



Working paper

VET providers and the EU Mobility: Reinforcing VET Attractiveness through Staff engagement

Foreword

In 2017 CEDEFOP set up the Community of Learning providers together with VET4EU2, the umbrella organization regrouping EfVET, EVBB, EVTA, EUCEN, EUproVET and EURASHE, the six associations active in VET at EU level to better ground its work on providers' needs and priorities and to share its work results with providers' broader audience, EU-wide.

It was agreed the Community would have a strong brokerage function, would work on a voluntary basis, would privilege demand-side, and promote practical applications. Producing concrete practical guidance for practitioners and making suggestions to the EU Commission on selected themes have been the Community's objectives under its motto of *Think European Act Locally*.

The Community started experimenting with its function by defining its first (2017-2020) work programme, focusing on VET providers'¹ role in three priority areas, namely on VET providers' role in enhancing the use of TEL in their institutions; in supporting their staff mobility; and in promoting third country national's (TCN) integration and empowerment through learning. Next, the Community set up three working groups (WG) to address these themes respectively; each WG was coordinated by an association representative and consisted mainly of providers, professors and teachers, experts in the specific theme, and members of the six associations mentioned above. The WGs worked through information sharing and expert cooperation, starting with participants' experience and know-how, CEDEFOP work and EU Commission-related programmes, policies and co-financed transnational projects. The WGs worked through meetings and regular correspondence via email, while the set-up of an online platform to complement the Community is under refinement at present.

¹ In the context of the present initiative , we refer to VET-providers as to those organizations, public or private, specifically set up to provide training and qualifications usually up to EQF 5 sanctioned by a recognized by the government diploma/title leading to employment and/or further studies

Due to policy calendar imperatives, the Community was asked to deliver almost one year earlier than foreseen. Despite this change, we think that the present working paper captures the core messages and issues the WG2 wished to convey on “VET providers and EU Mobility: Reinforcing VET Attractiveness through Staff Engagement”. The WG2 has been coordinated by Jon Harding of Bridgwater and Taunton College and the EfVET Steering Committee, with the support of Tina Bertzeletou, CEDEFOP VET expert. The reader will find WG2 composition and working method in Annex A of the present paper.

CEDEFOP wishes to thank all WG2 members for their cooperation and rich contributions throughout the last two years, and it wants to acknowledge in particular Jon Harding’s commitment to bring this joint initiative to a good end in the hope that it can be further developed into a permanent and sustainable activity on its own merits.

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Introduction	5
Part I. Current situation	6
Section A. Key actor 1: VET staff	6
Section B. Key actor 2 VET-providers and institutions.....	11
Section C. Key actor 3- Industry	15
Section D. Overview of Part A key points and messages.....	19
Part II- Managing and administering mobility.....	20
Section A. Managing	20
Section B. Administering of mobility paperwork	21
Section C. Erasmus+ further support to staff mobility	21
Part III Conclusions and Suggestions: Staff Learning Mobility	
Inhibitors and Enablers.....	22
Key actor 1: VET staff.....	23
Key actor 2: VET providers	24
Key actor 3: Industry	25
2.1. National level activation - suggested actions.....	26
3.1. EU Commission activation- suggested actions.....	26
Part IV- Mobility for today and tomorrow.....	27
Annex A.....	31

Introduction

European cooperation in education has always been a powerful mechanism for bringing European people and systems closer. A particularly efficient form of cooperation are mobilities, which allow direct exposure to another country's education system and culture. Currently, two major factors put learning mobility on the top of the EU educational agenda: the globalization of qualifications and standards, and the EU citizens' freedom to establish and work in another Member State.

Besides the acquisition of knowledge and work experience, mobility contributes to developing social and linguistic skills that would render learners more employable, thus increasing their chances of finding a job at home or abroad. This is all the more important in times of structural unemployment. Mobility activities also contribute to mutual intercultural understanding and promote tolerance, civic values and adherence to the 'democratic values, mutual respect and human rights'² that are the foundation of our "European common cultural heritage"³.

Contrary to HE, in which virtual mobilities are already a reality due to ICT and technology enhanced learning environments (TEL), mobility in VET- whether for learners or teachers- remains mainly physical and depends on various factors like local trade unions' policy and the recognition (or most often the absence of recognition) of mobility experiences in collective agreements and contracts.

Compared to general and Higher Education, the mobility of VET staff is less frequent since VET teachers and trainers participate less in mobility schemes than their colleagues in the aforementioned educational sectors. Consequently, VET staff mobilities, being less practised and therefore less analysed, have been a major motivator for setting up the present working group (WG) dedicated to this theme.

² [JRC Scientific and Technical Reports, The characterization of Active Citizenship in Europe, JRC 54065, Office for official Publications of the European Communities, 2009](#)

³ Workshop on Promoting quality in learning delivery: the way ahead, Cedefop, 2016

The aim of this WG was to conduct research on staff mobility and its importance for VET institutions, staff, and for the participating companies in view of formulating practical guidelines to further develop it at EU level⁴. Thirteen years after the Quality Charter for Mobility was adopted, it is important to take stock of its implementation and identify ways to make things even better, in view of the deployment of the new 2021-2027 Erasmus programme.

Part I. Current situation

There are three key actors in VET staff learning mobility; namely teachers and trainers, VET-providers/institutions, and industry/firms. Each has its particular interests and factors that enable or hinder its participation in mobility. These factors are of different natures and importance but their simultaneous presence in many cases affects the mobility experience and there is therefore a need to analyse them. WG2 looked into elements that may hinder mobility to define both the issues at stake and to suggest practical solutions to overcome them.

Staff mobility:

* Teaching/training assignments: this activity allows staff of VET providers to teach at a partner VET provider abroad. It also allows staff of companies to provide training at a VET provider abroad.

*Staff training: this activity supports the professional development of VET staff in the form of a work placement or a job shadowing/observation period abroad in a company or any other VET provider.

Erasmus+ supports learning mobility of staff that:

- is framed into a strategic approach of the participating organisations (aimed at modernising and internationalising their mission);

- responds to clearly identified staff development needs and is accompanied by appropriate selection, preparation and follow-up measures;

- ensures that the learning outcomes of participating staff are properly recognised and ensures that the learning outcomes are disseminated and widely used within the organisation.

Section A. Key actor 1: VET staff

Learning mobility is a powerful learning experience, during which an individual moves from their everyday context, and has to open up and adapt. It is a great way to develop social, intercultural and interpersonal

⁴ For the WG composition and working method see Annex A

competencies for life, and to promote a sense of common European belonging. It is also an important means to develop one's employability, as through mobility, teachers/trainers may acquire:

- Improved competencies, linked to their professional profiles;
- A broader understanding of practices, policies and systems in education, training or youth across countries;
- Increased capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international openings within their educational organisations;
- A greater understanding of connections between formal and non-formal education, vocational training and the labour market respectively;
- A better quality of work, and activities in favour of students, trainees, apprentices, pupils, adult learners, young people and volunteers;
- A greater understanding and responsiveness to social, linguistic and cultural diversity;
- Increased ability to address the needs of the disadvantaged;
- Increased support for and promotion of mobility activities for learners;
- Increased opportunities for professional and career development;
- Improved foreign language competences;
- Increased motivation and satisfaction in their daily work

“The teacher mobility experiences were fantastic. Being able to see how other countries approach teaching is absolutely fascinating. It allowed me to step outside of the box and see that there are many perfectly valid approaches to educating, not just one linear, prescriptive method. By going abroad and observing other teachers in their own environment, you develop not just professionally but also as a person. Setting up an international project and experiencing all that they have to offer will also make you a more attractive candidate for further teaching and management roles. By successfully applying, organising and running the course you demonstrate a great number of skills. Additionally, the knowledge and understanding that you glean from

your trips will have shaped your practice in a way that nothing else can.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2012/sep/28/international-exchanges-benefit-teachers-schools>

When we know the positive impact of learning mobility on personal development, social inclusion and civic participation, making learning mobility a rule rather than an exception at all levels of education and for all educational actors should become our collective aim. In order to achieve this, personal barriers should be overcome first, because completing a learning mobility is also an issue of mind-set and personal attitude.

To start with, WG2 underlines that mobility depends on the mobility culture of the institutions - both the sending and receiving organizations and of staff involved and that if embraced (not imposed) by management, it can work to the benefit of all. Findings show that the main obstacles preventing staff from participating in a mobility abroad are:

- Low language skills: many VET staff take part in staff training (mainly job-shadowing) and teaching assignments abroad, which are currently the only two options available for KA1 VET staff mobilities
- Job shadowing prevalence. Job shadowing accounts for 90% of VET staff mobility applications; however, in reality, study visits of a few days are organized for teacher groups instead of job shadowing
- Strong competition: Currently, in some countries, VET providers can present their staff with demands for training activities only under the KA1 School Education, thus competing with a larger audience coming from the school sector.

For the sending organisation, staff mobility is mainly a question of money and time. In terms of the latter, VET mobility is of limited

duration (usually a few days); 1-2 weeks constitute the upper limit because a longer mobility is practically impossible for a number of reasons. The longer the mobility, the more work-related problems teachers/other personnel within the sending institution have to face.

Concerning money and a mobility's financial aspect, the amount of money in a grant (including travel and subsistence expenses) is often a significant barrier because for teachers in some Member States it is not enough for a comfortable living whilst they are abroad. The low rate of funding is a great demotivating factor for managers across Europe.

Once the sending institution has solved the problem of money and time, the receiving organization has the job of arranging interesting and varied tasks for visiting staff with a reasonable work or job shadowing programme, avoiding putting extra burdens upon visitors and their hosts.

WG2 concluded that linguistic competencies are crucial and should be acquired *before* a mobility takes place, applying specifically to student mobilities of over a week, but not to staff mobility. The lack of language skills is certainly an obstacle for VET staff (and not only for VET) and the language barrier is often given as reason for not completing a mobility, though it also depends on the context, the sector and the organization in which a particular mobility takes place (i.e. in training center, VET school, company etc.). However, with time, and with a new generation of teachers, trainers and other staff entering the profession, this problem should diminish, due in part also to the Erasmus+ mobility program.

The preparatory phase, prior to the staff mobility, is vital. Participating staff should take advantage of Erasmus+ Online Language Support (OLS) to prepare themselves should they need to refresh their language knowledge. However, OLS⁵ is not sufficient for learning a foreign language from scratch and therefore additional language courses

⁵ <https://erasmusplusols.eu/en/> (language self-assessment and learning tool)

should also be organized at the home institution/organization. Even in instances where training sessions are attended by teachers from different countries, there is still a strong likelihood that there will be multiple people speaking the same language. Nevertheless, the language problem is serious enough to need to be dealt with at institutional or/and national level, as suggested above.

There are several digital tools that can support staff on mobility and many organizations have created their own platform to facilitate the management of mobility. For instance, an EfVET⁶ survey has shown that 53% of its 168 member organizations have their own platform or software to manage mobility.

WhatsApp groups are a common way for participants to contact each other before, during, and after mobility, enabling communication regardless of the linguistic differences. In general, some basic tools to work on shared documents, like for instance Google Drive, make life easier for everybody. Of course, to use digital tools you need digital skills, which are not always present. However, a lack of appropriate digital skills can be overcome with support.

Erasmus+ participants should also know what is expected of them upon return. In almost all institutions, management expects staff to improve their existing competencies, or acquire new skills in their subject (these are also conditions that must be met in order for a staff member to be eligible for a mobility). However, staff would very much like to improve their linguistic competencies and skills through OLS, which is not possible at present, since it is not included in the options of the existing KA1 program for VET staff.

⁶ <https://www.efvet.org>

Section B. Key actor 2 VET-providers and institutions

Mobilities should be considered under the double perspective of the sending and hosting/receiving institutions as they face similar but not identical challenges. As stated above, VET institutions' mobility culture is shaping its activation and inclusion within their regular programmes and activities. Indeed, issues of organisation, participation and procedures are linked to the position mobility occupies within the overall development strategy of the VET institutions concerned. If the strategy is there, it is easier to implement the necessary processes and adaptations.

It seems that it has been difficult in the past to make VET professionals understand mobility's benefit, and there was an attitude problem among VET top management, who tended to consider mobility as either additional financial revenue, a marketing tool, or an obligatory institutional requirement imposed by the ministry. However, due to the growing internationalization of society, and work done with managers, their perception and attitudes are changing and mobilities are beginning to be valued and sought after. Currently, VET providers are becoming more supportive of staff mobility and several are using a "buddy" approach to encourage staff participation, in which they pair up staff with 'staff ambassadors' who have participated in a mobility themselves and found the experience fruitful for both their personal and skills development.

The biggest problem teachers and managers face is communication at the receiving organization abroad, be it a partner VET institution or a company. To solve this problem, those in charge of mobility (international coordinators) in sending institutions try to create larger groups of teachers and to provide them with an interpreter, usually a teacher of English. However, sending several staff members abroad for more than a week usually causes a timetable collapse, which causes a reversion to prior negative attitudes amongst managers, i.e. not being

completely in favour of international mobility. Based on their experience and in order to overcome the communication problem, several VET providers have begun to send two staff members to the same place at the same time, with one more skilled in the requested language of communication.

In relation to the host or receiving organization, the majority of KA1 projects for staff takes place in VET schools, where the groups of visiting teachers get acquainted with the training system and methodology of the receiving country.

We found that we can never overestimate the importance of school- to-school approach, not only for job shadowing, but also for sharing social partners (the companies, with which they collaborate on a regular basis). This direct collaboration is a great tool for internationalizing education and training, for sharing similar cultural values, and fostering European citizenship and identity. It is therefore important to maintain and further develop it. If we want to keep the school-to-school approach in organizing international mobility, we should include in the new funding period corresponding mechanisms to encourage VET-institutions to develop such collaborations and partnerships themselves and to motivate their managers, who may not otherwise want to ‘waste’ staff energy on receiving foreign teachers more than once.

Practical arrangements can facilitate teachers’ uninterrupted interaction with their school while abroad without necessitating replacements, as confirmed by the Danish WG2 member: “We simply ask our staff to choose weeks without too many lessons for their mobility plan. In addition, teachers give their classes written assignments to work with, while they are abroad. They are online once a day, so if their students have questions, they will answer them within a day. Administrative staff usually go abroad in weeks with less workload or they arrange with management /other administrative staff to assist in urgent matters during their absence”. As to working during weekends, WG2 members from Finland and Denmark confirmed that it has not been a problem in their country. Usually their staff travel on Sundays to be in place for

the Monday morning program and then leave again 3-5 days later, having a full 3-5 days' program.

It should be noted that when management/administrative staff go abroad, they may experience a low quality mobility. Sometimes those in the receiving institution do not greet them or do not know they are coming, even if this has been agreed and is included in the work agreement.

The quality of learning mobilities are related to funding availability but it goes far beyond this. For mobility experiences to be successful, the quality of the mobility process is crucial. The process starts with the sending institutions and relies on them to be the “keepers” of quality. First of all, the sending institutions must recognize the added value and the competencies staff would acquire through an Erasmus+ stay abroad. We have to understand that the quality process starts the very same day we start thinking about writing the application, and that we have to design a strategic approach. If management is reluctant to do so, sending managers on staff mobility helps a lot, because they get first-hand knowledge of the program and the value of cooperating with colleagues abroad.

WG2 considers a holistic approach to be the best quality guarantee for learning mobility.

The holistic approach should cover all processes and aspects related to mobility to meet the institution's needs and characteristics. For instance, in very large institutions with thousands of students and hundreds of teachers, staff are not always aware of Erasmus+ staff mobility opportunities; consequently, the international coordinators in these colleges must make themselves known to the whole staff and get the mobility message through.

Furthermore, staff must know whom to turn to if interested in an Erasmus+ mobility stay. In a Danish college, “we have noticed that too many people did not know about the Erasmus+ staff program; so we are now writing about it on the school's internet platform and we are

participating in pedagogical meetings where we inform staff about Erasmus+ possibilities. Our experience shows that clear guidelines should exist and be put in writing, so that staff can easily find relevant information as to things like funding and what to do with lessons/workload while away.”

Ideally, the sending institution should have a clear internationalization strategy regarding mobility, comprising the following steps: information meetings for staff; a clear plan of how staff mobility should be planned from the moment staff mark their interest; the process to follow for an application for an Erasmus+ stay; the selection phase (who is allowed to go away for 1 week- to be decided in close cooperation with the department manager); the search for receiving institutions; the transfer of funding to the participant; and the work program during mobility etc. Erasmus+ participants should also know what is expected from them upon return. Once back, staff receive a Europass Certificate where their acquired competencies/skills are recognized. In this way, more credit is awarded to a mobility. Furthermore, in many institutions, staff are asked to share the pedagogical and didactic experience they had abroad with the staff members they cooperated with. In this way, staff who have not participated in a mobility get new knowledge and may be spurred to apply for a mobility. In addition, articles could be written in the local press about teachers’ participation in Erasmus+ to show to regional stakeholders that participating VET providers have an international outlook and management value the Erasmus+ advantages. Gaining greater visibility at a local/regional level is an indirect effect of mobilities.

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/eac-a06-go-international_en.pdf

WG2 notes that a step-by-step approach guarantees better results, as in many cases mobility must be activated via the strategy of every single college. Whether participating as receiving or sending organization, **mobilities should be seen as an opportunity for developmental**

work. This should be done in small steps because incremental moves lead to big leaps. Mobilities should be seen as a way to increase international activities, a chance to get new ideas, and to change and adopt best practices which will have an impact on the whole institution. Mobility facilitates innovation sharing among VET institutions, as in the case of “**Yritysamis**”, the new method of teaching in an entrepreneurial way developed by a Finnish college and WG2 member which has attracted several European providers’ interest to learn more about it, in view of implementing it in their institution. Methodology is nowadays a part of students’ education and those students who are interested about entrepreneurship can establish a Young Entrepreneur company for a year during their studies. Link <http://www.yritysamis.fi/>

In general, there are several VET providers who are very active in learning mobilities at an EU level, and who are characterized by a strong commitment to cooperation and a dedication to sharing information and good practices with their fellow providers- and their number is growing.

Concluding this section, WG2 considers that **inviting VET providers from different geographical regions but the same disciplines to organize joint conferences/meetings could further enhance knowledge sharing and maximize staff mobility impact.**

Section C. Key actor 3- Industry

It is still very difficult to organize a placement for teachers in companies related to their subject. Companies are often reluctant to host VET teachers and trainers for a number of reasons. Firstly, the absence or the insufficient mastery of a shared language by both the visiting staff and hosting firm, which in most cases is English. This can be a “cause and effect” problem, causing further obstacles to mobility. It is quite often the case that firms do not have time to be with foreign staff for more than a couple of hours and the time they do have is mostly limited to discussing the VET learners they are hosting, to assess them and validate related documents, etc. Usually, VET staff go to the same

places as their VET students, so that while they monitor them and see how they are doing, they also have the opportunity to learn in a practical VET environment.

Another problem with VET staff mobilities is that it is not easy to find businesses or companies that are willing to spend time sharing practices in apprenticeship, tutoring and mentoring at shop floor level. However, as already mentioned, mentalities are changing at firm level, and in Lithuania for instance, a very active Confederation of Industrialists is actively participating in staff mobility. Still, when it comes to VET staff placements abroad, more efforts are needed.

Short-duration mobility is also a recurrent problem, since it limits staff presence in hosting firms to one or two weeks only. This is a very short period for companies to invest time and effort in their presence. Compared to their teachers, students get mobility grants and do their practical training in the firms and fields they are studying far more easily (thanks to providers' close cooperation with partners, industries and chambers). On the contrary, staff placements in companies are low and the few positive testimonials that exist are the exception rather than the rule. Companies—if not large international SMEs (with more than 150 FTEs) –do not often have sufficient HR and facilities to receive teachers.

As already mentioned, it is extremely difficult to find companies which will take in staff for a week only, because if it is to gain something from foreign school staff presence, they would need to stay longer. Otherwise, they represent a lot of extra work for the company. Offering companies (SMEs in particular) financial incentives and granting them some sort of remuneration could help to meet this challenge. An additional non-financial incentive could be to allow them to select, among the VET institutions/business schools participating in Erasmus+ mobility, the institution they wish to send their employees to for improving their skills and competencies. In all cases, the issues of safety, insurance and compensation for the instructors of the receiving company should be addressed.

It is recognised that certified companies are well prepared to host foreign students and in some Member States (e.g. Denmark) companies have to be certified to be allowed to take in trainees and international mobility students. Certification is a guarantee of the quality of those placements in firms. The certified companies could also serve as example to follow in staff mobility.

WG2 would like to propose to increase the staff mobility under Erasmus+ for inviting companies' representatives/staff to VET institutions where they could teach or train for some hours the students/learners, exchange and share experience and expertise with staff, eventually give interviews and participate in sightseeing organized for them by the host institution. In this way, VET providers could strengthen their cooperation with the business sector and open up the possibility of sending staff from companies they cooperate with on mobility as eligible participants in the context of joint VET and company staff mobilities.

But how could companies interested in learning mobility be located? WG2 suggests that it is all about networking and maintaining relationships with those companies that have already provided traineeship to VET providers' students/learners in the past.

Sustaining contact with firms should embrace both foreign and national companies, since teachers' placement in national companies is equally important and is dependent on the industry and type of activity (NACE classification). As a VET provider from Spain stated: "Mobility projects get us closer not only to companies from other countries but also to companies of our own home country. Placing staff from our partner school/colleges in our partner companies has strengthened our relation and enriches the view companies have on VET education".

WG2 shares the conclusions of the research below (the direct benefits of staff mobilities on companies and businesses), provided staff placements are planned effectively⁷.

⁷<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003547.htm>

The main benefits identified include:

- Cost-effective staff development through, for example, improvements in the development of coaching and mentoring skills among staff gained from working with teachers. This contributed to employees continuing development and improved staff morale.
- Cost-effective consultancy. In longer, more participatory placements, teachers were able to carry out projects and consultancy work which the company might otherwise have had to buy in. Many employers appreciated the independent perspectives that teachers on placements were able to bring to the company.
- New management skills. Businesses could learn and benefit from the management skills of senior managers from schools.
- Improving the image of the business in the community was seen as a benefit to employers, which may lead to a boost in sales and improved public relations, and raised the profile of the business as an employer in the local area.

Recommended positive measures:

- Support by senior management team and incorporation of placements into the school development plan as well as into teachers' continuing professional development plan in order to gain maximum, long-term benefits from the placement across the school.
- Specific, defined, realistic, negotiable objectives based on clearly identified staff development needs. Employers and teachers recommended that in order to gain maximum benefit from the placement, both parties should meet prior to the placement to agree upon achievable objectives for both the teacher and the employer. Much of the literature also suggested that there should be a meeting during the session to discuss the progress made in

reaching these objectives, as well as a debriefing session after the placement to discuss the placement and future action plans.

- Careful matching of the teacher and the employer. It should be ensured that both the employer and the teacher have the necessary skills and commitment to achieve their objectives; this is the joint responsibility of the teacher, employer and the organization through which the placement has been arranged.
- Emphasis on benefits to business. It must be ensured that local businesses are aware of the many immediate benefits placements can have for them in order to encourage their participation in, and the success of, those placements.

Section D. Overview of Part I main points and messages

- It is difficult to make VET professionals and managers understand mobility's added value
- Language is still a barrier for many teachers
- It is still very difficult to organize teachers' placement in companies
- Visits and discussions are preferred to job shadowing
- Difficulties in leaving classes behind as most VET teachers have to catch up with work set during their absence.

Messages

- Staff mobility needs to become part of the institution's developmental strategy and top management should be its driving force
- A holistic approach is the best quality guarantee
- The quality of mobility processes defines the mobility's success
- A step-by-step approach guarantees better results
- Staff working on mobilities enhance their institution's mobility policy

- Networking and building trust with firms are crucial to mobility placements
- Solid preparation and results-sharing help to maximize mobility benefits

Part II- Managing and administering mobility

There are two players on the scene of learning mobility whose actions are influencing staff's participation: the national authorities and agencies on one side, and the EU Commission on the other. In recent years, the priorities of both have converged strongly due to considerable EU funding, but also due to globalization and the subsequent change in mentality; we feel part of the larger world, more concerned by it, and hence we are more mobile in our thinking. However, there still exist obstacles and entrapments that the concerted action of National and EU groups can alleviate.

During the Croatian rotating Presidency in 2020, the Council has adopted Council Conclusions on teachers and trainers of the future which among others, call for more international teaching mobility opportunities.⁸

Section A. Managing

It is through legislation and funding that countries shape their education and training systems and are able to monitor their modernisation. It is fundamental to encourage VET providers to run staff mobility at European, national and company levels. In some countries, like in Lithuania, the Ministry organizes seminars to encourage institutions to participate in mobility for students and staff. In other countries, international mobility is encouraged through the quality system of VET providers: in these cases, mobility is a mandatory quality requirement and they have to allocate the necessary resources.

Close cooperation between VET providers and National Agencies administering EU programs is of paramount importance. In Finland for instance, cooperation between education providers and the National

⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2020.193.01.0011.01.ENG

Erasmus+ Office is strong and continuous and seminars and events are frequently organised by the office.

Section B. Administering of mobility paperwork

There is a complicated issue in Europass⁹, the need for hosting organizations to validate the Europass Mobility Documents. They are written in English most of the time (to facilitate common understanding among organizations), and not all tutors, especially those working on a factory shop floor, can understand the language well enough to deal with it in an official capacity. This is an additional reason for VET staff presence in the hosting entity, even for a short period, as they help tutors understand and validate these documents.

There is a need to render the process less paper-dependent and more streamlined.

Section C. Erasmus+ further support to staff mobility

First and foremost, there is a need **to better align the mobility opportunities present in all EU education and VET policies to take greater advantage of them.** The new Call for accreditation¹⁰ (deadline October 2020) in VET, AE and schools goes in that direction, at least in terms of the access organisations/institutions have to the programme and the encouragement of Mobility Consortia.

The following actions are suggested for the Erasmus+ programme to better respond to provider and staff needs:

- Bridge Learning Agreement to Europass and integrate it into the process of ECVET, to stop Europass being an extra document with a different procedure to follow and fulfil. Make instead a centralized system for issuing Europass, for instance through the Mobility Tool, or just leave stakeholders free to work out the template as is the case for the Learning agreement. Consider

⁹ A new Europass portal, comprising additional features, has been launched on 1st July 2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/new-europass>

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/calls/2020-erasmus-accreditation>

better integration of IT tools, for instance between the Mobility Tool and OLS

- The Learning Agreement or the Europass could substitute the mobility certificate, while being relevant for other aspects, too
- Encourage the use of digitized documents in the Programme guide. Most of the aforementioned documents are requested in three printed copies, when one digitized version would be sufficient
- There could be an option to have the documents attached to Mobility tool+, allowing for a more structured and less time-consuming transfer of paper documents to and from all stakeholders involved in staff mobility. At present, for each single participation in an Erasmus+ VET mobility project, at least 50 pages of printed paper are required. We understand that the full digitalization of the process will require time and resources, but encouraging the use of digital copies rather than multiply the originals could be a first step. We hope that a simplified procedure with paperwork will reinforce the importance of the mobility itself
- Encourage mobility consortia. The model is crucial for the participation in mobility of smaller schools which would never have the capacity to start otherwise
- Provide institutions with the option to send staff on KA1 mobility for language courses
- Encourage the development and adoption of balanced approaches to validation corresponding to mobility reality.

Part III Conclusions and Suggestions: Staff Learning Mobility Inhibitors and Enablers

The following **table** refers to all challenges that inhibit staff mobility and which the three key actors (staff, VET providers and firms) are confronted with, as already analysed in the preceding sections; it

suggests also a series of measures to overcome the inhibiting factors and further enable staff mobility.

Key actor 1: VET staff

INHIBITORS

- The fact that the funding provided for staff mobility by Erasmus+ is not in line with international standard per diem rates for the receiving/host countries makes it difficult for staff to participate in mobility. The present number of grants is based on the principle that each and every person needs to invest in their professional development. However, depending on the country, reality shows that this is an inhibitor since staff may have very limited, if any, personal funding available to invest in a mobility.
- Another important issue related to the above is that National Agencies (NAs) have the discretion to decide the daily amount of funding granted according to the range provided by the Erasmus+ programme. This has a strong effect on the net funding amount received by participating staff.
- The funding does not take into consideration the extra expenses involved with securing a placement for mobility. This is often the case for mobilities related to the health/nursing/medical care sector; hospitals/clinics charge a fee per student to mentor/supervise them.
- Difficulties in leaving the workplace. Most VET staff have to recover any lessons/work lost when back to school, once their mobility is over.
- Typical staff mobilities do not exceed five working days in view of the effect on the sending organization.
- Language barrier problems. It is critical to address the language barrier so that more VET staff are encouraged to take part in mobility activities abroad.
- The travel funding as determined by the distance calculator does not always reflect the reality.
- Lack of recognition for participation in mobility programmes puts staff off participating.
- Staff mobility is currently limited to job shadowing, which participants consider very restrictive.
- Lack of identification of host partners.

ENABLERS

The following suggestions are proposed:

- Address the issue of budget for subsistence/individual support by adopting international standard per diem rates
- Reduce the range of the funding grant within which National Agencies decide to allocate budget for staff mobility
- Provide funding to support extra expenses linked to mobility
- Provide funding to allow non-participating staff to enrol on independent short language training courses that could later encourage them to go on a mobility. This can be provided through either language classes, Erasmus+ language courses (not OLS, however, as this is only limited to participating learners) or the use of digital tools
- Base travel funding on real costs and not by distance calculator
- Develop a recognition system for staff mobility to raise its status
- Consider alternative activities to job-shadowing during mobility, giving staff opportunities to combine language courses with professional development or/and study visits
- Provide funding to build school-to-school and school-to-company partnerships in order to support staff hosting.

Key actor 2: VET providers

INHIBITORS

- Many VET providers lack a clear and strong senior management commitment to internationalization and a realistic drive to adopt an internationalization strategy that emphasizes student and staff mobility
- Lack of recognition mechanisms for staff mobility
- Difficulties in substituting/replacing staff in mobility. Practical arrangements facilitate teachers' and students' uninterrupted interaction.

ENABLERS

- Recommend that all VET providers should have a clear internationalisation strategy and a commitment from management to implement it
- Develop a recognition system for staff mobility to raise its status
- Provide assistance and adopt greater flexibility in making teacher/staff mobility possible
- Produce a tool to analyse the quality of mobility processes and the experiences of staff, and propose new measures that would further support staff mobility through validation, certification and recognition.

Key actor 3: Industry

INHIBITORS

- A challenge exists to organise mobilities for teachers/staff in foreign companies due to lack of partnerships between VET providers and companies.

ENABLERS

- Recognise industries/host organisations supporting mobility through a charter similar to how VET providers are recognised. This would also provide a means of certification to those companies who support mobility; companies are key stakeholders in the process. Some form of certification would serve both to recognise them for their contribution and also to help institutions easily identify reliable hosts for their students.
- Offer VET providers databases/online catalogues to discuss potential mobilities with companies as per the one shown in www.goandlearn.eu
- Query companies to identify clearly what their expectations and needs are regarding staff mobility
- Allocate specific mobility grants under Erasmus+ to engage companies' representatives in mobility. Networking and maintaining the relations with companies are key to be able to have a successful mobility exercise
- Initiate a platform on which companies interested in hosting staff could register, maybe in connection with EURES or other tools like the Erasmus Intern for HE.

2.1. National level activation - suggested actions

Suggestion 1: All National Authorities should organize meetings or events with VET providers to encourage and support student and staff learning mobilities within the European Educational Area and the EU programs, and to explore funding possibilities. Positive testimonials would be especially welcome

Suggestion 2: We should simplify processes to ensure that companies' participation in staff mobility becomes more attractive

Suggestion 3: We should simplify and reduce bureaucracy of mobility applications. Less paperwork, more digitalisation, more 4.0 integration of all documents needed (Europass, quality commitments, assessments, mobility tool, different papers to different target groups, etc.)

Suggestion 4: Provide more support to VET providers, including training, in relation to EU Tools feasibility and integration (ECVET, LA – Learning Agreement, Europass Mobility, and CV Certificate etc.).

3.1. EU Commission activation- suggested actions

The European Commission's role is critical to encourage national authorities and VET providers to run mobilities naturally, as a part of lifelong learning process.

Suggestion 1: Provide adequate funding for Erasmus+ staff mobilities to encourage staff and VET providers, in particular smaller VET providers

Suggestion 2: Foresee in the new Erasmus programme the possibility of running training courses, events, study visits for staff and leaders, for peer learning, instead of just job shadowing

Suggestion 3: Include staff mobility among the criteria for quality/accreditation of VET institutions (European Centres of Excellence)

Suggestion 4: Include learning mobility experiences in teachers'/trainers career portfolios as part of their CDP

Suggestion 5: Review and update EU Transparency Tools to reinforce their use in mobility, rendering it more efficient and reliable; they are not integrated yet and the same information is repeated several times

Suggestion 6: Organise information days with Member-States/National Authorities on EU VET (and labour) related policies including mobility. This could be done during the [European Vocational Skills Week](#).

Part IV- Mobility for today and tomorrow

Although the impact of mobility varies between countries as a result of institutional and cultural differences, WG2 is certain that teachers' and trainers' learning mobilities will become a fundamental component of the 21st century VET sector in Europe.

Besides physical mobilities, where staff spend time abroad, mobilities can take other forms, for example, peer collaboration at distance, facilitated through digital means. This type of virtual mobility means that staff do not have to travel anymore; nowadays, virtual activities enable colleges to offer many staff an international experience.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Erasmus+ learners can now be offered:

- * Starting a learner mobility through virtual activities, to be combined with a physical mobility abroad at a later date (if and when the situation allows for it)
- * Both virtual and physical periods would count towards recognition of learning outcomes or professional skills gained

As to the mobility of staff: a full period of virtual mobility would be considered eligible, if the conditions to invoke the “force majeure” persist

As to the future, ongoing reflection on how to integrate blended mobility (the combination of virtual and physical mobility) in the future programme

Through various social media channels, Skype, and other electronic learning platforms, staff are encouraged to use foreign languages to communicate with their peers, to learn about other educational cultures, and to be informed on the differences between vocational studies in different Member States etc. Very often virtual experience sparks a serious interest in a physical mobility, e.g. in a work placement abroad. All the knowledge, skills and competencies gained as a result of virtual and physical experiences give staff a better insight into the other’s teaching approach and content.

As a result of working with international partners, teachers develop a very open attitude. Research shows that mobility makes teachers more flexible and their teaching more contemporary, challenging and exciting.

An important pre-condition for this is that physical and/or virtual mobility need to be embedded in the educational programs of the partner institutions. Working internationally should not be considered extra work; on the contrary, it should be part of the primary process! Schools’ cooperation promotes mobility participation and networking.

The approach of forming a consortium of VET schools for mobility applications is efficient and creditable and has existed in many countries for many years. However, the concept of “consortium” differs from country to country. In certain cases, school partnerships for mobility applications have been encouraged by the National Agencies since the time of the Leonardo da Vinci programme (LdV). This means that if a VET institution applying for funding for a group of catering students (or staff), for example, on placement abroad, invited other schools of the same course programme to join, this would bring the proposal additional funding. In this scheme, the main administrative responsibility falls on the applicant institution, although the active

participation of all participating schools is necessary. Next, the invited VET schools reciprocate by inviting partner institutions to take part in their own mobility projects for other profiles of teachers/students. In this way, VET providers can participate in several mobility initiatives and ensure that larger numbers and categories of staff benefit from international experiences. Participating in mobility activities brings institutions, their teaching professionals, and international officers closer together. It also helps providers build networks and share good practices within the VET community.

Reflection is needed on the specific quality-related dimensions of mobility, such as standards and guidelines and their implementation, in order to learn from their application and decide whether there is a need to develop quality standards to cover the mobility of VET teachers.

Staff need further empowerment to develop self-assessment tools for assessing their mobility experience and to define, together with their institution, which competencies they can develop at home and which abroad.

Among the competencies to further develop or acquire figure not only digital skills but also intercultural understanding, communication skills, and skills for innovation and creativity. It becomes imperative for future mobility activities to address them in order to promote people's well-being and society's prosperity.

Referring to people's well-being, VET providers and policy makers should further analyse and support mobility experiences addressed to students/learners with a disability; all WG2 testimonies agree that mobilities have a strong impact on raising students/learners' self-esteem, assertiveness, and socialisation, as well as facilitating further learning.

“Transnational trainings and mobilities are always good opportunities that we must grasp! Since I have been working for AEVA and the Vocational School of Aveiro, I have participated in several trainings abroad, and in two of them I have been responsible for the training abroad: in Estonia and, more recently, in Cyprus.

The staff mobilities allow the exchange of experiences and the sharing of good practices at various levels, from our professional area, to cultural enrichment, through teaching practice and job shadowing.

In my case, I can testify that these experiences have always been valuable, first of all by the development of language skills, and by the contacts that are made enabling future partnerships. A lot of the experiences lived, learning results and contacts were used for the enrichment of teaching practice and in the development of projects”.

Paulo Dias – Teacher of Marketing and Citizenship, AEVA and Escola Profissional de Aveiro, Portugal

Annex A

Working group 2 (WG2) composition and methods

Coordination: Mr Jon Harding (EfVET steering committee, Bridgwater & Taunton College, UK) and Mrs Tina Bertzeletou (VET-expert, Cedefop)

Members:

1. Mrs Sylvie Bonichon (EURASHE-CHAIN5 steering group, France)
2. Mr Louis Aquilina (EfVET, MCAST Director, Malta)
3. Mr Alfredo Garmendia (EfVET, San Viator Head of International Dept., Spain)
4. Mrs Inge Jakobsen (EfVET, Koege Business College international coordinator and lecturer, Denmark)
5. Mr Andrea Lombardi (EfVET, Uniser, Italy)
6. Mrs Christine Mertens (EVBB, Liege Science Park Director, Belgium)
7. Mrs Helena Mikkola (EUproVET, City of Turku International Affairs Manager, Finland)
8. Mr Iker Orueta (EfVET, Education & Mobility Co-Director, Spain)
9. Mrs Ana Ribeiro (EfVET, EPA Head of Teaching, Portugal)
10. Mrs Margarida Segard (EVBB Vice President, ISQ, Portugal)
11. Mr Raimo Sivonen (SAJO ry, Principal, Finland)
12. Mrs Konstancja Szymura (EfVET, Aviva General Manager, Poland)
13. Mrs Rasa Zygmantaitė (former EfVET, Lithuania)

Mr Guy Tchibozo (VET-expert, CEDEFOP, associated)

Working method

The present document is the result of WG2's work between May 2017 and April 2019¹¹. Members came together in May 2017 to set up this group on a voluntary basis, wishing to learn from each other and share knowledge and ideas on how staff mobility is working at present and

¹¹ During this period WG2 met four times (18 May 2017; 13-14 March 2018; 27-28 November 2018 and 8-9 April 2019)

what should be done to further develop it and render it a constitutional part of VET policies and programmes in the future.

The WG2 decided to focus on the needs and priorities of both VET providers and teachers/trainers in relation to learning mobilities, taking stock of their experiences. It also decided to privilege practical applications, to define supportive measures to enhance VET staff and secure more effective participation in learning mobility across the EU. It decided also to link its work to the CEDEFOP mobility scoreboard project.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard>

The WG2 proceeded with mapping and analysing examples of good practice proposed by its members and organising reflection groups in view of drawing practical suggestions to the attention of VET providers, National Agencies and the EU Commission.

The WG2 agreed to pay particular attention to the quality-related dimensions of mobility to further boost the quality of the cooperation among VET providers, sending and receiving organizations, firms, and teachers and trainers.

WG1 reckons that due to its composition its work has been limited to certain VET providers and Member States and consequently it cannot be representative of the wealth of mobility experiences led by VET providers at national or EU level in the context of former EU programmes like LdV and the current comprehensive and powerful Erasmus+. Nevertheless, WG2 hopes that the outcomes of its work reflect the challenges educators are facing in this field and that they can serve as “food for thought” to all actors involved, and in particular to policy makers and VET providers orienting their action towards a holistic approach to staff learning mobility.