sustainability plan, and visions and missions of project and outputs. Sustainability in arts, museum and exhibitions is always on-going, but expensive. Some museums may not have enough resources to carry out sustaining activities. Therefore, the plan's needs were clarified, and a short-term and long-term vision of the project were incorporated. The values of the project outputs should be foreseeable to be able to estimate the resources needed for sustaining now and years to come.

Analysis of competitors and the national contexts, mentioned by Interviewee 7 in the project Entrepreneurial Labs for Young Migrants across Europe, was dedicated to the studying of the market and competitors, and contextual factors such as legal, environmental, political, social aspects. This aided in the understanding of the environment and background of partner countries where the project was operated, and outputs were later utilised. The consideration indicated by Interviewee 7 was discussed later in the following chapter.

Identification of communication channels and engagement measurements was significantly noted in Life-cycle management project's sustainability plan. This referred to how to communicate the project values to stakeholders on daily basis, what communication channels are and how to measure the engagement of stakeholders in those dialogues. Communication was considered essential as Interviewee 2 acknowledged that resources are always limited. Discussing the project values gets stakeholders involved in sustaining results within their capabilities. Areas of project to be improved and developed were written in form of lessons learnt to help individuals who later use the outputs know where to improve. Compared to other interviewed projects, Interviewee 2 brought a different approach.

8 DISCUSSION

In this part, the two sets of research findings were analysed in the relation with the presented literature in chapter 2, 3, and 4. The research activities aimed to study the factors influencing on the project sustainability and explore the strategic planning models used in other projects including projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme and other programmes. This ultimately aided in the development of sustainability plan for the Reboot project.

This chapter discusses the major findings that help to answer the following research questions:

1. What are factors influencing on the project sustainability?
2. What strategic models are being used in developing a sustainability plan?

8.1 Factors Affecting the Project Sustainability

Findings suggested that project sustainability is essential, which confirms introduced important features of Erasmus+ Programme. The literature indicated that the sustainability of project outputs is significantly outlined in the feature of dissemination and exploitation (Erasmus+ Programme 2018, 7-10). However, the study proposed that sustaining is not easy to implement and never considered even though it is on the agenda. As the study found, planning for the project sustainability is doable but when the plan is written, it is not clear what the project is going to get.

According to the findings from seven semi-structured interviews, the project sustainability is influenced by different factors which are clustered in the project-related and context-related factors (internal and external factors). In each category, factors are discussed and presented in the order from most to least frequently mentioned.

8.1.1 Project-related Factors

Financing

Despite participating in different programmes and projects, all respondents indicated the lack of finance resources for sustaining activities. This was due to the on-going needs of using resources to sustain the project outputs and should be granted for one to two years after the project ends. The lack of funding for this interest affected the contribution of partners as beside the granted fund, internal resources within partners were not adequate to continue the work. Opinions of interviewees seem to follow the suggestion of Nepal (1994) and Clarizen (2018) that the sustainability relies considerably on financing as it helps to cover the maintenance and continuation costs. Therefore, the termination of financing upon the project closure causes numerous challenges to maintain project outputs (Nepal 1994; Clarizen 2018).

Relevance of project outputs

Literature suggested that the relevance of project outputs refers to the level that project outputs satisfy its direct beneficiaries and other indirect target groups (Burdick, Friedman & Loh 2014, 35). According to findings, there was a challenge to find the needs of the output usage among stakeholders as some project outputs were not feasible and applicable to target groups.

As study shown, output features were considered important in project sustainability as concrete results might be easier for sustaining, for instance within commercialisation. The opinion would align with the literature that proposed some outputs are sustainable while other outputs are not maintained (DiVa consortium 2011, 6).

In this study, there was an emphasis on the adjustment of project outputs to national contexts of partner countries as the project should respond to what was asked by target groups. Findings demonstrated that, during the project lifetime, feedback from stakeholders should be incorporated in project outputs. Literature suggested that the management of projects must be able to respond to any shifts in project demands and priorities (AusAID 2000, 5).

Capacity for self-sustaining

Interviewees demonstrated their concerns on where and how stakeholders access the project outputs, especially to stakeholders who may need project outputs and have not aware of the project yet. Only when the project and its materials are easily accessed, would the project sustainability be possible, otherwise what has been developed is all wasted. The development of online platforms helped reach a wider audience and sharing the project results via online platforms contributed to the project sustainability. Aligned with the theory, capacity for self-sustaining shall be highlighted in technical factors, such as Moodle and training websites (Burdick et al 2014, 35-36). These, if designed incorrectly, may dissatisfy stakeholders' needs and demands (Nepal 1994, 11).

Nature of project design and management strategy

The study discovered that to be able to sustain project outputs, its benefits should be foreseeable in a short and long term, which aided in the estimation of resources needed for sustaining. The emphasis on this aspect of the project design and management strategy is consistent with the corresponding literature. Burdick et al (2014, 34-35) suggested that the early determination of long-term goals and objectives that reflects the extended vision of the project beyond its end affects the continuity of project outputs.

8.1.2 Context-related Factors

Stakeholder and community involvement

Research findings indicated that there was a difficulty in communicating the importance of project outputs to stakeholders and beneficiaries. The non-recognition of project values may result in the waste of what was developed and in a potential budget cutting. As resources are always limited, to sustain project results in a longer term, it was considered crucial to widen as much as possible target groups and engage stakeholders and intermediaries who could benefit from

the project and help sustain them by using the project results and providing their feedback to project team.

The role of stakeholders was also emphasized in the literature. McConville (2006, 14) suggested that the participation of all stakeholders and the community plays a huge role in sustaining project outputs, which improves capability and interest in the project. The values of beneficiaries, if considered, supports the dissemination and exploitation of project outputs and guarantees their impacts beyond the end (Nepal 1994, 10-11; Salla 2014, 21).

Demographic, social and cultural factors

Study found that the perception of native population towards to the project topic and therein target groups shall influence on the project continuity. It was deemed a societal risk that probably disfavours long-term impacts of the project. National contexts, including legal, environmental, political, social context, vary country by country to which project outputs should respond and be adjusted. In this regard, the findings align with the literature that suggested demographic, social and cultural aspects of a country in which the project is operated should be delicately taken in account (Burdick et al 2014, 36).

Support from external institutions and government policy

As findings indicated, the role of governmental policy was considered important in project sustainability. Due to the non-recognition of the importance of project outputs of public funding organisations, there was outlined a probability of cutting funds for the sector. The economic and societal changes shall affect the decisions concerning policies and regulations, which may ultimately disfavour the project sustainability. The policy related to project themes may also influence on the continuity of project, i.e., the migration policy was considered as the project targeted at migrants and refugees. However, the study's conclusion noted that it seemed impossible to predict potential policy changes. This is consistent with proposed literature that said the project implementation gains a great advantage

from associated government policy and programmes (Burdick et al 2014, 36; Nepal 1994, 10).

8.1.3 Factors Discovered in the Research

There were certain factors that were discovered in the research and not presented elsewhere in the literature, including (a) other resources, (b) types of organisations, and (c) requirements of the funding programme. Compared to the literature, factors (a) and (b) would align with project-related factors, whereas factor (c) is a context-related factor.

Other resources

Study discovered that human-related factors play an important role in sustaining project outputs. Particularly, employees who closely involved in developing projects must leave the organisation due to short and temporary employment contracts. This resulted in a poor sustaining performance as those short-term employees may carry project essences with them upon their departure. Difference of project employees' backgrounds could also influence on the longevity of outputs, i.e., a person with a business background may not be the most suitable actor for health-related projects.

Timing was also raised as a concern in sustaining project outputs. It exposed as a challenge to assign other resources, such as budget and humans. If the project time is short, it is unable to develop outputs of a high quality and to necessarily measure project impacts on its stakeholders. Furthermore, findings noted that resources of participating organisations should be taken into account as the granted fund from the programme may not be sufficient to exceed requirements and therefore capacity of partners is helpful in sustaining.

Types of organisations

Study revealed that organisation types of partners that directly involve in projects influenced on the project sustainability. If the organisational culture is agile, open and transparent, outputs may be sustained longer. The company obtains a sufficient capacity, the sustainability is deemed better. It was said that small organisations may be lack of available internal resources for accomplishing things beyond requirements, resulting in an unequal contribution in sustaining activities. In this regard, the potential institutional changes within joining organisations shall be a risk for project sustainability.

Requirements of the funding programme

As findings implied, within the fund granted by the programme were numerous rules to comply with, and therefore project consortiums may not feel a need to adjust the project outputs to the reality as it was not required by the programme. In the end, project consortium only delivers what was promised, which may be not feasible and needed. Moreover, changes in strategies of the funding programme in upcoming terms were considered an influencer to project sustainability, which would be impossible to predict.

8.2 Strategic Planning Models

8.2.1 Case Studies

Findings from case studies revealed that all sustainability plans covered the following contents: identification of sustainable outputs; identification of beneficiaries of project outputs; clarification of reasons of project sustainability; clarification of reasons of sustainability plan; division of responsibility roles; indication of sustaining approaches and activities; designation of timeline; places to sustain or find the sustainable outputs; proposal of the evaluation of sustainability; areas of project to be improved and developed; visions and missions of project and outputs; and existing resources and support.

However, some of contents were more repeated than others. The most frequent included contents were the indication of sustaining approaches and activities, division of responsibility roles, identification of sustainable outputs, and

designation of timeline. Sustaining approaches and activities were indicated specifically in all plans. Comparing to the previously indicated literature, most cases appear to employ 5W1H model which concentrates on correctness, clearness, and conciseness (Han, Kim & Lee 2020, 4). Details are direct and focused, answering what (object), why (reason), who (subject), when (time), where (place), and how (method) questions (Markov 2019). However, it was noticed that the planning model was customised to each project. For instance, while DysTEFL2's sustainability plan answered to all questions, ISOlearn focused on answering what, who, why, how questions.

According to findings, the four least repeated contents were existing resources and support, visions and missions of project and outputs, proposal of the evaluation of sustainability, and areas of project to be improved and developed. Although the proposal of the evaluation of sustainability and visions and missions of project and outputs were only noticed in LangMOOCs and ESSA-Sport respectively, they were presented as important agendas of the general strategic planning process (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 2-3; Figure 5).

Existing resources and support and areas of project to be improved and developed that were written in sustainability plans of ESSA-Sport and Pathway seem to denote the alignment planning model. The model aims to create or enhance the alignment of resources with organisations, which helps them to identify major causes for unachievable goals and realign the established objectives (Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31; McNamara, n.d.; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 4-5). One noticeable difference in findings, as compared to existing studies, was the lack of incorporation of improvement activities as strategies which had been previously mentioned in the literature as one main stage of the model (Bush 2016; Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31).

8.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

According to findings, contents found in interviews are also contents introduced in case studies, added four emerged issues: resources needed in the future for sustaining; identification of potential risks; identification of communication

channels and engagement measurements; and analysis of competitors and the national contexts.

The most frequent included content was the identification of beneficiaries of project outputs, which was the only content covered in all projects. This was followed by the identification of sustainable outputs, existing resources and support, and resources needed in the future for sustaining. The five least repeated contents were the clarification of reasons of sustainability plan, areas of project to be improved and developed, visions and missions of project and outputs, identification of communication channels and engagement measurements, and analysis of competitors and the national contexts.

As indicated, ReCAP was the only project that clarified visions and missions of project and outputs, however, the content is considered an essential part of the general strategic planning process (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 2-3; Figure 5). In the comparison with the compiled theory, most projects, particularly ReCAP, Hyppy maailmalle – Etelä-Pohjanmaan ruokaketjun Euroopan yhteydet, Terkku, SMART, ELYME, seem to follow the alignment planning model that supports realign resources with operations of projects (Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31; McNamara, n.d.; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 4-5).

However, as compared to the literature, findings revealed that five stated projects did not comprise the other three main issues: identifying areas that function efficiently and areas that require improvements; determining the approaches to implement improvements; and incorporating the improvement activities as strategies (Bush 2016; Hiba, n.d.; Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 31; Figure 6). Moreover, the analysis of competitors and the national contexts, mentioned in the seventh interview, aligns with the second step of assessing organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the elaborated version of the model (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5; Figure 6).

As findings indicated, although only Life-cycle management project's sustainability plan mentioned the areas of project to be improved and developed which appears as a part of the alignment model, its essence was specifically emphasised on the identification of communication channels and engagement

measurements. This referred to how to communicate the project values to stakeholders on daily basis, what communication channels are and how to measure the engagement of stakeholders in those dialogues. The notion of communication to stakeholders is consistent with the literature of the organic model which places the common values in the centre of continual and regular dialogues among involved stakeholders. The model is used where diverse opinions are engaged (Kriemadis & Theakou 2007, 32; McNamara 2010; Metheny 2011, 13; World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5-6). Compared to literatures, differences are noticed in the lack of the third stage – continually remind all parties about the iterative feature of this method, and encourage each group to conduct their own clarification of visions, values, reflections and updates; and the fourth stage – focus on learning than on the method, reflect on how the plan will be presented to stakeholders, develop a detailed action plan (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 5-6; Figure 8)

One visible difference in the findings of this study, as compared to existing studies, was the introduction of the impact model that was not written elsewhere in the theoretical part. As early presented, the model works with a lot of numbers as key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of project outputs. Since indicators encourage partners to seek for right stakeholders and convince them to use project outputs, the project ensures the feasibility of outputs and hence their sustainability after the project ends.

Furthermore, it was noticed that none of projects in case studies and in semi-structured interviews incorporated the introduced Balanced Scorecard model and the Theory of Change model despite their popularity presented in the study of respectively Tarver (2021), Harries, Hodgson & Noble (2014, 5) and Organizational Research Services (2004, 1).

8.3 Sustainability Plan of the Reboot Project

This sub-chapter answers both research questions and applies the findings of the research to develop the sustainability plan of Reboot project, which is the main goal of the study. The following research questions will be answered:

1. What are factors influencing on the project sustainability?

2. What strategic models are being used in developing a sustainability plan?

The project sustainability is essential and seems to be demanding when implementing. Factors influencing on the project sustainability are varied and divided into two main categories: project-related factors and context-related factors. In the project-related factors, the development of Reboot project's sustainability plan shall pay attention to financing; other resources; relevance of project outputs; capacity for self-sustaining; types of organisations; and nature of project design and management strategy.

Financing considerably affects the project sustainability. When the project ends, funding is also terminated despite on-going needs of resources for sustaining activities. The lack of funding for this interest influences on the contribution of partners as internal resources within partners may not be adequate to continue the work. Given the above point, the finance capability of participating organisations should be taken into account as a sufficient internal capacity can also support this interest. Organisation types of partners is additionally an influencer: if the organisational culture is agile, open and transparent, outputs may be sustained better. A potential risk may occur due to possible institutional changes inside partner organisations.

Moreover, project employees play an important role in sustaining project outputs. The short and temporary employments can result in a poor sustaining performance as employees will leave the position and carry project essences with them. The concern shall be raised also in the difference of their backgrounds, whether or not employees' backgrounds are suitable to the project. The Reboot project should pay a close attention to timing which can influence on aligning other resources, such as budget and humans, and on the quality of project outputs.

Project outputs should satisfy stakeholders' needs. They should be feasible to target groups and their national contexts. For that purpose, during the project lifetime, stakeholders' feedback should be incorporated in and adjusted to project outputs when necessary. Features of outputs should be considered as some outputs, for instance concrete ones, might be easier for sustaining. To be able to sustain project outputs, its benefits should be foreseeable in a short and long term

as this helps estimate needed resources. The early determination of output benefits reflects the long-term vision of the project beyond its end.

In terms of capability for self-sustaining, it is suggested that Reboot project consider where and how stakeholders access the project outputs, which allows stakeholders who may need them in the future are able to find them at the appropriate time. A wider audience can be reached by means of the online platform, through which sharing project results contributes to the project sustainability.

As for context-related factors, considerations may be significantly needed in stakeholder and community involvement; demographic, social and cultural factors; support from external institutions and government policy; and requirements of the funding programme.

The participation of stakeholders and the community plays a huge role in project sustainability. Communicating the importance of project outputs to stakeholders and beneficiaries helps to enhance the interest in the project. The non-recognition of project values can result in the waste of what has been developed and in other potential disadvantages, such as budget cutting. As project resources are always limited, to sustain project results in a longer term, it is suggested widening as much as possible target groups and engage stakeholders and intermediaries who could benefit from the project and help sustain them by using the project results.

The perception of native population towards to the project topic and therein target groups may influence on the project continuity. Therefore, national contexts, including legal, environmental, political, social factors, should be carefully considered. Project outputs should respond and be adjusted to countries where the project locates. The role of governmental policy is important to the project sustainability as if the public funding organisations do not acknowledge project benefits, it can result in budget cut for the sector. The economic and societal changes shall affect the decisions concerning policies and regulations, which may ultimately disfavour the project sustainability. The policy related to project themes may also influence on the continuity of project.

Requirements of the funding programme set numerous rules to comply with, but the adjustment of project outputs to the reality is not required. This may draw on

the impractical and unneeded outputs. Moreover, changes of programme strategies in upcoming terms are considered an influencer to the project sustainability. However, findings found that it seemed impossible to predict them.

In the regard of the strategic planning models, the choice is made based on demands, types and sizes of an organisation – in this case, the Reboot project, and involved stakeholders (World Meteorological Organization 2016, 4). The 5W1H model is suggested to use when the priority is given in the correctness, clearness, and conciseness. Details therefore are direct and focused, answering what (object), why (reason), who (subject), when (time), where (place), and how (method) questions. The Reboot project can customise this model when necessary.

The alignment model serves a good purpose when the Reboot project wishes to create or enhance the alignment of resources with its organisation. In this regard, the attention shall be paid on outlining visions, missions, resources of an organisation and support needed; identifying areas that function efficiently and areas that require improvements; determining the approaches to implement improvements; and incorporating the improvement activities as strategies. However, findings of both case studies and interviews shown that the last stage was not executed.

The Reboot project may additionally take into account the practice of the organic model that values the stakeholder engagement in daily dialogues. The model is suitable when diverse opinions are engaged. It outlines how to communicate the project values to stakeholders on daily basis, what communication channels are and how to measure the engagement of stakeholders in those dialogues. Steps can be referred to the study of World Meteorological Organization (2016, 5-6) or customised according to project needs.

Lastly, the sustainability plan of Reboot can consider using the impact model which places the emphasis on widening impacts of project outputs during the project lifetime to guarantee their sustainability beyond the project end. The model works with numbers as key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of project outputs. Indicators encourage partners to seek for right stakeholders and convince them to use project outputs, the model ensures the feasibility of outputs and the project sustainability.

9 CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to develop a sustainability plan for the intellectual outputs of the Reboot project by exploring the factors influencing on the project sustainability. Its purpose was to also study the strategic planning models used in other projects which include projects funded by Erasmus+ Programme and other programmes. Findings from this study have led to a deeper understanding about the project sustainability and therein considerations. In general, the project sustainability is essential, however, implementing it is considered challenging.

There are different factors influencing the project sustainability. The development of Reboot project's sustainability plan should take into consideration both project-related and context-related factors. Project-related factors comprise financing; other resources, including type of project employees and timing; relevance of project outputs; capacity for self-sustaining; types of organisations; and nature of project design and management strategy as project-related factors. As for context-related factors, they are stakeholder and community involvement; demographic, social and cultural factors; support from external institutions and government policy; and requirements of the funding programme.

Considering strategic planning models, the choice is made based on demands, type and size of the Reboot project and involved stakeholders. The 5W1H model is suggested if prioritising the correctness, clearness, and conciseness, whereas the alignment model can help realign resources with the project operation. The organic model is used when the emphasis is put on the stakeholder engagement in daily dialogues, whilst the practice of the impact model guarantees the project sustainability as it centralises on multiplying impacts of project outputs during the project lifetime.

9.1 Limitation of the Research

This research has certain limitations that are considered characteristics of research design and/or methodology and have influenced on the interpretation of the findings (USC Libraries, n.d. online). First, as aforementioned, project sustainability is an emerging area of study. There is therefore a lack of available previous research studies to which the author can refer. Second, the research

covered only ten case studies that were of Erasmus+ Programme and seven interviews. Hence, the findings of this thesis might not be relevant to other cases as they were specifically tailored to the development of the sustainability plan of Reboot project funded by Erasmus+ Programme. Lastly, the limitation in research experience of the author may inhibit the fullest exploitation of the findings.

9.2 Reflection and Recommendations

The research utilised the qualitative method, including varied materials as well as case studies and interviews. The qualitative research assisted the understanding of the topic from individuals' perspective. Case studies aimed to explain, describe or explore the issue or phenomenon. For that purpose, ten case studies of Erasmus+ projects were compiled to explore strategic models used in planning project sustainability given that the Reboot project was also an Erasmus+ funded project. Semi-structured interviews provided open-ended questions and settings that allowed interviewees to freely express themselves. This method helped obtain attitudes, perceptions and other views towards the project sustainability.

While the author still agrees that qualitative research is the appropriate choice for this study that focused on the exploratory, the quantitative study can be necessarily combined in the future research to obtain a larger range of opinions and therefore decrease the subjectivity feature of qualitative studies. Quantitative studies and their statistical analysis can provide more evidence to reinforce the data obtained with qualitative tools. For example, a survey can be used to make stronger evidence of factors influencing on the project sustainability.

As earlier indicated, the current state of research on sustainability in project and project management is relatively interpretive. The integration of the concept of sustainability is not specified practically (Silvius et al. 2012). By focusing on exploring factors affecting the project sustainability and studying strategic models used in planning it, this study has addressed on the existing gap in previous studies. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvements and some research questions for the future research are recommended:

- How do internal and external factors relate to the project sustainability?

- How does financing affect other factors of project sustainability?
- What are the problems of the project sustainability?
- How can the concept of project sustainability be incorporated in the project development?
- How can a sustainability plan be developed?
- How do the project background and output features influence on the choice of strategic planning models?
- How does the choice of strategic planning models affect sustaining activities?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Note: Prompts are in *Italic*.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

1. What is your name and current position?
2. What is your previous working experience?

PART II: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AND THE PROJECT

3. Beside Erasmus+, which programme(s) have you participated in?
 - a. *How does the programme work?*
4. Which project under the [name of the programme] did you work in?
 - b. *What was the project about?*
 - c. *Who were the target groups of the project?*
 - d. *What were the types of outputs/deliverables in the project?*

PART III: INTERVIEWEE'S EXPERIENCE IN SUSTAINING THE PROJECT OUTPUTS

5. What was your experience of sustaining the outputs of the aforementioned project after its end?
 - a. *What should be considered in planning project sustainability? (Or in sustaining the project outputs?)*
 - b. *Do you use a specific model for planning project sustainability?*
 - i. *If yes, can you describe the model?*
 - ii. *If no, what elements need to be included in the sustainability plan?*
 - c. *Why do you use this model?*
6. Have you ever experienced difficulties in sustaining the project outputs in a project?
 - d. *Could you tell me more about them?*
 - e. *What you think are the causes of the difficulties?*
 - f. *What are the other causes/aspects that influence on the continuity of project outputs?*
7. What are your suggestions to sustain the project outputs better and more efficiently?

APPENDIX 2 – LINK TO THE ONLINE INTERVIEWS

The meetings were organised via Zoom. Link to the meeting:

<https://vamk.zoom.us/j/2560326754?pwd=dksvY2tKY2JwOXI5MUVRS2RMN3doZz09>

Password: VAMK

APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Bachelor's Thesis.

THESIS TITLE:	Sustainability Plan for the Intellectual Outputs of an Erasmus+ Project. Case: Reboot Project.
AUTHOR:	Thu Vo

The interview is a fundamental part of the bachelor's thesis research of the author. It aims to obtain information from project managers and members on their experience of planning the project sustainability and sustaining the project outputs after the project closure. The interview is semi-structured and will be customised accordingly to the interview progress. Estimated duration is one hour.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above thesis research. This consent form is to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Please sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview is voluntary and will be recorded and the transcript of the interview will be analysed only by Thu Vo.
- The access to the interview transcript will be limited to Thu Vo.
- The recording will be destroyed upon the author's graduation foreseeably in December 2021.
- Personal information will be treated strictly confidentially and will not be disclosed or be otherwise used except for the academic purposes.

With regards to being quoted and mentioned in the thesis writing, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to be quoted and mentioned directly with my names revealed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to be quoted and mentioned directly if my name is not published and a made-up name is used.

I _____ (Interviewee's name, surname) consent to participate in the interview conducted by Thu Vo.

Date: _____ **Interviewee's signature:** _____