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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying the document

Proposal for a Council Recommendation

'Europe on the move' – learning mobility opportunities for everyone

{COM(2023) 719 final} - {SWD(2023) 720 final}

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1. Introduction

<u>Policy context</u>

The European Education Area is a strategic initiative of the European Union aimed at improving the quality, inclusiveness, and competitiveness of European education and training systems. It seeks to create a common space for learning, where people can move freely, learn, and work anywhere in Europe. Until 2030, the achievement and further development of the European Education Area will be the overarching political objective of the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training 2021-2030[1]. The seamless learning mobility is an essential element of the European Education Area not only for people, but also for organisations and education and training systems.

The Commission Communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025[2] announced the update of the learning mobility framework, the 2011 Council Recommendation 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people[3], and the development of the policy framework for the learning mobility of teachers to enable more learners and teachers to benefit from a mobility opportunity. A proposal for the learning mobility framework was also listed among the strategic initiatives towards the achievement of the European Education Area to be adopted by 2025[4], with an adoption date by the end of 2023.

The Communication on achieving the European Education Area also affirmed the role of non-formal and informal learning, including volunteering, in the development of personal and professional skills and competences of learners, as well as their intercultural awareness and active citizenship. It highlighted the need to address legal, financial, and administrative barriers that might hinder the mobility of young people, including volunteers.

The Council resolution of 16 May 2023 on the European Education Area: looking to 2025 and beyond[5] emphasised that a particular focus should be given to promoting the professional development, mobility opportunities, working conditions and well-being of teachers as key factors in increasing the attractiveness of the profession, and to removing the remaining obstacles to mobility while encouraging inclusive, sustainable and balanced mobility in the EU, including by achieving automatic mutual recognition in education and training.

Much has been achieved since the 2011 Recommendation in promoting learning mobility by Member States and the EU, including through the reinforced Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

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[1] Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), (OJ C 66, 26.2.2021).
[2] COM(2020) 625 final.
[3] OJ C 199, 7.7.2011, p. 1–5.
[4] Communication from the Commission on progress achieved towards the achievement of the EEA, COMM 2022(700)
[5] OJ C 185, 26.5.2023, p. 35–38.

However, feedback and evidenced collected from the Conference on the Future of Europe[6], the European Citizens' panel[7] on learning mobility, the Mobility Scoreboard[8], the Eurobarometer and other surveys and studies called for the expansion of learning mobility opportunities for all, regardless of age, education and background and for making these opportunities more inclusive.

In the recommendations of the Conference on the Future of Europe citizens emphasized the importance for the EU and its Member States to "*Promote European exchanges in different fields, both physically and digitally, including educational exchanges, twinning, travel and professional mobility (including for teachers and local elected politicians)*" and to "*establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education and life-long learning, including those in rural and remote areas*".

The European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel addressed the question "how to make opportunities for learning mobility a reality for everyone?" and provided 21 recommendations to the European Commission ahead of its proposal for a Council Recommendation. These recommendations stressed the importance of an inclusive system that enables learning mobility for people with fewer opportunities, the importance of well targeted information and support for learners, the learning mobility of employees and the importance of multilingualism and a lingua franca.

The proposed Recommendation invites the Member States to make learning mobility experiences a valued part of all education and training pathways and embed the opportunity for mobility in education and training programmes. It has a strong focus on inclusive mobility and broadens the scope of the 2011 Recommendation to learners, educators and staff in all education and training, youth and sport sectors, whether formal, non-formal or informal. The proposal addresses the persistent impediments to mobility such as administrative burden, language barriers, lack of financial means, and lack of automatic recognition schemes. It equally addresses new developments in learning patterns aiming at making learning mobility more environmentally sustainable, benefiting from digital technologies and promoting EU values. It will also strengthen the links between learning mobility and labour mobility, promoting synergies between initiatives and organisations active in both fields and making learning abroad an important component of professional development.

Importance and benefits of mobility

Learning mobility supports the development of skills and competencies that are essential for a competitive and resilient economy, as well as for social cohesion. Embracing new cultures, languages, teaching and learning methods helps to develop critical thinking, intercultural competence, and communication skills. Transnational and international learning mobility activities have proven to be highly valuable experiences for people in gaining knowledge, skills

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[6] Conference on the future of Europe. Recommendations of the European Citizens' Panel 1 on 'Stronger economy, social justice, jobs, education, culture, sport, digital transformation', recommendation 36.
[7] European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility, final recommendations.
[8] https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/mobility-scoreboard.

and competencies[9] needed for personal, educational, and professional development[10], as well as civic engagement and social inclusion[11]. By investing in learning mobility, European countries can build more inclusive[12], competitive, and resilient education and training systems, and youth and sport sectors.

Free movement of persons, knowledge, ideas and cultural exchanges are at the core of the European project. Cross-border learning experiences also foster intercultural understanding and contribute to the development of a shared European identity. Learning mobility promotes the backbone of the EU's economic and social development: education, training, and research. It is also a strong driver for enhancing the quality of education and training institutions and of organisations and stakeholders involved in non-formal and informal learning contexts and youth work. Learning experiences abroad are also a first step towards a working experience in another country. Students are also the group in the population expressing the highest intentions for working abroad. In the recent Eurobarometer on Intra-EU labour mobility after the pandemic[13], 51% of students expressed the intention to work abroad, against a figure of 18% for the average population. For the majority of Europeans living or working abroad is an important experience beyond the professional aspects; within the population of those who lived abroad, 52% of the respondents considered this as an important experience which had effects beyond professional life and 40% agreed that they had gained better skills and qualifications, thus confirming the learning opportunity linked to mobility.

Scope and objectives of the proposal

With a proposal for a new Recommendation, the Commission is aiming to give a new impetus to boosting learning mobility, to promote its benefits and incentives and to address the still existing obstacles. The key ambition of the proposal is to gradually move towards making opportunities for learning mobility a norm, rather than an exception, for learners at any age, educators and staff in all education and training systems, youth and sport sectors.

The proposal for a new Recommendation builds on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation and seeks for continuity, where relevant. It builds on the broadened, reinforced and more inclusive Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 and its measures and good practices that may serve as an inspiration for other learning mobility schemes, in particular in support of inclusion and diversity, green transition, digital transition and participatory mobility.

The evidence for the proposal were gathered through the dedicated study "Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward" and an extensive consultation process that

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[9] See Di Pietro, G.(2022). International internships and skill development: A systematic review. *Review of Education*,10, e3363.

[10] See Di Pietro, G. (2022): "Studying abroad and earnings: A meta-analysis", Journal of Economic Surveys, 36(4),1096-1129.

[11] Commission Staff Working document: Impact assessment, accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) 1288/2013, {COM(2018) 367 final} - {SEC(2018) 265 final} - {SWD(2018) 276 final.
Link: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0277

[12] See Di Pietro, G. (2022): "Changes in the study abroad gender gap: A European cross-country analysis", HigherEducation Quarterly, 76(2), 436-459.

[13] Intra-EU labour mobility after the pandemic - December 2022 - - Eurobarometer survey (europa.eu)

comprised three blocs: the European Citizen's Learning Mobility Panel, the public consultation and the call for evidence that received over a thousand inputs and dozens of targeted information and consultations meetings with stakeholders.

The proposal also aims to give a specific boost to learning mobility for teachers and apprentices through dedicated policy frameworks in annexes. Schools are facing shortages of teachers and learning mobility should increase the attractiveness of their profession. Teachers who have experienced mobility may become role models for learners and important promoters of transnational and international cooperation. Apprentices are facing specific barriers related to the specificities of apprenticeship and work-based learning. Their mobility should help to address skills gaps and green and digital transitions, and increase the employability of young people.

Policy framework for teachers' mobility

The 2020 Commission's Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025[14] highlighted the crucial role of teachers and the vision of having highly competent and motivated educators who can benefit from a range of support and professional development opportunities throughout their varied careers, including through learning mobility opportunities abroad. It states that the Commission "will work together with Member States and stakeholders on a policy framework for increasing the number and quality of learning mobility of teachers in Europe based on their actual mobility needs".

In its Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), the Council agreed to address five strategic priorities including "Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all" and "Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession".

In this context, the mobility of teachers for professional developments is one of the cornerstones of the achievement of the European Education Area.

The Council adopted a Recommendation on Pathways to School Success in November 2022 aiming at promoting better educational outcomes for all young Europeans, irrespective of their personal characteristics, family, socio-economic and cultural background. This policy framework is based on a holistic approach for improving success by identifying key conditions and a wide range of prevention, intervention and compensation measures, which will serve as a reference tool for national, regional and local policy makers and practitioners in education and training to develop a systemic policy response to ensure better educational outcomes for all learners.

As part of this approach, the Council Recommendation calls for supporting school leaders, teachers, trainers and other staff by making sure they have the knowledge, skills, and competences, as well as time, space and adequate support to work effectively with learners at risk of exclusion, underachievement and early leaving.

Learning mobility of teachers, school leaders and staff contributes to their competences, motivation and professional development along their careers, as required in the context of the

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[14] COM(2020) 625 final.

Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success and more generally for the achievement of the European Education Area.

In addition, the Council Conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future[15] stress that cross-border mobility, either as short-term or longer-term, physical, virtual or blended, is a powerful learning experience and a valuable opportunity in developing participants' social, intercultural, multilingual and interpersonal competences, both for students in initial teacher education and practising teachers and trainers in their continuous professional development.

Furthermore, the mobility of teachers has an impact on the whole education and training system: the Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility during their initial and in-service education and training, issued in 2022, stressed the benefits of mobility for the professional development of teachers themselves but also for the development of a European dimension in the activities and projects of their education and training institutions.

Policy framework for mobility of apprentices

Apprentice mobility can bring benefits to the training and employability of young people, to company workforce skills, and to society as a whole. However, apprentices face additional difficulties on individual, organisation and systemic levels, in particular in long-duration learning mobility.

The Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships[16] lays down two criteria explicitly covering the mobility of apprentices: criterion 4 on workplace component, which states that, where possible, there should be an opportunity to undertake a part of the workplace experience abroad; and criterion 11 on flexible pathways and mobility, which states that transnational mobility of apprentices, either at the workplace or education and training institutions, should be progressively promoted as a component of apprenticeship qualifications. The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) has the mobility of apprentices as one of its four objectives (along with the supply, quality and image of apprenticeships) and the Alliance pursues this objective to respond the strong interest from its members.

The 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) [17] and the Osnabrück Declaration[18] have placed a very strong emphasis on VET internationalisation and learner mobility in particular. Along with setting the target of 8% of VET learners, including apprentices, benefitting from a learning mobility abroad by 2025 at EU level, the 2020 Council Recommendation stressed the importance of opportunities for learning mobility of VET learners and staff, including virtual mobility, long duration mobility and mobility to third countries. The Osnabrück Declaration endorsed by ministers in charge of VET, European Social Partners and the Commission asked national authorities to support and facilitate the

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[15] 2020/C193/04

[16] Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships
OJ C 153, 2.5.2018, p. 1–6

[17] OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16.

[18] Osnabruck declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies, endorsed on 30 November 2020.

mobility of VET and adult learners, including apprentices, for example by developing support structures and providing information on opportunities in host countries.

While progress has been made, apprenticeship schemes providing opportunities for the mobility are still rather the exception than the rule[19]. To ensure an appropriate volume of high-quality mobility offers, a strong supporting framework is needed addressing the specific needs of apprentices, VET providers and employers. To reinforce the provisions on mobility of the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for a Quality and Effective Apprenticeship, a policy framework to mobility of apprentices is presented in the Annex II of the Commission proposal to provide a guidance on the implementation. It proposes a strategic framework to be put in place at national level to facilitate the mobility of apprentices on system, individual and company level.

Overview of the Staff Working Document

This Staff Working Document is accompanying the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning mobility which is updating the 2011 Council Recommendation 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people. The staff working document presents the state of play of mobility in the different sectors and it sets out in more detail and depth the concepts put forward in the Commission proposal by providing research evidence, findings from consultation activities, good practice examples and other information as a basis for the proposed Recommendation.

The Staff Working Document provides an overview of the state of play of learning mobility since 2011 Recommendation and explains the proposed way forward. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the topic, describing the policy context of the European Education Area initiative, the importance and benefits of mobility, the current obstacles to mobility, and the scope and objectives of the proposal.

Chapter 2 presents in more detail the state of play of learning mobility. Its first section presents learning mobility data and trends. The second section provides an overview of the key findings of the Mobility Scoreboard that was established to follow-up the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation. The third part presents the main findings of the dedicated study on supporting learning mobility and other relevant data sources.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the way forward. Its first section gives details to the recommendations for the Member States. The second section explains the actions of the Commission. It also provides a detailed description of the actions proposed in Annexes I and II of the Recommendation which present two policy frameworks – for the mobility of teachers and for the mobility of apprentices.

The findings, suggestions and recommendations in this document are developed through a strong research base and wide-ranging consultations with multiple stakeholders and experts in the field, non-governmental organisations, social partners and citizen groups. The Annex on stakeholder consultations describes the stakeholder consultation process.

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[19] SWD(2021) 230 final

2. State of play of learning mobility in the European Union

2.1 Mobility data and trends

Since 2011 there have been ongoing efforts to improve data collections to provide more comprehensive monitoring of learning mobility in accordance with the aims of the 'Youth on the move' Recommendation. Despite the emphasis on improving quantitative data collections, comprehensive cross-national data collections for monitoring of learning mobility beyond Erasmus+ at EU-level are only in place in higher education[20]. Across all other sectors, the Erasmus+ programme offers the most comprehensive (in terms of geographical coverage), detailed, and updated monitoring data for EU-level analysis of learning mobility[21]. While other sources of data do exist, their quality, comparability, coverage and accessibility vary considerably, underlining the need for improving the evidence base which is detailed in section 3.3.2.

The following sections provide a brief overview of data availability, data quality, and gaps, based on the assessments and evidence gathered through the dedicated study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward', and overall participation trends in learning mobility per sector. The emphasis in the assessment of trend data is on participation in mobility activities, but equally important are quantitative data for addressing enablers and obstacles to mobility, and outcomes and impact of mobility activities.

Higher education

Monitoring of learning mobility is at its most advanced stage in higher education compared to other sectors. Comprehensive data collection exists at both national and international levels, capturing different aspects and types of learning mobility[22]. System-level, programme specific and thematic monitoring schemes are available, offering extensive country coverage. The emphasis tends to be on participation rates and mobility flows, but there are many examples of data collections addressing impact of mobility, satisfaction of participants, obstacles and enabling factors for mobility[23]. Limitations are also present in data collections encompassing higher education, however.

Data from the UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat joint data collection on education administrative data provides a comprehensive overview of mobility in the EU. In 2021, close to 400,000 of the 4.3 million higher education graduates (ISCED levels 5 to 8) in the EU (approximately 9%) had completed a temporary stay abroad of at least three months or 15 ECTS credits during their studies, known as 'credit mobility'[24]. Mobility under programmes financed by the EU is the predominant mode of credit mobility at the bachelor level (60.9%), but it accounts for less than half of the credit mobility taking place at the master level (45.8%). The corresponding

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[20] One example is the <u>UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat joint data collection on education administrative data.</u>

[21] In the youth sector, the European Solidarity Corps programme also offers relevant cross-national mobility data.

[22] Examples include the UNESCO-OECD0-Eurostat joint data collection and the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER).

[23] For instance <u>Eurograduate</u>, <u>Eurostudent</u>.

[24] Source: Eurostat (UOE) 2023. Online data codes: <u>educ_uoe_mobc01</u> and <u>educ_uoe_grad01</u>. Credit mobility is addressed in more detail in section 3.1.

percentages for short cycle tertiary education (data from 13 Member States) and doctoral or equivalent level (data from 21 Member States) are respectively 48.7% and 32.3%. Moreover, 8.0% of the 4.3 million graduates from higher education institutions in the EU completed their education in a country other than their country of origin[25].

Figure 1. Learner and staff mobility in higher education under Erasmus+, 2014–2022
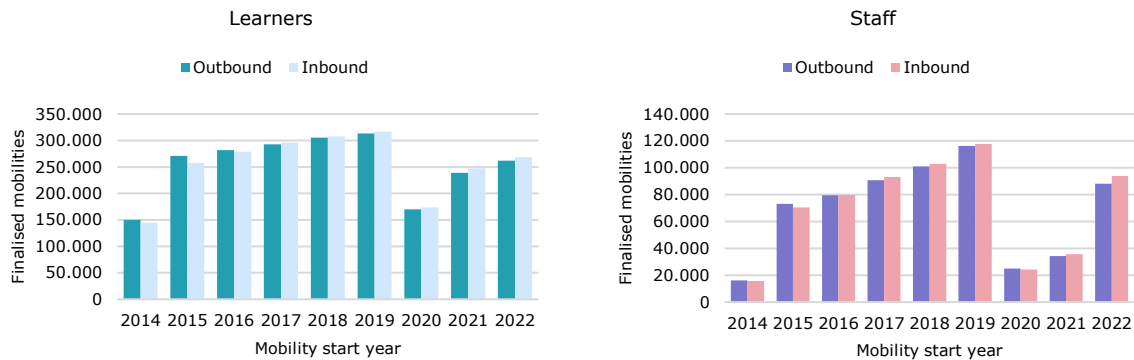
Source: Erasmus+ administrative data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Taking a closer look at programme data from the Erasmus+ programme we see that there was a steady increase in student and staff mobility from 2014 to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Although mobility has strongly increased following the end of the pandemic, neither student nor staff mobility had still reached the pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

In 2020, women represented 54% of the learners in the tertiary level of education in the EU27; this percentage raises to 59% for the same population among participants in learning mobility opportunities supported by Erasmus+[26]. More specifically, for the fields of study covering engineering, information technology, natural sciences and mathematics, women represented 42% for Erasmus+ Higher education mobilities in 2020, to be compared with the general figure of 32% in the EU in 2019.

Vocational Education and Training

Programme specific data collections on mobility are the most prevalent in VET, with limited availability of cross-national system-level data from other sources than Erasmus+. At national level, there are only a few examples of data collections on mobility in administrative registers, and there is not a collection system in place for compiling comparable cross-national data similar to the education administrative collections in place in higher education[27]. The focus of existing data collections tends to be on participation rates, and less on monitoring other aspects of learning mobility.

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[25] Country of origin is defined as the country of upper secondary diploma.

[26] Under Erasmus+ the gender ratio is similar across most fields and stable over the years.

[27] For an analysis of national-level sources of VET mobility, see European Commission, Hefler, G. & Steinheimer, E. (2020). *Measuring Learning Mobility in Vocational Education and Training: A review of data sources and approaches to measurement across European Union Member States.* Available at: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/693519.

At EU level Erasmus+ provides the most comprehensive collection of mobility data, enabling detailed breakdowns of mobility flows. Considering the high demand and increased funding of the Erasmus+ programme for 2021–2027, a new EU-level target on learning mobility in VET was introduced in the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience[28], stating that 8% of VET learners should benefit from a learning mobility stay abroad by 2025[29].

Figure 2. Learner and staff mobility in VET under Erasmus+, 2014–2022
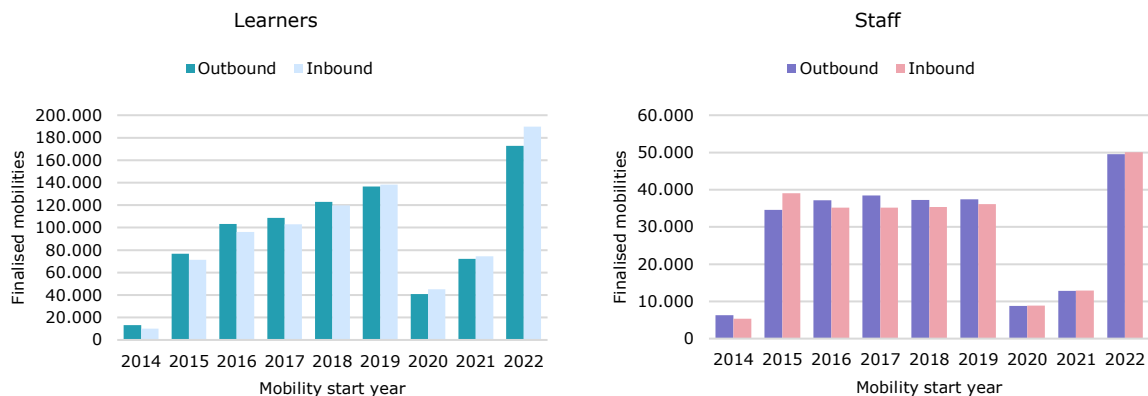
Source: Erasmus+ administrative data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Figure 2 shows the development of mobility of VET learners and staff in the Erasmus+ programme since 2014. There has been clear upwards trend in the number of mobile learners, while the staff mobility has remained stable. Like the higher education sector, Covid-19 resulted in a significant drop in both outbound mobile learners (-70.0%) and staff (-76.6%) from 2019 to 2020. Following the pandemic, and with the new Erasmus+ programme period starting in 2021, the annual mobility has caught up to and surpassed the pre-Covid-19 figures, however.

School education

There is a lack of centralised data collections for mobility in school education beyond specific data provided through the Erasmus+ programme and regional programmes such as Nordplus. For other learning mobility programmes operating within the EU and beyond, data collections are fragmented. The available data offer a limited understanding of pupils' and school staff's engagement in international mobility outside the scope of the most prevalent mobility programmes. At the same time, the Erasmus+ programme is identified as the primary means for cross-border activities for school staff and pupils in most EU Member States and offers a good indication of the volume of participation in cross-border education activities in the school sector.

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[28] Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. 2020/C 417/01. OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16.
[29] The target is addressed in more detail in section 3.1.

Figure 3. Learner and staff mobility in school education under Erasmus+, 2014–2022
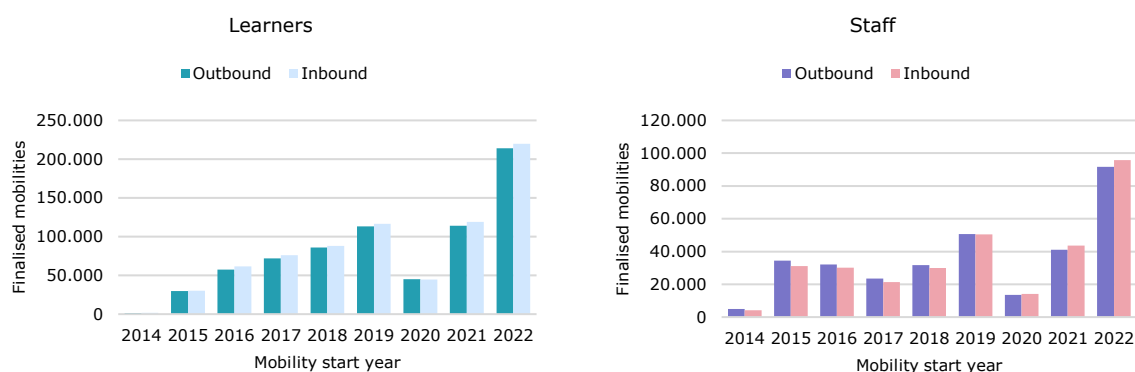
Source: Erasmus+ administrative data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Mobility in school education under the Erasmus+ programme is presented in Figure 3. From 2014 onwards, there has been a steady increase in the number of mobile learners and staff. The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic is clearly visible, with substantial drops in outbound mobile learners (-60.2%) and mobile staff (-73.4%) in 2020 compared to 2019, however. The pandemic also resulted in reduced mobility in 2021. This is also reflected in the inbound numbers. In 2022 mobility of learners and staff returned to and surpassed pre-pandemic levels, in part due to the launch of the new Erasmus+ programme in 2021 which allows for easier access to mobility activities in the field of school education. Close to 214 000 pupils and almost 92 000 staff members in EU Member States benefitted from cross-border mobility in 2022.

Youth

The main source of data on cross-national mobility in the youth sector comes from programme specific data collections such as the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity programme. Limited information is available on mobilities taking place outside these programmes.

Figure 4. Learner and staff mobility in the field of youth under Erasmus+, 2014–2022

Source: Erasmus+ programme data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps data allow to sketch a picture of mobility trends for the youth sector in the 2014–2022 period. There has been a steady growth in the mobility of young people through youth exchanges since 2014, albeit with substantial drops in mobility due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 (figure 4). A similar trend is visible for youth workers, but with a slight drop following the pre-pandemic high point in 2015 followed by growth from 2017 to 2019. Figure 5 shows the development of mobility in the European Solidarity Corps programme. In contrast to other programmes, there is no distinct drop due to Covid-19.

Figure 5. Mobility under the European Solidarity Corps, 2019–2022

Source: European Solidarity Corps programme data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Adult education

Cross-national data on mobility in adult education in the EU is limited beyond the data collected through the Erasmus+ programme and the regional Nordplus programme. National-level data collections are also limited, mainly sourcing programme data for monitoring of this field. This does not necessarily mean that mobility is not taking place, but rather that data is not systematically collected and reported.

Figure 6. Learner and staff mobility in adult education under Erasmus+, 2014–2022
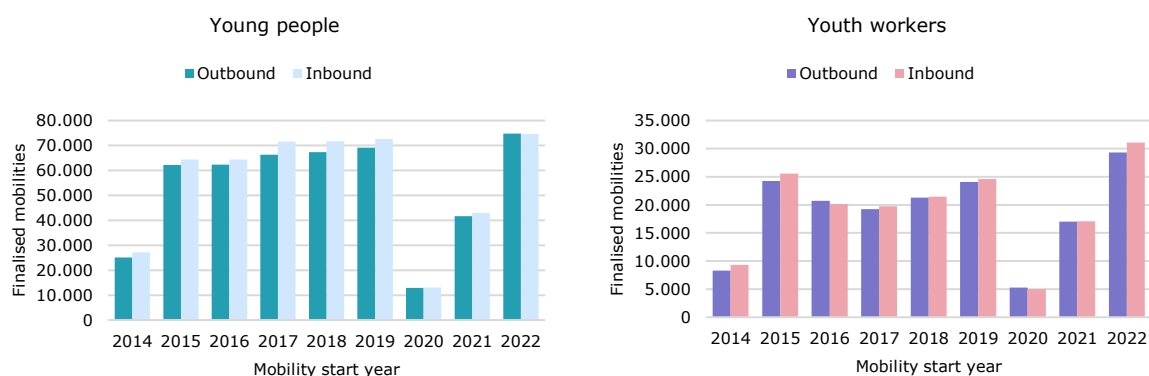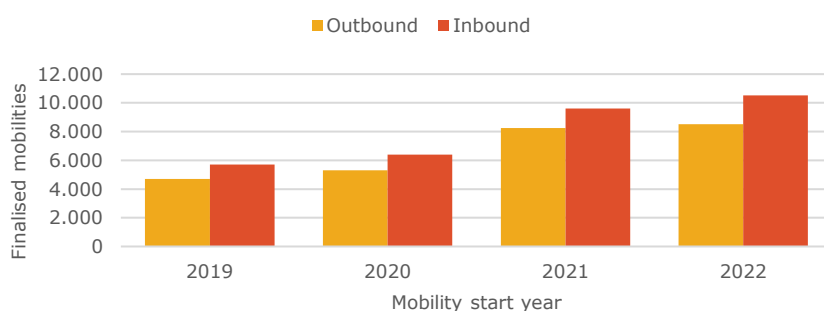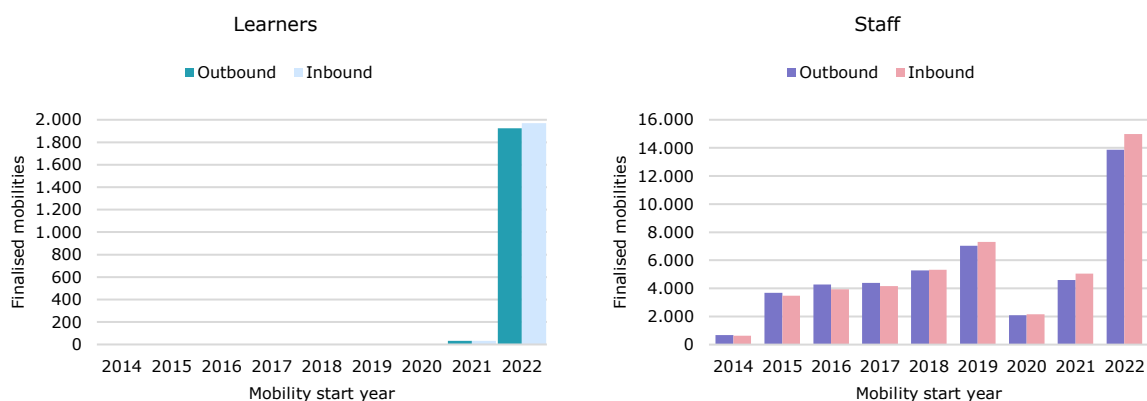

Source: Erasmus+ administrative data. Extracted 6.7.2023. Note: Aggregated data for the EU. Outbound mobility refers to mobilities originating in an EU Member State, regardless of country of destination. Inbound mobility refers to mobilities where the destination country is an EU Member State, regardless of country of origin.

Although limited to programme specific data, Erasmus+ provides a good overview of the extent of mobility in the adult education sector. Figure 6 shows the development of mobility of learners and staff in adult education under the Erasmus+ programme from 2014 to 2022. Actions to support mobility of learners where first introduced in the current Erasmus+ programme period (2021–2027), which explains the lack of data in the years preceding 2021. Widespread learner mobility only commenced in the second year of the new programme period, with close to 2 000 mobile learners. Notably, mobility of learners starting in 2023 have already surpassed the 2022 numbers according to preliminary data for the first six months of the year (not shown).

Staff mobility in adult education has increased consistently over the past nine years, if disregarding the drastic reduction in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022 there were close to 14 000 outbound staff mobilities originating in EU Member States, and almost 15 000 inbound staff mobilities to destinations in the EU.

Sport

In the sport sector, there is a very limited availability of monitoring data. Most of the available data on sport staff mobility are produced by the Erasmus+ programme, which is also the main European cross-national programme available for sport staff mobility. In addition, the European Solidarity Corps also accepts applications of sports organisations as host partners. Meanwhile, national institutions and agencies rarely collect sport staff learning mobility data.

Horizontal priorities

With respect to the relevant horizontal priorities: inclusive, green, digital, and participatory mobility, most national and cross-national monitoring systems still lack indicators for their monitoring. At the EU programme level, relevant data will be gradually available through the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps monitoring and evaluation. Inclusive mobility is addressed in greater detail in section 3.1.

2.2 Mobility Scoreboard

In 2011, the Council of the European Union invited Member States to implement structural reforms to create a positive environment to support learning mobility. This 'Youth on the Move' Recommendation[30] proposed the creation of a methodological framework known as the Mobility Scoreboard to monitor progress made by European countries in facilitating learning mobility. This tool examines rules and regulations that affect student mobility in higher education and initial vocational education and training (IVET).

The Mobility Scoreboard was first published in 2016 on a joint online platform.[31] Higher education indicators were developed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and information has been collected through the Eurydice Network on a three-yearly basis. The comparative analysis of higher education indicators was published in three Eurydice background reports.[32] Indicators in IVET were developed by Cedefop, and data have been

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[30] Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

[31] Mobility Scoreboard platform: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard

[32] European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2016. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report. Eurydice Report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; European Commission /

collected biannually through the ReferNet[33] network. IVET indicators are published on Cedefop's dedicated website.[34]

Composite indicators in both higher education and IVET are made up of five colour-coded categories reflecting performance in each policy area. An education system that meets all the expected criteria is allocated to the dark green category, while a system that meets none is placed in the red one. Three additional categories: light green, yellow, and orange are used depending on the number of criteria met.

2.1.1 Higher Education

The higher education Mobility Scoreboard[35] includes six composite indicators in policy areas mentioned by the 2011 Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on learning mobility for young people[36]: information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, support provided to disadvantaged learners, ensuring the full automatic recognition of the outcomes of the learning periods abroad carried out in education and training and automatic recognition of qualifications for further learning. Table below illustrates the overall performance of EU Member States by policy area (information on the three Belgian communities is included separately). The table shows that with the exception of the indicator on supporting disadvantaged learners, education systems fare relatively well in all areas of the scoreboard. The majority of EU education systems are placed in the top two categories for five scoreboard indicators.

Table 1. Number of EU education systems by scoreboard indicator category, 2022/2023

	Dark green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red	Overall
Information and guidance	6	9	9	3	2	Good performance
Foreign language preparation	9	6	7	6	1	Very good performance
Portability of grants and loans	9	7	6	5	2	Very good performance
Support provided to disadvantaged learners	1	3	7	17	1	Some progress has been made
Recognition of learning outcomes	5	12	7	5	0	Very good performance
Automatic recognition of qualifications	11	4	9	5	0	Very good performance

Source: Eurydice.

EACEA / Eurydice, 2020. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19. Eurydice Report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher education background report 2022/2023. Eurydice Report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[33] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/networks/refernet
[34] IVET Mobility Scoreboard: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/mobility-scoreboard
[35] European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher education background report 2022/2023. Eurydice Report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
[36] Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

In the two areas concerning recognition, no education system is placed in the bottom (red) category. At the same time, five systems meet only a limited part of established criteria for each indicator. For the **recognition of learning outcomes** through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), this means that in five EU Member States, external quality assurance agencies are not required to use the European Commission's and the European Higher Education Area's 2015 ECTS Users' Guide[37] to assess how well ECTS is used in higher education institutions. Nevertheless, quality assurance agencies generally use the Users' Guide in practice even in these cases. Among the countries where the ECTS Users' guide is required to be used, five education systems have widened the range of aspects to be monitored since 2018/2019; for four systems, this is also reflected in a change of the scoreboard indicator category.

Concerning the **automatic recognition of qualifications**, in the five EU Member States in the orange category, recognition of qualifications from countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is not (fully) automatic. These systems have nevertheless implemented at least two of the key measures of good practice in recognition according to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region[38], more commonly known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Overall, there has been steady, but relatively limited progress in the EU towards reaching full mutual automatic recognition, with only three countries making legislative changes to introduce automatic recognition since 2015/2016. This means that by 2022/2023, 11 EU Member States have implemented system-level automatic recognition. More significant developments towards automatic recognition have taken place in a regional context, with several multilateral agreements entering into force in this period. In total, 13 Member States practice automatic recognition with a subset of countries from the European Higher Education Area. The Council Recommendation on "promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad"[39] has also contributed to the improved implementation of automatic recognition in the EU since 2018.

The areas of foreign language preparation and the portability of grants and loans show similar patterns regarding both the distribution of countries along the indicator categories and the extent of changes over time: there are only one or two countries in the bottom category, the majority of EU Member States fulfils most conditions, but category changes have been very limited overall.

The indicator on **foreign language preparation** monitors the length of compulsory foreign language learning in general education and initial vocational education and training (IVET)[40], as well as the length of the period when at least two foreign languages are compulsory at the

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[37] European Commission, 2015. *ECTS Users' Guide 2015.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf

[38] Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, ETS No. 165, http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165

[39] Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018. EUR-Lex - 32018H1210(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

[40] Only VET programmes that give access to tertiary education are taken into account.

same time in school. The good overall performance of EU Member States indicates that foreign languages are introduced relatively early on in the curriculum, so the length of foreign language learning exceeds 10 years in most countries. And despite the few category changes, changes not detected by differences between indicator categories were more common, showing a slow but steady lengthening of language learning periods. However, the learning of two foreign languages is less common in IVET programmes. This might be a source of concern, given that students from both general and vocational education are able to enter the same higher education programmes, and therefore should have the same opportunities for learning languages so that they are equally able to participate successfully in learning mobility.

The indicator on the **portability of grants and loans** examines the extent to which higher education students can use their domestic grant(s) or loan(s) for studying abroad, either for credit or degree mobility. There are only two countries where students cannot keep their domestic grant or loan when they study abroad, while sixteen Member States allow for the full portability of domestic support measures, with or without additional restrictions. In 11 Member States, portability is only possible for credit mobility. However, this indicator proved to be the most static one, with only three category changes in the whole examined period.

The area of **information and guidance** is the field where most education systems have put policies in place, but only few meet all defined criteria. There are only six education systems in the dark green category, but only five in the orange and red as well. The most commonly lacking criterion is having a central monitoring and evaluation system of personalised services on outward mobility. Thus, while most EU Member States have centralised websites, strategies and/or large-scale initiatives aimed at informing and guiding learners on mobility opportunities, only few monitor the information and guidance provision in higher education institutions. This may result in a fragmented and uneven information provision and variable quality standards. At the same time, information and guidance provision is the policy area where most changes took place. More than one third of EU education systems changed their category between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023, and most towards higher categories. The changes were most often incremental, introducing one additional policy measure, but nevertheless indicate clear progress over the period.

The indicator on **supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners** reveals the greatest need for progress among the six indicators. For this indicator, the large majority of education systems are in the orange and red categories, and only four of them fall in the top two. This means that most education systems, while providing some form of targeted financial support, do not have the strategic goal of increasing the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes. The indicator has also proved to be relatively unstable in terms of the direction of policy change. Changes were relatively infrequent and did not always move in the direction of higher categories. Policy measures have been typically introduced through top-level internationalisation strategies, and when such a strategy has come to an end, it has not necessarily been renewed. While such drops may be temporary, they nevertheless signal a lack of systematic attention on supporting disadvantaged learners.

2.1.2 Initial Vocational Education and Training

In vocational education and training, the Commission entrusted Cedefop with setting up a Mobility Scoreboard for initial vocational education and training. A feasibility study in 2015

involved an expert group with representatives from the Commission and experts from six Member States and led to the development of a fully-fledged scoreboard in the period 2016-2017.

The Mobility Scoreboard[41] allows European and national policy-makers, mobility organisers in the participating countries and other stakeholders to evaluate, compare and adjust their actions in international learning mobility in IVET where needed. It is updated every two years with information provided by its European network of expertise in VET, ReferNet.

The Mobility Scoreboard presents information around ten key thematic areas in line with the Council Recommendation "*Youth on the Move - Promoting the learning mobility of young people*":

1. information and guidance;
2. administrative and institutional issues;
3. recognition of learning outcomes;
4. partnerships and funding;
5. motivating for mobility;
6. long-term preparation for mobility;
7. quality of mobility;
8. portability of grants and loans;
9. specific support to disadvantaged learners;
10. involving multipliers.

The IVET Mobility Scoreboard indicates performance across countries in meeting the requirements of the 'Youth on the Move' Recommendation. An indicator has been defined for each thematic area and consider the following criteria[42]:

- setting up targets
- actions taken in line with the 'Youth on the Move' Recommendation
- countrywide coordination of the actions taken
- countrywide evaluation of the actions taken
- involvement of learners and stakeholders

IVET mobility policies: recent progress

The political commitment to promote learning mobility in IVET appears to have increased in most of the countries monitored. Young people in IVET today have more opportunities to do part of their training abroad than their peers of a decade ago. The IVET Mobility Scoreboard distinguishes five levels of national achievements in developing mobility policies: excellent, very good, good, some progress made, and little progress made (see table 2).

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[41] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard
[42] The methodology of the Cedefop Mobility Scoreboard is derived from that of the Bologna process and is available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/methodology_20161121_v.04.pdf

Table 2. Degree of closeness to full implementation of the 'Youth on the move' Recommendation

Level of performance in 2021	Countries
Excellent performance (near full implementation)	None
Very good performance	DE, FI, LT
Good performance	BG, CZ, EE, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, LU, NL
Some progress made	AT, BE (de), CY, DK, ES, IE, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK
Little progress made	BE (fl)
Not enough data to allow for ranking	BE (fr), EL, RO, SE

Based on this methodology, Cedefop's 2021 review reveals that five out of the 10 thematic areas of the 'Youth on the move' Recommendation are covered reasonably well: information and guidance; partnerships and funding; motivation to participate in international mobility; long-term preparation for mobility; and quality of stays abroad (see table 3).

IVET mobility policies and systems have been developed and structured. Erasmus+ and other IVET-mobility-related European programmes and funding have had a significant positive influence. According to data available to Cedefop, in nine countries Erasmus+ is the only existing mobility scheme in which IVET learners can participate. The remaining 18 countries include more than 50 mobility schemes accessible to IVET learners which may or may not be part of a formal study or training programme and, therefore, may include (or not) related services for preparation, follow-up, and assessment. Several countries have developed good practices in these areas and they are available online at the dedicated space at the Cedefop Mobility Scoreboard[43].

Table 3. Average EU 27 performance by indicator in 2021

Indicator 1: Information and guidance	Good performance
Indicator 2: Administrative and institutional issues	Some progress has been made
Indicator 3: Recognition of learning outcomes	Some progress has been made
Indicator 4: Partnerships and funding	Good performance
Indicator 5: Motivating for mobility	Good performance
Indicator 6: Long-term preparation for mobility	Good performance
Indicator 7: Quality of mobility	Good performance
Indicator 8: Portability of grants and loans	Some progress has been made
Indicator 9: Specific support to disadvantaged learners	Some progress has been made
Indicator 10: Involving multipliers	Some progress has been made

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43 Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard/good-practices

Reporting on those action areas is done through several monitoring tools such as country fiches or scorecards. The performance of Member States varied across different action areas. The 2021 results showed that only three countries (Finland, Germany, and Lithuania) achieved 'very good performance' across all indicators. While no data are made available on four countries, 12 out of 34 countries or regions analysed have made only 'some progress' towards the implementation of the Recommendation, while another 11 countries achieved 'good performance'.

Compared to 2017, several countries have taken measures to reduce administrative burdens, recognise skills and knowledge acquired abroad, promote the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility activities and use multipliers to promote international mobility. However, countries' average performance in developing mobility policies in these areas is still poor. In addition, until recently most countries have lacked targets and evaluation in most policy strands; both aspects go hand in hand, as evaluation would not make sense if no prior targets were set.[44]

The state of play in 2021 identifying the strong areas, and where improvements can be made for each indicator is described below.

Information and guidance is one of the thematic areas where countries demonstrate good performance (yellow) on average. Most of them (16) have a mechanism in place to provide IVET learners with both information and guidance on international learning mobility (dark green) while eleven countries only provide information to IVET learners without personalised guidance (yellow). In addition, 17 countries report on having nationwide coordinated mechanisms to provide information to IVET learners.   The most commonly lacking criteria have been target setting and evaluation of the actions in place[45]. Before the European level target on VET mobility was set, only four countries have set up countrywide policy targets (whether quantitative or qualitative) and six countries monitored existing provisions of information and guidance for international IVET mobility and review them for continuous improvement. According to the National Implementation Plan of the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET, 12 Member States have addressed the target on mobility in VET at national level.

Some progress has been made on average (orange) for the indicator on reducing the **administrative and institutional obstacles** that can hinder international IVET mobility, and it is one of the indicators where the most progress is needed. Most countries have taken action to integrate international mobility experience in IVET curricula while the biggest challenge countries face is related to the mobility of minors. In addition, about half of countries (13) are lacking countrywide coordination and evaluation of the measures to ensure their consistency, convergence, effectiveness and improvement.

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[44] Cedefop Briefing Note, 2020: "On the move but not there yet", available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9145_en.pdf
[45] According to the National Implementation Plan of the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET, 12 Member States have addressed the target on mobility in VET at national level.

Concerning the **recognition of learning outcomes** acquired during an international IVET mobility five countries perform very good (light green) while nine have good performance (yellow) on average across all criteria. When it comes to the scope of recognition, mechanisms can take into account all or some of the following six elements: courses, credit points, units, modules, programmes, and qualifications/diplomas/degrees. Nine countries have recognition mechanisms that cover all the elements (dark green) while 11 countries cover a maximum of three elements (orange). Many countries reported recognising small units of learning abroad while the use and recognition of credit points is the least popular. Three countries do not have recognition mechanisms in place or they have very limited coverage. Most of the countries use the EU tools (EQF/NQF, Europass documents) in the process of recognition.

The indicator on **supporting partnerships** between private and public actors, and **providing mobility incentives** to participants and stakeholders is the one where countries have the highest score on average across all criteria: three excellent (dark green), eight very good (light green) and twelve good (yellow). Most of the countries (24) reported actions on all of the following three dimensions: i)support companies and institutions in the creation of mobility partnerships and networks, ii) fund the international learning mobility of IVET learners and iii) provide companies and IVET institutions involved in organising mobility projects with financial and/or non-financial support. In addition, contrary to the other indicators most countries reported that existing partnerships and funding actions are coordinated and are subject to evaluation.

On **motivating for mobility**, three countries have very good (light green) and ten countries have a good performance (yellow) on average across all criteria. This indicator looks at two dimensions: i) the actions taken by countries to raise awareness of IVET learners and stakeholders on the added value of learning mobility and ii) the actions to foster a mobility culture in IVET. Eight of the countries addressed both dimensions, while another 13 have in place actions in one of the two. When it comes to the coordination and evaluation of the existing actions seven countries demonstrate an excellent performance while target setting is an area for improvement as only one country reported on country-wide policy targets for motivating IVET learners to go on mobility. Actions for raising awareness of the added value of mobility and/or fostering a mobility culture may take various forms and countries can get inspiration from good examples of practice available on the Cedefop IVET Mobility Scoreboard[46].

Concerning the indicator **on long-term preparation for IVET mobility**, Cedefop's mobility scoreboard includes three dimensions: the linguistic and intercultural preparation of IVET learners from the early stages of education, the acquisition of basic digital skills and the internationalisation of IVET curriculum through methods and practices that are in use abroad. It is the indicator where countries have the highest score on average across all criteria after the one on partnerships and funding; one excellent (dark green), seven very good (light green) and 11 good (yellow). About half of the countries (14) reported on measures in all three dimensions. The process is in general coordinated and monitored.

On **quality mobility** one country performs excellent (dark green), five countries perform very good (light green) while 14 have good performance (yellow) on average across all criteria. They are in a different situation when it comes to consistently taking action to ensure quality

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[46] Examples of good practice in Cedefop IVET Mobility Scoreboard available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard/good-practices

in all stages of the IVET mobility experience. In nine countries where Erasmus+ is the only existing mobility scheme for IVET learners, quality requirements are met consistently in all mobility stages, because participation in Erasmus+ requires mobility organisers and participants to agree and implement actions stipulated in the "Quality Commitment" form. The remaining 18 countries include more than 50 mobility schemes accessible to IVET learners which may or may not be part of a formal study or training programme and, therefore, may include (or not) related services for preparation, follow-up, and assessment. Several countries have developed good practices and they are available online at the dedicated space at the Cedefop Mobility Scoreboard[47]. Learners' and stakeholders' involvement in improving the quality of IVET mobility is the highest compared to other indicators. Most of the countries (18) have taken measures in at least one dimension of the three: visibility and access policy, feedback surveys, and impact measurement. While learners' feedback surveys take place to a big extent, results are not always used to improve quality of mobility.

Ensuring the **portability of grants and loans** is one of the decisive factors in increasing overall mobility for IVET learners. This indicator examines the extent to which IVET learners can use their domestic grant(s) or loan(s) for studying abroad. Two thirds of the countries have mechanisms in place to ensure the portability of those grants and loans, while one third does not have neither plan to put such a mechanism in place. The scoring however of this indicator in the Mobility Scoreboard is relatively low compared to other indicators because countries do not set targets in making grants portable, they do not evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and most of them do not involve stakeholders in improving portability of grants and loans.

The indicator on **supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners** reveals a need for progress. Most countries provide some sort of support either in the form of information and guidance or funding mobility. Very few countries take action in motivating and preparing disadvantaged learners for IVET mobility abroad. The use of multipliers to inspire and motivate disadvantaged learners to become mobile is also lacking. As a result, more than half of the countries have made some (orange) or little progress (red) in this indicator.

The **involvement of multipliers** to motivate the mobility of IVET learners abroad is an area where countries on average have indicated some progress (orange). Many countries reported some actions to encourage the use of teachers, trainers, families, youth workers and young people who have participated in a mobility experience. However, only five countries take action to mainstream learning mobility as a component in the initial training and continuous professional development of heads of IVET institutions, teachers, trainers, administrative staff and youth workers. Also, few countries recognise and value teachers', trainers' and youth workers' commitment to learning mobility. Countries can be inspired by examples of good practices in the Cedefop IVET Mobility Scoreboard to improve the involvement of multipliers to motivate young people to become mobile[48].

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[47] Idem as 41.
[48] Examples of good practice in Cedefop IVET Mobility Scoreboard available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard/good-practices

2.3 Study on supporting learning mobility and other evidence and developments

The Commission contracted a study "Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward" that was conducted from November 2022 to July 2023 to strengthen the evidence base and to support its work in the preparation of the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation.

The study focussed on analysing evidence regarding learning mobility in formal, non-formal and informal settings throughout the European Union, within and outside the EU programmes, with a focus on identification of incentives and obstacles to learning mobility.

The key findings of the study are presented below for higher education, vocational education and training, school education, youth, adult education, sport sectors and for the horizontal aspects of mobility.

2.3.1 Higher education

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The 2011 Council Recommendation has consolidated the Union's efforts in the area of learning mobility leading to a steady growth in the numbers of participants in mobility activities and the proliferation of policy initiatives, programmes, and support instruments across different sectors.

Under the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme, interest in higher education mobility remained consistently high, and analysis of projects' success rates (calculated based on participants in contracted projects over participants in submitted projects) indicates that the budget allocated for higher education mobility under Erasmus+ has been fully absorbed . Success rates for programme countries ranged from 70% (2015 call) to 80% (2019 call). In the case of third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ programme, they ranged from 59% in 2015 to 75% in 2020. This indicates a significant room for further promotion of higher education mobility, especially in relation mobility with partner countries, by increasing the amount of funding. Increasing budget allocation for higher education mobility under the 2021-2027 programme was, therefore, an important step in the right direction.

The study identified obstacles for further growth of participation in learning mobility. These obstacles can be split into individual-level, organisational-level and system-level obstacles.

Individual-level obstacles include the financial burden associated with cross-border mobility, especially for those participants with family responsibilities. The obstacles also include the fact that there can be limited time for mobilities during master's programmes and in general a lack of personal initiative. Higher education staff also faces barriers such as lack of time, high workload, and lack of confidence. Staff with temporary contracts furthermore often do not perceive mobility as a priority due to high administrative and academic workloads. Non-mobile learner participants have also reported that the high level of bureaucracy was an obstacle to mobility. While the study does identify lack of foreign language skills as an obstacle, they also

note that this is not perceived by all as a barrier, as it was perceived that English could be used during the mobility.

The **organisational-level obstacles** include different higher education systems perceiving learning mobility, and its benefits and opportunities, in different ways. Organisational-level obstacles also include the higher workload that has come with adapting to digital mobility management and the management of new types of mobilities also which can be time consuming for HEI staff. This is also related to the limited number of staff members in institutions, and problems with finding replacement staff while on mobility. Organisational-level obstacles also relate to housing and finding suitable and affordable accommodation options during the mobility, and the integration with local communities during the mobility.

Finally, **system-level obstacles** include for example the timing of grant payments, low grant amounts for the mobility periods, and lack of portability of national grants. The recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes is also reported as an obstacle despite being at a far more advanced stage compared to other sectors.

The study also identified **key incentives** to increase participation in mobility. These are also divided into individual-level, organisational-level, and system-level incentives.

For **individual-level incentives**, traveling abroad in itself is a major driver and source of interest for students according to the focus group consulted in the study, with a general tendency of students to choose non-familiar destinations, such as locations outside the EU. Staff were more concerned about the quality of the host institutions and building professional relationships and cooperation. Having previous mobility experience was also found to increase the chances for students to go on degree mobility with the purpose of doing a master's degree abroad. Enhancing career prospects was also found to be an incentive, especially for traineeship students. The study explains that a tailored communication approach is important to incentivise staff, and that quality support with the application process and finding suitable host institutions are valuable as expressed by both mobile and non-mobile students.

Organisational-level incentives include the organisation of blended intensive programmes as they can represent low-threshold opportunities for HEIs to collaborate on joint curricula, and more generally the development of different types of mobility opportunities can contribute to widening participation. Joint programmes can also alleviate some administrative burdens and institutional challenges of mobility, a good example of that being the European Universities alliances. Involving stakeholders such as student bodies, alumni networks and youth associations can also be beneficial, and these actors play a vital role in the integration of incoming students. However, ESN research has found that returning students do not receive a lot of encouragement from their sending institutions to be involved in mobility alumni activities upon return. Finally, embedding mobility windows in curricula is seen as key for the internationalisation of higher education and easier recognition and credit transfer, as well as a less stressful mobility experience.

When it comes to **system-level incentives**, aligning grant rates for students and staff to the economic situation in home and host countries can encourage mobility, even more so if costs such as health insurance and visa are taken into account. Simplification of administration processes, using adequate IT and data collection tools can also result in successful mobilities.

Other evidence and developments

The Commission on 23 February 2023 has published its report[49] to the Council on the implementation of the "Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad"[50], four years after its adoption in November 2018. The report provides information on the current state of play, analyses the progress made and the lessons learned.

Automatic mutual recognition is key for students to make the best possible use of all learning opportunities across Europe and an essential building block of the European Education Area.

Automatic recognition is understood in this context as follows:

• a qualification at higher education level acquired in one Member State is automatically recognised at the same level in any other Member State, for the purpose of granting access to further studies.

• the outcomes from a learning period abroad at higher education level in one Member State are automatically and fully recognised in the others, as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. Credits gained during the period of study in another Member State or during a virtual mobility are transferred without delay and counted towards the student's degree without any additional work or assessment of the student.

• an upper secondary qualification giving access to higher education in one Member State is automatically recognised in any other Member State, for the purpose of granting access to higher education.

• at upper secondary level, the right to have the learning outcomes from a learning period abroad in one Member State recognised in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with those in the national curricula of the country of origin.

The Council Recommendation does not prejudice the right of the other Member States' authorities to verify the authenticity and the level of the qualification and if it really gives access to higher education in the Member State of issuance. However, this verification does not involve any separate recognition procedure. Automatic recognition does not prejudice the right of higher education institutions to set specific criteria for admission to their specific programmes.

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[49] Report from the Commission to the Council on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2023) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:91:FIN

[50] Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2018) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32018H1210(01)

In the field of higher education, a number of steps have been put in place by Member States to ensure the necessary framework conditions, trust and transparency within their education systems, however, more needs to be done by 2025.

In the **higher education field**, we can see the following:

- National legislation for automatic recognition of higher education qualifications from all EU Member States is in place in **12 Member States**. 3 additional Member States are in the process of adapting their national legislation. And 9 other Member States makes it available for a limited number of EU countries.
- The **Bologna and EU transparency tools** are in place in most of the Member States. However, there are still **11 Member States** where these tools are not fully implemented. This is hampering the necessary trust between Member States and systems.
- **14 Member States** have in place national guidance for institutions, together with regular training provision and utilisation of online tools for recognition decisions.
- **7 Member States** monitor and evaluate recognition decisions through a central system-level database that collects and disseminates data on recognition cases, and that is regularly updated. Such lack of data in other Member states hamper the assessment of de facto implementation of automatic recognition on the ground.
- When it comes to automatic recognition of learning periods abroad, the only available data is the one from the Erasmus+ programme. The European average in 2020 was 84.4% of credits automatically recognised, with substantial differences between countries. The new Erasmus+ quality framework for the period 2021-2027 has been set in place to achieve full automatic recognition of learning periods abroad through Erasmus+.

One of the difficulties in the implementation of the automatic recognition in the higher education is the inconsistencies in its implementation. Decisions on recognition are most often left to the discretion of the higher education institutions themselves, which leads to diverse practices. Another hurdle for automatic recognition lies in the fact that recognition and admission processes are often combined at institutional level. When adapting national legislation, Member States might consider ensuring consistency of implementation by giving the competence for automatic recognition decisions to a dedicated body.

In the field of **upper secondary education and training**, even more effort is needed in order to implement the automatic recognition.

In order to boost implementation, the Commission proposes the following actions:

- Developing a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System
- Automatic recognition accelerator teams reviews
- Provision of information on recognition via online platforms
- Financial support for automatic recognition
- Automatic recognition accelerator teams reviews
- Training and information provisions
- Facilitate dialogue between Member States
- Increased participation of **NARICs**

- Erasmus+ support for **further training** to prepare school heads and teachers in fostering automatic recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad
- Exploring synergies between Erasmus+ learning agreements and **Europass documents** for upper secondary education needs (European mobility template)

The Commission sees a continued need to increase efforts towards the implementation of the Council Recommendation and make substantial progress by 2025, based on the main findings of this report.

2.3.2 Vocational education and training

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The study categorises the obstacles in three different levels:

- **Individual-level obstacles:** Age is one of the factors that plays an important role in VET learners' (and apprentices in particular) willingness to go abroad. The highest number of contracted participants in short-term learning mobility of VET learners are those aged 17-18 years old, which is the age of many learners that are either near graduating or have graduated recently from their IVET programmes. Young age is often perceived as a barrier as learners may not be ready to leave their families and live and work abroad. Their foreign language skills may also be less developed. For staff, the trend is the contrary as it becomes more challenging to go on mobility as teachers grow older where the motivation to learn and experience new things tends to diminish for many teachers over time. Other obstacle identified at this level is the psychological well-being, as the fear of suffering from stress/loneliness/sadness was perceived by VET learners as one of the main hindering factors to engagement in cross-border learning mobility. The financial capacity to spend time abroad, the fear of losing employment are also considered as impediments to mobility, while employers may also be reluctant to let go of apprentices.

- **Organisational-level obstacles**: In a survey of VET learners, 'lack of support or information' was ranked amongst the top three obstacles preventing learners from engaging in learning mobility. They indicated that they did not know much about available opportunities, and they lacked proper guidance from their schools. Lack of substitutes for teachers going on mobility and dealing with the high administrative burden and busy teaching schedules are some of the major reasons why teachers do not engage in mobility. In the case of apprentices, they often lack the support of their employers (see below). The overall size and training capacity of companies might also pose challenges to promoting VET mobility, on the both sides of each mobility, the sending and hosting organanisations.

- **System – level obstacles:** Legal and administrative barriers to sending and hosting apprentices could deter companies, particularly small and medium sized ones from taking part in VET mobility programmes and activities. These include the diversity of VET curricula and apprenticeship schemes across Europe as well as the lack of clarity on the liabilities linked to the work-based learning context. The recognition of the learning outcomes acquired abroad is yet another challenge.

Other evidence and developments

Mobility of apprentices

EU-level policies related to high-quality VET and apprenticeships include other measures to stimulate cross-border mobility of learners. The Erasmus+ programme has placed an increasingly strong focus on strengthening the work-based character of mobility stays of VET learners and it co-funded the mobility of 165 000 apprentices in 2014-2020.

Besides Erasmus+, there are other European level policy initiatives and programmes supporting **apprentice mobility**. The **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** (EAfA) has the mobility of apprentices as one of its four objectives. As part of the efforts to enhance apprentice mobility, in autumn 2023 an EAfA Community will be launched on apprentice mobility to support mutual learning of interested EAfA members. In addition, the Apprenticeship Support Services of EAfA is planning to publish a toolkit on the mobility of apprentices later in 2023.; the **EURES portal** opens up job and apprenticeship offers available in national public employment services databases and among private employment services to candidates from other Member States. The **EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme** (EURES TMS) offers support services – varying according to labour market needs – provisions for interviews in another Member State/EU country, relocation support, linguistic training as well as work and country integration support for apprentices.

Besides supporting the implementation of the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA) in 2018, the Commission also carried out a stock-taking of the Member States' compliance with EFQEA criteria. Council Recommendation suggests to undertake, where possible, a part of the workplace experience abroad (criterion 4) and to promote mobility either at the workplace or at the training institutions (criterion 11). The report looked at the state of play and progress made in the implementation of the provisions of the Recommendation. In relation to mobility, it mapped the level of implementation as part of criterion 11: Flexible pathways and mobility. The report identified that in spite of the developments taken place, the implementation of flexible pathways and mobility in apprenticeship is still underdeveloped and this policy element is the least covered in Member States of the all the 14 criteria of the Recommendation.

To better understand the barriers related to apprentices' mobility, Cedefop has recently undertaken an analysis[51] to identify the main barriers to apprentice mobility, highlighting amongst others that:

- Employers are reluctant to let their apprentices go abroad, especially for longer periods, due to efficiency losses, fear of poaching, or concerns on contractual obligations, health and safety and quality of learning and related achievements.
- There is little appetite from apprentices themselves, who are in general young or even minors, and often have poor foreign language skills.

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[51] Cross-border long-term apprentice mobility - Making it work: suggestions for national policy-makers, June 2021; Enablers and disablers of cross-border long-term apprentice mobility: evidence from country- and project-level investigations, September 2021.

- The diversity of national apprenticeship schemes makes it difficult to identify, compare and recognise learning periods abroad. Differences in status (i.e. employee/learner) create a disparity in wages/compensation and social protection.

The Commission has conducted dedicated stakeholder consultations with the **Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT)**, social partners and VET providers where CEDEFOP evidence [52] was also widely discussed. The main feedback from the general and targeted consultations so far is as follows:

- The lack of information, lack of opportunities matching the interests, language barriers, lack of financial means, variety and rigidity in curricula structures, lack of automatic recognition schemes, lack of support to disadvantaged learners, administrative burden, and replacement of teachers are among the most common impediments to learning mobility abroad in all sectors identified by experts and surveys.

- Stakeholders also pointed to the lack of evidence on the benefits of long-duration mobility of apprentices. It was argued that apprenticeship mobility should be limited to 4 or 6 weeks since they are easier to implement, and longer periods are not deemed beneficial for employers and learners. Lack of appetite by the apprentices themselves is a disabler for long-duration mobility. Several factors can be identified to this: lack of foreign language skills, preference to continue studying without interruption or to look for a job, young age, or other responsibilities of the individual such as having a family, can that stand in the way of mobility.

VET providers were also consulted through their **ad hoc expert group** in a meeting in October 2022composed by six European Associations of VET providers (EVVB, EVTA, EUproVET, EfVET, Eucen, EURASHE). They emphasised the benefits provided by learning mobility forVET staff; however, both in-companies trainers/tutors and VET school teachers face challenges to find a period of time during the school year when they would be available. VET providers would like to have more clarity on EU transparency tools and their further development to facilitate recognition of learning periods abroad, with a special focus on the soft skills.

In January 2023 a dedicated hearing was organised with **Social Partners** on learning mobility, the main conclusions of the hearing were:

- Social Partners strongly agreed with Cedefop findings on the various challenges related to long-term mobility of apprentices. There was an overall consensus that mobility of apprentices should last up to 4 or 6 weeks (max 2 months if needed).
- Virtual mobility can complement but not replace physical mobility (or can be used to prepare physical mobility) (Trade Unions).
- Efforts to increase information, guidance and support in all stages need to be stepped up, to increase motivation in particular for learners and SMEs.
- Partnerships, networks, support structures, intermediary bodies can alleviate burdens, deepen trust and could be supported from Erasmus+ (Trade Unions).

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[52] Cross-border long-term apprentice mobility - Making it work: suggestions for national policy-makers, June 2021; Enablers and disablers of cross-border long-term apprentice mobility: evidence from country- and project-level investigations, September 2021.

- Ensuring the quality of mobility should be supported e.g. with a framework and the continuation of (ECVET) mobility tools.
- Foreign language learning should be strengthened.

Input about the obstacles to VET learners' mobility has been collected in the context of the public consultation.

For example, EAM.EU (EuroAppMobility.EU), an international non-profit association, together with seventy stakeholders from different backgrounds (like apprentices, companies and VET providers) recommends to:

- provide better information on mobility opportunities;
- exchange good practices and better promote soft skills acquired through mobility ;
- remove administrative and technical obstacles;
- remove psychological barriers and support overcoming difficulties;
- mainstream mobility activators to support young people and companies in their efforts, and thus remove some of the above-mentioned obstacles.

It also identifies the following obstacles to long term mobility of apprentices:

- language barriers,
- recognition of learning outcomes
- issues related to the legal and administrative rules on apprenticeship status
- financial barriers
- psychological obstacles

The VET provider "Les Compagnons du devoir" also mentioned the reluctance of employers to let their apprentices go for a learning period abroad, not to weaken their workforce.

2.3.3 School education

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

Mobilities in school education among pupils and school staff happen through various channels, including bilateral institutional agreements, non- and for-profit organisations, individual initiatives, European and global exchange programmes.

As it is the case in the current Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027), learning mobility in school education targets two main groups: pupils and staff. Pupils usually take part in individual or group mobility whereas options for school staff can comprise placements and teaching assignments, job shadowing, professional development courses and training abroad. For both groups of participants, learning mobility can be short –a few days- and long –up to one academic year.

For both groups, learning mobility can bring about significant benefits related to cultural, cognitive, and personal learning experiences, in addition to knowledge and skills. Pupils after

mobilities showed higher degrees of independence and volunteering, they improved transversal skills, including cooperation with others, responsibility, creativity, learning to learn as well as digital skills[53].They might also have higher expectations towards teachers and more motivation for learning. In addition to individual benefits, knowledge and experiences gained through mobilities can enrich schools, especially when schools have been directly involved in the design and implementation of the mobility experiences a whole and wider communities.

Within Erasmus+, the new accreditation scheme put in place under the 2021-2027 programming period, contributes to building capacity of schools to engage in cross-border exchanges and cooperation, and carry out high quality mobility projects. The action contributes to long-lasting effects on the participants and participating organisations involved, as well as on the policy systems in which such activities are framed.

Available data suggests that learning mobilities at school level have strongly increased since the early 2000s. Major contributing factors for this increase are the establishment and continuous development of international programmes promoting mobility and exchange, including Erasmus+ and its precursors[54]. However, according to the relevant legal basis, mobility projects selected along the previous Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) could include staff mobility only, while mobility activities for pupils were embedded in strategic partnerships (under Key Action 2), and more specifically in school exchange partnerships, meaning cooperation projects between organisations. Under the (2021-2027) Erasmus+ programme, mobility activities for pupils, together with mobility activities for staff, are part of mobility projects supported by Key Action 1 of the programme, which gives more visibility to such opportunity.

Challenges

Despite positive developments with regard to engaging in mobilities at school level, various barriers for pupils, teachers and other staff still remain to undertake learning activities abroad. According to the study, some of the key obstacles to pupil and school staff learning mobility include:

- Language barriers;
- Emotional distress caused by separation from families;
- Insufficient finances or resources on individual and organisational levels for preparing and implementing learning mobility activities;
- Workload;
- Inflexible and varying school curriculum (no time slot available);
- Lack of education and training on learning mobility topics;
- Lack of recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad;
- Lack of centralised learning mobility monitoring approaches and practices.

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[53] European Commission (2017). Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes. Final report. https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/eval/icf-volume1-main-report.pdf

[54] Such as the Comenius programme for school partnerships (1995-2013) and Pestalozzi, the Council of Europe training programme for education professionals

These obstacles can be linked to specific situation at individual level or to the more structural or systemic context.

Pupil mobility

At an individual level the obstacles to pupil mobility are connected to personal and emotional reasons such as psychological distress caused by separation from the family and lack of interest and motivation to go on mobility. Most schools currently lack mobility coordinators or appointed tutors for supporting incoming and outgoing pupils. As a result, very few pupils are aware of available learning mobility opportunities.[55]

Real or perceived lack of foreign language competences is another major barrier for pupils to go abroad. Significantly more pupils who speak three languages or more take part in Erasmus+ (not only mobilities), while there are much fewer participants who speak only one other language.

On an organisational level, schools often have insufficient resources to implement, facilitate and support the learning mobilities of pupils and school staff. Insufficient funding is one of the main reasons why learning mobilities for pupils might not be realised. Disadvantaged learners, in particular, are at risk of not participating in learning periods abroad without additional financial support for such experience. This especially applies for small schools, located in rural areas or designed to support pupils with special needs. Missing awareness of mobility opportunities and benefits among individuals and education institutions undermine mobility potentials.

An important system-level obstacle is finding the suitable time during the school year to go on a mobility due to the rigid nature of the school curriculum. In addition, procedures for recognition and accreditation are often lacking at institutional level. Where they exist, different schools might have diverging views on what should be recognised. Even if host schools certify learning periods of visiting students, such "certification" usually does not carry legal value at the home school.

Due to the scattered nature of mobilities that take place in school education, especially for pupils, there is a lack of centralised mobility monitoring processes. This lack of information on mobility flows impairs the development of evidence-based policies and practices for learning mobility.

Teacher mobility

Individual-level obstacles include lack of support from superiors, peers or family which might prevent teachers from participating in mobility activities. Teachers and other staff often have family or other personal responsibilities, which might prevent them from participating in learning mobility. The language barrier is another big obstacle for teachers to be able to attend job shadowing or other professional learning activities abroad. Research shows that foreign

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[55] ESN et al (n.d) Erasmus in schools, Research on the knowledge and the interest of high school students regarding International Mobility: report on the findings of the survey

language teachers engage in learning mobility activities more often than teachers of other subjects.

At organisational level, schools often struggle with the administrative burden and additional workload of engaging in mobility activities. The study shows that schools often lack an institution-wide strategy to share the acquired knowledge through mobility periods. Thus, many teachers' mobility activities are initiated by teachers themselves and therefore have less strategic impact on the whole school community than learning mobility strongly embedded in the school development strategy. In some countries there seems to be the expectation for teachers to invest their own finances in their professional development[56].

Due to a strict nature of the school curriculum, many teachers have a very limited number of windows during a school year which could be used for individual learning mobility activities or for accompanying pupils during group mobilities. This is also related to the shortage of teachers in many EU countries (which result in more difficulties for schools to find replacements of teachers) and the lack of funds dedicated for schools to hire substitute teachers for the ones who participate in mobilities.

On the basis of the aforementioned obstacles, the main incentives supporting learning mobility in school education are as follows:

- Language support tools and platforms.
- Support for sending and hosting schools that engage in learning mobility.
- Rewarding the work done by staff preparing and implementing mobility projects
- Supporting schools in their learning mobility awareness-raising efforts.
- Development of a more flexible curriculum by embedding mobility windows.
- Provision of education and training on learning mobility topics to school staff.
- Provision of guidance on the recognition process and building of bilateral exchange agreements.
- Adoption of nationally centralised learning mobility monitoring practices.
- It is also necessary for institutions to be supported in their awareness-raising efforts in multiple ways, including the production of promotional campaigns, informational materials or involving ambassadors that share their learning mobility experiences with interested individuals in schools.

Lastly, the development of evidence-based policies, regulations, and practices for learning mobility in schools can be supported through nationally centralised learning mobility data monitoring approaches.

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[56] Focus group of respondents as part of the Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

Other evidence and developments

Pupil mobility

Within the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors, the pupil mobility activity started in bilateral or multilateral projects between schools. A study[57] published by the European Commission about the impact of Comenius partnerships (cooperation projects in the school education sector) under the previous Lifelong Learning programme mentions that cooperating with other organisations (local authorities, NGOs, companies etc) in addition to schools brings a strong added value to the schools involved in the Comenius partnerships.

A collective of European civil society organisations in the field of school education, including, inter alia, EFIL, OBESSU and the Lifelong Learning Platform, as part of the public consultation, call any learning mobility programmes beyond Erasmus+ to be identified and adhere to the European Quality Charter for Mobility[58]. This Charter mentions that support for mobility within the EU from all stakeholders (including public authorities) is needed to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in Europe. The quality of mobility can be enhanced by the provision of schemes such as mentoring for participants. It also calls for supporting Individual Pupil Mobility (IPM) as a key tool for the internationalisation of schools and for developing European citizenship at a young age. In addition, it calls for supporting a learning mobility culture by:

- − ensuring a whole school approach to internationalisation (and including learning mobility in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curricula).
- − supporting school heads to integrate learning mobility within the school pedagogical project, in line with a whole school approach, also in view of providing adequate information to teachers and students
- − promoting diverse host destinations, including beyond Europe;
- − promoting a welcoming culture in hosting institutions and communities, conducive to learners' cultural immersion in the local community, and the creation of hosting infrastructure (e.g. accommodation);
- − supporting partnerships between key mobility stakeholders (i.e. schools, youth information centres, school students unions, non-profit organisations running mobilities) to provide pupils and parents with information on learning mobility, especially through peer interventions.

Teacher mobility

Under the new Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027), trends in teacher mobility show that a majority of teachers participate in courses abroad (for which Erasmus+ support can be allocated for a maximum of 10 days), while job shadowing in a school and teaching assignments (which can be supported for up to 60 days and 350 days respectively) are much less common. This

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[57] Étude d'impact des partenariats scolaires Comenius sur les établissements – Changements institutionnels et dimension européenne : Rapport final, Publications Office, 2012

[58] RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility (2006/961/EC)

illustrates the difficulties for teachers to go abroad for those activities, which are in general longer than courses and training events.

The TALIS survey (2018)[59] considers the transnational mobility of teachers during two specific periods: mobility during initial teacher education and mobility as a practising teacher. Despite the importance of transnational mobility as part of initial teacher education, only 20.9% of teachers in the EU reported having gone abroad during their studies. As far as in-service teachers are concerned, approximately one third (32.9 %) of teachers in the EU reported having had a transnational mobility experience, again with variations across countries. The same survey also suggests significant gender imbalances in the teaching workforce because of fewer numbers of men choosing to be teachers.

Mobility schemes as part of initial teacher education is sometimes diminished by a number of obstacles to their academic recognition. One challenge relies to discrepancies between countries with respect to the level of qualification teachers must attain in order to meet the requirements to become a fully qualified teacher [60]. In addition, teacher education curricula do not always enable periods of mobility abroad. Teaching and training assistantships in other European countries may not be recognised as being an integral part of initial teacher and trainer education, especially as being equivalent to in-school training in a national education and training institution[61].

Student mobility in European teacher education lags far behind other study areas, due to national obstacles of time frames and regulations. When looking at the student mobility in higher education under the (2014-2020) Erasmus+ programme, study fields such as business, administration, law, arts and humanities make up 43,5% of all mobile students while study fields while the study field 'education' only 3,7%.

As regards in-service teachers, a recent study of Eurydice[62] show that foreign language teachers are the most mobile ones compared to teachers of four other main subjects (reading, social studies, science and mathematics). Some countries provide top-level funding schemes to support the transnational mobility of their foreign language teachers wanting to go abroad for professional purposes. Still, almost only 30% of modern foreign language teachers surveyed in the EU have never been abroad for professional purposes.

The Council Conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility also mention obstacles to the mobility of teachers and trainers. This includes recognition issues, difficulties in arranging substitute teachers and trainers, lack of language competences. In addition to this, there is a significant degree of regulation at national level within the teaching profession and there are differences in the structuring of school years between Member States. While this is a sign of the diversity and richness of the national education and training systems in the EU, this may also hinder the organisation of in-school training such as job shadowing, teaching assistantship or teaching assignment.

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[59] TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II), Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals
[60] Eurydice, "Key Data on Education in Europe" (2012)
[61] Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service education and training (2022/C 167/02)
[62] Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe - 2023 edition

The Council of the European Union recognized, in its conclusions issued in 2022 (Council Conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility[63]) that in addition to its positive effects on the motivation, knowledge, skills and competences as well as the professional pathways of teachers and trainers, mobility of teachers and trainers, especially European mobility, is also beneficial to national education and training systems and could improve them since:

a) it reinforces teachers' and trainers' capacity to innovate and to reflect on practices with a view to better meeting the needs of learners;

b) it helps develop teachers' and trainers' sense of belonging to a European teaching and learning community through the bonds that are forged during and after mobility experiences, it encourages learners' mobility and more generally, it contributes to the development of a European dimension in the activities and projects of their education and training institutions, as well as international strategies, hence it has an impact on the whole education and training system. However, the Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future stressed that initial education programmes for teachers often display a weak international dimension and low levels of study and traineeship mobility, in comparison to study programmes in other subject fields, and there are challenges related to recognition of mobility periods abroad and learning outcomes.

2.3.4 Youth

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward in non-formal and informal learning contexts, including learning mobility of young people and youth workers.

The dedicated study highlighted that the variety of youth mobility opportunities offered by Erasmus+ youth and the European Solidarity Corps offer a good range of activities and experiences, accomodating different needs and interests of young people and youth workers. These projects cater for diverse interests, e.g. addressing democratic participation, EU values, inter-cultural awareness, support to communities and humanitarian and societal challenges, including inclusion, environment and climate and digitalisation. Opportunities embed key competence development that support the next steps of young people, for instrance to prepare for further education or training, for employment or for civic and voluntary engagement. Learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering contexts, through their participatory or experiential pedagogy, building relationships and learning together, mentor and peer support, offers valuable opportunities for all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, struggling with studies or training, and encountering barriers in their transition to adulthood.

The study identified the following key **obstacles** in the youth sector:

- Financial obstacles due to insufficient funding provided to mobile participants.
- The lack of interest and motivation to go on mobility.

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[63] Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service education and training (2022/C167/02)

- Psychological obstacles due to separation from families and peers and lack of self-reliance.
- Lack of adequate foreign language skills.
- Lack of awareness and information on mobility opportunities.
- Lack of organisations' capacities due to understaffing and underfunding.
- Administration/bureaucracy of grant funding processes in EU programmes.
- Lack of suitable accommodation.
- Issues with recognition of competencies obtained through mobilities.

The Flash Eurobarometer 502[64], found that the main individual-level obstacles to youth mobility activities are lack of financial means (36%), lack of interest (24%) and lack of self-independence (20%). Younger age groups (15-18 or 19-24) are more interested in participation. Other reasons include lack of information on learning mobility, non-adequate foreign language skills (19%), mismatch between available opportunities and personal interests (14%) and lack of support by family, partner or friends (7%).

The Eurodesk Youth Info Survey 2022[65], found that non-mobile young people face challenges such as finding opportunities matching their interests, societal expectations, academic pressure, and the risk of losing benefits like unemployment or welfare services. Geographical obstacles can add costs and challenges due to time and distance to travel and lead to exclusion of young people from peripheral areas[66]. Young adults who have family responsibilities or caring duties are less motivated for mobility due to financial obstacles and societal expectations. This lack of motivation for mobility is not only caused by financial obstacles, but also by societal expectations on family responsibilities and ties[67.]. A focus group mentioned social costs and self-confidence issues as obstacles to leaving one's comfort zone for learning[68].

The complexity of mobility programmes and their requirements makes communication challenging. Information can be ineffective or not enough, or not reaching the right audience.[69]

According to Eurodesk, overall access to youth information remains unequal across Europe, with some regions and demographic groups facing greater barriers to accessing quality information[70]. Factors that contribute to inequality of access to information are: geographic location, language, socio-economic status, health and digital literacy. Exposure to mobility experiences in the family environment can also contribute to foster a positive approach towards mobility[71].

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[64] European Commission (2022) *Flash Eurobarometer 502: Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth*. Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2774

[65] Eurodesk (2022) *Youth Info Survey 2022 – Mobility and the Role of Youth Information*. Available at: https://eurodesk.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ED_survey_22_WEB_Final.pdf

[66] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2020) Study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities, Publications Office. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1a7042cb-e678-11ea-ad25-01aa75ed71a1

[67] Focus group with Italian youth workers and volunteers.

[68] Focus group with Italian youth workers and volunteers.

[69] Internationale Jugendarbeit (FPD) (N.D.) *Access Study in international youth exchange*. Available at: https://www.zugangsstudie.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Zugangsstudie_en_web.pdf

[70] Eurodesk (2020) *EU Youth Strategy Mid-Term Evaluation How investing in Eurodesk boosts Inclusion and Diversity in EU Youth Programmes and Initiatives*.

[71] Interview with Eurodesk.

A focus group with young people found that learning mobility is primarily associated with university studies and Erasmus+ KA1. Most participants were not adequately informed about the variety of available opportunities, and EU websites were perceived as main tools for information on learning mobility opportunities beyond the Erasmus+ study abroad period and higher education institution channels.

In the field of social youth work and youth work with disabled young people, international learning mobility is often perceived as a luxury activity, especially for young people with fewer opportunities and where organisations already struggle with providing their main services and tasks[72]. This suggests that youth workers and the youth work field do not always associate their function, action, and professional role with mobility opportunities. This warrants additional attention considering the objectives of the European Youth Work Agenda.

Additional efforts to promote mobility opportunities are often hindered by scarcity of funding and human resources. Eurodesk, the leading European youth information network, points out that limited human resources hamper the capacity to promote opportunities on social media, websites, and coordinate multipliers and ambassadors' networks.

Applicant organisations face difficulties with workload, administrative procedures, complex funding rules, partner finding, and project development[73]. A recent study by the European Commission on youth work in the EU[74] highlighted the need for further financial support, especially for youth work organizations lacking sustainable core financial support from the government and in countries with underdeveloped youth work practices. The lack of structural funding can lead to short-termism and brain drain[75], hindering the attractiveness of the sector as a career option and impairing the availability of relevant development opportunities. Youth workers working with vulnerable target groups stress the insufficiency of financial support to cater for their specific needs.

Financial concerns remain a significant obstacle for young people participating in mobility, with many stating that EU and public funding is insufficient, and they cannot afford to engage in mobility relying solely on their families' economic support. Eurodesk emphasizes the importance of proper and affordable accommodation for mobile learners, especially for short periods abroad. Housing problems are identified as the second most frequent obstacle for learners while in mobility (25% of respondents)[76], after financial problems.

Recognition issues are also a significant obstacle, including for youth workers, as competences acquired in youth work are not always recognised in national formal education systems and not

[72] Interview programme

[73] ALTO/RAY (2019) Exploring the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps during its first year. Available at: https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/training-support-community/resources/

[74] European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2021) Study on youth work in the EU – Final report. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5a8beedc-f0e1-11eb-a71c-01aa75ed71a1

[75] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2020) Study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities, Publications Office. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1a7042cb-e678-11ea-ad25-01aa75ed71a1

[76] Erasmus Student Network (2017) *HousErasmus+ Research report*. Available at: https://esn.org/sites/default/files/pages/he_finalreport.pdf

formally recognised in policy[77]. The lack of recognition related to non-formal and informal learning in youth work, youth activities, and volunteering can also hinder regional and local support for organisations and potential learners' willingness to engage in youth work and mobility.

International youth work is sometimes considered a closed system with high threshold access and complex bureaucratic work, which discourages participation from young individuals who may not have the educational and social means to engage in mobility bureaucracy.

Compatibility of legal frameworks across participating countries is crucial for cross-border youth mobility, volunteering and solidarity activities. A survey on cross border solidarity[78] found that lack of standardised approach to mobility and visas, lengthy procedures and visa-costs, risks of loss in health insurance/state welfare, difficulties in navigating complex national rules, posed substantial obstacles for organisations and participants.

To mitigate the obstacles, the study idenftified the following key **incentives** in the youth sector:

- Practices and initiatives that mitigate psychological and motivational barriers.
- Practices that foster better information and awareness on mobility opportunities.
- Work of multipliers and community-based youth networks.
- Support offered to youth organisations by national agencies.
- Ad-hoc recognition frameworks developed at organisation level.
- Practices and policy strategies aimed at enhancing recognition and quality frameworks for youth work and youth volunteering.
- Sufficient variety of available activities within EU mobility schemes.
- Additional funding provided by national agencies, other national public bodies or private agencies.

To manage individual-level obstacles in learning mobility, the study suggests to involve parents in the pre-departure stage, provide direct information on opportunities, and use individual counselling. Multipliers and ambassadors' networks, like Eurodesk[79], play a crucial role in promoting mobility. Peer-to-peer strategies, like Europeers[80], involve informal intercultural exchanges between mobile international students, young people, volunteers, and those with fewer opportunities. These strategies help reassure families and learners about the value and safety of learning mobility.

The Eurodesk 2022 survey[81]indicates that most young people require individual support for mobility experiences. Research by RAY-MON[82] shows that 55% of project participants know about their projects through youth organisations, informal youth groups, or youth centers.

[77] European Commission (2021) *Study on youth work in the EU – Final report*. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5a8beedc-f0e1-11eb-a71c-01aa75ed71a1

[78] European Commission (2020) *Study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities*. Available a: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1a7042cb-e678-11ea-ad25-01aa75ed71a1

[79] Interview with Eurodesk.

[80] For more information, please see: https://www.europeers.de/international/

[81] Eurodesk (2022) *Youth Info Survey 2022 – Mobility and the Role of Youth Information*. Available at: https://eurodesk.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ED_survey_22_WEB_Final.pdf

[82] RAY-MON (2022) *Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme*. Available at: https://www.researchyouth.net/news/new-effects-and-outcomes-of-erasmus-youth-in-action-between-2014-2020/

Friends and acquaintances also play a significant role in informing participants. Diversification of activities and programs, such as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps and national schemes, can facilitate mobility participation and accommodate different interests and stages of life and careers of young people and youth workers. This approach also enables professional development at different stages of the youth work career, aligning with the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Work Agenda.

Multipliers enhance youth mobility information accessibility and targeting, benefiting civil society and youth organizations. Eurodesk multipliers consist of local youth information points, libraries, and municipalities. Eurodesk Ambassadors, Youth Ambassadors and European Young Journalists also support these activities. Local outreach and networks facilitate mobility by reaching young people in their communities, emphasizing links between community, locally-based action, and transnational activities. Community-based face-to-face outreach reaches younger target groups and builds trust, providing a personal and relatable face to Europe[83].

Locally-based networks can improve the community impact of learning mobility projects, involving community members, fostering interaction, and acquiring skills, visions, and values. National agencies' guidance and support act as incentives at organisational level, motivating youth organizations to design and complete projects. Eurodesk and EUROPE DIRECT centres are well placed to cooperate to enhance the appealing of learning mobility.

Organisational practices, such as the use Youthpass[84], and other EU and national transparency tools, can improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth and volunteering activities. The Youthpass process and certificates support, identify and document participants' learning throughout the project life-cycle. The Franco-German youth office (OFAJ international organisation) is an example of certification for youth workers based on intercultural standards and professional competence assessment.

RAY Network[85] highlights professional development as a motivating factor for youth workers to participate in mobility. Youth workers need practical knowledge in digitalization, foreign languages, presentation, project applications, and implementation. Having competent and knowledgeable youth workers can stimulate interest, support young people in identifying opportunities, prepare young people to go on mobility in non-formal and informal settings and volunteering, ensure quality and inclusion of mobility activities and support the process of recognition of learning outcomes.

Coherent legal frameworks can incentivize young people's participation in cross-border youth work and volunteering. Recent policy developments, such as the 2022 Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU[86], invite Member States to strengthen legislative frameworks for health, safety, and security, support organization capacity building, and raise awareness on volunteers' rights.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] YouthPass website. Available at: https://www.youthpass.eu/it/
[85] RAY-MON (2022) *Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme*. Available at: https://www.researchyouth.net/news/new-effects-and-outcomes-of-erasmus-youth-in-action-between-2014-2020/
[86] Council of the European Union (2022) *Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union*. Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0411(01)

The implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda is coordinated by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership[87] and aims to improve framework conditions for and recognition of youth work in Europe and beyond.

Initiatives like the European Union-Council of Europe youth partnership's Quality Framework for Learning Mobility in the Field of Youth serve as sources for developing EU-level quality and recognition frameworks. The framework includes quality principles, indicators, inclusion, health and safety, and active participation, as well as a quality handbook.[88]. The Q! App, developed by the European Platform for Learning Mobility, assists organizations in planning and creating quality mobility projects. It guides organizers through 16 questions and provides resources, tips, and practical solutions, enabling easy quality assessment for youth mobility organizers.[89].

Funding necessities remain the main barrier to youth learning mobility participation. Additional funding schemes, also beyond those offered by the EU programmes, offered by public or private bodies, like education and training institutions and national agencies, can enhance economic conditions for young mobile learners. The study found examples of Italian National Agency and Universities[90,] which provide additional funding if family income is below a certain threshold, an approach that the study suggests could be interesting for other sectors and countries.

Other evidence and developments

In the feedback to the Call for Evidence, stakeholders such as the European Youth Forum and the Erasmus student network, have highlighted that there is a lack of awareness of many young people of the wide range of learning mobility opportunities available and a disproportionate focus on formal education settings. Young people face challenges in participating in youth learning mobility activities due to lack of support, financial constraints, and inadequate support for youth organisations. Improved outreach and inclusion, as well as further recognition of learning outcomes, are needed.

Before Erasmus+ 2014-2020, Youth in Action 2007-2013 was the EU programme for young people, supporting out of school mobility within and beyond the EU, non–formal learning and intercultural dialogue, strongly focused on the inclusion of all young people regardless of their socio-economic, educational, and cultural background. It also put emphasis on the objectives of youth participation and the citizenship dimension of the activities. The mid-term evaluation of Youth in Action found that the programme provided strong learning experiences and helped distinguish non-formal learning as a separate area of key competence and skills acquisition. It also showed effects in terms of life-changing impact on participants, leading to better education and employment prospects. Learning experiences in a non-formal setting were found to create

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[87] Council of Europe website. Available at: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/recognition-resources/-/asset_publisher/llpkrN7I27by/content/bonn-process?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fpjp-eu.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fyouth-partnership%2Frecognition-resources%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_llpkrN7I27by%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_pos%3D1%26p_p_col_count%3D2

[88] Council of Europe and European Commission (2019) Handbook on Quality in Learning Mobility. Available at: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/Handbook+LM/3a5c103c-0367-4eba-1aca-ee544826f557

[89] For more information, please see Annex 2.

[90] Focus group with Italian youth workers and volunteers.

bridges to formal education and training. Opportunities to 'hard-to-reach' groups, including young people struggling with school and studies, were impactful in increasing participants' motivation to return to or continue in further formal education. Participation also contributed to young peoples' social awareness and sense of responsibility. It stimulated interest in EU values and a positive view of the EU. For many young people, Youth in Action offered the possibility to venture outside of their country or even beyond their home region for the first time. The programme was also valuable in supporting the professionalisation of youth work.

2.3.5 Adult education

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

While learning is a lifelong process, in many countries access to education remains limited as soon as formal initial education is completed. Lifelong learning is pivotal to build inclusive, resilient and active sociates. Adult education can provide unique opportunities to gain new knowledge, skills and confidence and to experience active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. As it is the case for other Erasmus+ sectors (including Youth with non-formal and informal activities), available data show that adult learners who benefit from learning opportunities become well-versed, self- empowered, self-assured and better equipped to make decisions in a variety of situations.

Currently, learning mobility in adult education is primarily supported through Erasmus+ and Nordplus Adult programmes. Some mobility of adult education staff and learners also takes place in an unstructured way, but the information of this is not always publicly available.

The main aim of the mobility activities in adult education in Erasmus+ is to provide learning opportunities to individuals (mainly for social inclusion and active citizenship) and to support internationalisation and institutional development of adult education providers and other organisations active in the field of adult education. By doing so, they also contribute to the implementation of the European Skills Agenda and the creation of the European Education Area.

The definition of adult education within the Erasmus+ programme includes all forms of non-vocational adult education, whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature (for continuous vocational training see "VET"). We can divide the participants in two categories: staff and learners. Adult learners are any adult who, having completed or being no longer involved in initial education or training, returns to some forms of non-vocational continuing learning (formal, non-formal or informal). Staff members are formally linked to their working educational organization (school, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education organization) and are not considered as adult learners in such context.

Challenges According to the study, some of the key obstacles to mobility in adult education are as follow:

- Difficulties to reconcile mobility periods with work and family responsibilities.

- Emotional distress caused by separation from family, especially young children or elderly parents.
- Insufficient language skills of potential participants.
- Lack of awareness and potential benefits – difficulties for accessing to information.
- Limited operational capacity of adult education organisations.
- Difficulties finding suitable organisational partners.
- Lack of sufficient funding for adult learners.
- Lack of sufficient paid training leave for adult learners
- Lack of internationalisation of adult education on the national level.

The study identified the following main incentives to support learning mobility in adult education:

- Awareness raising and providing information on opportunities in adult education.
- Support to organisations in creating cooperation networks.
- Providing legal, administrative and logistical support to participants.

Individual-level obstacles

Adult learners hey might face fear and anxiety, especially if the mobility is longer than several days. The length of mobility is also an important factor when it comes to work responsibilities.

In addition to psychological barriers, insufficient language skills of potential participants need to be tackled by adult education organisations.

The low level of awareness of mobility opportunities and potential benefits for individuals and adult education organisations is among the obstacles to mobility of adult learners considering that such organisations initiate, plan and implement mobility activities for adult learners. More promotional and communication tailored actions could help adult education organisations understand that the experience with the mobility activities makes their learning programmes more innovative and differentiate their learning offers in general.

Operational capacity of adult education organisations.

Adult education sector is still affected by relatively low participation of adults in learning and training activities which means that there is much less focus on internationalising it and putting a strong focus on mobilities. National Authorities could take a more proactive role in highlighting the benefits of internationalisation in adult education.

In many cases such organisations suffer from low operational capacity, since they do not have access to stable funding and depend on voluntary staff. Notably adult education organisations do not have own premises and staff alike the institutions in the formal education sector. They are not aware of the EU nor other national and local funding sources for covering operational costs.

- National and local authorities could put in place necessary mechanisms and communication to support them to this regard, in particular to support synergies

between mobility schemes and other EU, national and local funding targeting operational costs.

In order for all mobility programmes to have the highest impact, organisations and individual participants need to be aware of and interested in available mobility opportunities. Once organisations are aware of mobility projects, are confident to engage in them, and have the necessary resources to do so, it is important for them to create partnerships and engage in networking.

EPALE platform (ePlatform for Adult Learning in Europe) is a key tool in this preparation and implementation of Erasmus+ projects. Among other things the platform allows users to network and search for partners.

Other evidence and developments

Before Erasmus+ (2014-2020) was launched, adult education was addressed by the Grundtvig programme (2007-2013). The Grundtvig programme specifically sought to address the educational challenge of an ageing population and to provide adults with alternative pathways to updating their skills and competences. The programme encompassed all types of learning, whether these took place in the 'formal' or 'non-formal' system of education for adults, or in more 'informal' ways, such as autonomous learning, community learning or experiential learning. The mid-term evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013)[91] pointed out a positive effect of the mobility opportunities to socially disadvantaged groups of learners. Adult education organisations developed improved teaching methods, more effective strategies for outreach to socially marginalised learners, new ways of validating skills and competences, and improved provision of courses for the training of adult education staff.

Overall, Erasmus+ (2014-2020) has seen a gradual increase in participation in the adult sector. Mobility of adult staff witnessed a significant rise under Erasmus+ going from around 10 000 participants in 2014 to a bit less that 30 000 participants in 2020[92]. One of the novelties of the second generation of Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) lies in the support of learning mobility of adult learners under mobility projects, together with mobility of staff involved in adult education.

Concerning directly participants, the objectives of mobility projects in adult education focus on:

- promoting values of inclusion and diversity, tolerance, and democratic participation,
- improving the quality of formal, informal and non-formal adult education in Europe for key competences as defined by the EU framework (2018), including basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) and other life skills,
- raising the participation of adults of all ages and socio-economic background in adult education, especially by fostering participation of organisations working with disadvantaged learners, small adult education providers, newcomers to the Programme

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91https://eur-
lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM%3A2011%3A0413%3AFIN%3AEN%3APDF
92 Final figures to be validated within the final evaluation of the (2014-2020) Erasmus+ programme.

and less experienced organisations, as well as community-based grassroots organisations.

In line with these objectives, at the very beginning of the programme, only adults with fewer opportunities could be supported by Erasmus+ mobility projects.

Considering the time necessary to implement the mobility projects since the beginning of the (2021-2027) Erasmus+ programme and the disturbance resulting from the COVID-19 crise, it is still premature to mention precise and reliable data regarding the participation of adult learners under the current Erasmus+ programme.

While the very first projects are being finalised, those organisations which have already implemented mobility projects report not only an overall reinforcement of key competences but also a bigger motivation of adult learners and their willingness to learn further.

The key stakeholders (European Association for Education of Adults and Lifelong Learning Platform) active in adult education call for more effort towards lifelong learning approach to learning mobility and underline the fundamental importance of quality mobility opportunities. They plead for learning mobility as a fundamental component of the universal right to adult education and continuing training (Art. 14(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights), the right to employee training and the right to paid training leave – in conjunction with the right to freedom of movement (Art. 45 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights).

It is crucial to ensure learning mobility opportunities to a wide range of individual's profile, whatever be their gender, age, socio-economic status, educational attainment, ethnic or migrant background, special educational needs and disability, parenting and caregiving responsibilities etc

The systemic approach is needed to overcome barriers to mobility opportunities in adult education. Financial resources, reinforced local culture and practice, networks, adult education staff, and support of local and regional authorities are pivotal to foster motivation and participation of learners in education and training activities.

2.3.6 Sport

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles, and way forward

The sport sector is a very diverse sector, which makes defining sport mobility more challenging, compared to other sectors. Even within a narrow understanding of sport, there are significant differences between the professional and elite sport segments, with a commercialised and specialised approach, and the grassroots sport, participatory segment, where health, social and inclusion values dominate. Often, sport is seen in the broader context of physical activity, play and games, which broadens the scope even more. In the Erasmus+ programmes, sport has thus consistently been described together with physical activity and assumed a key role for initiatives such as the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle and the #HealthyLifestyle4All initiative (i.e., Health-Enhancing Physical Activity).

In addition, there are some related areas which also touch upon elements of mobility in sport:

- Sport tourism, which is so far mostly individual and commercially driven, but represents a growing sector.
- Sport diplomacy, where both elite and grassroots sport diplomacy are drivers for international exchanges.
- Sport festivals, where participants in groups or individually participate in large, culturally oriented events.
- Higher education mobility for students and teachers in sport-related subjects

Since 2022, the Erasmus+ programme specifically supports mobilities in the sport sector. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide provides a useful description of mobilities in sport:

"Staff of sport organisations, primarily in grassroots sports, are provided the opportunity to improve their competences, qualifications and acquire new skills through learning mobility by spending a period of time abroad, thus contributing to the capacity-building and development of sport organisations. This action supports the professional development of coaches, and other staff (both paid staff and volunteers) in grassroots sport".

Volunteers are included, reflecting the specific characteristics of sport, notably that a significant share of involved staff and coaches are volunteers.

The intended outcome of sport mobility is both individual skills development and capacity development of involved organisations. This broad understanding is in line with the other Key Action 1 sector descriptions.

Approaches to learning mobility in sport

In practice, learning mobility in sport (beyond the Erasmus+ programme) can take many forms including a work placement, a job shadowing, a study programme, a voluntary activity or an apprenticeship.

Three major approaches to learning mobility in the sport sector were identified:

- International mobility in connection to coach education and sport youth leader development.
- International mobility between sport organisation staff to exchange approaches and methods, and learning from best practice.
- International mobility and exchanges of athletes and teams in connection to sport competitions at all levels.

These approaches have some overlaps with related sectors, as mentioned above (sport tourism, sport diplomacy, sport festivals and higher education exchanges) and they are distinguished by the objective of the mobility as well as the target group.

The Erasmus+ (MFF 2021-2027) Key Action 1 for sport focuses on the first two approaches and target groups.

As international mobility in the field of sport matures, definitions and the focus of sport mobilities are likely to evolve around these described approaches, objectives and target groups.

Other evidence and developments

The results of the Erasmus+ programme sport mobility projects will be taken into account as the definition and scope of sport mobility develops.

2.3.7 Inclusive mobility

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The study underlines that equality and inclusiveness are embedded in the EU treaties, policy documents and strategies as they are part of the funding values of the European Union. After referring to the right of citizen in accessing 'to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning' opportunities and the key role of education institutions in fostering inclusion, it focuses on the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and its policy context.

It is worth mentioning that the study quotes the definition provided by the Inclusive Mobility Alliance (IMA), a network of different European organisations that aims at making mobility programmes inclusive for students and young people from disadvantage and underrepresented groups. According to the IMA the term inclusive mobility means "creating adequate conditions to learn, work or volunteer abroad for people with fewer opportunities, by addressing their diverse support needs. It is a needs-based approach to what the individual beneficiary needs to ensure a safe and exciting mobility period abroad. It is important to not generalise needs, needs are specific and the individualised aspect in it is highly important. What the person/beneficiary says they need is what they should receive. It is not only about academic mobility but also about the social aspects that play an important role in the experience abroad and the potential link to connect with the local community"[93].

Key developments and trends

Inclusion has always been at the forefront when it comes to EU programmes, but its promotion has notably intensified since 2021. Within the Erasmus+ programme, the trends show that the number of people with fewer opportunities receiving financial support increased over the years. Between 2015-2020 top-up grants were allocated to 45,322 participants with special needs and 481,919 with fewer opportunities mainly in VET and youth sector. In 2020, 8% of the participants with fewer opportunities took part in mobility activities in higher education, 12% in VET and 40% in youth sector. With the new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027, higher education sector has seen a significant increase in financial support for people with fewer opportunities. Promising trends seem can also be observed in the adult education, youth and school education sectors, in link with the implementation of inclusive rules and formats launched since 2021.

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[93] Van Hees, V. et al. (2020) Making mobility programmes more inclusive for students with disabilities Inclusive Mobility - Research Report. Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO).

Obstacles, incentives, and good practices

Among the main obstacles outlined by the study, it is important to mention not only the personal, psychological, financial barriers, disabilities, and accessibility issues that a participant may face – pointed out by the Erasmus+ programme as well – but also the lack of awareness and access to information about opportunities and support for people with fewer opportunities and the capacities of organisations dealing with inclusion aspects. The study also mentions the research conducted by the SALTO Resource Centre for Inclusion and Diversity in Education and Training exploring the obstacles that the National Agencies have to cope while promoting inclusion. Among them are the definition, the reach out and the engagement of target groups, the fulfilment of the role of inclusion and diversity officer because of lack of time, resources and training, and the administrative burden related to the paperwork and the programme terminology.

Some of the solutions to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles include:

- Better engaging multipliers and ambassadors sharing their positive and real-life experiences. Their key role in implementing awareness is significantly impactful, and it is even more at the community level. Thus, it is essential to find a way to motivate and reward them for their useful work (through networking and training opportunities or information resources as done by the Eurodesk).
- Engaging in more targeted outreach activities addressed to persons with disabilities and people with fewer opportunities. According to a survey with students with disabilities led within the EPFIME project, only 22% of the respondents affirmed that their higher education institutions provided additional information about opportunities for students with disabilities. Most of them (58%) were not aware of such information being provided.
- Creating dedicated accessible websites, organising campaigns, producing inclusive formats of materials and adopting inclusive communication. Some examples of incentives dedicated to this topic are a website and campaign – created by the German National Agency and the Ministry of education – focusing on two students regularly posting on their social media channels their daily life as students with impairment living abroad. The Greek Erasmus+ National Agency published leaflets in braille, KU Leuven university developed a detailed English website about studying with disabilities and provided a checklist to help students with disabilities to prepare their stay. In addition, it is essential to consider accessibility issues. According to the EPFIME survey, accessibility is particularly important for individuals with disabilities while choosing their mobilities, notably regarding to the accessibility of the city, of the academic life, of local transports and of housing and campus.
- Expanding the activities, financial and human resource capacities of organisations promoting learning mobilities – such as Eurodesk and SALTO resource centres – and increasing capacities and expertise of the National Agencies. These actors are key to the promotion of inclusive learning mobility programmes, but they often have to face constraints in their activities due to limited resources. More support to them would allow a stronger impact in fostering inclusion and providing guidance.
- Clarifying the amount and the timing of payments. The study highlights that when pre-payment is not available and the payments are receiving during or after the mobility,

individuals with fewer opportunities need to know when to expect them. This also leads to individuals not even considering mobilities because of their potential financial difficulties. According to the Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility study, 43% of students from low-income backgrounds said that they worried about finances or losing their current job when considering an exchange compared to 34% of those from higher income backgrounds. Moreover, lack of portability of national grants and support services between countries is a major obstacle for students with disabilities.

- Streamlining inclusiveness through mobility programmes to ensure diversity of learners and involve unrepresented groups. For instance, Taith programme provides disadvantage participants with additional financial support.

Other evidence and developments

The Erasmus+ Programme aims to shape a more inclusive and diverse, digitally advanced, sustainable, and engaged community of participants – across Europe and beyond – and seeks to maximise its impact on the wider society. To do so, it defined four transversal priorities to be implemented throughout all actions and sectors: inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, environment and fight against climate change, and participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement.

These priorities are cross-cutting key areas that influence the design, the implementation and the evaluation of projects and initiatives funded by the programme. As a matter of fact, the programme gives priority to projects addressing the priorities as a thematic topic or adopting approaches, methods, and actions in line with them, by considering all these aspects in the criteria to assess project proposals. Furthermore, in some cases, it provides additional financial support, develops tools and platforms, and carries out dedicated actions to foster the implementation of the horizontal priorities. To strengthen the impact of the programme as regards of the transversal priorities and to enhance cooperation and collaboration on the topic, dedicated resource centres – SALTO – are established for each priority. Moreover, National Agencies appointed contact persons to support the work of the SALTO Resources Centres and to share knowledge and practices related to the horizontal priorities.

Policy Context

Education, youth, sport and culture play a crucial role in building inclusive and cohesive societies. In this regard, in October 2021, the Commission published the '**framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027**[94]'. The framework outlines concrete measures to be adopted throughout the programmes to foster inclusion and diversity, with a view to ensuring ensure equal opportunities for people from all backgrounds and origins.

In addition, the '**Inclusion and Diversity Strategy**[95]' – co-created with the Erasmus+ National Agencies and the stakeholders – stresses the importance of formal, non-formal and informal education in increasing commitment to inclusion and in involving people and organisations

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[94] COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) of 22.10.2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027.
[95] Implementation guidelines. Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (2021).

with fewer opportunities. To this end, it provides practical guidance on how to implement projects in a more inclusive manner and features shared definitions across the different sectors, target groups and specific inclusion-related objectives.

Transnational work experience can help young people find their way to the job market, especially the most disadvantaged NEETs[96] (young people not in any kind of employment, education or training) aged 18-29, who are vulnerable with regard to their chances of accessing work or training for individual or structural reasons (e.g. disability, long-term unemployment, insufficient school performance/vocational skills, migration background). The **ALMA**[97] (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) initiative, implemented under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) by Member States and supported by the European Commission at EU level. aims to help young NEETs by offering participants a supervised work-related experience in another EU Member State for a period of 2 to 6 months and a comprehensive project cycle with coaching and counselling at every step. The ALMA initiative is based on a theory of change whereby young participants with low motivation, low self-confidence, and low chances in the labour market undergo a transformative experience and develop relevant skills, boost their self-confidence, and, as a result, they are motivated to participate in education and training or employment. It actually complements existing programmes supporting mobility of young people like Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps, by catering for a group of young people that are not captured by these programmes. The initiative builds on a German-led mobility project (ESF Learning Network on Transnational Mobility Measures for Disadvantaged Youth and Young Adults, TLN Mobility) which has given thousands of Europeans the opportunity to gain skills and confidence by working abroad.

There is also European research, by the RAY network[98], showing that young people with fewer opportunities generally benefit more from youth mobility projects than better-off peers. They report a significantly higher impact on their competences, their behaviour and their values, suggesting that participation in learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings provide valuable options for young people with fewer opportunities, including young people not in employment, education or training and at risk of exclusion. Together with a strengthened 'learning to learn' competence, youth projects make young people with fewer opportunities more autonomous and self-reliant for the future. Non-formal and informal learning mobility opportunities can stimulate a positive attitude to further learning, including returning to or continuing in formal education and training, and improving competences and soft skills that are valued in the labour market, for civic engagement etc.

Definition

The Erasmus+ Regulation[99] defines **people with fewer opportunities** as 'people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a

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[96] Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)
[97] ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)
[98] Research-based analysis of European youth programmes | RAY (researchyouth.net)
[99] REGULATION (EU) 2021/817 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme'.

The Erasmus+ programme plays a key role in making inclusion a reality and in addressing the barriers that different target groups may face. The programme defines and further explains a non-exhaustive list of potential barriers that can hinder the participation in mobility programmes. Among them are disabilities, physical or mental health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, to discrimination, geographical barriers – that people living in remote or rural areas may encounter, socio-economic difficulties as well as cultural barriers.

Furthermore, based on the overall principles and mechanisms at European level, National Agencies draw up inclusion and diversity plans to best address the needs of participants with fewer opportunities and to support the organisations working with these target groups, paying particular attention to the specific challenges to access the Programme within the national context.

Dedicated measures

The Erasmus+ Programme aims to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity, and fairness across all its actions. To reach out people with fewer opportunities, it allocates resources to initiatives that offer flexible and simple participation formats and provides financial support to prepare and accompany current and prospective participants all along their Erasmus experience.

The programme gives **priority** to projects addressing inclusion and diversity and developing diversity-sensitive practices by assessing these aspects in the award criteria. While developing their projects, organisations should take an inclusive approach, design inclusive activities, ensure access to participants from all backgrounds and involve them in the decision-making process, independently from the thematic of their projects.

It also offers more accessible formats for small and grassroots organisations such as the small-scale partnerships and youth participation activities – which are particularly suited to involve people with people with fewer opportunities – and to ensure newcomers' participation.

Moreover, the Erasmus+ programme provides **financial support** for organisation and individuals – especially with physical, mental or health related conditions – to cover the additional costs related to the organisation of mobility activities for participants with fewer opportunities. It also covers additional costs of preparatory visits and accompanying persons. This support is tailored to the type of action and to the individual needs of each participant with fewer opportunities.

Special attention is also given to the inclusion of people who are unable to apply for long-term physical mobility, due to their field of study or to some barriers they face. In this regard, **blended mobility programmes** – which combine both physical and virtual mobility – can offer additional opportunities to them.

Resources

To support the implementation of inclusion and diversity across all the programme, to gather knowledge on the topic and conceive and run capacity building activities, two dedicated resource centres were created: one for the youth sector – hosted by the Belgian Flemish National Agency – and one for education and training – hosted by the Croatian Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

The **SALTO Youth Inclusion & Diversity**[100] aims to facilitate the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in international youth projects, while equipping youth and youth workers with the necessary skills to deal with diversity of all kinds. It also provides a wide range of resources such as trainings, exchanges of knowledges and best practices, for individuals, organisations and agencies supporting young people with fewer opportunities (inclusion workers, youth workers, social workers, National Agencies & Coordinators). The SALTO Youth Inclusion & Diversity seeks to enhance the transparency and accessibility of its work in promoting inclusion and diversity and to widely prioritize the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and the positive diversity management.

The **SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre** (Education and Training)[101] seeks to assist the National Agencies in enhancing the inclusive dimension of the Erasmus+ programme and ensuring the implementation of high-quality projects school education, vocational education and training, higher education, and adult education. Its scope is also to conduct analyses, coordinate networking and practice sharing activities, provide support to both NAs and beneficiaries, cooperate with different stakeholders and contribute to impact assessments.

2.3.8 Digital aspects of mobility

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The study underlines that digitalisation has become an integral part of the EU policies in response to the rising need for high qualitative, inclusive and accessible digital education. It refers to the Digital Education Action Plan and to the actions led by the Erasmus+ programme to foster the digital dimension of learning mobility. The study also defines three different formats of digital learning mobility: virtual or online mobility which consists in the use of information and communication technologies to implement a project with an international partner at a distance, hybrid mobility which is a combination of physical and virtual mobility simultaneously, and blended mobility – an asynchronous mix of physical and virtual mobility components.

Key developments and trends

The Erasmus+ data shows that digital aspects of learning mobilities have been evolving in all sectors since 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic certainly gave a setback to physical learning mobilities while contributing to the rapid increase of digital learning mobility patterns and

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[100] https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/; https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/
[101] https://saltoinclusion.eu/

highlighting the urgent need for the digital transition. As a matter of fact, the pandemic accelerated the use of virtual, hybrid and blended mobilities as well as the implementation and the usage of tools and applications. For instance, by 2020 nearly 1 million people improved their language skills thanks to the Online Linguistic Support (now called Online Language Support). Moreover, in order to assist the Member States in developing policies on digital skills, a dedicated working group on digital education was established under the ET2020 framework on education and training. In the past years tools such as SELFIE were extended and Erasmus Without Paper was developed.

The monitored data collected under the new Erasmus+ Programme (2021-2027) will provide more precise information about the digital dimension in learning mobility activities.

Obstacles, incentives, and good practices

Digitalisation is crucial to facilitating free movement of persons and labour mobility.

In the social security coordination area, significant progress has been achieved in the exchange of information between social security institutions through the Electronic Exchange for Social Security Information (EESSI) system.

The Commission and Member States are also working to further simplify the lives of mobile people when dealing with cross-border social security issues. The European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) initiative was launched, starting with a pilot project, to explore a digital solution for the cross-border digital verification of social security entitlements. The aim is to make it easier for citizens to exercise their social security rights across borders.

The Commission will present a Communication later this year to take stock of the current progress, in particular with the EESSI system and the ESSPASS pilot project. This Communication will clarify the overall landscape of existing initiatives relevant for free movement of persons and labour mobility, setting out the objectives to be achieved in the short and long term.

The study defines the main obstacles linked to the digitalisation of learning mobility programmes including:

- Lack of connectedness and personal reciprocity that can only be cultivated through face-to-face interactions, and lack of immersion in the foreign culture and socialisation processes.
- Insufficient time and resources to implement mobilities on individual or organisational levels.
- Incompatibility of academic calendars of participants.
- Lack of recognition of the acquired learning outcomes.

To mitigate these obstacles, the study identifies some incentives:

- Innovative digital solutions embedded in the design of the projects, created through the collaboration between education institutions and stakeholders, to motivate and engage participants. According to the study, individuals are often hesitant about the added value of digital activities and in some cases, it is difficult to keep their motivation and

engagement throughout these activities. An example could be the Museopedagogy and Augmented reality (MONA) project which brought culture to young audience through four elements: a guide to museum education with the use of modern technology, a virtual guided tour platform, an interactive game, and an application. Moreover, according to a study led in Finland, teachers in school find virtual cooperation intensive and stressful. Besides, it is challenging to manage hybrid mobilities because of its need of synchronisation. Thus, collaboration with external stakeholders should be fostered to overcome the additional workload, time and energies needed to implement digital activities.

- Policy initiatives promoting equal access to information and communication technologies and providing educators and participants with the required digital skills. Regarding this aspect, centralised platforms offering training materials and tools are essential to enhance digital competences.
- Clear guidance, tools and good practice examples which should be provided to help educators and staff in the digital transition. In the context of higher education, the UNIC Handbook on Physical and Virtual mobility is indicated as a precious resource[102].
- Additional evidence-based research on successfully implementing blended and digital aspects of mobilities to improve guidance.
- Virtual collaboration platforms allowing institutions to create partnerships. The development, the promotion and the extension of existing platforms should be fostered in order to help institution to find suitable partners open for collaboration.
- Quality frameworks ensuring recognition of learning outcomes obtained during virtual activities. As a matter of fact, there seem to be discrepancies in recognising the outcomes produced during digital or blended learning mobilities, among different institutions and countries. It is important to mention that the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education also covers blended mobilities which requires higher education institutions to consider the credits earned during these activities in the same way as those earned in traditional in-person mobility.

Other evidence and developments

The **Digital Education Action Plan**[103] adopted on 30 September 2022 outlines a common vision of high quality, inclusive and accessible digital education across Europe. Its objective is to support Member States in adapting their education and training systems to the needs of the digital age.

In order to address the challenges and the opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic and to foster the transition towards more digital education and training systems, it sets out two strategic priorities: fostering the development of a high performing digital education ecosystem and enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation.

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[102] D3.5 UNIC Handbook on Physical and Virtual Mobility. Available at:
https://www.unic.eu/storage/app/media/Publications%20archive/D%203.5%20UNIC%20Handbook%20on%20 Physical%20and%20Virtual%20Mobility.pdf
[103] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting education and training for the digital age.

By defining guiding principles to make education and training systems fit for the digital age, it underlines inter alia that digital education, which respects the protection of personal data and ethics, must be a strategic goal for the whole education and training ecosystem. Appropriate investments in connectivity, equipment and capacity skills are necessary to guarantee an equal access to digital education. The Digital Education Action Plan also highlights the importance of enhancing digital competences of all teachers and educators as they play a pivotal role in promoting digital literacy and in tackling disinformation.

In the Call for Evidence feedback, the European Youth Forum highlighted the importance of quality and the involvement of youth organisations to ensure that online components are included in line with the interests of young people, stressing also that online elements should remain complementary, e.g. linked to preparation phases or to enable greater inclusivity, rather than replace offline activities. The 2021 Commission study on youth work[104] showed a need for strengthened funding to implement online activities, including for adapted pedagogical materials and infrastructure, as well as support for digital skills for youth workers, including for designing and organising high quality online youth work and core activities.

Definition

In the glossary of terms, the Erasmus+ programme guide defines digital competence as follows: 'it involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking.'

However, the digital priority goes beyond digital dimension as a set of skills. It concerns many different aspects such as teaching and learning methods and formats, tools and platform, activities organisation, virtual collaboration, the innovative practices implementation and digital methods development. The programme aims at building capacity and critical understanding in education and training institutions, as well as empowering education ecosystems to leverage the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning, across all levels and sectors. It also helps them to develop and implement digital transformation plans. Moreover, through the use of information, communication and technology tools, the programme's objective is to reach out to a larger target group within and beyond the Union, fostering the use of physical mobility, virtual learning and cooperation.

Dedicated measures

In line with the key priorities of the Digital Education action Plan, the Erasmus+ Programme seeks to prepare individuals and organisations for the digital transition and provide them with high performing skills and competences. It promotes actions to enhance digital competences development throughout society and focuses both on basic and advanced digital skills, as well as on digital literacy.

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[104] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Study on youth work in the EU : final report*, Publications Office, 2021, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45059

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ Programme encourages education institutions to adopt and promote innovative, flexible, and inclusive learning formats. In this regard, it supports **blended programmes -** which combine physical mobility with a virtual component **-** in all sectors. Besides, in the higher education field, it proposes **blended intensive programmes**, in any study field and cycle, to allow students to further develop their digital skills while participating in innovative online and physical trainings and courses. To boost the digital transformation the programme also promotes projects on **virtual exchanges** in higher education and youth sector.

In addition, through the **Digital Opportunity Traineeships**, higher education students and recent graduates in all disciplines are able to gain professional experience in the tech sector and to further develop their digital skills, in accordance with the labour market needs. Companies can cover different areas such as digital marketing, software and application development, web design, as well as cybersecurity, big data, quantum technology and machine learning. This initiative serves multiple purposes: ensuring Europe's competitiveness, enhancing the employability of students and recent graduates, and assisting companies in finding employees who possess the necessary skills for today's digital landscape.

From the launch in 2018 until the end of 2021, around 30 000 students undertook an Erasmus+ traineeship to acquire digital skills.

The digital dimension is part of the award criteria at the level of the project design and implementation. In order to assist primary, secondary, vocational education and training (VET), higher, and adult education institutions in their digital transformation plans, the programme gives priority to projects aimed at enhancing the capacity and readiness of institution for a successful transition towards the digital education.

Emphasis is also placed on the substantial use of digital technologies and methods in education, training, youth and sport for teaching, learning, assessment, and engagement. This also entails fostering digital pedagogy and expertise among teachers and learning staff, and accessible and assistive technologies as well as the creation and innovative use of digital education content. Therefore, the programme gives priority to projects helping staff to acquire digital skills, to further develop their teaching methods and to best use innovative and digital tools and technologies.

More in general, the programme seeks to develop digital skills of all the population; particular attention is given to gender equality in this field and to underrepresented groups in the access to digital tools.

The priority supports the development and the implementation of STEM/STEAM higher education curricula and strives to increase women participation in this field, notably in engineering, ICT and advanced digital skills. In addition, education institutions are encouraged to support the digitalisation of student mobility management, in line with the standards of the European Student Card initiative. This means that HEIs participating in the Erasmus+ programme must connect to the Erasmus without Paper Network in order to exchange mobility data and manage digital learning agreements and digital inter-institutional agreements online.

Moreover, to boost exchanges and bottom-up collaborations on digital learning methods and tools, projects in the field of school education and adult education are strongly encouraged to

use European School Education Platform or the adult learning platform EPALE to work together before, during and after the project activities. Similarly, projects in the field of Youth are strongly encouraged to use the European Youth Portal and the European Youth Strategy Platform. In the European Solidarity Corps, the General Online Training helps young people prepare for a volunteering and learning experience abroad and navigate the activities on offer as well as access additional learning resources and post-placement guidance and support.

Europass

The Europass framework offers online tools and information through the Europass online platform[105] to support people in their lifelong learning and career management. Its mission is to provide services for job and learning mobility and transparency of skills and qualifications and serve as a life-long management career platform, allowing citizens to have access to all opportunities for working and learning in Europe, enabling labour market and education and training actors to have the same understanding and trust regarding information on people's skills and educational background, and avoid proprietary data standards thanks to a public infrastructure for documenting personal work experiences and educational attainments. It can be used by learners, workers, jobseekers and volunteers to communicate and present their skills, qualifications and experiences clearly and consistently across Europe. It includes a set of tools for documenting and registering skills and experiences acquired abroad:

- The Europass Mobility was first introduced in 2004. In the new Europass Decision (Decision (EU) 2018/646), the Europass Mobility is defined as a template which describes the skills acquired abroad on mobility experiences for learning or work.
- The Europass Mobility is a transparency tool to document and communicate the new skills and experiences acquired during a traineeship, volunteering or a learning period abroad. The sending organisation and the host organisation both complete the Europass Mobility to document the skills development and experiences of the participant. The Europass Mobility is shared with the participant at the end of the experience abroad and can be used by the participants to prove the credentials and skills acquired.
- The European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC) has its legal base in Article 4(6) of the Europass Decision (EU) 2018/646. The 2018 Digital Education Action Plan[106] also mentions the need to develop a digitally signed credential infrastructure (priority 1, action 3). The 2020 European Skills Agenda also reinforces the need to develop EDC under action 11. Since then, numerous documents refer to EDC (the Council Recommendations on: a European approach to Micro-Credentials, Individual Learning Accounts, and the proposal for a Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training).
  On 25 October 2021, the European Commission launched the European Digital Credentials for Learning. These standards for digitally-signed credentials are compliant with international standards ("verifiable credentials"). These electronic learning documents can be full qualifications, transcript of records, as well as certificates of non-formal learning. In the context of EDC, a digital credentials infrastructure was put in place: it includes a digital credentials "issuer" (to build, seal and sign the credentials in

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[105] Please see Home | Europass
[106] (COM(2018) 22)

compliance with the current eIDAS Regulation) and a "viewer" service (to view and verify the credentials), a digital wallet to store digital credentials, and verification services (the credentials are tamper-evident). The EDC infrastructure allows education and training institutions, employers, credential evaluators to easily authenticate, validate and recognise learning credentials of any size, shape or form.

The infrastructure is delivering in practice: examples of adoption are the use by Luxembourg for issuing VET certificates, Croatia (digitalised degrees), Malta for issuing over 2,200 transcripts of records in early 2022. Most recently, the 2018 agreed template for the Diploma Supplement has become available as Digital Credential type under the EDC infrastructure.

- As part of the efforts to increase transparency of information on qualifications and learning opportunities, the European Learning Model (ELM) , the first multilingual (29 languages) data model for learning which can operate in the field of knowledge and skills data exchange, is opening new possibilities for interoperability and credential exchanges. It is used to share information on qualifications, learning opportunities, accreditation, and credentials in the field of learning. By establishing a single vocabulary for learning in Europe, ELM aims to help the recognition of and trust in qualifications and digital credentials across Europe, supporting the fight against fraud. Aligning with the ELM allows for the comparability, transparency and portability of all data related to learning. The ELM contributes to the wider goals of the European Commission to promote labour and learning mobility in Europe, and Common European Data Space for Skills. The data richness of the ELM supports the visibility of skills. The latest version of the ELM is fully compatible with the ELMO data model, opening the way for ELM to be reference data model for all types and levels of learning, including formal and non-formal/informal.

Youthpass

- Youthpass is a long-standing European transparency instrument for identifying and documenting non-formal and informal learning outcomes that are acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes. Since its launch in 2007, close to 1 500 000 Youthpass certificates have been issued. The Youthpass Strategy[107] aims to advance the broader visibility and recognition of the learning value of engagement in youth work and volunteering.

- Youthpass consists of a structured process of individual reflection, self-awareness and guided self-assessment about learning and a certificate that on this basis identifies and documents the participants' non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Youth workers and mentors are important to support and guide young people in the discovery and awareness of their learning and towards documenting the learning outcomes. Project participants are entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate, issued by the organisation that signs the contract for the grant, documenting their non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

- Youthpass contributes to the objectives of the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy and the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. It structures and reinforces reflective practices in youth work and solidarity activities,

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[107] https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/youthpass-strategy/

thereby enhancing their educational quality and recognition. Youthpass also supports the continued pathways of young people and youth workers, including into formal education and the labour market, and raises visibility of the value of European engagement.

For the validation of non-formal and informal learning, transparency tools such as Youthpass and Europass are important to support the identification and documentation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes gained by participants in activities organised by civil society, youth organisations and volunteering organisations, also beyond the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Such documentation can facilitate entrance in the labour market or into formal education. Youthpass educational materials, such as handbooks, leaflets etc., and examples of certificates are publicly available on the Youthpass website[108] and can inspire practices of civil society and other organisations and promote policies and validation arrangements for non-formal and informal learning at national and regional levels.

The Erasmus+ programme provides and supports tools and platforms such as:

- **Online Language Support (OLS):** an e-learning linguistic support platform providing participants in mobility activities the opportunity to assess their knowledge of languages as well as to follow online language courses to improve their competences of the language in which they will work, study or volunteer abroad.
- **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE):** a membership community open to adult learning providers, as well as policymakers, researchers, journalists, and academics. The platform offers up-to-date information on developments in adult learning and enables members to network with colleagues across Europe, to share best practices and knowledges. It also includes a virtual Community of Vocational Education and Training practitioners since 2020, regularly mentioned in the Erasmus+ programme guide for virtual collaboration and networking among its members.
- **Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational technologies (SELFIE):** a free multilingual online tool designed to help primary, secondary and vocational schools to build their digital capacity through a process of self-reflection and assessment. Similarly, **SELFIE for teachers** allows teachers to reflect on how they make use of technologies in their professional practices, to self-assess their own digital skills and to understand how to improve further.
- **European School Education Platform (ESEP)**: the meeting point for all stakeholders in the school education sector. The platform provides up-to-date information, resources, training and courses, support, and the opportunity to interact and collaborate with other verified school staff in Europe.
- **e-Twinning**: a community of teachers and school staff hosting a space for registered users, national support organisations, central support service, the European Commission (Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture), and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency. eTwinning embodies a methodology, a pedagogical approach, a community of practice, and a platform that enables innovation, communication, and collaboration.

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[108] Welcome to Youthpass – Youthpass

- **European Youth Portal** offers European and national information about opportunities and initiatives that are of interest to young people who are living, learning and working in Europe. The European Youth Portal also provides information for other stakeholders working in the field of youth (youth organisations, youth workers, policy makers, etc.). The European Solidarity Corps portal, hosted on the European Youth Portal, offers on-line learning resources and General Online Training for participants.
- **HEInnovate**: a guiding framework for Higher Education Institutions that gives them the opportunity to assess their innovative potential in eight key areas, and notably digital transformation and capability. It is also a community of practices that offers workshops and trainings.
- **The European Student Card initiative** which aims at digitalising the main components necessary for the organization of student mobility. It consists of three key elements:
  - European Student Card: a standardised student card valid across Europe, which allows students to benefit from on and off campus services during their mobility.
  - Erasmus Without Paper Network: a digital solution connecting systems in higher education institutions, allowing them to manage Erasmus mobilities online.
  - Erasmus+ App: a single-entry point to provide learners with all practical information about opportunities and administrative procedures before during and after their mobility programme.

Resources

A dedicated resource centre - **the SALTO digital** - was created to support the implementation of the digital dimension throughout the programme and to raise the quality of digital education and aspects in Youth. It is hosted by the Finnish National Agency for Education and works in all sectors. Its purpose is to gather evidence-based knowledge in the field of digital education and youth, to enhance the impact and the quality of digital-related projects to and to guide the National Agencies to raise awareness.

Digital competence of both young people and adults, digital pedagogy and equipment, digital skills of teachers and staff, digital and virtual cooperation, as well as virtual exchanges, are key operational priorities for the SALTO digital. Furthermore, the resource centre actively explores the impact of new technologies on education, work, and society at large, while also promoting programming competence, AI proficiency, and STEM subjects through the support of EU programmes.

2.3.9 Green mobility

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

After presenting the EU policy context as regards to the green transition and underling the key role of the education and training ecosystems in shaping a more sustainable society, the study provides a broad definition of green mobility. This consists in "all measures, practices and actions that foster: a) a learning mobility that operates through lower carbon emission options

where possible; b) a learning mobility that improves learners' knowledge and awareness of themes such as climate change, green transition and sustainability; c) the alignment of mobility organisations to sustainability principles and practices on the procedural and organisational level".

Key developments and trends

The interest towards sustainability and green mobility has been growing in recent years. For the period 2014-2020 sustainability-related topics were mostly covered by projects realised under the Erasmus+ KA2. Despite showing a decrease in popularity in the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, since 2020 environment and climate change has become a more popular topic to be addressed through learning mobility activities. To this extent, the new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 addresses and promotes environmental and climate change related issues in learning mobility.

As to sustainable practices and behaviours, the study findings point out a general will of learning mobility participants to reduce their environmental impact while taking part to mobility activities, but also stress that practical circumstances make it unfeasible and create a gap between the will and the action of individuals. According to a survey led by Nuffic[109] among higher education students in the Netherlands, students care about sustainable issues, but some of them pay less attention to the topic when it comes to the organisation of sustainable international experiences. In addition, students would appreciate a higher support from their institutions in planning sustainable journeys. The majority of the respondents declared that they travelled by plane to reach their destination not only because of the reduced time of travel but also because of the practical feasibility. Furthermore, based on a survey led by the Czech National Agency for Education and Research (2022), almost half of the respondents consider the negative environmental impact of the means of transport but only 9% of them chose the most environmentally friendly option. When it comes to choose how to travel several factors such as price, safety, comfort, and speed are taken into account. In addition, it is important to mention that 48% of the respondents would like to reduce their environmental impact but they do not know how.

Obstacles, incentives, and good practices

The main barriers to a greener mobility identified by the study findings are as follows:

-   Lack of financial support for sustainable travel.
-   Scarce information and promotion on sustainable travel.
-   Difficulties related to infrastructures and transportation means across Europe.
-   Dissatisfaction towards virtual and blended mobility.

The incentives proposed to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles are:

-   Practices that learning mobility organisations can implement in favour of sustainability in their internal functioning, by designing and organising projects, by fostering education and awareness to change systems and policies.

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[109] Nuffic is the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education. The study led by Nuffic cannot provide a complete overview of European and Dutch students' opinions. However, it offers useful elements for reflection.

- Information and promotion on sustainable practices. Different guidelines, tools and resources are available especially for youth organisations and youth workers to orient their activities to sustainability principles such as the sustainability checklist designed in the context of the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, the Sustainable Event Guidelines, the Eurodesk guide on Greening Youth Services.
- Projects dedicated to sustainable mobility within EU funded mobility programmes such as the Erasmus Goes Green, the Green Erasmus Project and the Air Travel project. More precisely, Erasmus Goes Green is a project developed within the Erasmus+ KA2 by different partners to assess the carbon emissions derived from Erasmus+ mobilities by the realisation of an online carbon footprint calculator. The project also published a report on the assessment of the transport related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme which underlines that travels carried out within the academic context generated significant emission. The academic world should be aware of the environmental externalities induced by international cooperation practices.
- Financial incentive to promote green travels. It is worth mentioning that the study highlights that students feel that financial support for sustainable travel is insufficient and that they need some guidance and information. The Green Erasmus Project also underlines the scarcity of the financial support and claims for a universal top up to individual support of 250€, proportionate to distance covered, and an increase up to 7 days for travels. In addition, inadequate levels of infrastructure and means of transport across the European countries hinder green practices and discourage participants, as travelling by train or sea is often more expensive and less accessible and high-speed train connections are not enough deployed across different countries.

Other evidence and developments

The Commission Communication on the European Green Deal highlights the pivotal role of education to foster knowledge, skills and attitudes on sustainable development and climate change issues. It recognises that schools, training institutions and universities are key players in involving the wider community in the transition towards climate neutrality.

In addition, the **Council Recommendation on 'learning for the green transition and sustainable development'** (June 16, 2022) stresses the commitment of the EU Member States to make teaching and learning for sustainability a priority in education and training. It emphasises the need to provide learners of all ages with opportunities to discover more about the climate crisis and sustainability, in both formal and non-formal education.

Within this context, it is worth mentioning that the **GreenComp**, a reference framework for sustainability competences, helps learners and educators to better understand what sustainability as a competence entails. It is designed to support education and training programmes for lifelong learning and support people to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live and act in a sustainable manner.

Definition

Environmental sustainability has been set up as one of the four horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme since the 2021 call for proposals.

The programme is a key instrument for building up knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development, both within European Union and beyond. Thanks to its multidimensional nature, the programme has a broad environmental impact: it operates at many levels – inter alia, by incentivising sustainable travels, prioritising green projects, raising awareness about environmental issues - with a wide spectrum of actors such as citizens, educational institutions, VET providers, youth and sport organisations, NGOs, local and regional authorities, and civil society organisations. Besides, it acts as a multiplier and a point of reference for mobility programmes and education, paving the way for more sustainable actions, and inspiring environmental improvements.

Dedicated measures

The programme gives **priority** to projects aimed at promoting the development of green sectorial competences and strategies, enhancing career prospects, and engaging participants in areas which are strategic for sustainable growth, with special attention to areas such as rural development, sustainable farming, management of natural resources, soil protection, bio-agriculture, clean energy transition, and healthy oceans. It fosters actions that - through education, training, youth and sport activities - enable behavioural improvements for individual preferences, consumption habits, and lifestyles, making learners and staff true actors of change.

The programme fosters projects addressing 'environment and climate action' as a thematic topic and adopting implementing practices with a low environmental impact. Thus, participating organisations are encouraged to promote environmental sustainability through their activities by using the specific funding opportunities provided by the programme, raising awareness among their participants, sharing best practices as well as choosing green-oriented design for their activities.

The incorporation of green practices in all facets is part of the **award criteria** in both programmes, to encourage participants and participating organisations to take an environmentally friendly approach when designing the activity, to discuss and learn about environmental issues, to come up with alternative greener ways of implementing their activities, as well as to reflect on local actions.

Besides fostering cooperation on environmental challenges in all sectors, the programme encourages participants to use lower carbon transports as an alternative to flying. For this purpose, since 2021, it has introduced a **financial contribution** of 50EUR (in addition to the individual support) to sustain participants from Higher Education sector, using low emissions means of transport, such as train, bus, or carpooling. Moreover, it has **extended the travelling period** for participants up to 6 days in some cases and it has **increased by 15% the standard travel support** in the other fields ("Green travel top-up").

Resources

A dedicated resource centre - **the SALTO on green transition and sustainable development** - was created to strengthen the impact of the programme as regards to the green transition. It is hosted by the French National Agency and has been operational since March 2023. It aims at guiding the National Agencies on the implementation and the follow-up of the green priority through the Erasmus+ programme, and acts along three main lines:

- Raising awareness, training, and equipping national agencies and their ecosystems (beneficiaries, evaluators, multipliers) with skills and knowledges about sustainability and climate change.
- Creating and animating a networking community, sharing good practices and expertise.
- Developing a capacity to measure and analyse developments.

2.3.10 Participatory mobility

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The study points out that the EU commitment in strengthening the European identity and increasing citizen's consciousness and engagement through mobility activities dates back to the late 80s. More recently Youth on the Move and the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy, reinforced by the 2022 European Year of Youth, underline the crucial role of learning mobility in involving young people and helping them to gain intercultural awareness and become active European citizens.

Different actions implemented under Erasmus+ - including the EU Youth Dialogue - and the European Solidarity Corps programme are particularly relevant to the objectives of participatory mobility. However, what emerges from the study is that the participatory dimension in learning mobility seems to be mostly associated to youth and higher education sectors, despite the relevance of the involvement of adult learners and VET participants, as well as the school sector.

Key developments and trends

The study underlines that the participatory aspects of learning mobility continue having a relevant impact on learning mobility participants since the early stages of learning mobility programmes implementation. As argued by the study, the presence of Europe seems to be more tangible in educational spaces, especially in higher education. Other discrepancies can be seen among people with different educational levels as well as between people from EU15 countries and the others. As stated by the study "in countries such as Belgium and Italy, the daily consequences of EU might appear as less visible, given that Europe has always been present" compared to countries that joined the EU later. Moreover, the study stresses the role of the Erasmus+ Programme in spreading the EU values and the sense of identity and belonging. In this respect, recent studies confirmed that mobilities within the European context have a significant impact on participation on EU issues, notably on the intention to vote at the next EU elections and improves the vision of the EU as a community. It is important to mention that other EU funded programmes such as the European Solidarity Corps cover participatory aspects in a substantial way, both in the objectives and themes of activities and in quality and support measures such as the General Online Training for the European Solidarity Corps which includes modules on EU values and inter-cultural awareness etc.

Obstacles, incentives, and good practices

The main barriers hindering the implementation of participatory mobility activities identified by the study are:

- A lack of focus on participatory mobility in some education sectors. Higher education, youth and VET seem to propose more activities that include participatory components than adult education, school, or sport sector. However, it is also important to consider that for these sectors the effects of mobility on engagement and participation have been less studied in literature.
- A mismatch between concrete delivery of projects based upon participatory aspects and the project's participation-related goals and contents
- Difficulties in establishing common definitory aspects. For instance, according to the study findings, the definition of EU values seems to be still vague, as well as a common understanding about the concept of solidarity.

What emerges from the study is that national and local implementation of participatory mobility programmes represents a clear incentive, especially for those programmes that are linked to the local dimension. Thus, it is important to adopt a bottom-up approach and to bring together the transnational dimension with the local one. This would reinforce motivation and foster a positive attitude towards mobility projects focused on social engagement and political topics. Two examples of successful programmes fostering participatory dynamics are CERC programme and the Italian Servizio Civile.

Furthermore, proving accessible, targeted and coherent information could also boost interest in participatory mobility. For that purpose, Eurodesk has provided an excellent source of information on mobility programmes and has gathered best practices, adopting a peer-to-peer approach, non-formal methods, and a locally oriented perspective.

Finally, the study also stresses that the direct involvement of participants in the preparation and implementation of participatory mobility projects allows them to practice participation and can directly influence their participation experience.

Other evidence and developments

The 2017 **Commission Communication**[110] **'Strengthening European identity through education and culture'** highlights the pivotal role that education, culture and sport play in promoting active citizenship and common values among the youngest generations. The **Erasmus+ Regulation**[111] recalls this role and stresses the need to strengthen priorities on fostering European identity, active citizenship, and participation in democratic life. As a matter of fact, the regulation emphasises the crucial role of the programme in contributing to a more democratic Union and in boosting the sense of commitment and belonging to the Union among the participants. In addition, it underlines that the Programme should support Member States in reaching the goals of the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015 on promoting citizenship and

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[110] COM/2017/0673 final
[111] REGULATION (EU) 2021/817 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education. The Regulation also highlights the objective of encouraging the participation of young people in Europe's democratic life by supporting active citizenship, education and participation projects for young people.

Moreover, the **European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027**[112] sets out a framework for European cooperation in the youth field, based on the Commission's Communication of 22 May 2018 on 'Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people'. The Strategy fosters youth participation in democratic life, supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. The European Youth Work Agenda[113] stressed the role of youth work in promoting active citizenship, democratic awareness and inter-cultural understanding, including through competence-building and education and training of youth workers. The 2022 European Year of Youth was a significant initiative, boosting youth participation and engagement, fostering intercultural dialogue, diversity and solidarity, including through learning mobility opportunities. The legacy of the European Year of Youth will ensure a longer-term impact on youth empowerment and youth-centred policy making.

Definition

Promoting democratic participation, common values and civic engagement is one of the four horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. The programme aims to foster active citizenship, shape inclusive and engaged societies, build intercultural awareness, and empower participants to become active and responsible European citizens. By encouraging dialogue, exchange of ideas and experiences, tolerance and respect for diversity, the programme aims to enhance understanding and cooperation among participants from different backgrounds, and to equip them with the necessary skills for active engagement in democratic life.

Dedicated measures

The Programme promotes active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning and plays a crucial role in supporting the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking, and media literacy across all its actions and sectors. To do so, it gives **priority** to projects that enable people to participate in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The emphasis is placed on raising awareness and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards the common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as their social, cultural and historical heritage. Thus, projects should aim to improve participants' knowledge of the European Union and the European values, including respect for democratic principles, human dignity, unity and diversity, intercultural dialogue and tolerance. While designing their project, applicants are encouraged to address democratic participation and to support active citizenship and ethics, as well as provide participants with the necessary competences to be more engaged and active.

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[112] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027
[113] European Youth Work Agenda: EUR-Lex - 42020Y1201(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

According to the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021, 82% of participants declared that they were more aware about European values after having taken part in mobility activities.

Furthermore, to promote participation in democratic life, the programme supports youth-led local and transnational initiatives run by informal groups of young people or youth organisations. In Youth participation activities, the focus is put on the organisation of initiatives aiming at engaging young people in democratic life, learning to participate, raising awareness about European Union common values and fundamental rights, bringing together young people and decision makers, contributing to the EU Youth Dialogue and to the European Youth Goals. In the field of youth, a Youth Participation Strategy[114] has been designed to provide a common framework and support the use of the programmes to foster youth participation in democratic life.

The **Jean Monnet actions** – implemented by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency - are also instrumental in promoting teaching, learning and research in European integration matters, in both higher education and education and training fields. They must contribute to spread the knowledges about the European Union, its history, aims, structures, functions, and its policies and bring the EU closer to the public. By doing this, they also enable learners to know how European policies can benefit the daily lives of citizens and can influence the policy making system in similar fields. The Jean Monnet actions strive to function as a vector of public diplomacy towards third countries, promoting EU values and enhancing the visibility of what the European Union stands for and what it intends to achieve. They also promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide, foster dialogue between the academia and the whole and strengthen the role of the EU within Europe and beyond.

Resources

The **SALTO participation and information**[115] resource centre was created to enhance the impact of the programme as regards to the democratic participation. It is hosted by the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Estonian Agency and operate across all fields by implementing strategic and innovative measures to foster engagement in democratic life. This includes providing guidance and support for applicants, beneficiaries, and national agencies, ensuring the involvement of young people, organising events and activities to promote active participation and civic engagement.

2.3.11 Balanced mobility

Key findings of the study on supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward

The idea of a more balanced mobility between the EHEA countries has acquired rising importance within the Bologna Process framework starting from the 2007 onwards[116].

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[114] SALTO-YOUTH - Youth Participation Strategy
[115] https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/
[116] Ferencz, I. (2015). *Balanced Mobility Across the Board—A Sensible Objective?* The European Higher Education Area, pp. 27–41. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0_3.

Although the concept does not currently have a commonly agreed definition at the European level, it can be stated that it refers to the policy aim of reaching a more balanced flow of incoming and outgoing students.

Key developments and trends

The Bologna Process Implementation Report (2020) [117] classified EHEA countries into four different mobility categories, based on their mobility flows balance: 'limited' systems were found in countries experiencing high outflows but lower inflows (those generally denouncing brain drain); 'closed' countries were indicated as those with low outflows and even lower inflows; 'open' systems were characterised by high outflows but even higher inflows; finally, 'attractive' systems were reported to have low outflows and generally high inflows.

However, in certain countries, situations of imbalance were actively sought as desirable objectives in their mobility policy. For example, countries with 'attractive systems' (such the UK, France, Denmark and Sweden) were seen as the benchmark in terms of student mobility despite their imbalances in the outgoing and incoming students mobility flows.

It is important to distinguish between balance in credit mobility and balance in degree mobility. While the Erasmus+ Programme enabled credit mobility flows to take place in both directions, the concept of balanced mobility remains more of an ideal rather than an actual reality (or even a tangible policy objective) when it comes to degree mobility, since the tools to influence degree mobility flows are much less feasible compared to student exchanges (credit mobility).

In fact, while degree mobility tends to be self-funded, credit mobility mostly takes places within the context of funded European and national mobility programmes, making it far easier to steer and influence by policymakers.

When it comes to extra-EU mobility flows, the EU aims to attract top talent to study in the EU. Third-country students make up a larger proportion of the student population compared to mobile EU students. However, attracting these students is easier than retaining them, as only few countries offer strong incentives to retain them.

When it comes to doctoral students and researchers, the study shows recognisable mobility patterns to countries that are leaders in producing world-class, high-quality scientific research, which include organisations located in North America and Western Europe.

Obstacles, incentives, and good practices

The study outlines several obstacles impacting balanced mobility:

- internal and systemic factors such as political stability, quality of education, geographical location, socioeconomic situation, and standard of living;
- varied practices of recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad;
- lack of policies to retain incoming and outgoing learners in degree mobility;

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[117] Agencia Ejecutiva En El Ámbito Educativo, A. Y. C., & Education, A. & C. E. A. (2020). *The European Higher Education Area in 2020: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. UTB. Available at: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/756192.

- differences between safety and security standards applied between countries can influence the participant's willingness to apply for a traineeship or VET mobility abroad.

The study identifies a number of measures that National level policy-makers can implement to reduce imbalances in learners mobility flows:

- automatic mutual recognition of learning periods abroad;
- increasing the attractiveness of learning locations;
- establishing return grant schemes;
- the establishment of specific mobility programmes that target selected geographical regions, such as Nordplus, the regional learning mobility programme between Nordic and Baltic countries, can also stimulate more balanced flows among the participants countries.

In relation to mobility flows with non-EU countries, ad-hoc bilateral or multilateral agreements and/or specific exchange programmes can shape the structure of mobility flows with non-EU/third countries.

Overall, achieving balanced mobility requires a comprehensive approach that addresses various factors, including policy measures, financial support, information and guidance services, cooperation between institutions, and incentives for both students and institutions. By addressing these factors, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards creating a more equitable and balanced mobility landscape.

3. The way forward

3.1 Learning mobility targets

Evidence shows that EU-level targets leverage educational issues on the national agenda and foster the monitoring of progress[118]. Moreover, concrete targets to be achieved in a specific area can be a powerful tool to encourage Member States, regional authorities, and organisations to focus their strategies[119]. The European Commission has identified three areas suitable for adjusting or setting EU-level targets on mobility: mobility in vocational education and training, mobility in higher education and inclusive mobility. In other areas the robustness of available international data does not presently allow for meaningful target setting beyond the EU-funded programmes. Supporting the Member States in strengthening the evidence base on learning mobility in Europe and beyond is addressed in section 3.3.2.

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[118] Commission Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. COM/2020/625 final.
[119] Green Paper - Promoting the learning mobility of young people. COM/2009/0329 final

Learning mobility in vocational education and training

In the context of the strategic framework on "Education and Training 2020", the European Council agreed in 2011 that "by 2020, an EU average of at least 6% of 18-34-year-olds with an initial vocational education and training (VET) qualification should have had an initial VET-related study or training period (including work placements) abroad lasting a minimum of 2 weeks (10 working days), or less if documented by Europass." By 2019, 4% of VET learners on upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level completed a mobility experience in VET[120].

Considering the growing demand since 2014 and increased funding of the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027, a new EU-level target on learning mobility in VET was introduced in the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience[121]. The target states that 8% of VET learners should benefit from a learning mobility abroad by 2025[122]. Some adjustments to the definition of the underlying indicator were made (namely narrowing the focus on upper-secondary an post-secondary level and eliminating the age requirement), and the methodology was agreed to source administrative data to measure progress.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an interruption of the upward trend in VET mobility experiences over the 2014-2020 period. The number of participants grew steadily from 126 000 in 2014 call year. In 2020 the number of participants contracted surpassed 167 600 – nevertheless only less than 33 000 mobilities, in line with the target definition, were realised in that year due to the pandemic. The year 2021 still suffered from the negative impact of the pandemic and in 2021 only around 2.1% of the respective cohort of VET learners – around 56 000 participants on ISCED level 3-4 – could benefit from a mobility experience.

Participation in mobility is brought up to speed starting from 2022 with a number of 136 300 contracted learner participants last year. In 2023, submitted applications point to increasing demand accounting to 7-8% of VET learners in the respective cohorts on upper-secondary and post-secondary level[123] in 2023. However, funding is limited and close to half of the demand cannot be met by Erasmus+ programme.

The European Parliament in its Resolution on the Council Recommendation for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience called for setting a more ambitious target on learning mobility abroad for VET students, recalling the 20% target set for higher education graduates. During the consultation phase of the updated mobility framework, various

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[120] Share of ISCED 3-4 VET mobilities supported under Erasmus+ compared with Eurostat data.
[121] Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. 2020/C 417/01. OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16.
[122] This will be measured as the share of mobile learners in a calendar year, as a proportion of a cohort of VET graduates in the same year. The indicator will be based on the mobility data sourced from Erasmus+ data and VET graduate data sourced from the UOE data collection. Where available and only if the data provided is comparable to Erasmus+ data, including the duration of mobility, data from national authorities' mobility programmes could also be used to complement the data from Erasmus+. In case data from national authorities is included, it should be displayed in a transparent manner.
[123] Due to the data collection methodology, the exact share of VET learners on ISCED level 3-4 can be established upon the completion of the mobility project.

stakeholders expressed the need to expand the opportunities for mobility for VET learners including apprentices.

To respond to these calls, this recommendation proposes to increase the target of participation in mobility of VET learners, including apprentices, to 15% by 2030 including the participants of flexible mobility opportunities under Erasmus+ (such as individual or group mobility shorter than two weeks, blended mobility, mobility linked to participation in skills competitions).

Figure 7. Growth rate of requested VET participants since 2021
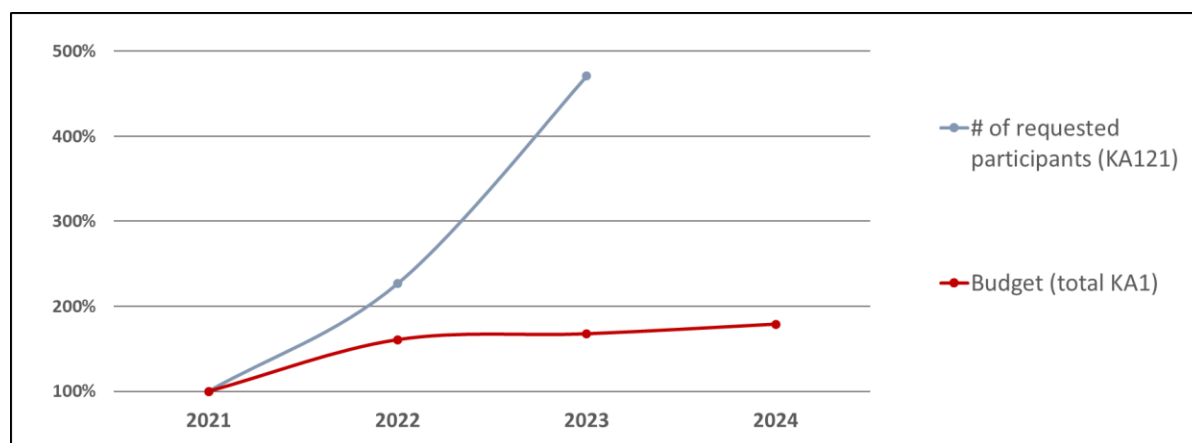
Source: Erasmus+

Learning mobility in higher education

A target on learning mobility in higher education is not featured in the 2021 Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)[124]. Learning mobility was amongst twelve areas where policy priority and robustness of international data was assessed during technical preparatory work for developing a new set of education and training targets but was not part of the final set of targets proposed by the European Commission[125]. EU Member States aligned with this recommendation and did not introduce a target on mobility in the strategic framework resolution.

Under the previous strategic framework (ET2020), a target on learning mobility in higher education did feature as one of seven benchmarks (i.e. targets)[126]. Extensive work was

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[124] Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). 2021/C 66/01. OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1–21.

[125] COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. SWD/2020/212 final.

[126] The target on learning mobility in higher education stated that by 2020, an EU average of at least 20% of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of 3 months. See the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2–10. This target was aligned with the 20% higher education mobility target set in 2009 by the countries partaking in the Bologna process. See the Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009.

undertaken to develop an indicator to measure progress towards the learning mobility target introduced by means of the 2011 'Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility'[127]. The focus of this indicator is on outward mobility, measuring the number of graduates originating in the EU who have been both mobile during their studies and have successfully completed their tertiary education qualifications[128]. The reliability of this indicator is adversely affected by data availability, being reliant on data collected and reported by receiving countries outside the EU[129]. Quality and robustness of available data was one reason the indicator (and target) was not carried over into the current strategic framework.

The notion of a target on learning mobility in higher education was revisited during development of the present proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning mobility. The policy context and current state of play are outlined in sections 2.1 – 2.3. In line with current policy priorities the European Commission proposes the following EU-level target: i*n higher education, the share of graduates with a learning mobility experience should be at least 25%, by 2030.*

The indicator established to measure progress towards the target captures credit and degree mobile graduates in the EU at ISCED levels 5 to 8[130], expressed as a share of graduates in the EU (figure 8)[131]. It encompasses graduates who have completed a credit mobility stay of a minimum duration of two months or representing at least 3 ECTS credits during the duration of the tertiary programme from which they graduate[132]. It also covers graduate who graduated in another country than the country of their previous qualification level. Data are sourced from the UNESCO-UIS / OECD / Eurostat (UOE) data collection on formal education[133]. Further development is necessary to cover the full range of these learning mobility experiences especially for mobilities at ISCED level 5, for mobilities less than 2 month or 15 ECTS credits.

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[127]Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility. 2011/C 372/08. OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 31–35.
[128] The procedure for computing the ET2020 learning mobility indicator is outlined in the Eurostat Methodological manual on learning mobility in tertiary education.
[129] For more details on data issues concerning the ET2020 higher education mobility indicator, please see Flisi, S. and Sánchez-Barrioluengo, M. Learning Mobility II. An estimation of the benchmark, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018.
[130] ISCED level 5 is included only if the county's higher education system covers these levels. For ISCED level 8, some countries don't award credits (so credit mobility is not applicable).
[131] Credit mobility is defined in accordance with the Eurostat 'Methodological manual on learning mobility in tertiary education' as "temporary tertiary education and/or study-related traineeship abroad within the framework of enrolment in a tertiary programme at a 'home institution' (usually) for the purpose of gaining academic credits (i.e. credits recognised by that home institution)". A graduate is a person who, during the reference academic year, has successfully completed an education programme.
[132] The indicator includes all credit mobile graduates whose 'home institution' is in the EU, regardless of whether the graduates' country of origin is in the EU.
[133] The UOE data collection is administered jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Statistical Authority of the European Union (Eurostat).

Figure 8. EU-level credit mobility rates
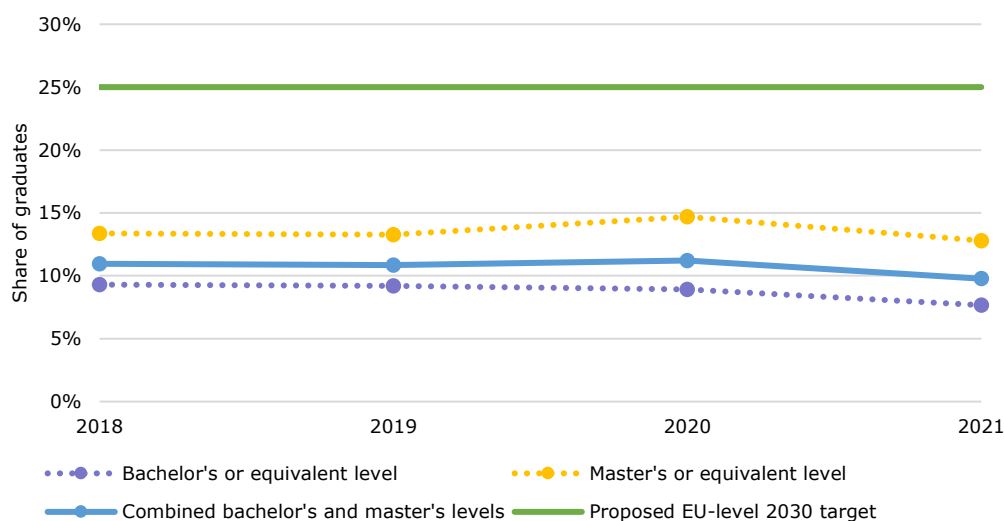
Source: Eurostat (UOE) 2023. Online data codes: educ_uoe_mobc01 and educ_uoe_grad01. Extracted June 2023. Note: data on credit mobile graduates are not available for Ireland, resulting in an underestimation of the EU-level credit mobility rates. French estimates of credit mobile graduates in 2021 do not account for the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a possible overestimation of the EU-level rate. For additional flags, please see the Eurostat metadata.

There is robust and comparable available data across Member States (Figure XX) and over time (Figure X) for ISCED levels 6 and 7(limited to the bachelor's or equivalent level and the master's or equivalent level)[134]. There are some data available for on short cycle tertiary education and credit mobility with durations shorter than three months (or less than 15 ECTS points)[135] is currently reported on a voluntary basis. Combined, the bachelor's and master's levels constitute approximately 87% of graduates in tertiary education and 94% of the reported credit mobility in the EU in 2021. Enhancing data collections to improve coverage of mobility in short-cycle tertiary education and at the doctoral or equivalent level would allow for future expansion of the target indicator to also cover these levels. Developing further reporting for short mobilities (less than 3 month or 15 ECTS credits) will acknowledge the development of different kinds of learning mobilities in the EU, and also be in line with the ambition to provide micro-credentials for small learning options. Meanwhile, reporting will be based on the available data, focusing on ISCED 6 and 7.

From 2021 the Erasmus+ programme started offering more opportunities for shorter mobilities for higher education students through the introduction of blended mobilities. Short-term blended mobilities last from 5-30 days and for student mobility for studies should give at least 3 ECTS points. This offers more opportunities for students to have an international experience during their studies and these opportunities have already proved to be successfully

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[134] Credit mobility in short-cycle tertiary education is a limited phenomenon. Only 13 EU member States reported that there were credit mobile graduates at this level of tertiary education in 2021. Moreover, 94.5% of the credit mobile graduates were reported by Spain and France. Although country coverage of credit mobile graduates is better at doctoral or equivalent level, the six Member States where data are not available constitute 41.8% of the graduates at this level.

[135] Reporting of credit mobility with durations shorter than three months is done on a voluntary basis through the UOE data collection. Only 13 Member States reported mobility at the bachelor's and master's levels for the reference year 2021.

implemented by many higher education institutions. Furthermore, the European University Alliances have a 50% mobility target, that also includes shorter durations and more varied mobility formats.

Figure 9. Credit mobility rates by country
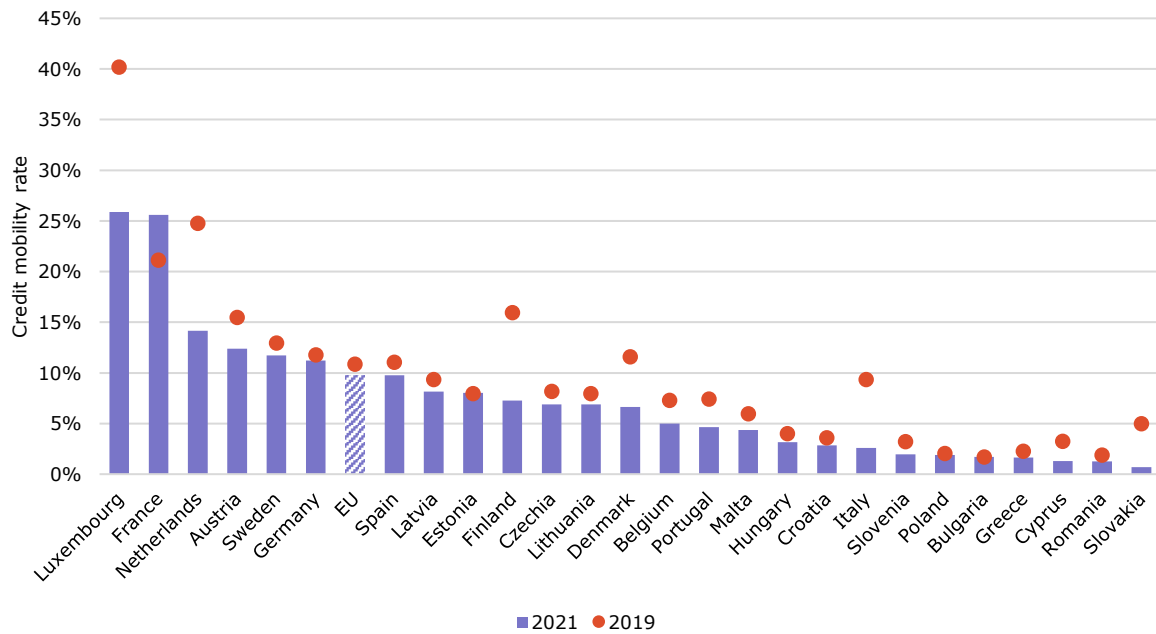
Source: Eurostat (UOE) 2023. Online data codes: educ_uoe_mobc01 and educ_uoe_grad01. Extracted June 2023. Note: data on credit mobile graduates are not available for Ireland, resulting in an underestimation of the EU-level credit mobility rates. French estimates of credit mobile graduates in 2021 do not account for the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a possible overestimation of the EU-level rate. For additional flags, please see the Eurostat metadata.

In 2021, 9.8% of graduates at master's and bachelor's levels in the EU had been on a temporary stay abroad at some point during their studies. This was a notable but expected decline compared to the pre-Covid-19 data from 2019, when 10.9% of graduates in the EU had participated in credit mobility (figure 8). Across all Member States there is indication of an adverse Covid-19 effect on credit mobility. Limited progress in the years leading up to 2021 (figure 9) suggests that there are other barriers to mobility besides those imposed by the pandemic that would need to be removed if the EU is to reach the proposed 2030 target, however.

Inclusive mobility

Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education is a strategic priority for European cooperation in education and training[136]. This also entails making learning mobility more inclusive and accessible, including providing more learning mobility opportunities to people with fewer opportunities. The policy context and current state of play for inclusive

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136 Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). 2021/C 66/01. OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1–21.

mobility are set out in section 2.2.7. Underlining the importance of this issue, the European Commission proposes the following EU-level target:

In all education and training, and youth and sport systems, people with fewer opportunities should account for at least 20% of all learners benefiting from learning mobility abroad, by 2030.

The indicator established to measure progress towards this target is a proxy for inclusive mobility based on data on learners with fewer opportunities participating in the Erasmus+ programme, expressed as a share of all learners partaking in mobility activities[137]. The indicator encompasses all completed mobility activities from EU Member States (i.e. the sending country is an EU country), irrespective of duration, destination country, or type of mobility, starting in the reference year (figure 10)[138].

Figure 10. Participants with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+ programme
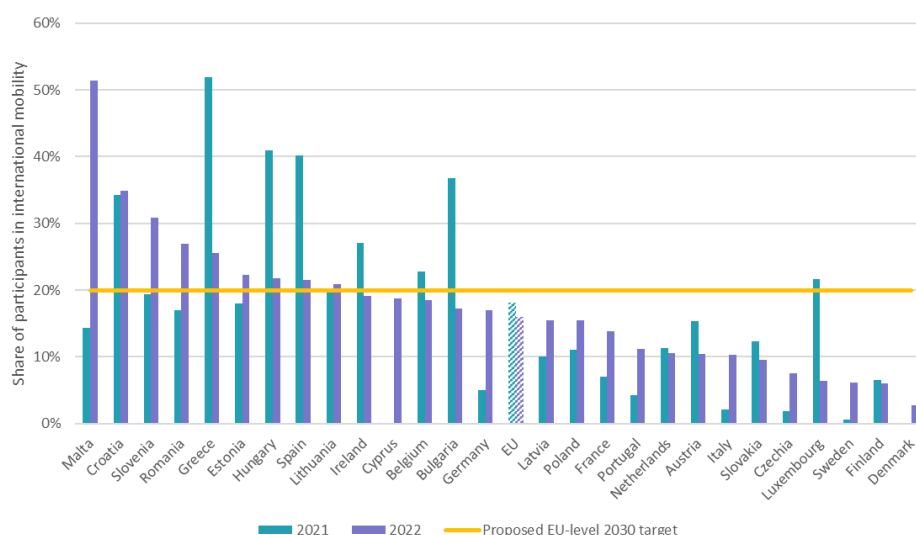
Source: Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme data. Extracted June 2023. Note: completed mobilities from the EU by start year of the mobility. The vertical bars show learners with fewer opportunities participating in cross-border mobility activities expressed as a share of all participants in mobility activities. Sorted in descending order according to share of mobilities with start year 2022.

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[137] The Erasmus+ Regulation[87] defines **people with fewer opportunities** as 'people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme'.

[138] Using Erasmus+ programme data provides for a common definition of people with fewer opportunities at programme level, but caution should be applied when interpreting the data as there are variations in how the definition is applied between and within sectors and between and within countries. Moreover, using a proxy indicator offers limited possibility of generalisation beyond the Erasmus+ programme.

3.2 Recommendations for the Member States

3.2.1 Providing systemic learning mobility opportunities

(a) Making learning mobility abroad a standard and integral part of school education, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education and training systems by embedding learning mobility periods abroad in all education and training curricula through flexible mobility windows, elective courses and other opportunities.

Education and training organisations as well as national and local authorities should take into consideration the systemic and individual benefits of learning mobility activities abroad when designing and implementing their development strategy.

For example, embedding time slots for mobility periods abroad in all education and training curricula and in all initial education and training programmes for teachers, trainers, other educators and youth workers would be useful for making such learning mobility abroad a reality.

A mobility window for learners is a recommended period during academic and school years when mobility of learners abroad takes places without prejudice for further study. A mobility window for teachers, trainers and other educators is a period of the school year in which sending and hosting teachers and future teachers is appropriate to implement in view of not disrupting the education process. The wider use of mobility windows has been recommended by various stakeholders from the higher education, school education and VET fields in the public consultation[139].

More generally, participation of teachers, trainers, educators and youth workers in various forms of mobility should be accompanied by making efforts to find sustainable solutions for replacement needs. This means that resources, in terms of funds, equipment and staff are allocated to the most appropriate level to foster internationalisation strategies in education, training and non-formal and informal learning, including all forms of cross-border learning mobility.

It is also recommended to facilitate teaching assignment of practising teachers and trainers for a limited period abroad (up to one year) as part of their continuous development.

At organisational level, this includes building organisational culture towards a more open, more diverse, international way of working and including innovative learning and teaching methods as well as new skills. More flexible curricula structure and legal arrangements should facilitate the implementation of mobility periods abroad for learners and staff from various education and training sectors.

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[139] See for example "Joint Position Paper on the European Learning Mobility Framework in the school sector (EFIL Obessu LLLP)", "Towards a revised European learning mobility framework: ACA vision and way forward, More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility", "The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility for all", "ESU: Learning mobility - a reality for all".

In addition to the mobility windows, inputs from the public consultation[140] stress the need to supporting school heads to integrate learning mobility within the school pedagogical project, in line with a whole school approach. This would contribute to support a learning mobility culture at organisation, local and national levels as promoted by stakeholders in the field of school education[141].

(b) supporting education and training providers in developing and delivering an increasing share of cross-border joint activities, including joint programmes leading to joint degrees, by making the best use of European initiatives, in particular European Universities alliances, Centres of Vocational Excellence, National VET Teams, Alliances for innovation, and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies; building on the experiences of the European Universities alliances targeting a 50% mobility rate of students, with physical, virtual and blended mobility options;

The study identifies the development of joint education programmes as a key incentive to higher education learner and staff mobility and explain that the development of joint education programmes can alleviate some of the administrative burdens and institutional challenges of implementing cross-border student exchanges/mobility activities[142].

The European Universities alliances represent an important good practice in that regard. They form a framework for facilitated cross-border mobility of students and staff, including joint activities such as joint degree programmes and living labs. They aim to create European inter-university campuses, where students, staff and researchers enjoy seamless mobility (physical, virtual or blended) to study, train, teach, do research, work or share services at cooperation partner institutions. These inter-university campuses are created with embedded long-term mobility targets of at least 50% of the students within the alliance, as well as for academics, professional staff and researchers, which proves the transformational character of the alliances' cooperation, aiming to foster mobility among its partner universities. Moreover, strong attention is given to provide versatile and seamless transnational mobility options for all learners, including for people with fewer opportunities or from remote areas, and lifelong learning activities, across interconnected European campuses. The European Universities initiative also strives for balanced mobility of students, mobility of staff and brain circulation, within the alliances. The fact that they contribute to driving legislative changes, and are part of policy experimentations such as the Erasmus+ pilot projects on the joint European degree label and a European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions, illustrate well the scope of their impact, and their potential.

Being firmly embedded in well-connected ecosystems, with rich diversity of partners, European Universities alliances have a long-term engagement and vision, with the aim to be role models and benefiting the entire higher education sector. This includes diffusing their innovative approaches such as bringing cooperation to an unprecedent level, offering flexible learning pathways, opening their courses to the partner universities, redefining, diversifying, and enlarging the scope of mobilities, and making use of existing tools to automatically

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[140] see joint position paper issued by EFIL, Obessu, LLL, ATEE, EEE YFU in the context of the public consultation.
[141] Idem.
[142] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

recognise qualifications and mobility periods abroad as a bridge between the European Education Area and the European Research Area, in full synergy with the European Higher Education Area.

Erasmus+ Teacher Academies create European partnerships and promote cooperation between teacher education institutions and training providers. Two of their objectives are to develop and test different models of mobility in initial teacher education and continuous professional development.

Also in Vocational Education and Training, new forms of transnational partnerships facilitate mobility of learners and staff. The Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence initiative aim to implement Vocational Excellence and support reforms in Vocational Education and Training, in line with the Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, as well as the Osnabrück Declaration. The Centres of Vocational Excellence are collaborative structures that bring together a wide range of stakeholders: VET providers, higher education institutions including universities of applied sciences and polytechnics, research institutions, science parks, innovation agencies, employers, chambers and their associations, social partners, national and regional authorities etc. Among the activities that the Centres of Vocational Excellence can engage in, are the internationalisation and mobility abroad, such as creating support structures and measures to foster and ensure the quality of mobility experiences (including virtual mobility) among the partners in the networks in compliance with the Erasmus Quality Standards, and launching initiatives to mobilise learners, teachers and trainers (including in-company trainers), as well as experts, to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme to engage in mobility abroad. The Centres of Vocational Excellence can also work on developing curricula and qualifications, including integrating international learner mobility in the curricula, ensuring the validation and recognition of the learning outcomes acquired abroad. Through the transnational cooperation, the project partners learn about and gain trust in each other's vocational education and training systems. This knowledge and trust can contribute to reducing the mobility barriers related to concerns about learning outcome, brain drain, balanced mobility, etc.

Since 2020, many Member States have set up National VET teams supported by the Erasmus+ programme. The purpose of these teams is to provide a pool of expertise to promote the application of EU VET tools and principles in EU funded projects supported by the Programme. The concerned EU VET tools are laid down in the relevant EU VET policy documents such as the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and the Council Recommendation on VET (covering the EQAVET Framework, European Vocational Core Profiles, graduate tracking, etc.). The National VET team members provide support to the beneficiaries of EU funded projects supported by the Erasmus+ Programme to implement the abovementioned EU VET tools in their projects and they promote in many cases the mobility of learners in VET programmes. Activities include the organisation of webinars about promoting mobility of learners, publication of guides on the use of learning outcomes as a way to facilitate mobility, promotion of micro-credentials as an opportunity for mobility.

(c) Promoting and embedding inwards and outwards learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings, as valuable and viable mobility

options for all learners and staff, including through awareness-raising, outreach measures and other support to providers of non-formal and informal learning, local and regional authorities, youth centres and civil society organisations.

The agreements of Member States in the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, to engage, connect and empower young people, and in the European Youth Work Agenda, with the promotion of the European dimension of youth work through cross-border exchange and cooperation, also rely on learning mobility and volunteering opportunities to support young people in their personal development and transition to adulthood. The European Year of Youth raised awareness of such opportunities for young people and reaffirmed the need to continue promoting, addressing obstacles, and facilitating access for young people with fewer opportunities.

Research, such as the RAY youth research, on the effects of young people's participation in Erasmus+ (youth chapter) and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and stakeholder feedback, have shown the benefits of learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings. These experiences can be particularly beneficial for young people with fewer opportunities. They support the development of key competences and offer spaces and activities through which young people can grow, step outside of their comfort zone and engage with other cultures and perspectives in a safe and respectful environment. Spending a period abroad in youth or youth work activities or volunteering strengthens competences such as communication, inter-cultural understanding, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, resilience, and leadership, all of which can significantly boost young people's prospects, including in further education and training, in the labour market etc. By engaging in community-based projects, young people learn about societal challenges, develop a sense of social responsibility and motivation to contribute to positive change in their communities. This cultivates active citizenship, promoting EU values, social inclusion and civic engagement.

Non-formal and informal learning mobility of individuals also generates cooperation on joint projects and partnerships, exchanges of knowledge and practices among young people, youth workers and organisations across borders. This can help the transfer of innovative ideas, methodologies and approaches and enrich existing local strategies or the development of new strategies for non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering. This also contributes to a shared European identity, promoting understanding and solidarity.

However, based on the findings of the dedicated study and as shown in the Citizens' panel, learning mobility is still very much perceived as student mobility and information channels as those of higher education institutions by many young people and the general public. The study also shows that among youth workers and civil society organisations, learning mobility is sometimes perceived as something unattainable or even a 'luxury' – it is thus not systematically considered due to e.g. resource constraints, lack of awareness of different opportunities and quality and support measures, while this type of learning mobility is well suited to cater for young people with fewer opportunities and those working with and for them.

Member States can actively promote and facilitate learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings, through supportive policies and

frameworks, e.g. by giving visibility to non-formal and informal learning mobility, cross-border youth work and volunteering in national youth strategies and other policies that impact young people e.g. education and training, employment, social inclusion etc. Member States can foster a learning mobility eco-system that considers and puts forward non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering across borders as valuable and viable options for all young people, including young people not in employment, education or training, young people with disabilities or health issues, or experiencing other obstacles to participation on equal footing with peers, and for the organisations that work with them.

Member States are recommended to work closely with local and regional authorities, youth centres, civil society organisations, Eurodesk and other information and support structures, to provide comprehensive, accessible and inclusive, information and guidance on the variety of learning mobility opportunities and to disseminate effectively and reach diverse young people.

Investing in capacity building of youth workers, trainers, staff in youth centres and civil society organisations is crucial. Training on project management, intercultural competences, approaches and methods in supporting young people in diverse and difficult situations, mentoring, and digital skills, can enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning mobility schemes and boost organisations' capacity to deliver high quality and impactful learning activities and experiences for young people.

Ensuring appropriate funding for youth and youth work organisations, youth centres, civil society organisations and local and regional authorities that organise cross-border learning mobility, trainings, exchanges and other activities in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings, including for digital youth work, enables capacity building and inclusiveness so that young people are motivated and well prepared for and adequately supported during (including coverage of travel and living costs during mobility) and after the mobility, including through adequate mentoring and guidance. Exploring complementary funding and synergies with diverse funding sources can also be a way to cater for additional needs of young people and youth workers with fewer opportunities.

Member States can also encourage the establishment of partnerships among local and regional authorities, youth centres, civil society organisations and facilitate networking and collaborating on learning mobility strategies, projects and activities. Such an environment can also help effective sharing of resources, expertise and good practices. Member States should also continue developing arrangements and mechanisms for recognition and validation of the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering.

(d) supporting the application of quality criteria for preparation, implementation, and follow up of learning mobility activities, including by building on quality standards developed within the Erasmus+ programme, the European Solidarity Corps programme and other learning mobility schemes;

When supporting or developing learning mobility schemes, Member States should cooperate to design and implement a system for quality assurance, including by defining general principles and criteria for the successful organisation of related activities. These activities include the preparation, implementation, and follow-up of learning mobility abroad.

The quality criteria should serve the purpose of benchmarks to support organisations in their daily work related to the organisation of learning mobility activities and should allow for independent monitoring at various stages of the process. Member State are recommended to build upon the existing quality standards for mobility projects under the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. This includes for example the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) which provides the general quality framework for European and international cooperation activities a higher education institution may carry out within Erasmus+. Organisations implementing youth learning mobility activities also adhere to a common set of quality standards (Erasmus+ Quality Standards mobility projects-Youth) to ensure quality experience and learning outcomes for all participants, and to make sure that all organisations receiving the programme's funding are contributing to its objectives. Erasmus+ Accreditations and European Solidarity Corps Quality Labels, can inspire systems to ensure that organisations involved in learning mobility offer necessary conditions to participants, comply with principles and charters and meet high quality standards.

In their Joint Position Paper on the European Learning Mobility Framework in the school sector, several stakeholders from the sector (EFIL – European Federation for Intercultural Learning, LLL – Lifelong Learning Platform, OBESSU – Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, EEE-YFU – European Educational Exchanges Youth for Understanding, and ATEE – Association for Teaching Education in Europe) also advocate for adhering to the European Quality Charter for mobility.

An important step towards guaranteeing quality of mobility programmes is a clear status for mobile learners, meaning e.g. whether pupils are officially registered in the hosting school and/or remain registered at the sending school. The status may determine whether the learners' learning outcomes during the learning period abroad may be recognised (e.g. in some countries, hosted pupils who are not registered will not have their learning recognised in their home country). It can also determine whether sending and host schools receive funding for exchange learners (thus creating incentives or disincentives for hosting learners or for the sending school to approve the mobility period abroad). A clear status is furthermore essential to guarantee the learner re-enrolment in their sending school upon return (a lack of status thus creating a disincentive for pupils to risk losing their place in the school). This has been pointed out by stakeholders in the context of the European Parliament Preparatory Action 'Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education".

Member States should put in place effective procedures to provide practical, accessible, and comprehensive information at national level for all learners, educators and staff relating to national legal and administrative rules. Potential participants in learning mobility activities abroad should receive appropriate guidance on the necessary steps to undertake before embarking on the activities.

This includes information about their health and social security rights during their stay aboard and administrative status in their sending organisation. Upon their return from the mobility activity abroad, participants should receive appropriate information about their reintegration in their country of origin.

Protection and safety of participants in learning mobility activities are of great importance in view of taking full advantage of the possibilities for personal and professional development.

All activities should be organised in a safe environment which respects and protects the rights of all persons, their physical and emotional integrity, their mental health, and wellbeing. Where minors are involved in learning mobility activities, organisations must obtain the prior authorisation of participation from their parents or legal guardians.

In accordance with national legislation, organisations taking part in learning mobility activities should seek the most suitable insurance policy. This policy should cover at least the risks related to travel (including damage of loss of luggage), third party liability (including, wherever appropriate, professional indemnity or insurance for responsibility), accident and serious illness (including permanent or temporary incapacity), death (including repatriation). Where applicable, participants are strongly recommended to be in possession of the European Health Insurance Card.

Quality support for participants during preparation, implementation and follow up is also important to ensure the high quality of the mobility experience. The study notes that in higher education, both mobile and non-mobile students find support with the application process and the choice of a host HEI to be highly valuable. Physical pre-departure events are also highly regarded. This also applies to staff members, who see benefits in the organisation of physical promotional events. There is a clear need for a more tailored approach in communication and important that Member States devote enough resources to this preparation phase of the mobility. Similarly, the study found that in the youth field, organisations often struggle with the application process, developing projects and finding partners, also linked to limited and volatile financial and human resources for learning mobility and youth work.[143]

(e) fostering cooperation among the bodies managing and implementing funding instruments at EU, international, national or regional level to ensure coordinated activities to support and promote learning mobility, while avoiding overlaps and maximising the impact of resources.

For supporting organisations and participants in implementing learning mobility abroad with appropriate measures, national, regional and local funding should complement EU co-funding and programmes in the field by creating synergies between funds. More specifically, inputs from the public consultation mention ESF+ and Interreg. Some stakeholders stress the role of public funding to effectively operationalise the monitoring process and develop a quality monitoring system.

Cohesion policy funds programmes support formal, informal and non-informal education. In continuity with the previous programming period, ESF+ supports investment in Education, including learning mobility. Interreg programmes support various activities to support and promote learning mobility such as language learning, schools and university student and teacher exchanges, as an instrument to reinforce cooperation and trust across borders, and to support access to cross-border labour market. The four EU macro-regional strategies (MRS)[144], overlapping with the geography of four transnational Interreg programmes, contribute in policy

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[143] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

[144] i.e. the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region. See https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies_en

making exercises related to skills development and labour market exchanges among Member States, but also among Member States and non-EU countries part of the strategies. Youth mobility and exchange is also at the core of the work of MRSs, through the Youth Councils and the financing of projects related to students and teachers exchanges. In parallel, instruments focussing on infrastructures (e.g. ERDF programmes, Digital Europe, RRF) can equally support the fostering of learning mobility by through the funding of e.g. tools for digital education, schools, libraries in disadvantaged areas, affordable housing for students, facilitating green travels for learners in mobility. Building structured forms of cooperation among the bodies in charge of implementing complementary actions supporting learning mobility is essential to channel, with a strategic approach, the resources needed to support participants and organisations, while increasing the European added value and the impact of the investments of each specific instrument.

National Agencies implementing Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are tasked to put forward a number of activities aiming to develop sustainable forms of cooperation with other funding bodies, in view of facilitating the building of synergies and complementarities. To achieve this goal, national and regional authorities play a key role to ensure that appropriate cooperation channels are supported, in a synergetic effort. This also implies that National Authority actively support and assist the National Agencies under their supervision in their effort to build long-standing cooperations with other funding instruments.

3.2.2 Enhancing language learning

(a) strengthening language learning at all stages of education and training, and in youth and sport systems, including by delivering part of curricula in other EU languages than the national language(s), notably to boost learning mobility options and opportunities;

(b) Facilitate access to language education and learning, including for adult population, to improve multilingual competences and enable citizens to fully take advantage of learning mobility, the European Education Area and employment opportunities.

The study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward' identified lack of language competences as one of the core barriers to mobility for participants in higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult education and youth[145]. According to the study, participants in learning mobility may not be able to follow instructions if they are given in a language that the participants do not know, limiting the opportunities and destinations. For instance, teachers' professional training, such as job shadowing or long-term mobility, is very limited due to language barriers. Similarly, language barriers may also impede on youth workers capacity to take part in learning mobility for their professional development.

Multilingualism is one of eight key competences needed for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion, as outlined by EU Member States in the Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning[146].

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145 Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)
146 Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01)

The Citizen panel highlighted that one way of motivating people to learn more languages can be achieved through EU funding and that participation in learning mobility creates a strong basis for language education.

A recent study from Eurydice shows that more progress is needed in the second foreign language. In 2020, only about 60% of students in general upper secondary education learnt at least two languages in Europe.

The report also showed that VET students do not have the same opportunities to learn two foreign languages as their counterparts in general education. In 2020, only 35.1% of learners in upper secondary VET were learning two languages. Nearly one in five learners (that is 18%) in upper secondary VET did not learn any foreign language while in general upper secondary education they were only 2.9%. This is an issue requiring attention.

The Council recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019) highlights that increasing and improving language learning and teaching could strengthen the European dimension in education and training. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) that is, teaching subjects through a foreign language have proven efficient for different categories of learners.

The Eurydice report (2023) shows that Content and Language Integrated Learning plays an increasingly important role in language education, both as a feature of foreign language teaching and learning, and as an element of bilingual and plurilingual education.

3.2.3 Supporting engagement in learning mobility activities

(a) building lifelong learning mobility culture at all learning stages from school education to adult education and across learning settings, by developing a variety of mobility formats and activities, supporting sending and hosting organisations in pursuing their internationalisation strategy, increasing the attractiveness of education institutions in hosting mobile learners, and encouraging alumni networks to develop and promote learning experience at the local level;

Learning mobility opportunities should be part of the lifelong learning pathway in all education and training, youth and sport sectors, starting from school education and youth exchanges. These early experiences may inspire confidence and motivation for learners to see learning mobility as an important opportunity for personal and educational development in later stages of formal, non-formal and informal learning, and in working life.

For example, the most common types of learning mobility activities for pupils are organised as a group mobility or an individual mobility. The group mobility usually takes place over a short period of time and is aimed primarily at meeting peers from another country, encouraging multicultural understanding, and sharing of common values. The individual learning mobility may take place over a medium or long term and has benefits such as improving self-awareness, personal independence, communication skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, and civic engagement of the pupils.

In both cases, spending a period abroad helps pupils with language learning and gives them a chance to experience Europe's cultural diversity first hand. Due to its character and length,

group mobility of pupils generally have a common learning programme applicable to all pupils, and reintegration in the sending school is quick and seamless. In individual pupil mobility, an individual learning programme must be drawn for each mobile pupil, with expected learning outcomes agreed between the sending and hosting organisations together with each participant: each pupil must have their own learning agreement as a personal guarantee of quality. In addition, it guarantees that reintegration workload is manageable, and that the sending school will avoid double coursework for the pupil.

For example, DiscoverEU in the field of youth gives young people the possibility to travel, learn and discover the cultural heritage of Europe and beyond, strengthen their sense of belonging and connect with other young people and local communities across different themes and routes. DiscoverEU also serves as an entry point to youth exchanges and other learning mobility opportunities offered in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, thus supporting a learning mobility culture among young people. In the Discover EU Facebook Group, young people exchange experiences and tips and National Agencies promote further mobility opportunities. The DiscoverEU Learning Cycle also offers post-travel meetings organised by the National Agencies and the European Commission promotes next steps after DiscoverEU via a youth-friendly infographic[147].

In higher education, students who have completed an Erasmus+ mobility indicate in their participant report after the mobility whether they plan to participate in Erasmus+ mobility again. The results from call 2021 and 2022 for KA131 student mobility show that 37% of responding mobile students said yes, 35% are undecided and 27% said no. Of those students who did a traineeship abroad through Erasmus+, the rate of those who say they do plan to participate in Erasmus+ mobility again goes up to 41%, with 23% saying no. This demonstrates how mobility can lead to more mobility.

This is further demonstrated in the 2019 Erasmus+ higher education impact study that showed that Erasmus+ graduates have more international career than non-mobile students[148]. 23% of Erasmus+ graduates reported to have started their job in a country different to their country of origin, compared to 15% in the case of non-mobile graduates, and 87% agree or rather agree that they definitely want to work abroad for at least some time.

(b) fostering cooperation between regional and local authorities, education and training providers, civil society organisations, NGOs and private actors, for promoting and supporting outgoing learning mobility, including of people with fewer opportunities, and fostering a welcoming environment towards incoming learning mobility participants from abroad;

The organisation of successful and meaningful learning mobility activities abroad requires the active collaboration between various stakeholders at national, regional, and local level. In practical terms, national, regional and local authorities should engage with education and training and non-formal learning providers, civil society organisations and private actors for promoting and fostering a welcoming environment towards incoming learning mobility

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[147] DiscoverEU infographic: discovereu_whatsnext-hd.pdf (europa.eu)
[148] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Erasmus+ higher education impact study : final report, Publications Office, 2019, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/162060

participants from abroad. Recommendation 12 of the European Citizens Panel on learning mobility pleads for reinforced welcome in the hosting country to facilitate integration of mobile learners.

The involvement of various stakeholders throughout this process raises awareness of the benefits of learning mobility (including through role models and alumni), influences positively the offer and quality of learning mobility opportunities, while providing orientation on possible future pathways. In addition, collaboration between the public and the private sectors ensures that future needs in terms of professional development are taken into account when supporting the development of mobility schemes.

Local authorities can also support the implementation of mobility projects and outgoing learning mobility activities by providing and pooling resources in order to coordinate learning mobility activities for consortia of education and training organisations around. This is an asset for more inclusiveness by involving a wide range of organisations and participants in mobility projects and activities.

Furthermore, alternative options for hosting organisation could bring added value to learning mobility experiences. For example, traineeships in general education could diversify the offer of learning mobility activities abroad. Pupils can learn by observing and performing tasks in a workplace environment - in cultural institutions (such as museums, libraries, theatres or cultural centres), non-governmental and civil society organisations, media organisations, local government offices, public service providers, companies and small businesses. Common examples of learning outcomes in general education traineeships include communication and digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, media literacy, active citizenship, cultural awareness and interpersonal skills.

Some public consultation input (EAM) stress that efforts should be made to develop partnerships and networks between training centres and companies in order to be able to carry out long-term stays for their apprentices.

Collaboration with employers and associations of employers is also important and Member States should consider collaborating with employers to highlight the benefits of receiving trainees and apprentices from abroad. At the same time, it is important to also ensure the quality of these mobility experiences by providing support to the incoming participants. This can be achieved through collaborations with other stakeholders such as the Erasmus Student Network and other learner organisations, or support from other local stakeholders or authorities. Member States can furthermore consider incentivising companies that decide to host learners, as suggested by the Erasmus Student Network. The Erasmus Student Network highlights the need for mobility promotion initiatives to be embedded in internationalised educational curricula and planning from an early age, as this will help learners adopt an internationalisation culture they can then continue to boost throughout their lives and prepare them to make the most of any international mobility experiences[149].

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[149] More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility. The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility for all.

(c) encouraging the authorities and organisations managing mobility schemes, both in sending and hosting roles, to reduce administrative burden for organisation and participants and provide clear guidance throughout the application process.

Evidence, including the study and stakeholder consultations on learning mobility also identified that the application and reporting procedures put high administrative burden on organisations, in particular on small and medium sized companies, and civil society and youth organisations, eventually discouraging applications. Efforts should therefore be made towards lowering the level of bureaucracy and administrative burdens associated with applying for EU-funded mobility programmes through, for example, the simplification of the application process, clarifying the programmes' language and related concepts, offering adequate guidance, and embracing the use of digital tools.

(d) supporting flexible learning mobility formats, that can broaden the pool of participants, also as a stepping stone to longer mobility periods including group mobility activities, short-term mobility and blended intensive programmes; and any other learning experiences that can lead to micro-credentials, in line with the European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability.

The study identifies blended intensive programmes as one of the incentives for higher education mobility. They can represent a low-threshold opportunity for HEIs to collaborate on joint curricula and more generally the development of different types of mobility opportunities can contribute to widening participation.[150] Blended programmes, with a short-term physical component and a complementing virtual component, can give mobility opportunities to students who are not able to go on long-term mobility for whatever reason. This can include students with limitations in their study programmes, students with caring responsibilities, or students with health issues. Short-term mobility can also serve as a stepping-stone to longer mobilities and give students who are unsure whether learning mobility is for them the chance to experience a shorter mobility that can later lead to further mobility experiences in their study careers. Research by Cedefop (2021) shows that apprentices that were satisfied with their short-term experiences became more inclined to undertake long-term learning mobility.[151] According to the OECD report *Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability*, some countries also discuss micro-credentials in the context of promoting internationalisation and student mobility, as the widespread use of micro-credentials could improve cross-border academic recognition.[152]

The study also points to the wide range of different learning mobility formats offered to young people in the Erasmus+Youth and European Solidarity Corps programmes as examples of incentives for participation as they respond to a variety of needs and interests of many young people.

(e) valuing the work of staff preparing and implementing learning mobility projects and activities by making it an integral and formally recognised part of the profession of education and training staff and youth workers, in particular in terms of working hours

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[150] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

[151] Cedefop. (2021). *Cross-border long-term apprentice mobility. Making it work: suggestions for national policy-makers.*

152 OECD Education Policy Perspectives, published 17 March, 2023 , no. 66, available: Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability : Uses and possibilities | OECD Education Policy Perspectives | OECD iLibrary (oecd-ilibrary.org)

quotas and formal requirements for career advancement, and recognising the role of staff mobility in preparing, encouraging and subsequently supporting student mobility.

Quality standards and evaluation criteria applicable in mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, demonstrate that setting up learning mobility activities requires a significant investment of work:

- on substance: to analyse the learning requirements at sending and receiving end, define the learning content of the activity, monitor the participants' progress, provide academic and personal support, and to evaluate and document the achieved learning outcomes (recognition)
- in the form of administrative, financial, logistical, reporting and coordination tasks.

For many education, training and youth organisations these are novel tasks that do not fit easily into existing work roles. This is particularly true in the context of formal education and training where extensive regulation exists on the number and profile of employees, on how work hour quotas are established and what kind of activities can be recognised as part of that quota. As a result, Erasmus+ National Agencies and beneficiaries report that staff working on mobility projects and activities often do so on a volunteer basis without remuneration and at times having to justify their activities, rather than being recognised for performing them. It is also a particular issue in the adult education, youth and youth work sectors, where many organisations lack stable and structural funding and rely on volunteer staff and youth workers with varying conditions.

Two changes are needed to improve the situation: (1) changing the workplace culture and management mind-set to better valorise learning mobility activities and by extension the work necessary to implement them, and (2) creating, expanding and promoting the use of regulatory mechanisms for formal recognition of work on organising learning mobility as a valid professional task that counts towards the working hour quotas and career advancement requirements for education, training and youth staff.

Improvements in formal recognition of work on organising learning mobility activities is a precondition for mainstreaming learning mobility activities. Scaling up the current practices is not possible based on unpaid work of staff investing their free time. The need to recognise the work of those who make mobility opportunities possible has been highlighted by Citizen Panel's Recommendation 14: Recognise the role of educators in learning mobility.

Standardisation of work tasks necessary for international cooperation (including learning mobility) has been a crucial part of successful mainstreaming of learning mobility in higher education over the last 36 years. Successful higher education models for defining new work tasks can be transferred to other fields, should the Member States provide an appropriate regulatory framework and resources.

Staff mobility in higher education also plays an important role in encouraging the mobility of students. Academic staff that has been mobile earlier in their careers and also during their position in their institution can offer encouragement to students. The same goes for administrative staff with mobility experience as they can offer better support and advice to both incoming and outgoing students. It is therefore worth examining the increase of synergies

between student and staff mobility, as pointed out by ACA[153] and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research[154]. They also explain that "recognising the value and additional effort of gaining a mobility experience abroad as part of career progression or workload arrangements by home institutions can be potentially decisive for early career academic staff as well as administrative staff, and should be further incentivised at both the national and European level."

As also highlighted in the study, youth workers play an important role in learning mobility in youth, youth work and volunteering settings. They participate in learning mobility for their own personal and professional development, the latter of particular importance in countries where formal youth worker education and training is less developed. They are also designers and organisers of learning mobility activities for young people. Furthermore, in their daily work with young people, e.g. in youth centres, youth organisations, in open youth work on the streets etc., they play a key role in promoting opportunities and motivating young people of all backgrounds for learning mobility, as well as helping in their preparation, mentoring and support during and after mobility. However, due to limited financial and human resources, youth and youth work organisations are sometimes struggling to engage in learning mobility and even perceiving it as a 'luxury' for which staff time, and youth worker and youth leader time, cannot always be devoted.

3.2.4 Providing information on learning mobility opportunities

(a) putting in place learning mobility promoters – coordinators, contact points, ambassadors or dedicated learning mobility information centres – at regional or local level to share their expertise with regional and local education and training providers, civil society organisations and private actors, to support engagement in learning mobility activities. Encouraging the networking of these coordinators at national and transnational level.

The creation of more and better opportunities for learning mobility abroad necessitates the pooling of resources for preparation and implementation of learning periods abroad, in particular through dedicating human resources to act as mobility promoters or mobility coordinators.

In order for educators, teachers, youth workers, students, pupils and young people to benefit from mobility activities, some staff members have to act as project managers and mobility coordinators: preparing project applications, finding partners abroad, managing EU funds and reporting. These are novel tasks for staff who encounter obstacles in receiving appropriate training and having their work recognised. Tackling these issues is a crucial element in making mobility opportunities a standard in European schools.

Recommendation 14 of the Citizens Panel on learning mobility emphasises the importance of the mobility coordinators, who make learning mobility possible, and the need to properly recognise their role and work. In most cases, in the sectors of VET and school education, this work is conducted by teachers and trainers as an additional task, which is not considered part of their official teaching hours. In the youth field, it can also be performed by voluntary staff

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[153] Towards a revised European learning mobility framework: ACA vision and way forward
[154] The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research's input to the development of a Learning mobility framework

and youth workers under different conditions and considered as an 'add-on' to their normal tasks.

Working together and sharing of experience between mobility coordinators should be encouraged at transnational level. Member States can make use of existing structures or create other opportunities for transnational cooperation.

Member States should also work on the creation of dedicated learning mobility information centres at the regional and local levels. Inputs from the public consultation (a statement from the Lifelong Learning Platform[155]) stress the key role of actors from the local and regional levels in administrative support and in the creation of adequate structures to support learning mobility. The statement supports the idea that learners experience different needs, while access to housing, health care, leisure, accessible learning conditions, access to scholarships becomes ever more difficult as a mobile learner. There needs to be sufficient resources and incentives to maintain such services in order to ensure that learning mobility is tailored to the specificity of the beneficiaries, especially the ones from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such centres should also support beneficiaries of learning experiences in accessing information on work opportunities, traineeships, and apprenticeships in other countries.

As the SIEM Research Report[156] demonstrates, "mobility promotion and preparation initiatives are key to convincing those learners who might not have considered taking part in a mobility opportunity, helping to overcome environmental and attitudinal barriers". The Erasmus Student Network suggests that promotional and pre-departure strategies should be multi-layered and involve a variety of stakeholders, including learners.[157] They suggest that such strategies should be embedded in the broader internationalisation strategies at institutional and national level and that Member States should put in place measures to support the collaboration between organisations representing learners engaged in mobility promotion with other educational institutions and offer them visibility in institutional spaces. These organisations could furthermore be included in the planning of promotional strategies and pre-departure preparation.

Local and national partnerships can also join together to provide valuable support to mobile participants of any type when it comes to support services such as registration in the country or city and with healthcare providers. The Erasmus Student Network points out that "Empowering local associations supporting learners through financial support and institutional recognition can improve the available support for incoming learners while helping to create a culture of learning mobility"[158].

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[155] Learning mobility for all: a lifelong learning approach to targets, process and monitoring https://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/WGINT_LLLP-Statement_Learning-mobility_-April-2023.pdf

[156] Allinson K., Gabriels W. (2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, siem-project.eu

[157] More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility. The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility for all.

[158] More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility. The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility for all.

The importance of having students involved in the entire communication process is also highlighted by ACA, who mention that "Student networks are crucial partners in the entire communication process and should be empowered and supported in their capacity of information multipliers and reference points"[159]. According to the study, a lack of sufficient information and proper guidance was repeatedly highlighted in the reviewed literature as one of the main and most important obstacles.[160]

(b) providing targeted information to learners on learning mobility opportunities throughout the life-long learning cycle, including in schools and youth centres, among vocational education and training and adult education providers, youth work and volunteering providers, higher education institutions, and employers by building on learning mobility promoters and by integrating information about learning mobility opportunities in study and career guidance.

In the study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward' lack of sufficient information and proper guidance was repeatedly highlighted as one of the main and most important obstacles. Information and guidance are necessary to raise awareness about the benefits of learning mobility and overcome psychological barriers. According to the study, promoting the benefits of mobility can be one of the most effective drivers of learning mobility. This calls for more inclusive and accessible information tools and communication channels including measures to address different target groups (e.g., pupils, staff, adult, VET and different learners with fewer opportunities).

The Citizens Panel recommended to make use of ambassadors for a more mobile Europe. This would include the usage of ambassadors publicising and promoting existing learning mobility programmes for all types of target groups and in all types of organisations. Stakeholders in the school education suggested supporting mobility culture by supporting partnerships between key mobility stakeholders (i.e. schools, youth information centres, school students unions, non-profit organisations running mobilities) to provide pupils and parents with information on learning mobility, especially through peer interventions[161]. Stakeholders in the youth field emphasised that more needs to be done to inform young people of the wide range of possibilities for learning mobility, including in non-formal and informal settings. Reaching out through local youth work which operates at the community and grass-roots level, close to young people in diverse situations, can be very effective here.

In a survey, VET learners and stakeholders pointed out the lack of information in their educational institutions or working places, where they would expect to get guidance on their opportunities[162]. It is therefore also necessary for institutions to be supported in their awareness-raising efforts in multiple ways, including the production of promotional

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[159] Towards a revised European learning mobility framework: ACA vision and way forward

[160] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

161 Joint Position Paper on the European Learning Mobility Framework in the school sector Contribution to the EU Public consultation April 2023

[162] In a study carried out in Austria, 69% of the trainers and 40% of the employers surveydresponded they little or no information on transnational mobility opportunity. Auslandsmobilität in der Lehrlingsausbildung, Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, 2021

campaigns, informational materials or involving ambassadors that share their learning mobility experiences with interested individuals in schools.

To support learning mobility of apprentices, stakeholders in the field (EAM) promote the financing of a full-time mobility coach position within apprentice training centres (the people in charge of mobility are generally not full-time and do not have the time to properly support groups or young people who wish to carry out a project abroad). Communication campaigns targeting companies and networking of companies willing to host and send students on apprenticeships are also recommended.

(c) promoting the benefits of a mobility period abroad and provide advice, tips and mentoring, in particular to learners with fewer opportunities, including by making best use of the Erasmus+ App.

Member States should encourage their organisations to make full use of existing platforms such as inclusivemobility.eu and the website of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (https://www.european-agency.org).

(d) encouraging hosting organisations to ensure a smooth reception of incoming learners, including by the availability of information and relevant material;

The attractiveness of a learning mobility destination and reputation of the education institutions can be increased by providing specific services supporting the arrival and stay of mobile learners, and by making information easily accessible via the hosting organisations.

(e) Establishing a link between learning mobility and labour mobility by connecting learning mobility promoters to the EURES network's mobility advisers;

It is important to connect learning mobility promoters to the EURES advisers, a network of over 1000 professionally trained labour mobility specialists with presence nationwide in all EU and EEA countries plus Switzerland.

(f) providing information on living and working conditions of the hosting countries by leveraging on the information available in the EURES portal on Living and Working Conditions in all EU and EFTA countries, including by linking this information to national portals of learning mobility;

The Living and Working Conditions database on the EURES portal contains details on a number of important issues such as finding accommodation, finding a school, taxes, cost of living, health, social legislation, comparability of qualifications, etc; the section also gives information on traineeships and apprenticeships in the different countries

3.2.5 Supporting transparency and recognition of learning outcomes

(a) boosting automatic recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad in education and training sectors at all levels, including for virtual and blended learning, by providing guidance and training for education and training providers and ensuring consistency of decision-making on recognition;

Recognition of qualifications acquired in another Member State and outcomes of learning periods abroad is essential: without it, participants in mobility may lose motivation for mobility, as the outcomes would not be recognised in the other country. In such situations, the mobile learner may be asked to pass the credentials once again. Recognition of qualifications leads to access to education programmes in other countries (such as study cycles), whereas the recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad usually leads to the continuation of an education degree in the home country. Non-formal and informal learning outcomes, those acquired outside of formal learning such as during youth exchanges, also need to be recognised and validated appropriately, as they will not be reflected within any education degree but give the participant valuable skills and competences for the education or career. Recognition and validation of skills is thus essential for fostering learning mobility and a fundamental building block of the European Education Area.

Member States should ensure an automatic procedure to allow for the recognition of qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad. Furthermore, since the 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition the recognition of qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad in higher education and upper secondary education and training (including VET) from any other EU Member State for further learning needs to be automatic. The report from the Commission to the Council on the implementation of the Council Recommendation adopted in February 23 demonstrates progress in implementation of automatic recognition since the adoption of the Council Recommendation, however achieving full implementation by 2025 will require considerable additional efforts.

Various stakeholders have stressed in their input to the public consultation focusing on recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad (LLP, OBESSU, EFIL, EAM, ESN, and more) that strategies need to be implemented to make progress towards recognition, and this was also identified as a barrier to mobility for various sectors in the study.

All recognition is based on trust and transparency between education and training systems. Member States are invited to further implement existing transparency tools, quality standards and quality assurance (such as the EQAVET framework), a framework for common competences, reliable learning outcomes for mobilities (through the use of learning agreements) as well as the use of appropriate tools to this extent, such as Europass and the European Qualifications System (EQF[163]), which facilitates the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications of different national systems. Through referencing National Qualifications Frameworks to the EQF, it is possible to compare all types and levels of qualifications from the national systems.

Having a recognition system in place is not sufficient. Currently, there is little evidence on how recognition happens and what the rate of successfully recognised qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad is. Only a few Member States and a few private mobility providers monitor this systematically. This knowledge is essential to evaluate whether recognition is fair and transparent. Member States are therefore advised to install monitoring systems and keep

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[163] Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning - EUR-Lex - 32017H0615(01) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

records, in line with national legislation, of decisions on recognition of learning outcomes to ensure consistency of decision-making through time and between different organisational structures of institutions. Stakeholders during the public consultation highlighted that funding needs to be available to implement recognition and validation systems that are easy to navigate for learners, parents and education providers.

It is furthermore important, that Member States not only focus their efforts on outcomes of formal learning, but also of non-formal and informal learning abroad. For this reason, Member States shall support organisers of youth learning mobility activities, youth work and volunteering, in systematic use of national or EU frameworks and instruments to identify, document and validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes acquired through learning mobility, via Youthpass, and other appropriate tools.

(b) ensuring the full automatic recognition of qualifications and the outcomes of the learning periods abroad in higher education by making full use of the schemes and tools available, including ensuring through the external quality assurance system the full implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in line with the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide.

(c) Encouraging education institutions to keep record of decisions on recognition of learning outcomes to ensure consistency and transparency of decision-making through time and between different organisational structures of institutions and understanding of the concept and definition of automatic recognition;

When it comes to automatic recognition of learning periods abroad, the only available data is the one from the Erasmus+ programme. The European average in 2020 was 84.4% of credits automatically recognised, with substantial differences between countries. The new Erasmus+ quality framework for the period 2021-2027 has been set in place to achieve full automatic recognition of learning periods abroad through Erasmus+. Automatic mutual recognition entails that the holder of a qualification from one Member State does not have to go through any separate recognition procedure in another and for outcomes of learning periods abroad to be recognised automatically as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. Credits gained during the period of study in another Member State or during a virtual mobility are transferred without delay and counted towards the student's degree without any additional work or assessment of the student (for upper secondary education: provided they are broadly in line with the national curriculum of the country of origin).

For mobilities within Erasmus+ in higher education, this is one of the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). The ECHE provides the general quality framework for European and international cooperation activities a higher education institution may carry out within Erasmus+. By applying for and signing the ECHE, institutions commit to ensure full automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes satisfactorily achieved during a period of study/training abroad, including during blended mobility. According to the SIEM research report 30% of non-mobile higher education students report recognition issues as a barrier to participation in mobility. According to the ESN survey – XIV edition (2022), 71.37% of students have full credit recognition of their mobility period. This is lower than the 84.4% reported by the progress report of the European Commission on the implementation of the 2018

Council Recommendation on automatic recognition. As stated in the Council Conclusions dated on 16 May 2023, Member States need to increase their efforts to make automatic mutual recognition a reality.

(d) Supporting the full recognition of competences acquired through learning mobility in non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering settings, through promoting cooperation on validation arrangements among the relevant bodies across education and training sectors, non-formal learning providers and civil society organisations, so that non-formal and informal learning outcomes can be more easily used in formal education and in the labour market.

The 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning, recognises that informal, non-formal and formal learning complement each other. Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is a crucial aspect of learning mobility in youth, youth work and volunteering settings, contributing to quality and providing educational value to the experiences. Stakeholders and the dedicated study have also stressed the role of validation for the broader recognition of youth work in our societies.

It is therefore important that the involved organisations can rely on validation processes and tools, such as Youthpass and Europass or national tools, to identify and document learning and competences developed by participants in their activities, which can support the continued pathways of young people and youth workers and facilitate their entrance in the labour market or into formal education.

However, as also highlighted in the 2023 updated European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, there is a lack of connection between validation arrangements initiated by civil society, youth and youth work organisations and education and training or labour market initiatives. Therefore, Member States could envisage a strategic approach across policy areas, including education and training, labour market, youth, social inclusion and migration policies, and promote cooperation on validation arrangements among institutions and stakeholders, involving different actors, e.g. youth and volunteering organisations, youth workers, civil society organisations, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce, skilled crafts, national entities involved in professional qualifications recognition and employment services.

To make validation processes better connected and more valuable, Member States could support cooperation for instance, on exploring how common reference points and/or standards can contribute to better communicate between the different forms of learning that occurs through learning mobility, and to facilitate validation across geographical, institutional and sectoral borders. Cooperation is also essential for systematic and comprehensive dissemination of information and effective outreach measures. Civil society, youth and youth work organisations are closer to young people and may have better access to those most in need of validation.

(e) supporting education and training providers, and organisers of youth learning mobility activities, youth work and volunteering in the systemic use of Union frameworks and instruments, including Europass, the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO), European Qualifications Framework (EQF),

Europass Mobility and Youthpass, and/or national frameworks to support the identification, documentation, assessment, and as appropriate certification of competences developed through learning mobility.

The EU Youth Strategy underlines the need for recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes acquired through youth activities, youth work and volunteering, to which the Youthpass Strategy contributes. Issues with recognition are also among the obstacles to learning mobility identified by the dedicated study and stakeholders. When continuing their follow-up to the 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Member States can support organisers of learning mobility activities in youth, youth work and volunteering, in the systematic use of national or EU frameworks and transparency instruments, such as Youthpass and Europass, to promote and enable the identification, documentation, and where appropriate, assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning outcomes acquired through the activities. Member States can also promote cooperation and exchanges between validation arrangements across sectors so that Youthpass certificates, and other certificates of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, would be better recognised and more easily used in other contexts, for example when accessing formal education, apprenticeships or applying for a job.

The Europass Decision identifies volunteers as one of the target groups of individual end-users. It also highlights that the Europass platform is to provide tools for "documenting and describing skills and qualifications acquired through working and learning experiences, including through mobility and volunteering", in particular with the Europass profile and CV and with the Europass Mobility.

(f) taking steps towards the ratification of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education and the relevant regional Conventions to improve fair and transparent recognition of third country qualifications, as well as partial and prior learning.

The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education came into force on 5 March 2023, becoming the first legally binding United Nations instrument on higher education, fostering international mobility and opening up increased opportunities for students and qualification holders worldwide. It establishes universal principles for fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education and offering avenues for further study and employment.

With provisions on non-traditional learning modes, the Global Convention also facilitates the recognition of qualifications, prior learning and study periods earned remotely. With physical mobility long seen as a mark of privilege, the Global Convention contributes to the diversification of mobile student, faculty and researcher populations, as well as the emergence of various mobility pathways, including virtual mobility, making international mobility a more inclusive concept and practice.

For the countries that decide to be legally committed to the Convention's text (States Parties), the Global Convention will be a strong instrument to prevent brain drain, since these countries are engaged in putting in place mechanisms to facilitate the recognition in their countries of

qualifications obtained abroad. In turn, it will also facilitate the return home of academic diasporas who have obtained their qualifications abroad.

While all EU Member States have ratified the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region ("Lisbon Recognition Convention"), only seven have ratified the Global Convention. Ratification by all the EU Member States will send a strong signal towards the EU's international partners regarding Europe's intentions and ambitions in international learning mobility. It will also create a positive momentum for the ratification of the Global Convention, as well as of the Regional Conventions in other parts of the world, by other partner countries.

(g) using policy cooperation, in particular, the Global Policy Dialogue of the Bologna Process and cooperation of recognition authorities and quality assurance agencies, to develop capacities at third countries' higher education institution and align quality assurance processes in order to maximise the learning outcomes of the mobility experience of third country students and to ensure full recognition of the mobility period towards the student's degree in the home country.

Policy cooperation of third countries in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme supports understanding of the European education systems in third countries and help aligning learning outcomes of higher education institutions in third countries and in the EU.

The Global Policy Dialogue of the Bologna Process aims at developing continuous dialogue with other regions and international organisations on matters of common concern and relevance for higher education with respect to which cooperation and sharing of ideas and policies can be mutually beneficial. The Global Policy Forum, organised regularly back-to-back with the Ministerial Conferences of the European Higher Education Area is the main forum for discussion. Currently, the main aims of the Dialogue are to intensify focus on the societal role of higher education to foster effective inclusion of learners not only at the time of access to HE but also with respect to retention, success and employability; promote inclusive mobility as one of the most important keys to global understanding and excellence in higher education; promote further development and use in the practice of the transparency and quality tools necessary for advancing mobility and facilitating recognition; create contacts and support reciprocal referencing of the several overarching Qualifications Frameworks and Qualifications Reference frameworks now functioning or being prepared in the EHEA and other macro-regions; promote student-centred learning and understanding of credit systems or credit reference systems based on Learning Outcomes and student time; develop dialogue about the challenges and opportunities offered by the shift towards digital learning environments, in part triggered by the pandemic.

The network of the National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC network), established in 1984, is a network of recognition authorities of the Erasmus+ Programme countries, and was established to support mobility within the EU. The parties of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, with the aim to advance its full implementation, established the network of National Information Centre in 1997. As the goals between the recognition centres are similar, the joint ENIC-NARIC network was set up in 2004. The

Commission is supporting the secretariat of the NARIC network, and supports its activities with an Erasmus+ grant.

The network has developed cooperation with recognition centres in different regions (MERIC network with Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres; RecoAsia with Cambodia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, RecoLatin with Latin-America). Most of these cooperation initiatives were supported by EU grants (Erasmus+, Tempus). Building on these experiences and established ties with recognition authorities in third countries, the ENIC-NARIC network is one of the important players in Europe to facilitate fair and transparent recognition procedures of qualifications and learning periods of third countries.

3.2.6 Supporting transition to labour market and work mobility

(a) facilitating the transition from learning mobility to work mobility by supporting mobile learners as well as teachers, trainers, other educators and youth workers to access jobseeker support from public employment services and from EURES.

Public employment services (PES) are a key factor in implementing active labour market policies in many Member States. PES provide services for the recruitment and placement of workers, career and vocational counselling or training, skills intelligence and analysis of labour and skills shortages, information on market conditions. PES have a central role in providing services to support young people in their transition between education and the labour market and in the outreach and activation of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Engaging with employers and jobseekers to provide them with support during and after the recruitment process is a key activity of the EURES network. General support services for workers and employers include matching and placing activities, provision of information and guidance, post recruitment assistance and support to youth (including on traineeships and apprenticeships available in other Member States).

These services are therefore available to mobile learners, youth workers, teachers who decide to make the transition from a learning experience to a work experience in another country or are looking for an opportunity to transition to employment in their country after an experience abroad. Member States should facilitate the access to services and information offered by PES and EURES, ensuring connection between learning mobility information promoters and labour market advisors and make such link part of the assistance to mobile learners.

(b) supporting learners, including recent graduates through Erasmus+, to undertake traineeships abroad to develop their entrepreneurial, innovative, creative, and inter-cultural skills.

The study found that enhancing career prospects was an incentive for mobility, especially for students undertaking traineeships abroad. According to the Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact study from 2019, 40% of participants who went on a traineeship were offered jobs with their hosting organisations or companies, and around 10% started their own companies, with more

(75%) planning to do so in the future.[164] As mentioned in the contribution to the public consultation, ESN has reported that there is a higher satisfaction with Erasmus+ mobility periods from students undertaking student mobilities for studies than those undertaking student mobilities for traineeships. ESN suggests this could be due to the lack of support systems for students on traineeships.[165] While students on study mobility have a more structured support system, both at the sending and receiving institutions the mobility process, timing, and destinations are more varied for traineeship students. This can be improved by increasing the involvement of trainees in the local community and can be achieved both through more engagement by local educational institutions, but also other stakeholders, such as student unions and associations and local employers.

(c) encouraging organisations to host trainees from abroad, including through investments, awareness building and accessible information.

ESN also suggests closer cooperation with companies to ensure a quality traineeship experience. This can for example be done by incentivising companies to support trainees and apprentices from abroad, with a focus on those organisations who provide financial support to the trainees.[166]

Member States are therefore encouraged to foster more collaboration with organisations and enterprises when it comes to welcoming traineeship students from abroad, and explore ways of strengthening support measures for both outgoing and incoming traineeship students.

3.2.7 Making learning mobility more inclusive and accessible

(a) setting inclusion targets in national and regional schemes for transnational or international learning mobility that would contribute to the achievement of the EU-level inclusion target set in this Recommendation, and developing dedicated measures to support the mobility of people with fewer opportunities.

The Commission proposed to set a new EU-level target stating that in all education and training, and youth and sport sectors, people with fewer opportunities should account for at least 20% of all learners benefiting from learning mobility abroad. Member States are invited to encourage setting inclusion targets in the cross-border learning mobility schemes that would contribute to the achievement of the EU-level target and developing dedicated measures to achieve these targets.

(b) ensuring learning mobility is accessible for persons with disabilities by removing barriers and addressing their needs from the early stage of the design of the learning activity;

In the public consultation, the European Disability Forum recommended that organisations be in line with the EU legislation the EU Directive on Accessibility of Websites and Applications

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[164] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Erasmus+ higher education impact study: final report, Publications Office, 2019, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/162060
[165] Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility for all
[166] idem

and the EU Accessibility Act, and that institutions should for example have their websites and applications respecting the Accessibility Standards.

The Disability Forum suggests that organisations put in place mechanisms to link the Disability units of learning organisations with their mobility services, in order to provide an inclusive and accessible service

(c) provide the level of support needed to make learning mobility accessible to people with fewer opportunities, as well as support to organisations hosting such people, including by appropriate funding at national or regional level and by fostering synergies among different EU, international, national and regional funding instruments.

Recommendation 10 of the Citizens Panel is to assure tailored financial support for all people going on learning mobility.

Hosting countries, cities and organisations play a large role in making mobility opportunities more inclusive. While participants with fewer opportunities might get additional financial support due to their barriers to mobility, more support can be provided by receiving countries, cities and organisations. This can for example take the form of subsidised housing, public transport support, cultural promotion support, and others in addition to direct financial support, as suggested by the Erasmus Student Network. Information on support from these actors should be gathered and shared with organisations that are involved in organising mobilities.

(d) Providing precise and timely information on available learning mobility funding, the timing of payments and other available support for learners.

Member States should encourage their organisations to make this information easily available for example on their websites, and if relevant to encourage them to include this information on any national information platforms. Member States can encourage their organisations, or organise joint efforts, to do targeted outreach to participants with fewer opportunities to present information on available mobility funding. Having accurate and up to date information on funding and support can encourage participation from non-mobile participants, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

(e) encouraging full or partial pre-payments of grants and allowing the portability of grants and loans. In accordance with national law, encouraging to exempt those grants from any taxes and social levies and to treat grants awarded by public or private legal entities in the same manner; and informing mobile participants about procedural requirements with regard to the income taxation.

The Erasmus Student Network has reported that the timeliness of grant payments matters almost as much as the grant amount itself. According to the ESNsurvey - XIV edition (2022), almost a third of respondents reported receiving their grants later than one month after the beginning of their mobilities. While much of the decisions regarding grant payments lie with the institutions involved in the grant payments, Member States should encourage the timeliness of grant payments. Receiving mobility grants on time is also relevant to the issue of housing as participants might find it challenging to pay large deposits to secure their housing if they have not received their grants. The Erasmus Student Network would encourage pre-departure funding to be the norm for mobility activities, with a specific focus on those participants that

have fewer opportunities. Receiving this funding before the mobility will encourage mobile participants to undertake mobility activities, as it can reduce some stress related to the mobility process and reassure those who have financial concerns.

(f) facilitating learning mobility abroad by addressing student housing shortages for mobile learners, together with relevant national and local authorities.

The study identifies the lack of appropriate accommodation options as a barrier to mobility.[167]

As has been highlighted by the Erasmus Student Network, student housing is fundamental to ensure the quality of a mobility period. Housing problems are a barrier to mobility for many participants with the SIEM research report (2021) showing that 49% of both mobile and non-mobile students fear facing problems with accommodation. By signing the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, higher education institutions participating in the Erasmus programme commit to providing information about accommodation for incoming students. In the field of youth, the European Youth Forum also highlights the lack of adequate financial support to cover the costs of housing as a key obstacle for young people to participate in learning mobility.

As accommodation issues are not solved by one actor, more collaboration between national or local authorities and education providers to make sure that adequate housing options are available to mobile participants, at different times of the year and for different durations.

(g) ensuring, in accordance with EU and national legislation, appropriate protection of mobile participants, including apprentices, trainees, young researchers, and youth workers and in particular of minors, in terms of insurance, labour standards, health and safety requirements, tax, social security including access to health care and, where relevant, the possibility to accumulate pension entitlements.

Dealing with the administrative aspects is a cost for employers when organising both inward and outward mobility of apprentices. Dealing with contracts, taxation, healthcare and social security within different regulatory frameworks are complex tasks and employers, in particular small and medium sized companies do not always have a full picture of the entire process and would not have enough human resources to cover the administrative aspects. It is important to devise measures ensuring that the necessary standards for the health and safety of apprentices are maintained during mobility. In cases where the apprentice has only student status, a social coverage scheme for the apprentice in mobility needs to be created. As apprenticeships often involve minors, regulations in this field are usually more restrictive and differences apply at the sector level.

3.2.8 Making learning mobility more environmentally sustainable

(a) where appropriate, making travelling with more sustainable means of transport from and to learning mobility destinations and during mobility periods, an integral part of the learning mobility experience, and providing adequate funding for as well as guidance on sustainable travel.

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[167] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023)

As proven by the evidence gathered through the study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward', learning mobility participants are willing to plan sustainable travels while participating in mobility activities but they lack of adequate financial support, information and guidance. Moreover, difficulties related to the infrastructures and transportation means across Europe have been highlighted.

Member States should encourage sustainable travels when greener alternatives are feasible and available. In addition, Member States should promote the use of sustainable means of transport by setting affordable and accessible prices, improving infrastructures, and fostering land connections between different countries. Additional financial support and dedicated measures should be provided to support participants to offset higher costs and longer duration of sustainable travels.

Member States should provide learning mobility participants with more guidance and information on the available sustainable options by organising informative and supporting actions and/or empowering organisations and networks operating in the field.

Member states should explore ways to provide additional funding for those who select sustainable means of travel. This can take the form of additional funding for travel for those participants who select a sustainable way of travel to their mobility destination but this can furthermore include subsidising train or bus tickets for those travelling sustainably to the mobility destination, or for those who are already on mobility.

Member states should support the sharing of good practices and guidelines on how to live a more sustainable lifestyle while on mobility, and sustainable practices for the organisation of mobility projects and in the promotion of mobility opportunities. This can include focusing on digital promotional material instead of paper material. The Green Erasmus project provides guidelines for students on how to act sustainably before, during and after their mobility, along with a handbook for higher education institutions on how to include sustainability principles in their internationalisation practices.

(b) supporting education and training providers and civil society organisations that organise learning mobility activities to integrate sustainability practices into their daily activities through training, guidelines and exchange of good practice.

In order to promote the development of green competences, sustainable practices and strategies, the Erasmus+ Programme gives priority to projects addressing sustainability and environmental issues as a thematic topic, or adopting approaches, methods, and actions in line with the green dimension. As a matter of fact, all these aspects are taken into account in assessment of the project proposals. In addition, the establishment of a dedicated resource centre – the SALTO on green transition – aimed at creating and animating a networking community and raising awareness among participants and stakeholders.

Member States should encourage organisations to integrate sustainability practices in their daily activities and support them in making learning mobility more sustainable. Education and training providers and learning mobility organisations should favour projects implementing sustainable practices and/or providing and improving green competences.

Networking communities focusing on the exchange of practices, training and supporting activities should be fostered, thanks to the support of the Member States.

Member states should promote the development and improvement of tools and guidelines to accompany organisations in adopting more sustainable practices. Thus, organisations are encouraged to make use of the different guidelines and tools available to orient activities to sustainability principles.

(c) supporting education and training providers in setting targets and monitoring arrangements at organisational level to cut greenhouse gas emissions from learning mobility travel.

The study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward' provided examples of projects such as Erasmus Goes Green, the Green Erasmus Project and the Air Travel Project aiming to assess the carbon emission derived from international mobility and to raise awareness among the academic world about the environmental consequences caused by international cooperation travels.

Member States should encourage organisations to develop actions and conduct analysis to monitor and collect data on the environmental impact of mobility programmes.

3.2.9 Making use of digital technologies to facilitate learning mobility

(h) supporting the development and use of interoperable IT systems based on common European standards for learners, educators and staff to manage and register learning mobility experiences, and for organisations to provide information on mobility opportunities, manage mobilities and reduce the administrative burden, including by making full use of the features of the European Student Card Initiative and the tools offered by the Europass platform, inter alia through the digitalisation of learning credentials with the European Digital Credentials for Learning infrastructure.

The Council Conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe, adopted on 5 April 2022, are calling Member States and the Commission, in cooperation with higher education institutions, to strive to simplify administrative procedures for institutions, including by further widening the implementation of the European Student Card initiative.

The Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, adopted on 5 April 2022, recommends that Member States support the digitalisation of Erasmus+ mobility management within multilateral partnerships, in particular the standardisation and digitalisation of business processes for the signing of multilateral inter-institutional agreements, including through the widening of the European Student Card initiative.

An efficient management of cross-border mobility experiences suppose that the different systems used at national, regional or institutional levels can communicate with each other. This is the idea that led to the implementation of the European Student Card Initiative and the Erasmus Without paper Network. The higher education community has widely embraced the need to continue and to enhance the process of administrative digitalisation of Erasmus+

mobilities. The implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper Network has demonstrated the validity of the European Student Card initiative approach towards a streamlined and paperless programme management across higher education institutions and a greater mobility of students across borders and campuses supported by digital tools.

Member States should support the development and use of IT systems to manage mobility at national, regional and institutional levels that are compatible with other European IT Systems sharing the same purpose, for all sectors of education and training, besides higher education. Member States should support the development and use of systems using common European standards such as the European learning Model (ELM) to ensure semantic interoperability. Member States should also consider other initiatives such as the European Digital Credentials for Learning, the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure and the future EUDI Wallet which offer common European models when building their own IT systems.

(i) Contributing to initiatives supporting mobility of researchers and providing relevant information and support services, including EURAXESS and the upcoming ERA Talent Platform.

EURAXESS - Researchers in Motion is a one-stop shop for researchers and innovators seeking to advance their careers and personal development by moving to other countries. It provides tailored information and support, free of charge, to researchers, entrepreneurs and research performing organisations. The web portal offers job, funding and hosting opportunities, career development guidance and free tools. EURAXESS network counts 43 European countries and 9 worldwide hubs

The new ERA Communication outlines that EURAXESS services, network and portals will be broadened into an ERA Talent Platform, an online one-stop-shop, with improved structure and governance, exploiting links to Europass, the EU platform for people to manage their learning and careers and the EURES network of European public employment services.

(j) Providing financial and human resources support to education and training providers and civil society organisations, enabling them to effectively set up and utilize digital tools at their level when necessary and/or to use existing digital tools to complement physical mobility.

A lack of financial and human resources can be significant barriers to mobility, as identified in the study. In order for education and training providers and civil society organisations to provide quality support for mobile participants the digital tools they are using need to be up to date and suitable for the purposes of mobility management.

Developing new systems, adapting to existing systems, or training staff in the use of existing tools takes time and requires both dedicated financial and human resources. Member States should therefore provide the required financial and human resources support needed to their mobility providers so that quality support for the mobile participants can be provided.

(k) supporting the development of quality blended and virtual mobility formats by adapting existing national frameworks to further enable complementary innovative mobility formats making use of digital technologies.

Member states should investigate how they can support the development of quality blended and virtual mobility, including by adapting existing national frameworks, if necessary. Member States are encouraged to work together with the relevant stakeholders and organisations to further develop and enable innovative mobility formats utilising digital solutions.

3.2.10 Promoting EU values through learning mobility

(a) encouraging the participation of learners, educators and staff in the life of hosting communities, including volunteering activities, during their learning mobility period abroad;

Participating in the life of hosting communities exposes learning mobility participants to the local culture, traditions and way of life and a more intense language immersion. Engaging in volunteering activities is also an opportunity to interact with local residents, build relationships, and develop a deeper understanding of the hosting community. This fosters mutual respect, tolerance and intercultural competences and can also contribute to exchanges of good practices and methodologies, as well as promoting a learning mobility culture.

In the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, some learning mobility formats explicitly include and promote active participation, connections with local communities and learning experiences through volunteering, e.g. DiscoverEU and youth participation activities in Erasmus+(Youth), volunteering and solidarity projects in the European Solidarity Corps.

Stakeholder feedback, including from the Erasmus Student Network, has stressed that the quality of mobility is enhanced by feeling integrated in the host country and organisation and that civic engagement can amplify the social impact of learning mobility beyond the individual participation. Encouraging and supporting learners, educators and staff in all sectors to actively engage with the local communities while on learning mobility, can also contribute to inter-cultural understanding, promotion of EU values and active citizenship, including mobilisation for taking part in elections at European, national, regional and local levels.

Member States can encourage and facilitate connections and engagement with hosting communities for all learning mobility participants, by promoting partnerships among education and training institutions, providers of non-formal and informal learning and youth work, local actors and civil society and volunteering organisations, which could encourage and foster the engagement of learning mobility participants with the local community.

EU networks with a local and/or micro-local dimension like EUROPE DIRECT centres and BELC could play an important role in encouraging the participation of learners, educators in the life of hosting communities. In particular, they are well placed for improving the knowledge of EU issues and their impact on the hosting community; these networks can engage with people on the ground in discussions and promote the learners' active participation to the local dimension of European democracy during the mobility experience.

(b) enriching learning mobility experience with training in intercultural awareness, civic engagement, digital and media literacy, EU values and fundamental rights;

The evidence gathered through the study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward' proves that mobilities within the EU context have a significant impact on participation in European issues.

The Erasmus+ Programme gives priority to projects aiming to improve participants' knowledge of the EU values and to strengthen democratic participation and active citizenship. As reported by the Erasmus+ Annual report, learning mobility programmes can have a real impact in raising awareness about democratic principles and EU values as shown by the high percentage of Erasmus+ participants declaring they were more aware about EU values after having taken part in mobility activities.

Member States should support their national organisations and institutions in the provision of information on the rights of mobile students when it comes to voting while on mobility. The ESNsurvey 2019 reports that even though "Erasmus+ Alumni have higher interest and are more likely to vote in European elections than the European average, students who are currently on exchange reportedly vote less, due to procedural barriers" .

(c) providing incoming learners, educators and staff with information relevant to local context and fostering a welcoming culture through mentors and administrative support;

Providing relevant information to mobile participants is key to successful quality mobilities. This applies both to outgoing and incoming participants, especially those who go on mobility through less structured programmes or activities.

(d) ensuring that mobile students and staff enjoy the highest level of academic freedom. Encouraging education institutions, including through quality assurance, to develop a quality culture where full adherence to academic integrity principles is ensured also during mobility periods.

Academic freedom and integrity are central to achieve both the European Education Area, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area. In addition, the Communication on a Global Approach to Research and Innovation, Europe's strategy for international cooperation, emphasises the role fundamental principles and values in international cooperation.

In line with the EHEA Rome Ministerial communiqué (Annex I), Academic freedom is a distinct, fundamental democratic right in part grounded in the right to education, and shares elements with freedom of thought, opinion and expression. Academic freedom must be framed by rigorous scientific and professional standards, respect for the rights of others, ethical conduct and the awareness of the impact of research on humans and their environment. It is crucial to advance the standards of academic disciplines and fields of enquiry.

Both higher education staff and student on mobility should benefit from academic freedom. As for students, this is also reflected in the Erasmus+ Student Charter which specifies that students on mobility are entitled to academic freedom in communicating or sharing ideas and facts, as well as in any potential research they might carry out throughout their mobility period. In line with the charter, students shall also respect the code of conduct of the receiving institution and respect the principle of academic integrity.

3.2.11 Promoting the EU as a learning destination

(a) cooperating closely in the Team Europe approach to increase the attractiveness of Europe as a learning destination, utilising the existing range of national and regional initiatives, such as the Study in Europe EU project in higher education;

Critical issues cannot be addressed by using the knowledge and resources of one actor, nation or region alone but require working together – internally and internationally. Tackling challenges requires the adoption of a Team Europe approach, combining actions at Member State and EU level in order to maximize the impact on European and international level. Since 2015, the Study in Europe project has been a prime example of this approach, bringing together higher education stakeholders, which were only loosely connected before, and giving them the forum needed in order to take stock of their achievements and share good practices, but also to look together into the challenges for the sector in the future.

Through the organisation of various online and face-to-face study fairs worldwide, the project aims at raising and strengthening the profile of the entire range of higher education on the world stage and building on Europe's reputation and attractiveness as a study destination. At the same time, various networking events for higher education promoters help peer learning and allow the different actors at EU and national level to assess better their strategic orientations and planning, the coherence between their national strategies and EU objectives, and the level of complementarity of EU and MS activities.

Member States are encouraged to seek synergies between their national and regional promotional schemes and EU initiatives, as well as to use the existing know-how in the field of higher education to expand the attractiveness of Europe as learning destination in other fields, e.g., vocational education and training, informal education via youth programmes.

(b) facilitating learning mobility with other parts of the world, notably with countries with an enlargement perspective, through closer cooperation between their relevant authorities and education and training institutions and those in the Union. Talent Partnerships and the Talent pool can provide a framework for an enhanced cooperation partnerships with third countries in line with mutually agreed objectives as foreseen in the Talent Partnerships initiative, as can including bilateral agreements between organisations. Such cooperation can help ensure learning mobility indirectly contributes to addressing skills gaps in third countries and the EU, for example by targeting skills gaps in sectors affected by the green and digital transitions and improving the employability of learners.

Talent mobility can promote the circulation of skills and transfer of knowledge between the EU and partner countries. This approach is already reflected in the concept of Talent Partnerships, which aim to provide frameworks for reinforced cooperation between the EU, Member States and selected partner countries on talent mobility and skills development in line with mutually beneficial, tailor-made priorities[168].

While Talent Partnerships will be anchored in bilateral cooperation, they have the potential to allow economies of scale to be achieved as actions should simultaneously address the needs of

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[168] COM(2022) 657 final.

all participating Member States, in cooperation with the partner country. The EU is currently launching Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

(c) supporting the timely issuance of visas and residence permits for third-country nationals who are selected for a learning opportunity in a Member State, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council[169] and Directive (EU) 2016/801 801 of the European Parliament and of the Council[170].

A recurrent challenge faced by third country nationals choosing Europe as their learning destination concerns obtaining an authorisation to entry and reside in the EU (residence permit or visa). Various factors contribute to this challenge, e.g., lack of consulates in the home country of third-country applicants, long waiting time for appointments at consulates, long processing time of visa application (more than 90 days for long-term visas, as established by Directive 2016/801, and more than 15 days for short term visa). According to a recent survey of universities in third countries sending students to the EU and hosting universities conducted by EU Delegations and Erasmus+ National Agencies of the Member States on the topic of visas in April 2023, provisional results show that the above mentioned challenges are common to many EU Member States and that an important number of students could not initiate their learning mobility. Another common finding concerned the lack of objective justification for the rejection of visa applications.

The Commission's Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum was adopted on 23 September 2020. It underlined the need to address the main shortcomings of the EU policy on legal migration, with the overall objective of attracting skills and talent the EU needs. Inter alia, the Pact set the objective of making the short-stay visa procedure fully digitalised by 2025, with a digital visa and the ability to submit visa applications online. On 13 June 2023, the Council reached a political agreement with the European Parliament on a proposal for a Regulation to digitalise the visa procedure.

Member States should continue to cooperate closely with the European Commission services on the communication and analysis of data regarding the number of visa authorisations, as foreseen by Directive 2016/801 - Conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing.

Member States should also continue their coordinated effort in the full digitalisation of visa procedures. The first steps towards this objective are very relevant for short-term learning periods either under EU-funded or national exchange programmes, while they will not facilitate administratively applicants that aim for a learning period longer than 3 months in the coming years. A broader positive impact from this first visa digitalisation phase can be expected as from 2028 onwards, in which Member States' role will be crucial.

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[169]   Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243 15.9.2009, p. 1).
[170]   Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (OJ L 132 21.5.2016, p. 21).

3.2.12 Making implementation arrangements

(a) developing by May 2025, action plans for 2025-2030 at national or regional levels in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and notifying them to the Commission, on how to implement this Recommendation in higher education, vocational education and training, school education and adult education sectors and in youth and sport systems addressing both outgoing and incoming learning mobility;

Member States are invited to establish structural cooperation with stakeholders in the area of learning mobility in view of the implementation of this Recommendation, including the contribution to the EU-level targets set in it. Action plans at national or regional level for 2025-2030 should cover all education and training sectors – higher education, vocational education and training, school education, and adult education, as well as youth and sport sectors and should address both, outgoing and incoming learning mobility.

Point 3.3.1 (a) provides more details on the implementation of this point.

(b) fully cooperating with the Commission in respect of the actions it intends to take as explained in the recitals 27-39;

The Commission intends to further supporting the implementation of this recommendation by building on existing actions and tools, in cooperation with the Member States. Point 3.3 provides details on the implementation of this point.

3.2.13 A policy framework for teacher's mobility

Considering the European Education Area policy priority on enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession and its challenges as stressed by the aforementioned Council Conclusions, in particular regarding obstacles to mobility, a policy framework for teachers' mobility is presented in the Annex I of the Commission proposal.

More specifically, teacher mobility can contribute to the following challenges highlighted in the Council Conclusions for supporting mobility in initial and in-service teacher and trainer education and training systems:

- reinforcing the attractiveness of the profession, in order to address the shortages of teachers in many Member States;
- support teachers' competences in:
  o working in environments transformed by technology, digitalisation and artificial intelligence, with attention to their pedagogical potential and ethical, safe and responsible use;
  o working in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms and learning environments, with learners from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and, with different needs, including special educational needs;
  o using various research-based teaching methods and practices, mainstreaming innovative and digital methods and approaches, with a focus on learner-centred and competence-based approaches, in line with the evolving and individual needs of learners, in order to facilitate the learning process and support the co-

creation of teaching and learning, while ensuring that such practices are inclusive, socially just and equitable;

Developing transnational mobility for teachers during their initial education and continuous professional development has been a longstanding priority and specified in the Council Conclusions enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility[171]. The Council conclusions stressed the benefits of mobility for the professional development of teachers themselves but also for the development of a European dimension in the activities and projects of their education and training institutions hence mobility of teachers, in addition to pupil mobility, has an impact on the whole education and training system.

In order to mainstream learning mobility of teachers in Europe, the obstacles identified so far in EU Member States and elaborated under part 2 of this staff working document should be addressed by measures at system and local levels.

•At system level, it is recommended to integrating mobility in initial education and continuous professional development of teachers

Initial education

Transnational mobility as part of initial teacher education has many long-term benefits: in addition to the benefit for the prospective teacher, such mobility also increases participation in mobility at later career stages (ibid.).

In order to address obstacles to learning mobility in initial teacher education as highlighted in the Eurydice report "Key data on education in Europe" and the Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility as well as the Council conclusions European teachers and trainers for the future mentioned above, the policy framework recommends to embed mobility in initial teacher education as a part of the curricula (whatever be the main topics of such a curricula, e.g not only curricula of future language teachers).

To do so, time slots -called mobility windows, when such a learning mobility period, in particular teaching assignment, is easy to implement without prejudice to the future teachers study- should be earmarked in the academic year. Such mobility windows in the initial teacher education system should be consistent with mobility windows earmarked in the school academic year (see below) to facilitate learning mobility periods abroad for continuous professional development.

In addition, it is recommended to recognising learning mobility as being an integral part of initial teacher education.

Furthermore, future teachers should be equipped with the right skills for carrying out learning mobility periods abroad, not only during their initial teacher education but also along their career: modules dedicated to such skills, like language skills, intercultural mediation and digital skills are necessary to make the most of the learning mobility experience.

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[171] Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service education and training (2022/C 167/02)

Initiatives such as the European Teachers Academies, facilitates networking, knowledge sharing and mobility among institutions providing teachers and trainers with learning opportunities at all phases of teachers' and trainers' careers, sharing of best practices and innovative pedagogies, allowing for mutual learning at a European scale. The aim is to increase the number and quality of learning mobility of teachers in Europe based on their actual mobility needs.

Continuous professional development

Improving the visibility and accessibility of opportunities for professional development has been identified as an important step in creating a profession that is attractive, motivating and fulfilling. Transnational mobility contributes to the development of a wide range of competences among teachers. However, still only a minority of teachers in Europe have been abroad for professional purposes.

Several measures need to be taken at system level to have learning mobility played an actual role in the continuous professional development of teachers:

- embedding "mobility windows" in the school year, to earmark time slots when sending and hosting teachers and future teachers is appropriate and easy to implement; such a time slot should also facilitate the replacement of teachers;
- providing incentives to teachers by formally recognising and valorising outcomes of learning periods abroad as a a legitimate and valuable part of the professional activities of teachers; recognition of outcomes can be ensured by referring to European tools available for ensuring transparency and comparability of skills;
- facilitating the replacement of teachers by allocating resources and flexibility in procedures to schools;
- clarifying procedures to ensure good conditions for teachers carrying out a learning mobility period abroad, from an administrative point of view (e.g as regards social security, taxation, etc).

•At local level, it is recommended to enhancing cooperation with education and training authorities, schools and any relevant partner to define and implement a strategic approach towards mobility of teachers with appropriate resources

Mobility of teachers needs to be part of the overall strategic development of schools.

To do so, it is necessary to involve all relevant stakeholders at local level, especially for pooling resources, facilitating replacement of teachers, taking benefit of the local ecosystem of organisations involved in education and training to find partners abroad as well as establishing networks of organisations between Member States.

Furthermore, promotion is necessary to raise awareness of decision makers and school leaders about the benefits of teacher mobility at individual, school and local levels.
In this context, school leaders should be supported by specific training and be rewarded for their involvement in learning mobility projects in the context of their school development.

The pivotal role of education and training leadership should be taken into account when developing good environments and conditions for the development of competences and motivation of teachers, trainers and educational staff, thus ensuring that education and training institutions operate as learning organisations[172].

In order for some teachers to benefit from mobility activities, some staff have to act as project managers and mobility coordinators: preparing project applications, finding partners abroad, managing EU funds and reporting. These are novel tasks for staff who encounter obstacles in receiving appropriate training and having their work recognised. Tackling these issues is a crucial element in making mobility opportunities a standard in European schools.

Teaching staff at all levels, including school leaders, would benefit from increased learning mobility and networking, given the important role these have played in enhancing the quality of education and training systems and institutions, as well as in making such systems and institutions more open, more outward-looking, more accessible and more efficient[173].

3.2.14 A policy framework for mobility of apprentices

Apprenticeships based on strong partnerships can bring benefits to the training and employability of young people, to company workforce skills, and to society as a whole. VET learner mobility, short and long duration, has proven to improve the employability of all VET students, including apprentices. Nevertheless, as presented in Chapter XX, structural constraints limit the chances of apprentices to participate in mobility activities.

In order to ensure equal access to apprentices to the benefits of mobility experiences, the proposal invites Member States to apply a strategic approach based on strong social partnership and involving all the levels and actors concerned.

Elements of Annex II explained

1. System level requirements for facilitating apprentice mobility

   (a) **Including mobility of apprentices as part of national internationalisation strategy for education and training and of sectoral (economic) strategies – this can include an incremental approach building on short-duration mobility in cross-border regions/selected sectors or through fostering short-duration collective / rotation mobility scheme**;

Specificities of and interest in apprentice mobility vary across sectors. While some sectors (for example the construction, automotive and crafts sectors) push strongly for mobility, others seem to be less interested. It may depend on the level of internationalisation of the sectors: some sectors have a stronger tradition in apprentice – and worker – international mobility, others may involve occupations that are perceived by stakeholders as characterised more by country specific cultural elements and values. Certain sectors are more exposed to seasonality (e.g. tourism) also impacting the implementation of apprentice mobility. Nesting apprentice

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[172] Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training
towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), (2021/C 66/01)
[173] Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders (2009).

mobility in international and sectoral strategies, involving social partners to support employers and developing broad-scale, sector-specific measures and networks can help to address sectoral needs and specificities.

Policies can also focus on certain geographic area by piloting apprenticeship mobility first in cross-border regions to gradually expand it building on good practices. Building (sectoral) cross-border networks can allow introducing rotation schemes, where a sending company can become a receiving one too, helping employers with limited exposure to internationalisation and administrative capacity, in particular small and medium sized enterprises, to participate in mobility schemes. The option of developing reciprocal circular-type exchange arrangements between two countries may eliminate fears that the apprentice will not return due to an attractive job offer abroad.

Promoting regional cross-border mobility (internationalisation on a 'small scale') probably on a daily (or weekly) basis would have the additional advantage that the apprentice would reside at or be close to home and not miss peers/friends/family.

(b) **Fostering internationalisation, by building on the know-how of the Centres of Vocational Excellence, which connect reference VET providers across Member States, foster cooperation, including with stakeholders, and strive to develop high quality curricula and qualifications focused on sectoral skills needs and societal challenges. Centres of Vocational Excellence act as drivers of excellence and innovation and promote a proactive role for VET in local and regional economic development;**

Creating an international environment for VET learners and teachers brings benefits to all VET stakeholders including business, industries and the society as a whole: it results in more motivated teachers/trainers and students, a more relevant training provision with skills of newly qualified learners meeting the needs of employers and overall an increased attractiveness of VET. Both the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational educational and training and Osnabrück Declaration explicitly call for the promotion of the international dimension of VET. The European Citizens' panel also highlighted the need for a deeper integration of the VET sector in Europe. The Centres of Vocational Excellence provide a proven model for internationalisation by developing joint activities and exchanges among partners which could contribute to reduce barriers to access and improve the trust and the quality of VET.

(c) **Allocating dedicated staff (ambassadors, focal point, mobility coordinators) at local and national levels for raising awareness of and facilitating mobility of apprentices as regards the various national and regional schemes; mobility coordinators support the preparation and implementation of mobility projects and activities, including mentoring apprentices, supporting hosting and sending institutions and dealing with logistics and administrative procedures;**

'Lack of support or information' was ranked amongst the top three obstacles preventing VET learners from engaging in learning mobility according to the preparatory study. In addition to availability, the quality of information services is also important. The need for organisational support being offered to companies, regardless of size was also identified by the study as a necessary incentive. Such structures are needed both in the sending country and in the receiving

country. Their role could include matching apprentices with in-company placements, defining the training plan and related mobility objectives before the apprentice leaves, providing know-how and support to address the many logistical and practical aspects related to organising mobility (accommodation, social security and residence permits, housing and utilities, bank accounts). Allocating human resources or support personnel to coordinate learning mobility activities of apprentices can significantly enhance the awareness of the parties concerned and the quality and safety of the implemented projects.

> d) **Fostering an ecosystem for apprenticeship mobility, inter alia, by establishing new networks or strengthening existing ones between employers, VET providers, public employment services and social partners, taking advantage of existing initiatives like the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA);**

The multi-stakeholder character of vocational education and training requires structures of broad cooperation among stakeholders. As part of their recommendation for a deeper integration of the VET sector in Europe, the European Citizens' panel stressed the importance of the incentivisation and inclusion of all the stakeholders in VET. European initiatives as the EAfA offer a platform for members, including networks, to cooperate on learning mobility of apprentices, among other topics, and offer the possibility for connecting relevant actors at all levels.

> (e) **Having curricular arrangements that facilitate mobility of apprentices without negative impact on completion of their studies and recognition of the learning outcomes acquired abroad (for example by including a dedicated mobility module in the curricula or by introducing distant courses, where needed and possible);**

VET qualifications and apprenticeship schemes can be fundamentally different in countries which results in difficulties to communicate training objectives to employers in other countries and in their limited comparability hampering the possibility for recognition of the learning outcomes achieved. Building on learning outcomes and competence-based approaches as well as curricula, and designing transparent and flexible training pathways and qualifications, including training packages/modules of what has to be done and taught during mobility stays can help to alleviate this problem.

To overcome the differences in alternance structure, distance courses could be introduced for those apprentices that also need to undertake theoretical training.

> (f) **Ensuring easy access to legal and administrative requirements for apprenticeship mobility related to compensation and legal status of mobile apprentices**;

Dealing with the administrative aspects is a cost for companies when organising both inward and outward apprenticeship mobility. This is cumbersome for medium and large companies, and even more for small and micro companies that would not have enough human resources to cover the administrative aspects. Companies are confronted with the complexity of differences in administrative procedures and regulatory frameworks among the hosting and sending countries. Guidelines, tips, checklists and other practical tools that help structure and manage apprentice mobility experiences would make the job of all involved parties easier and increase the willingness to engage.

(g) **Facilitating the work permit procedures for incoming apprentices where relevant**;

When it comes to extra-EU mobility flows, the EU aims to attract some of the best talents to study in the EU. Countries offering strong incentives for students' retention (such as exemptions from labour market checks, work permits) are still an exemption than the rule. Facilitation of the issuance of work permits, where applicable, amongst others for third country national apprentices, can promote the participation of companies and learners in apprentices' mobility.

(h) **Encouraging bilateral agreements with other Member States (or regions if applicable)** to remove any persisting barriers and for the recognition and comparability of skills acquired (e.g. through a common quality framework).

Across the EU countries, the status of apprentices varies from one of employee (or equivalent) to one of learner. The former is covered by the social security system, regulations for safety and health as well as for overtime/ shift work (especially for minors), while the latter is not. This raises concerns about the legal protection of apprentices during periods of apprenticeship mobility in countries where apprentices do not enjoy the status of employee or equivalent. Additionally, social security regulations may differ between countries and that might pose problems for apprentice mobility. Bilateral agreements concluded with other Member States or third countries can reduce uncertainties and provide clear instructions for stakeholders on the issue of the overall employer liability for mobile apprentices while abroad for example by envisaging a secondment agreement without putting the employment contract on hold, or the clarification of the employer's liabilities in the event of work-related accidents.

Bilateral agreements can also include structured work on the comparison of skills included in qualifications available in the apprenticeships schemes, facilitating their transparency, the communication of expected learning outcomes and the recognition procedures between the sending and the host organisations.

(i) **Involving social partners** at all stages of the design, implementation and follow-up of apprentice mobility;

Involvement of professional branches and social partners is necessary to improve clarity, coherence and comparability of apprenticeship competence standards, and to build transparent and flexible qualifications and curricula based on a learning outcomes and competence-based approach. Social partners could work towards aligning occupations, comparing standards, and enhancing trust between stakeholders. Involving VET institutions and/or other supporting organisations is equally important, both in the sending country and receiving country. Their role could include matching apprentices with in-company placements, defining the training plan and related mobility objectives before the apprentice leaves, providing know-how and support to address the many logistical and practical aspects related to organising mobility (accommodation, social security and residence permits, taxation issues, housing and utilities, bank accounts).

2. Support to apprentices

(a) **Implementing mobility in an accessible and inclusive manner providing specific support for people with fewer opportunities and with disabilities;**

While the Erasmus+ programme allows for specific provisions for the participation of individuals 'with fewer opportunities' also including apprentices, actual implementation can be difficult. Disadvantages can range from access, i.e. practical, legal or administrative barriers, but they can also be intrinsic, such as psychological barriers due to low skills levels[174].

Success demands a professional approach to the way mobility programmes are structured, with systems designed to meet the needs of the target group. Length of stay, mode of sending, preparation, debriefing and integration upon homecoming, etc. must all be designed for this target group and learning mode.

(b) **Complementing Erasmus+ grants with additional funding to cover the costs of apprentices' mobility;**

Cost is an important disabler of apprenticeship mobility. It consists of several elements, making it comparatively higher than in case of other target groups. Apprentices are often young therefore accompanying staff is needed to participate in the exchanges. Apprentice salaries or social security costs also have to be covered while abroad. Employers have to face the loss of productive work while the apprentice is abroad. To cover living costs of the apprentice abroad, Erasmus+ funding often needs to be topped up.

Government or sectoral funding would be necessary to cover the relative costs, protecting both employers and apprentices. While it might take time to set up such funding mechanisms, discussions could start at national level by taking inspiration from existing practices in this domain.

Exempting employers from paying apprentice salaries while abroad, with government and/ or hosting companies covering the relative direct and indirect costs can be a solution to overcome this barrier.

A good example is Denmark, where the OPU programme reimburses some of the costs for students as well as employer.

(c) **Promoting pedagogical arrangements and tools to support mobility of apprentices for example through distance courses;**

Evidence suggests that even when curriculum is in theory flexible and the training regulations foresee the possibility of learning abroad, in practice there are issues with the recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad. For instance, recognition of theoretical subjects in the sending country's curriculum cannot always be validated if they have been completed in another country. To overcome the differences in alternance structure, distance courses could be introduced for those apprentices that also need to undertake theoretical training. This could

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[174] Microsoft Word - 5155 EN text.doc (europa.eu)

prevent apprentices from losing time of study progress and having trouble returning to the regular timing and alternance of company training and part-time vocational schooling.

(d) Providing increased support and outreach to apprentices including on language preparations support (developing specific language learning materials for certain occupations in English and the language of receiving countries);

Apprentices often have comparatively poor foreign language skills, or for some learners, it is their lack of confidence in their foreign language skills which is a significant barrier, as it makes them think they would not be capable of living and working abroad and would be unable to make a success of the opportunity. Investing in language training at the beginning of the apprenticeships would address a major constraint of why apprentices are reluctant to undertake cross-border mobility (both short- and long-term).

(e) Devising accompanying measures for apprentices going abroad for example by developing a mentoring/buddy system for the preparatory phase, by offering virtual mobility in the preparatory phase (to complement the physical mobility) and when being abroad or by supporting apprentices upon return to reintegrate into their working environment and use their newly acquired skills;

The Erasmus Quality Standards also applicable to VET clearly describes the minimum requirements during the phase of preparation, participation and follow up phase of mobility experiences. They call for identifying a mentor or a similar key person such as a buddy who should be following the participant during their stay at the hosting organisation. Tasks can include the support of the incoming apprentice to take care of the logistical aspects (accommodation, the internet, etc.) and to help them to achieve the desired learning outcomes. To better prepare apprenticeship mobility, the beneficiary organisations are expected to make maximum use of the digital tools, online platforms, and other digital opportunities. In order to make best use of the skills and competencies gained abroad, assessment and recognition procedures have to be in place upon return. Issuing a stackable, preferably digital credential on the learning outcomes achieved is a crucial step in the process. Following up activities can include career planning building on the learning outcomes acquired abroad by the individual. On organisational level, monitoring and the collection of evidence on the benefits and lessons learned is necessary to further improve the quality and relevance of future apprentice mobility experiences.

(f) Promoting widely opportunities for apprentices in VET schools, including Erasmus+ opportunities and international mobility schemes, via a dedicated network of advisors and social media.

One of the key obstacles for apprentices is the lack of information, administrative support to submit their application, and executive support before and after the mobility. Many apprentices are still not well-informed about mobility opportunities available for them and the benefits it can bring. Setting up a dedicated network of mobility advisor or mobility coordinators to raise awareness by building on good experiences and promoting existing opportunities is essential to reach out to learners and companies.

(g) Promoting widely the opportunities for apprentices offered on EURES online portal in order to assist mobile learners in their transition into the labour market

In addition to an overview of available apprenticeships around Europe, all the EURES countries have a separate overview, in the section of Living and Working Conditions of the portal, of the country's definition of apprenticeships, eligibility furthermore targeted information for both employers and jobseekers on all aspect the topic, including for example what rights and allowances apply.

3. Support to companies

In countries where an apprentice is an employee or equivalent, the contract remains valid even during the mobility of the apprentice and employers are generally obliged to pay apprentice salaries and are also legally liable from an employment perspective. This might raise questions for employers in relation to whether, how and at what cost they can let the apprentice leave (e.g. should they keep paying the apprentice while abroad?). Apprenticeships nested in employment contracts are associated with a high degree of apprentice dependency on the employer. This may also translate into less flexibility to fit mobility in the training programme and define the relative learning outcomes. Envisaging specific legal provisions e.g. a secondment agreement without putting the employment contract on hold can be beneficial.

For example, as of January 1, 2023, the Slovak Parliament has approved an amendment to the Act on Health Insurance No.580/2004 Coll., regulating the public healthcare insurance for general healthcare provision in Slovakia. Accordingly, all international scholarship holders funded by national mobility scholarships, EU funded mobility scholarships, and mobility scholarships based on international agreements will be fully covered, for free, by the Slovak public health insurance if they are awarded the scholarship for a period of more than one month. The eligible mobility programmes include Erasmus+, the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic (NŠP), CEEPUS, Scholarships of the Government of the Slovak Republic, and Fulbright Slovakia.

(a) Financial incentives are provided to employers to compensate them for the period apprentices are abroad as well as to apprentices who complete their qualification upon return to their sending employer;

Mobility at system level can be facilitated with a funding scheme which reimburses some of the costs for students, including the differences in remuneration (where it applies), as well as employers to make up for their loss of production while the apprentice is abroad. It is important to ensure that such costs are taken care of, without placing the financial burden on the employer or the VET provider.

(b) Targeted assistance is provided to employers, in particular for small and medium sized enterprises, for example by supporting the establishment of intermediary networks among receiving and sending countries, preferably on a sectorial basis to assist companies with organisational issues and with dealing with legal requirements;

To engage more employers, in particular small and medium sized companies, in apprenticeship mobility, it is necessary to devise solutions addressing company concerns over loss of productive work, high administrative burden, brain drain and abuses. The establishment of training alliances/networks (ideally at the sectoral level) seem crucial for the establishment of relations of trust needed to scale up apprenticeship mobility. Public Employment Services have an important role to play, considering their role in labour market intelligence and direct support to matching offer and demand. Though this may vary across countries, PES have an important role to play in monitoring shortage occupations, making this information available to stakeholders. They also play a specific in matching offer and supply of apprenticeships, in particular those supported by Active Labour Market Policies.

(c) **Promoting Erasmus+ opportunities and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships** amongst companies highlighting the benefits of hosting and sending apprentices on mobility.

Given the tangible evidence on the lack of sufficient information on Erasmus+ and other opportunities for apprentices, Member States should, through National Agencies, VET providers, and intermediary organisations, enhance the quantity, quality, and inclusiveness of the information and guidance services offered to staff in relation to both nationally and EU-funded mobility programmes. Information and guidance for companies (especially those hosting apprentices in cross-border long-term mobility) on the process, legalities, and benefits of sending and/or hosting apprentices should be offered and/or enhanced. Such support should ideally cover topics such as concluding contracts, managing taxation, and managing healthcare and social security coverage, which would contribute to alleviating the administrative burdens that represent a key barrier to the participation of companies in apprentice mobility. Member States should also promote knowledge on the European Alliance of Apprenticeship and its services to support apprenticeship mobility.

3.3 Actions of the Commission

3.3.1 Supporting the implementation of the Recommendation

(a) **developing guidelines for the preparation of actions plans** referred to in point 12 of the recommendation and drafting an overview report of these plans to support peer learning opportunities and exchange of good practice.

As specified in the point 3.2.12 (a), Member States are invited by May 2025 to develop action plans for 2025-2030 at national or regional levels in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and notify them to the Commission, on how to implement this Recommendation in each education and training sector and in youth and sport systems addressing both outgoing and incoming learning mobility.

These one-off action plans will help to consolidate the efforts of Members States and all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of learning mobility opportunities for everyone. With the facilitation of the Commission, these action plan will also serve for peer learning and exchange of good practice. The Commission will propose guidelines to the Member States on drafting the action plans.

(b) further supporting the implementation of this recommendation by building on the cooperation and co-creation of expert groups under the European Education Area governance.

The European Education Area strategic framework was put in place to promote and structure collaboration between European Union Member States, the European Commission and other key stakeholders of the EEA to achieve a series of common goals. Policy cooperation includes a whole range of peer learning methods for mutual learning, technical exchanges and the identification of good practices, among others.

Commission expert groups are at the service of the strategic framework with the aim of benefiting the Member States and the Commission in their work on furthering policy development at the technical level. They are composed of experts from Member States, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries (e.g. in the case of EEA Strategic framework Working Groups) or independent experts, international organisations, stakeholders, as appropriate.

This would include the seven EEA strategic framework Working Groups, five sector-focused (on early childhood education and care, on schools, on higher education, on vocational education and training and the green transition and on adult learning), and two issue-focused (on digital education and on equality and values), as well as other Commission expert groups contributing to European cooperation in education and training and to building the European Education Area (such as the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks or the Expert Group on Wellbeing and supportive learning environments at school).

(c) **encouraging and supporting youth participation** in designing and implementing learning mobility strategies and programmes at local, national and European levels.

As demonstrated in the Conference on the Future of Europe 2021-2022, the European Year of Youth 2022 and the Citizen's Panel for this learning mobility initiative, encouraging youth participation instils a sense of civic responsibility and engagement, empowering young people to form their contribution and learning experiences, which also supports their growth and development. Ultimately, participatory and co-creation approaches benefit society as a whole by fostering a generation of informed, engaged, and motivated young citizens who actively contribute to shape learning mobility opportunities and to strengthen local communities and the broader European society.

It is therefore key to involve and consult young people when designing, implementing and monitoring learning mobility strategies and programmes to ensure that these initiatives adapt and cater to the actual needs and aspirations of youth, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement. As emphasised by stakeholders, including the European Youth Forum and the Erasmus Student Network, by actively involving young people and organisations working with and for them, public authorities at all levels from local to European, can gain valuable insights into their challenges and preferences, thereby tailoring strategies and learning mobility programmes to be more relevant and effective. Furthermore, such involvement promotes inclusion and diversity as it allows for a broader representation of perspectives and backgrounds in the planning and programming processes.

Programmes and instruments such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the EU Youth Dialogue, the EU Youth Coordinator, stakeholder platforms, alumni networks and initiatives, flagship events including the Erasmus+ Days and the European Youth Week, will continue to be mobilised to encourage and support youth participation. Involvement of learners and stakeholder engagement should also be promoted at local and national levels in the development and implementation of learning mobility strategies and programmes.

(d) **further developing, promoting and providing support through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes for the use of EU tools that support the implementation of learning periods abroad**, like the European Student Card Initiative, Online Language Support, the European School Education Platform, the European Youth Portal, General Online Training, Youthpass and Europass.

Preparatory work is undertaken to bring together the three components of the European Student Card initiative (Erasmus Without Paper, Erasmus+ App, European Student card project) into a coherent and integrated ecosystem, bringing the maximum benefits to users. The objective is to develop a system that will remove most of the current causes of interoperability issues ensuring a streamlined and efficient exchange of data and documents between education institutions and mobile learners and staff.

In the public consultation, ESU highlighted the need to continue to offer language courses beyond upper-secondary education (preferably for free), and that institutions must also pay attention to the language proficiency of staff involved in mobile student support. The Citizen panel also recommended improving language learning through new technologies.
The Erasmus+ programme offers language learning support to all mobile participants via the Online Language Support (OLS) platform.

As the lack of language skills remains one of the main barriers to the participation in European education, training and youth mobility opportunities, the OLS platform makes language support accessible in a flexible way, allowing participants to access online course before, during and after their learning mobility. The aim is to help participants improve their knowledge of the language in which they will work, study or volunteer abroad so that they can make the most out of their experience.

(e) **further developing, promoting and providing support for the use of EU tools that support the transparency and validation of outcomes of learning periods abroad and credentials**, in particular Youthpass and the Europass platform/Europass Mobility, including through semantic interoperability through the European Learning Model and the European Digital Credentials for Learning.

To facilitate recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad and enable automatic recognition within EU Member States, the Commission is exploring synergies between the Erasmus+ learning agreements and **Europass Mobility documents** for upper secondary education and training needs, allowing for a smooth transition from agreed to recognised learning outcomes. This will allow sending and hosting institutions, together with the participant of the learning mobility, to agree upon learning outcomes before the mobility and have them easily certified afterwards for an automatic recognition, if the conditions agreed upon before the mobility were met. The Commission is also exploring the digitalisation of the Europass Mobility under the European Digital Credentials for Learning infrastructure.

(f) **Further developing and providing support to the European Universities alliances, including through the Erasmus+ programme and policy support**, allowing them to realise their full potential and act as role models for the higher education sector by fostering seamless and embedded mobility in European inter-university campuses, promoting the use of micro-credentials, and paving the way towards a possible joint European Degree.

European Universities alliances work towards establishing European higher education inter-university 'campuses 'where students, doctoral candidates, and staff benefit from seamless mobility opportunities (physical, blended mobility or virtual learning) to study, train, teach, do research, work, or share services in any of the partner institutions. Embedded mobility at all levels, including at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, is a standard feature. They strive for at least 50% of the students within the alliance to benefit from such mobility, be it physical, virtual, or blended. Acting as trailblazers for the entire higher education sector, European Universities develop flexible learning opportunities and alternative learning pathways for example through the use of micro-credentials, and play pivotal roles in paving the way towards a possible joint European degree by actively contributing to the ongoing Erasmus+ pilot projects on the joint European degree label.

The Erasmus+ programme will continue to support the further roll-out of the European Universities initiative through calls for proposals, covering education and the link with research and innovation, all at the service of society. Under the budgetary period of 2021-2027, Erasmus+ assigns a record of around EUR 1.1 billion to the European Universities initiative. This means up to EUR 14.4 million available for each European Universities alliance covering 4 years, which is almost 3 times more than the amount offered during the 2019-2020 piloting phase. Alliances may be able to extend this period of 4 years of funding with 2 extra more years, to be confirmed under the 2026 and 2027 Erasmus+ work programmes. Next to these dedicated funding streams for European Universities, they can also access other Erasmus+ funding opportunities, linked to for example student and staff mobility and innovation.

The Commission is committed to support the long-term engagement of the Erasmus+ European Universities alliances. As announced in the European strategy for universities, Commission services are working on an investment pathway for European Universities alliances to provide the alliances with continuous support also beyond 2028-2029. The objective is to facilitate a more comprehensive funding approach, complementing the educational dimension with support across all alliances' missions, and seeking for synergies with national and regional funding.

The Commission also works together with the Member States and relevant stakeholders towards the implementation of the Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation. The Council Recommendation aims to foster greater coherence and compatible policy priorities, and create appropriate conditions at national level for enabling closer and sustainable transnational cooperation, such as for European Universities. Such favourable conditions enhancing seamless cooperation also intends to benefit the entire higher education sector. Aiming to take transnational cooperation to a new level of intensity and scope and to directly benefit the students, the Recommendation has the ambition to improve students' skills and employability by getting easier access to modern and innovative transnational campuses, to mobility abroad, and to transdisciplinary learning.

(g) **providing further support from the Erasmus+ Programme, by encouraging cooperation and mutual learning of Member States in ensuring automatic recognition of qualifications and the outcomes of the learning periods abroad carried out in education and training sectors at all levels**, including for virtual and blended learning.

The Erasmus+ programme will continue to support the implementation of the Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad in higher education and upper secondary education and training among others through its bi-annual targeted calls for NARICs. These calls have recently been focused on automatic mutual recognition and put an increased focus on upper secondary education and training, encouraging and enabling NARICs to work together on joint projects and make serious progress in the field.

Erasmus+ funds and structures will also be used to provide further training to prepare school heads and teachers in fostering automatic recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad as part of training and cooperation activities (TCA).

The Commission is committed to supporting Member States in developing mutual trust among education systems and adapting national legislation as needed. For this, the cooperation with National Academic Recognition and Information Centres, peer learning and exchange of best practices and the implementation of a learning outcome approach for recognising outcomes of learning periods abroad will be supported by the Commission.

As stressed by various stakeholders in their input to the public consultation focusing on recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad (LLP, OBESSU, EFIL, EEE-YFU, EAM), structures and cooperation at EU level are required for advancing support. For this reason, additional information on automatic recognition will be provided via existing online platforms, creating transparency and increasing the level of awareness of all involved stakeholders as well as participants.

To facilitate recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad and enable automatic recognition within EU Member States, the Commission is exploring synergies between the Erasmus+ learning agreements and **Europass mobility documents** for upper secondary education and training needs, allowing for a smooth transition from agreed to recognised learning outcomes.

(h) **Continue to support** Member States towards a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages, notably through peer learning activities, promotion of initiatives and events like the European day of languages and cooperation with stakeholders and international organisations like the Council of Europe and the OECD for developing innovative tools for language learning.

In 2019, the Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages[175] highlighted that multilingual competence lies at the heart of the vision of a European Education Area and can support increasing mobility and cooperation within the Union. The study[176] and the Citizen Panel confirmed this by highlighting lack of foreign

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[175] Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages.
[176] Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward (2023).

language skills as one of the main barriers to learning mobility activities across all fields. Following the adoption of the aforementioned Council Recommendation, the European Commission engaged in a number of activities supporting its implementation, notably peer learning activities. Actions like the European Language Label and the European Day of Languages also provide further opportunities for Member States to promote language teaching and learning. In this Recommendation, the Council also invites the Commission to strengthen cooperation with the Council of Europe, and the European Centre for Modern Languages, to enhance innovative methods in teaching and learning of languages and increase awareness of the crucial role of language learning in modern societies. In addition, the Commission has been collaborating with the OECD in the development of a module for testing foreign language competences, that will be ready for general roll-out on voluntary basis as a component of PISA 2025.

The 2023 edition of Eurydice's Key data on the teaching of languages in schools in Europe contained some indicators to monitor progress from 2019 Recommendation showing that the number of teachers going on mobility is increasing. There is however still a need for development of language awareness by promoting study periods abroad for students studying towards a teaching qualification and mobility for all teachers.

(i) **fostering the building of synergies and complementarities between the EU programmes addressing learning mobility,** such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and other funding instruments at EU, international, national and regional level, such as Cohesion policy funds, in particular the European Social Fund Plus, and the European Regional Develement Fund programmes, to maximise the impact of the actions fostering learning mobility opportunities, including by supporting the implementation of tools and strategies to enhance the participation of people with fewer opportunities.

Synergies and complementarities are an important objective in the 2021-2027 programming period in order to solve common challenges, address the needs of particular target groups or specific policy objectives, using different EU, international, national, regional programmes as instruments while maximising the impact of the investment performed under a single instrument.

A strategic approach for synergies implementation implies the identification of 'win-win' situations whereby programmes (at EU, international, national or regional level) work together in achieving common policy objectives, which can be:

- high quality, effective, inclusive and relevant education and training,
- equal access to lifelong learning,
- boosting competences and skills levels relevant for the future of work and to face the digital and green transition and address youth employability,
- increasing the capacity of teachers, educators, trainers, youth workers, sport coaches providing them with the tools – at personal and professional level – to deal with multi-cultural and inclusive societies and educational systems
- up-skilling and re-skilling of workforce, including adult learners,
- enabling a more active participation in society,
- increasing the effectiveness and performance of education systems, including formal, informal and non-formal learning.

In the context of Erasmus+ and Cohesion policy programmes funded under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), developing synergies and complementarities could help foster learning

mobility, notably for people with fewer opportunities and less mobile learners[177], support the digitalisation process of education and training systems, support structure aiming to facilitate access to learning mobility for skills enhancement [178], support the upscale of projects testing innovative approaches to digital and inclusive education in view of their mainstreaming. Complementarities with programmes funding infrastructures (e.g. ERDF programmes) for schools, higher education institutions, educational providers are be equally important in order to ensure better mobility experiences for learners.

The fostering of synergies and complementarities with other funding instruments is a key objective of the Erasmus+. As from 2023, Erasmus+ supports a more structured approach to the development of synergies with Cohesion policy programmes, in particular the ESF+ programmes, by piloting the Seal of Excellence [179] through Erasmus+ flagship actions, such as the European Universities and the Centres of Vocational Excellence. Notwithstanding the voluntary uptake of this tool from other funding authorities, the Seal of Excellence facilitates the building of synergies between programmes, by allowing win-win strategic investments on projects that meet common objectives.

A more extensive development of effective synergies and complementarities with other funding sources at national or regional level is also fostered through specific additional support to the National Agencies. In this context, National Agencies are required to develop a set of activities aiming to set up the basis for an effective cooperation with the authorities managing other funding instruments to e.g. facilitate the upscaling of successful projects, top-up mobilities, develop complementary projects meeting the objectives of more than one funding sources, set up a longstanding cooperation with the bodies managing other funds and programmes.

(j) **helping Member States to reform and enhance learning mobility systems** at national and multi country level.

The Technical Support Instrument stands ready to support Member States, upon their request, to design and enhance learning mobility systems, notably in the context of the Flagships on Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (PACE)[180], talent attraction[181], skills[182] and

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[177] The German authorities have agreed to transfer a share of the national allocation under ESF+ to Erasmus+, for a total of EUR 57 Mio to be distributed along the programming period, starting from 2022. In accordance with the Partnership Agreement of Germany, the transferred resources are allocated to Higher Education learning mobility and will target students with fewer opportunities. The funds are managed and implemented by the German National Agency for higher education under indirect management and are spent for the benefit of the Member State.

[178] In 2014, the city of Gijón decided to set up a local Youth Employment and Activation Agency. This was first established as a pilot project funded by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), and has now become a permanent structure. The project aimed to initiate a collaboration between local and regional stakeholders to offer personalised orientation and guidance to young NEETs. The main actions are covered by the municipal budget, complemented by ESF/YEI. Participants in the programme have the option to join a mobility project (activation pathways), using Erasmus+ to enhance their intercultural integration skills and ultimately support labour market integration back home. In addition, the programme implemented at local level also uses Erasmus+ for the mobility of teachers and learners from second chance schools, and for cooperation between schools.

[179] See Article 32(3) of the Erasmus+ Regulation and 73 of the Common Provisions Regulation.

[180] PACE, Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (europa.eu)

[181] Migrant integration and talent attraction (europa.eu)

[182] Skills: Fostering skills development systems better adapted to the labour market (europa.eu)

youth[183]. Support can be provided, upon request, on a bilateral or multi-country basis. Additionally, Member States may benefit from the measures foreseen in the Commission Communication on "Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPAct)", to help build better and more skillful public administrations.[184]

(k) **Mapping existing resources, tools and good practices implemented at EU, international, national or regional level** to raise awareness of the respective areas of intervention and potential actions to support an effective synergetic approach across the relevant stakeholders and disseminating good practices.

To support the objective of building effective cooperation among the bodies implementing different funding instruments in view building effective synergies and complementarities, it is necessary to raise awareness of the role that each actor can play to support learning mobility. Currently, the Commission is collecting, in cooperation with National Agencies, examples of projects implemented in synergies with other funding instruments with the aim of:

- collecting evidence of successful synergies implemented so far,
- disseminate across National Agencies success stories that may inspire both National Agencies and project promoters of the effects that cooperation with other instruments may produce in terms of impact and optimisation of resources,
- developing a peer-learning process across National Agencies in view of further supporting their activities to promote synergies and cooperation with other funding instruments,
- facilitate the mapping of areas of potential synergies with other funding instruments.

A more systematic mapping of the areas of intervention of the EU funding instruments that may support different aspect of learning mobility will be carried out in cooperation with other Commission's services.

3.3.2 Strengthening the evidence base on learning mobility

(a) **working with the Member States and relevant stakeholders towards further improving the quality and availability of data** and developing EU-level methodologies for data collection and analysis, including surveys, for example the European graduate tracking survey, on learning mobility in all education and training, and youth sectors, that can also account for inclusiveness and territorial diversities, in full compliance with EU data protection legislation;

Capturing the complex, multidimensional nature of learning mobility necessitates development of robust monitoring arrangements. The evidence gathered through the dedicated study 'Supporting learning mobility: progress, obstacles and way forward' indicates a wealth of monitoring data that are available for different sectors. According to the study's mapping of available statistical data and indicators at national and cross-national level, the data are at various levels of quality, comprehensiveness, and accessibility, however[185]. Moreover, an

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[183] YOUTH FIRST – supporting children and youth wellbeing, education, training, social protection and labour prospects (europa.eu)
[184] Communication_Enhancing the European Administrative Space.pdf (europa.eu)
[185] See section 2.1 for an overview of data availability and mobility trends.

overarching learning mobility monitoring system that integrates data from different sources and across different sectors appears to be lacking.

The Commission intends to support Member States and relevant stakeholders in developing EU-level methodologies for data collection and analysis on learning mobility in school education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth and sport systems and on participation of people with fewer opportunities in learning mobility abroad, and work towards further improving the quality of data used for higher education. Strengthening the quantitative evidence base on learning mobility will enable more accurate monitoring of the implementation of the proposed Council Recommendation, complementing the qualitative monitoring framework envisaged through a revamped Mobility Scoreboard.

(b) **Revamping the Mobility Scoreboard, in close cooperation with experts from the Member States,** to follow up the implementation of this Recommendation and to enlarge it to cover all education and training, and youth sectors.

The new recommendation needs a new monitoring framework, taking into account the new priorities, and the focus on all the sectors. The European Commission will build on the existing experts groups and networks to develop this new framework.

The Commission will rely on the experiences gained during the previous monitoring exercise in order to gather recommendations on how the existing indicators in higher education and initial vocational education and training can be revised and adapted to the new recommendation. EACEA and Cedefop will provide the necessary input for these discussions.

The Commission will also analyse the potential information sources for the sectors currently not covered by the Mobility Scoreboard. It will gather recommendations on how to coordinate monitoring across the different sectors and based on different information sources.

As outlined in the [European Strategy for Universities](#) the European Commission is setting up a European Higher Education Sector Observatory that will combine in one single place the current EU data tools and capacities on higher education (at system, institutional and individual level, including for the Erasmus+ programme). This will allow to monitor student and staff mobility and institutional transformation through a European Higher Education Sector Scoreboard and will further enhance their use and relevance for policy makers, universities, students and researchers. Further synergies with the mobility portal are envisaged in the context of the design of a student observatory.

Annex: Stakeholder consultation synopsis report

a) Introducing the consultation strategy

The objective of the consultation strategy was to inform all interested parties about the upcoming Commission initiative and to gather relevant evidence and feedback from them. The Commission aimed to collect citizens' and stakeholders' views on learning mobility, to identify possible gaps and to define solutions.

Evidence was collected through a range of sources, including the call for evidence and the open public consultation that were accessible online for 12 weeks from 8 February to 3 May[186], and targeted consultations. The Commission also engaged 150 citizens in the European Citizens' Panel on Learning Mobility which deliberated in March and April 2023.

In line with the Commission's Better Regulation policy to develop initiatives informed by the best available knowledge, scientific researchers, academic organisations, learned societies, and scientific associations with expertise in the policy fields linked to the initiative were also invited to submit relevant published and pre-print scientific research, analyses and data.

The consultation activities were promoted on the Commissions' web pages and social media, and by the Erasmus+ national agencies and national authorities through their existing communication channels.

b) Targeted information and consultation of stakeholders

Targeted consultations were carried out by the Commission and by an external contractor. Consultations included focus groups to check and discuss the outcomes of the public consultation, multilingual focus groups with learners and staff who have not been on learning mobility to find out about their incentives and impediments, and dedicated meetings and targeted interviews with key stakeholders.

The Commission has consulted with stakeholders at large events such as the Erasmus+ 35 Years event (December 2022), the European Year of Youth event (December 2022), the National Agencies event (January 2023), the Erasmus Generation Meeting (April 2023). Dozens of stakeholders were also consulted at various steering group meetings, expert group meetings, working groups, including the hearings with social partners (January 2023), the Higher Education Working Group (February 2023), and in meetings of Directors General for Schools.

c) Public Consultation and Call for Evidence

Public consultation

The public consultation attracted a total of 666 respondents. A total of 572 respondents (86.0%) identified themselves as learners, educators, or staff. Out of those, the majority (60.0%)

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186   https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13563-Learning-opportunities-learning-mobility-abroad-in-Europe-for-everyone_en

indicated that they were schoolteachers or staff, followed by VET teachers or staff at 11.4%. In relation to the field of professional activity, the majority (58.3% of total respondents) indicated their affiliation to school education. Meanwhile, also 59.65% of the total respondents indicated their affiliation to academic/research institutions.

Around 60% of respondents were women and 36% were men. When it comes to their level of education, most of the respondents were highly educated with around 41% having a master's degree or equivalent, 37% with a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and 13% with a doctoral degree or equivalent.

When it comes to respondents' experience with learning mobility, around 91% indicated that they had experience staying abroad for learning, training, traineeship, apprenticeship, youth exchanges, youth work or teaching activities, and 92% indicated that they were mobile within the EU compared to 8% of respondents with international mobility experience. Moreover, 80% of respondents had experience organising mobility activities as a representative of a sending organisation.

The majority of the 666 respondents to the online public consultation indicated Spain as their country of origin (71.5%), followed by Italy (6.3%), Germany (3.8%), Greece and France (both at 2.7%), and Croatia (2.3%). The remaining countries combined (24 countries) accounted for 10.8% of the respondents.

Call for evidence

The 408 respondents to the Call for Evidence consultation spanned different categories including EU citizens (41.7%), academic/research institutions (24.8%), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (6.7%), public authorities (5.9%), companies/businesses (2.7%), business associations (2.2%), non-EU citizens (1.7), trade unions (0.5%), and others (13.7%).

Examining organisational respondents to the call (222) shows that organisations that offered inputs in the area of school education represented the highest share of responses at 42%, followed by vocational education and training (27%), higher education (22%), adult education (9%), and youth (3%). In addition, 7% of the responses were cross-sectoral.

Spanish organisations offered the highest share of responses (41%), followed by German (16%), Belgian (9%), and French organisations (9%). Organisations from all other countries accounted for 25% of the responses, combined.

Responses to the Call for Evidence spanned 33 countries. Out of 408 responses, 34% came from Spain, followed by Germany (12%), France (10%), Greece (7%), Italy and Belgium (both at 6%), then Portugal, Croatia, and Estonia (each representing 3%). All other countries combined (24 countries) accounted for 16% of the total responses.

Obstacles to learning mobility

In the public consultation, obstacles to learning mobility were structured under six broad categories:

- lack of awareness and motivation: This affirms the important role of adequate information and guidance in incentivising learning mobility;
- difficulties to prepare for departure: This highlights the need for improving the support offered by sending and hosting organisations and countries in relation to the practicalities/logistics of spending periods abroad;
- lack of funding, and socio-economic obstacles: This shows that availing adequate and inclusive funding for learning mobility is highly critical for motivated individuals who cannot afford going abroad without sufficient external funding;
- difficulties in ensuring quality and recognition of skills and competences acquired abroad: This affirms the need to fully implement the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad;
- administrative and legal obstacles: This indicates that understaffed schools find it very difficult to send teachers abroad;
- incoherent systems and actions implemented by different Member States and at the EU level: This again affirms the key role availability of funding plays in incentivising learning mobility.

Higher Education

In higher education, the most common obstacle identified was financial barriers. Mobility programmes, including Erasmus+, do not cover all expenses and the monetary support received is often insufficient as it does not account for all individual circumstances.

Incomparability of curricula was identified as the second most common obstacle. Complex application process was the third most mentioned obstacle.

The call for evidence stressed that individuals are often unaware of the learning mobility opportunities or cannot participate due to personal circumstances.

Vocational education and training (VET)

The most common obstacles in VET sector learning mobility are length of apprenticeships and finding companies willing to participate, lack of interest from trainees, legal and administrative barriers and recognition of acquired skills.

The lack of motivation by apprentices to participate in learning mobility was indicated as an important obstacle. Apprentices are often unmotivated to participate as their main aim is to finish as soon as possible and sign a permanent work contract.

The differences in the Legal and administrative frameworks around apprenticeships across Europe. For example, in some countries apprentices are part of employment relationship and other social security related provisions and if apprentices decide to go on longer mobilities, they lose their apprentices status as their contracts are put on hold by employers.

Feedback from the call for evidence also emphasises concerns that skills acquired during periods abroad are not recognised at their true value.

School education

The most common obstacle identified was the complex and lengthy application process and financial obstacles. It was stressed that it requires tremendous efforts from participants to fill out the application forms, collect the needed documents, and find partner organisations. In addition, learning mobility coordinators are often not paid any extra so they perceive mobility as a burden.

The call for evidence feedback have also stressed the lack of recognition of learning outcomes acquired during mobilities to be an important obstacle in the school sector.

Adult education

Lack of organisational capacities was identified as one of the key obstacles to learning mobility in adult education as organisations do not have dedicated staff that could coordinate learning mobility projects.

Adults face more time constraints to engage in learning mobilities due to their personal and professional constraints.

The feedback also suggested that limited budget and restrictive eligibility criteria have a negative effect on the accessibility of Erasmus+ programme in adult education.

Youth

Both the call for evidence and focus groups stressed that scarcity or lack of funding for organisations and participants is an important obstacle to learning mobility.

Insufficient promotion and awareness have been outlined as a common obstacle. Often, young people are not aware of mobility opportunities.

Also, personal and individual obstacles are important obstacles to mobilities. These include insufficient language skills, lack of motivation to engage with mobilities and the overall lack of trust in institutions, including the EU institutions and programmes.

Sport

Feedback provided by participants of the focus group suggests that sport community does not usually associate its activities with learning or mobility. Other important obstacles are lack of awareness about mobility opportunities, time constraints of volunteers and organisational capacities.

Horizontal priorities

Both the call for evidence and focus groups have stressed that insufficient attention is being given to individuals with mental and physical disabilities.

Main obstacles for green mobility are lack of sufficient financial support for green travel and uneven infrastructure for sustainable travel.

The call for evidence emphasised that virtual and blended mobilities require additional administrative workload and coordination, sufficient competencies of staff, sufficient equipment, thus sometimes making it difficult to implement.

The call for evidence feedback showed that obstacles to balanced mobility are mainly related to the lack of language skills as well as choosing more well-known and countries.

Recommended actions to incentivise learning mobility

When asked to assess which of the six broad groups of obstacles the European Commission should address right away, 59% of the respondents to the public consultation indicated addressing *'incoherent systems and actions implemented by different Member States and at the EU level'* as the first immediate priority towards removing obstacles and incentivising learning mobility. The other groups of obstacles highlighted as a priority for the Commission's immediate action are administrative and legal obstacles (42%), difficulties in ensuring quality and recognition of skills and competences acquired abroad (33%), shortage of funding and socio-economic obstacles (30%), and difficulties to sufficiently prepare for departure (13%).

Regarding the actions to be undertaken by the Member States and the EU, the respondents prioritised promoting a 'mobility culture' in all education, training and youth and youth work sectors (60%); acting to simplify administrative procedures to access learning mobility activities (52%); encouraging the Member States and institutions providing education and training to embed the opportunity for learning mobility in all education and training programmes and youth work systems (52%); increasing the accessibility of people with fewer opportunities to learning mobility activities (41%); and promoting more linguistic support/foreign language training (40%). On the other hand, the issues that were emphasised the least were improving qualitative and quantitative monitoring (9%), promoting virtual/blended mobility for learning purposes (8%), and improving cross-border verification of social security coverage (8%).

The European Commission has the political ambition of ensuring that future learning mobility is more inclusive, greener, better utilises digital and blended approaches and tools, and better contributes to fostering European identity, active citizenship and participation in democratic life. In relation to these political priorities, 89% of the respondents to the public consultation (strongly) agreed that a bigger share of funding and administrative resources should be provided for making learning mobility more accessible and attractive to learners with fewer opportunities. Moreover, while 78% of respondents (strongly) agreed that any mobility activity/process must, to the extent possible, be climate friendly.

There was also agreement that the EU should invest more in digital technologies, tools and pedagogies that are used to facilitate the learning mobility experience and process.

Higher education

The most common suggestions on how to improve learning mobility in higher education sector were focused on funding. Another prevalent recommendation across consultation activities was the simplification of the application process.

The call for evidence feedback stressed that universities should strengthen the promotion of short-term mobilities and enhance flexibility of mobility duration.

Vocational education and training (VET)

Allowing more flexible mobility timeframes, harmonising legal status of apprentices, providing more support to companies and encouraging reciprocity were the most mentioned recommendations in the call for evidence feedback.

Harmonisation of the status apprentices would also positively impact long-term mobilities and remove some of the administrative and legal obstacles.

Financial compensation for companies that agree to send their trainers and trainees on mobilities could also support and incentivise learning mobility in VET. Otherwise, a reciprocal mobility should be encouraged that companies who agree to send their apprentices to compensate for the loss of workforce.

School education

The most commonly mentioned recommendations included the need to provide economic or other type of recognition for the learning mobility coordinators in schools, establish a database for schools and school staff to easier find partners and training opportunities and increase the overall funding for school education within the Erasmus+ programme.

There were recommendations in the call for evidence to prioritise schools with no prior learning mobility experience and simplify the application process.

Some inputs have also highlighted the need to include the topic of learning mobility in the training of teachers, and the need to solve issues around the availability of substitute teachers were also mentioned.

Adult education

Feedback from the call for evidence suggested that there is a need to raise awareness about learning mobility's benefits for adults.

It was stressed that it is essential to offer targeted support measures for adult learners, which could include flexible learning schedules or support related to childcare. Moreover, it was suggested that a right to paid training leave should be guaranteed and available to all adults. Adults should be able to go on mobilities without incurring a loss of their income.

It was suggested to set common objectives and targets for learning mobility in adult education sector and to include adult mobility in the European Commission's Mobility Scoreboard.

Youth

Feedback from both the call for evidence and the focus group emphasised the need to simplify the application process by having easily accessible and more readable programme guidelines and application forms.

It was also suggested to invest more in the promotion and awareness campaigns by strengthening multiplier and ambassadors' networks. It was noted the need to increase the funding for youth organisations that struggle to cover the increasing costs of their activities.

The call for evidence feedback advocated for the further involvement of experts and civil society organisations in the planning, evaluation and implementation of mobility programmes.

Horizontal priorities

Substantial number of responses to the call for evidence stressed the need to increase inclusiveness of mobility programmes, especially for people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and individuals with disabilities. This could be done by strengthening the support services and ambassador networks.

The call for evidence has also emphasised the need to further raise awareness and promote green travel options. In order to encourage green mobility, more substantial financial support needs to be provided and green travel top-ups need to be increased. Moreover, there needs to be better consideration on the regions that cannot easily enjoy green mobility, especially the ones not connected to the mainland.

The call for evidence feedback emphasised that virtual exchanges should not be used as a substitute for physical mobilities. However, blended mobility is seen as a useful tool in some situations and there are suggestions to provide adequate support and funding for blended mobility that would mitigate the administrative burden when implementing blended mobilities.

Even though balanced mobility has not been substantially addressed by the call for evidence, there was a suggestion to address the underlying reasons to mobility imbalances rather than trying to create an artificial balance between countries. Focus group respondents have noted that balanced mobility is one of the least important aspects.

d) Citizens' Panel recommendations

Building on the success of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Commission has decided to use the European Citizens' Panels to engage citizens in its policy making. The purpose of the citizens' panels is to deliberate and make recommendations ahead of certain key proposals. Through their participatory and deliberative democratic process, they improve the quality of the policy by considering citizens' concerns and increase visibility and communication opportunities for the initiative. In addition, they help to build trust in an inclusive democratic manner.

150 citizens of different age and background from 27 Member States were randomly selected to form the European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility. The participants came together to discuss the future of learning mobility in three sessions in March and April 2023 aiming to provide recommendations on how to make learning mobility opportunities a reality for everyone.

Based on these deliberations, the Citizens' Panel made 21 recommendations[187] that the Commission took into consideration when defining its policy proposal. In particular, the Commission's proposal is well aligned with the recommendations to develop inclusive learning mobility opportunities that enable learning mobility for people with fewer opportunities; the provision of targeted and timely information at the level closest to people through learning mobility promoters (such as alumni, ambassadors, mentors, and information centres); increased focus on work-based learning mobility; strengthening language learning at all stages of education and training; the recognition of the role of educators in organising learning mobility and environmental sustainability of mobility.

A more detailed overview on how the Commission has addressed the recommendations of the Citizen's Panel is presented in the citizens' report.

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[187] European Citizens' Panel on learning mobility, final recommendations, https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/learning-mobility-panel_en.