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Background paper for "AI use in NA work"

Towards AI-ready and AI-fit National Agencies and Programmes

Evidence base. *SALTO Digital's AI survey* received responses from 34 NAs, representing 63.0% of the 54 NAs. Twenty NAs (37.0%) are not represented; results therefore describe responding NAs and should not be extrapolated mechanically to the whole network. Open responses were multi-coded, so one NA may appear in several categories.

National Agencies are increasingly exploring how AI can support the implementation of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Drawing on survey responses from 34 of the 54 NAs, this background paper presents an overview of the current use of AI, organisational preparedness, development interests and competence needs. The findings show that generative AI is already widely used in everyday knowledge work, particularly for drafting, summarising, translation, communication and preliminary analysis. However, organisational maturity, access to approved tools, and the availability of policies and secure infrastructure vary considerably across NAs.

The findings indicate a gradual shift from informal experimentation towards more structured organisational use and more programme-specific solutions. NAs are particularly interested in AI-assisted application and project report processing, administrative automation, knowledge assistants, communication, data analytics and monitoring. Moving forward will require secure environments, clear governance, human oversight, practical competences, sustainable ownership and greater sharing and co-development across the Erasmus+ ecosystem. Tool access alone is not enough: NAs need to become both AI-ready and AI-fit to use AI safely and purposefully.

AI-ready: having the governance, data, secure infrastructure, competences, ownership and digital capacity needed to implement and maintain AI responsibly.

AI-fit: having genuine operational and digital capability to automate workflows, processes, use cases or programme functions with AI.

Using and Developing AI in National Agencies

National Agencies are moving from informal experimentation with generative AI towards more structured organisational use. AI already supports everyday knowledge work in many NAs, while programme-specific systems for assessment, information services and document processing are beginning to emerge. The shared ambition is not simply to adopt more tools, but to use AI safely and purposefully to improve efficiency, quality and programme implementation while retaining human responsibility.

1. Current use of AI and the tool landscape

Current use is concentrated in low-risk, human-initiated tasks: brainstorming and drafting; proofreading and adapting text for different audiences; summarising; translation; presentations and visual content; information retrieval; and preliminary data analysis or chart creation. Some NAs also use AI for meeting notes, transcription and communication support. Deep integration into grant-management processes remains uncommon.

Reported platform	NAs	%	Main role
Microsoft Copilot	25	73,5 %	General assistant; drafting, summarising, language and office work
ChatGPT	15	44,1 %	General-purpose text, ideation, analysis and communication
Canva AI	5	14,7 %	Visual content and communication materials
Claude	5	14,7 %	Content creation and everyday work support
Gemini	3	8,8 %	General tasks and the preparation and review of documents
Other named platforms used (e.g. Mistral, DeepL, 506.ai, NotebookLM, Atlassian Rovo)	1-2 each		Research, European LLMs, translation, audio/video and knowledge search

Copilot is the dominant shared ecosystem, reported by 25 of 34 NAs (73.5%), followed by ChatGPT reported by 15 (44.1%). Four NAs also report operational programme-specific systems: VAL.ER.AI for final-report evaluation, an internally hosted beneficiary/applicant chatbot, ValidIA for document classification and extraction, and final-report analysis and project-counselling tools.

2. Policies, rules and responsible use

Twenty-one NAs (61.8%) have a formal AI policy, strategy or applicable organisational/national framework in force. Three have limited or informal rules, five are developing a policy or strategy, and five report no guidance. Thus, 24 already operate under at least some rules, and 29 either have rules or are preparing them. Several NAs apply the policy of their host organisation, ministry or national administration rather than an NA-specific framework.

Common safeguards include approved tools; excluding personal, confidential or sensitive data; not copying complete applications or reports into public systems; human oversight and accountability; output verification; and transparency or labelling where relevant. Some frameworks prohibit AI in case handling or restrict its use in assessment. Variation between strict approved-tool environments and staff-level freedom creates uneven access and uncertainty about acceptable use.

3. Experiments, pilots and emerging developments in NAs

Beyond the four operational systems, seven NAs are building or piloting a prototype and five are planning a concrete solution; 18 report no system or development project of their own. Experiments include an accreditation-evaluation chatbot; enquiry chatbots; a secure environment for expert assessment; a Programme Guide Copilot agent; eligibility, plagiarism and double-funding checks; large-document analysis; Erasmus+ knowledge and assessment assistants; a Copilot agent proposing rankings from anonymised TCA applications; and brand, tonality, article-drafting and grant-prefilling assistants. Results generally remain subject to staff or expert validation.

Plans include applicant and beneficiary chatbots, website assistants for the next programme period, internally hosted final-report analysis, and knowledge-management or internal-assistance solutions. This signals a shift from generic productivity tools towards AI grounded in programme rules, organisational knowledge and controlled data environments.

4. How NAs would like to use AI

The strongest message concerns practical use in core NA processes. The open responses identify six recurring development interests:

Development interest	NAs	%	Examples
Application/report work and checks	23	67,6 %	Assessment support, quality and risk signals, eligibility and formal checks
Administrative automation	19	55,9 %	Repetitive workflows, document preparation, minutes and process support
Assistants, chatbots and knowledge search	17	50,0 %	Programme Guide RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) assistants, internal knowledge and applicant support
Communication, advice and content	16	47,1 %	Clearer guidance, multilingual communication, accessible and targeted content
Data analytics and monitoring	13	38,2 %	Trend, portfolio and impact analysis; reporting and visualisation
Shared solutions and co-development with other NAs	8	23,5 %	Reusable components, shared environments, prompt and assessment libraries

The most important prospective application is AI-assisted assessment and processing of applications and project reports – not autonomous decision-making. NAs want support for identifying missing or inconsistent information, formal checks, summarising large files, detecting quality or risk signals and navigating evidence. They also want beneficiary-facing chatbots, internal knowledge assistants, more efficient communicatio, and better use of programme data for monitoring, impact and portfolio analysis. In addition, National Agencies expressed interest in pooling expertise and resources, sharing existing tools and practices, and jointly developing and validating AI solutions that could be used across the Erasmus+ ecosystem.

5. Development and competence needs

Safe foundations. NAs need approved, secure environments, practical data rules, risk classification, procurement guidance and clarity on human oversight, transparency and accountability.

Practical competence. All 34 respondents rated safe use, data protection and privacy as essential or very important. Practical NA cases received a Top-2 rating from 31 of 33 respondents. Ethics, risks, bias, critical evaluation, validation and fact-checking were also highly rated. Seventeen NAs requested hands-on examples; 11 highlighted legal, ethical, privacy or human-oversight questions.

From pilots to sustainable services. NAs need skills in RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) and agents, anonymisation, integrations, quality assurance, testing, metrics, ownership, maintenance and scaling. Managers need governance, resourcing and change-management support, not only tool demonstrations.

Shared capacity. Eleven NAs requested peer learning or solution-sharing. Smaller NAs would particularly benefit from use-case libraries, reusable prompts and assessment templates, shared low-risk pilots and Commission- or network-level secure solutions.

Implication for joint development and training. Support should combine a common responsible-use foundation with NA-specific practical laboratories. The greatest added value would come from shared, secure experimentation in assessment, knowledge assistants, communication and analytics, followed by structured evaluation before scaling. The role of the European Commission in coordinating and providing foundations for this work is crucial.

6. Questions to ponder and discuss within each NA

1. Which tasks and decisions must remain human-led, and how should human oversight, output verification, transparency, documentation and accountability be organised?
2. What types of data (programme, applicant, beneficiary or staff etc) may be processed with AI, under what safeguards, and what data should never be entered into an AI system?
3. Where could AI create the greatest value in our NA over the next two years?

7. Questions for the NA DIR Informal -meeting

1. How should NAs (together with the EC?) develop AI governance and knowledge management to ensure that AI is used appropriately and provides added value?

2. How can we strengthen the AI competences of our staff, managers and external experts?

3. What should be developed:
    a. locally by individual NAs,
    b. jointly or co-developed within the Erasmus+ ecosystem,
    c. centrally by the European Commission?