



SHAPING VET FOR TOMORROW



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IMPRINT

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Design and Layout: Bernadett Baukó | Publication designer at Tempus Public Foundation

ISBN 978-615-6615-07-7

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission and the Ministry of Culture and Innovation. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Introduct

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[PREFACE]

An international conference titled '*Shaping VET for Tomorrow*' was organised in Budapest on the initiation of the Hungarian National VET Team working in the framework of the Hungarian National Agency, Tempus Public Foundation, on 6 December 2024. The conference participants came from 13 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey and represented National VET Teams either as the coordinator or experts. Regarding Hungary, except for the coordinators and the experts of the Hungarian national VET Team, directors and teachers from VET schools and VET Centres took part in the event.

After the official greetings, the conference started with plenary presentations. One of the keynote speakers, Marta Munoz represented the European Commission (Directorate – General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture) and talk generally about the current situation and perspectives in Erasmus+ in VET sector, while the second speaker participated as the coordinator of an international research LTA, called '*The impact of VET placements on national education in Central and Eastern Europe*' coordinated by the Polish National Agency and she presented some transnational research results.

The plenary presentations were followed by a roundtable discussion, which brought together leading experts from four EU countries: Rudolf Razka from Austria, Branko Pleadin from Croatia, Katrin Rein from Estonia, and Urte Savickiene from Lithuania. They shared their experiences and insights on the integration of green initiatives in vocational education and training (VET). With participants deeply involved in sustainability projects and educational reforms, the discussion explored how environmental consciousness and sustainability can be effectively embedded into vocational curricula across Europe, with a special focus on mobility projects. Led by moderator Eva Toth, eTwinning ambassador, EU CodeWeek leading teacher and expert in VET education from Hungary, the conversation delved into successful good practices, local and international initiatives, challenges, and strategies for fostering environmental responsibility among students in vocational training programmes.

Participants could actively be involved in the work in sessions. Three parallel sessions were organised on three different topics: Quality assurance and EQAVET, School innovations generated by Erasmus+ programmes, and Fostering EU citizenship through Erasmus+. The sessions were led by Hungarian experts, the majority of whom work as National VET Team experts. Besides Hungarian best practices, some foreign participants presented their own best practice. The session 'Quality assurance and EQAVET' was chaired by Katalin Molnárné Stadler and József Marton and except for the Hungarian best practice, three other ones were presented by Lucie Großstück from Germany, Liliya Elenkova from Bulgaria and Marge Kroonmäe from Estonia. The participants of the session 'Erasmus-driven innovations in schools, with chairs Éva Rozmán and Helga Müller, listened to best practices from Croatia by Ljiljana Mraz, from Latvia by Sigita Jasinska, from Austria by Rudolf Razka, and from Hungary. The session that focused on participation in democratic life and fostering EU citizenship was chaired by Judit Emma Tóth and Tamara Tuza.

In this session, except for three best practices from Austria (Monika Auzinger), from Slovakia (Zuzana Kunová), and from Hungary, the Hungarian contact point of Participation SALTO, Éva Járosi introduced some useful ideas.

The sessions focused on showcasing impactful approaches, addressing key challenges and exploring innovative solutions. Participants from various National VET teams, Hungarian schools, and other stakeholders worked together to exchange experiences, identify barriers, develop strategies, and discuss best practices to strengthen intercultural understanding of the given issue. Due to the strong intention of the participants, this international book was written to combine the professional content of the international conference and to make it more available for a wider audience. The aim of the conference volume is not only to disseminate conference presentations but also give a complex view on Erasmus+ programmes in VET sector across many European countries as well as to provide the collection of best practices that can be applied by most VET institutions and support VET school to implement Erasmus+ programmes as successfully and effectively as possible.

The first study, *'Evolution and perspective of ERASMUS+ for the VET field'*, written by Marta Munoz, theoretically introduces the issue, starting with the Council recommendation on European Education Area, then highlighting the evolution of the Erasmus+ programmes in figures and finishing with some sights on the future. The second study, titled *'Beyond Borders: Examining the Impact of Mobility on Vocational Students in East-Central European Countries'*, the author of which is Julita Pienkosz, through presenting some results of an international research LTA project, focuses on the impact of VET mobilities on students' competences, such as working skills, learning motivation, foreign language competence, intercultural and transversal competences, as well as interschool relationships.

Continuing the influences of Erasmus+ programmes on schools as well as widening the aspect focusing not only on students' competences but also including the beneficial impact on the educational institutions as a whole, the third study, written by an international group of experts, highlights educational innovations generated by Erasmus+ programmes. The study, *'Erasmus driven innovation in schools – Let's broaden our horizon!'* initiates the implementation of the impacts of Erasmus+ programmes, considering the influence of both teachers and students' mobility and explains 4 best practices from Hungary, Latvia, Austria, and Croatia.

The next two studies emphasize two priorities of the current programme period: Participation in democratic life and Sustainability. Regarding the former priority, Participation, and its role as well as implementation in VET education is elaborated in the fourth study, *"Participation in Democratic Life - Fostering Active Citizenship through Erasmus+ Programmes"*. Besides applicable best practices from Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia, introducing, for example ambassador programmes, the study includes SALTO's opinion and suggestions on this horizontal priority in general as well as enhancing democratic participation in Erasmus+ VET programmes.

The fifth study consider the second priority, sustainability and greening, with the title of *'Green Transition in Erasmus+'*. The study combines unique perspectives of four experts, representing

four countries and their approaches to the green transition in VET and presenting several mini-best practices. It is emphasized that international cooperation has a crucial role in advancing green skills in education and preparing future generations for the demands of a sustainable world – especially with the advancement of the energy-consuming artificial intelligence emerging.

The last study incorporates EQAVET and quality assurance in vocational education and training as well as highlights the significance of quality assurance in the successful implementation of the Erasmus+ KA1 projects. Among the introduced best practices from four different countries, the authors propose, on the one hand, the EQAVET-based quality management system in Hungarian VET institutions with reference to the self-evaluation of VET institutions, the performance evaluation of teachers, the indicator system, and feedback collecting form partners, and on the other hand, the quality assurance systems in learning mobility from Germany, Estonia, and Bulgaria.

The international authors and the editor of the publication hope that the book provides valuable and effective suggestions for VET institutions across any countries on how to plan Erasmus+ programmes, incorporate the horizontal priorities in the projects, implement the beneficial results of the projects into the everyday operation of schools, convert the experience gained in international programmes to the development of the institution, teachers, and students, and take advantage of Erasmus+ programmes to increase the quality of teaching, inspire teachers, and motivate students.

Csilla Marianna Szabó Dr.

Editor in chief

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MARTA MUÑOZ:

**Evolution and Perspective of
ERASMUS+ for the VET Field**



INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus+ programme has undergone significant evolution and has a promising perspective. The programme began in 1987 as Erasmus for university students and since that time has expanded to include other sectors of education and training, such as Comenius, Leonardo, and Grundtvig, in 1995 and 2000. In 2014, the programme merged with other European education and youth programmes to form the Erasmus+ programme, which has been implemented since 2014, and is managed by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture.

1. European Education Area

The Erasmus+ programme is the main instrument to achieve the political goals of the European Education Area (EEA), which has several objectives including removing barriers from learning, improving access to quality education, and initiating to speak two languages beyond one's mother tongue as a norm. The EEA also aims to make excellence in education as a reality for all EU students, regardless of their socio-economic background, as well as to promote a strong sense of European identity and cultural heritage.

The European Education Area fosters collaboration among European Union Member States to build more resilient and inclusive national education and training systems. The European Commission and European Union (EU) Member States are working to achieve their collective vision for a European Education Area by focusing their efforts on several fields, such as:

- improving the quality and the equity in education and training,
- teachers, trainers and school leaders,
- digital education,
- green education,
- the EEA in the world.

The idea to create a European Education Area was first endorsed by European leaders at the 2017 Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden. As a result of decades of close cooperation, significant progress has already been made with the fields as follows:

- Almost 95% of children attend early childhood education from the age of 4.
- More than 40% of young adults acquire a higher education qualification.
- Almost 90% of young people leave education with either an upper secondary diploma or enrolment in training.
- 80% of recent Erasmus+ graduates gain employment in less than 3 months after graduating. (European Education Area explained)

1.1 Council Recommendation for improving EEA

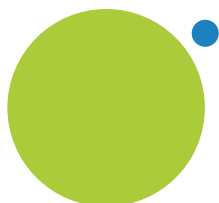
In September 2020, the Commission outlined its renewed vision for the European Education Area and the concrete actions to achieve in a Commission Communication. The Council of the EU responded with the February 2021 Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for the period 2021–2030 (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). In November 2022, the Commission published its Progress Report towards the achievement of the European Education Area (Building the European Education Area). The report highlights the work that has been done so far, and the challenges still to be addressed. 2023 was devoted to the European Education Area midterm review process.

The midterm review process contributed to the ongoing interim evaluation of the efforts to build the European Education Area. The evaluation report will be published in 2025. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training will contribute to the achievement of the European Education Area by:

- supporting EU Member States with their reforms of education and training systems,
- enhancing synergies with other policy areas, such as research and innovation, social policy, employment and youth, as well as with EU funding instruments to better support national reforms,
- identifying targets and indicators to guide work and monitor progress.

The implementation of the Programme's KA1 has been further supported by the Council of the European Union with the adoption of the Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' in May 2024, which covers all sectors of education, youth, and sport, and aims to make learning periods abroad a standardized and accessible option for all. The Recommendation identifies several obstacles to learning mobility in VET, including language barriers, age barriers, emotional distress, lack of recognition of learning outcomes, and financial barriers. To address these obstacles, the Recommendation suggests that member states, among other recommendations, should offer systemic mobility opportunities, facilitate information about the opportunities available, strengthen language learning, improve recognition of learning outcomes, and make mobility opportunities more accessible and inclusive.

In addition, in the VET sector, the Erasmus+ programme aims at supporting the implementation of the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020 (EUR-Lex), the Osnabruck Declaration, the Copenhagen process, the European pillar of social rights, whose first pillar is education, training and life-long learning, and the European Skills Agenda, among other initiatives.



2. The evolution of the programme in numbers

More than EUR 26 billion are allocated for the programming period 2021–2027, nearly doubling the size as compared to the envelope of the predecessor programme. The table below shows the indicative budgetary distribution through the current period.

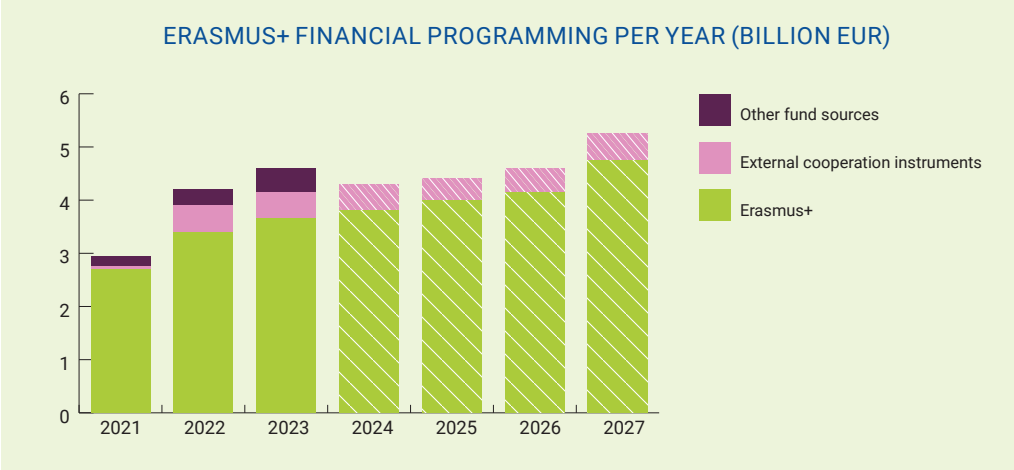


Figure 1: Erasmus+ Financial Programming per year from 2021 to 2027
Source: Erasmus+ Annual Report 2023, p. 25

As of 2021, the programme implemented several structural novelties, including accreditations in the school education, VET and adult education sectors, international mobility activities in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, and mobility of learners in school education and adult education fields.

The accreditation scheme implemented in KA1 in the VET, school education and adult education sectors has proved to be a success. It allows organisations to adopt and implement long-term plans to develop their organisation through organising learning mobility activities for their learners and staff. This scheme enables reliable and easier access to funds for mobility activities every year, while ensuring that the available budget is fairly spread among the accredited organisations. The accreditation system has also introduced the mobility consortia allowing local and regional authorities, coordination bodies, and other organisations to involve multiple educational providers in their country into joint capacities and forces to implement mobility projects.

The accreditation contributes to building the European Education Area by creating a long-lasting network of organisations that continuously participate in cross-border mobility and build their organisational capacity and quality with the support of the Erasmus+ programme.

Demand for opportunities in both KA1 and KA2 exceeds the available budget in most sectors of the programme. As the graph below shows, every call year there is a positive budget uptake.

NUMBER OF PROJECTS CONTRACTED IN BUDGET YEAR AND GRANTS IN BILLION EUR

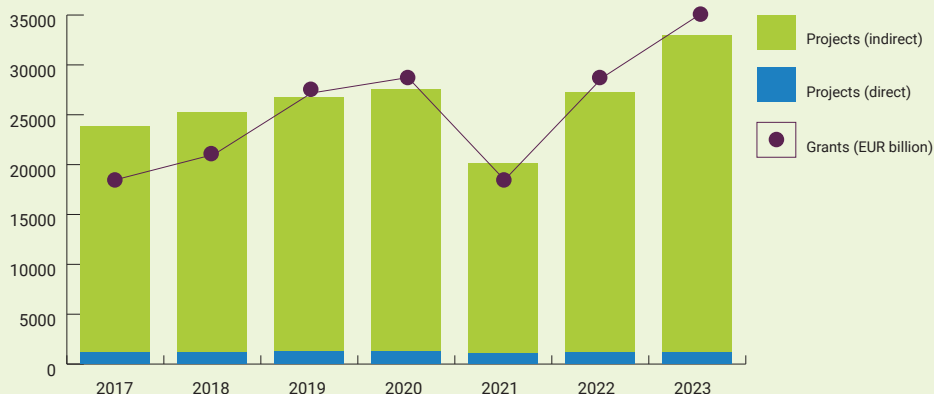


Figure 2: Number of projects contracted in budget year, grants in billion EUR
Source: Erasmus+ Annual report 2023, p. 24

Focusing on the number of participating organisations at the end of the Programming Period of 2014–2020 and at the beginning of 2021–2027, a kind of fluctuation can be detected due to the change in the structure of the programme that affects the categorisation of the data and, probably due to the COVID pandemic. In addition, the budget was lower in 2021, resulting in fewer organisations being involved in Erasmus+ projects. In 2023, an increase could be seen in all sectors.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPATIONS OF ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

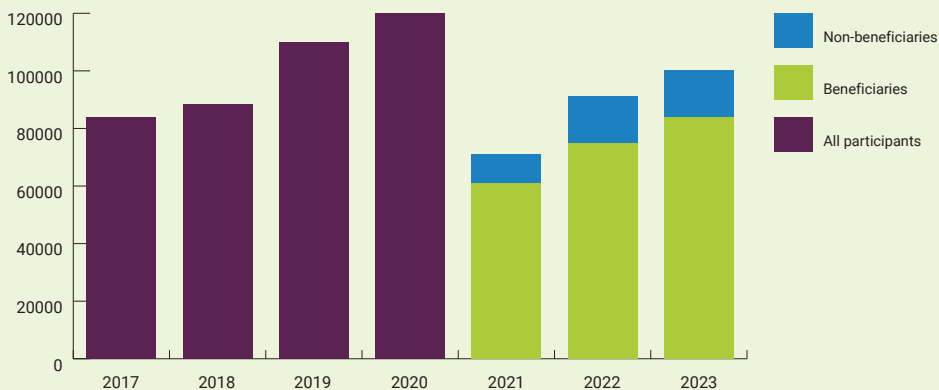


Figure 3: Number of participations of organisations involved per year
Source: Erasmus+ Annual report 2023, p. 25

3. Vocational education and training sector in the Programme

During the first three years, the Erasmus+ programme has seen significant growth, with a budget of 301 million euros in 2021 dedicated to mobility of learners and staff projects (KA1) in VET, which increased to 600 million euros in 2024. The number of VET organisations and authorities participating in KA1 has also increased from almost 9,600 in 2021 to around 23,150 in 2024, with a corresponding increase in the number of accreditations in VET, from 3,990 to 5,700. The current programme has supported learning mobility activities of around 698,000 VET staff and learners by 2024.

In terms of Key Action 2 – Partnerships for Cooperation, the programme has seen an increase in the number of projects in the VET field, from 994 in 2021 to 2,640 in 2024, with a corresponding increase in the number of VET organisations participating in projects, from more than 3,600 in 2021 to more than 7,300 in 2024.

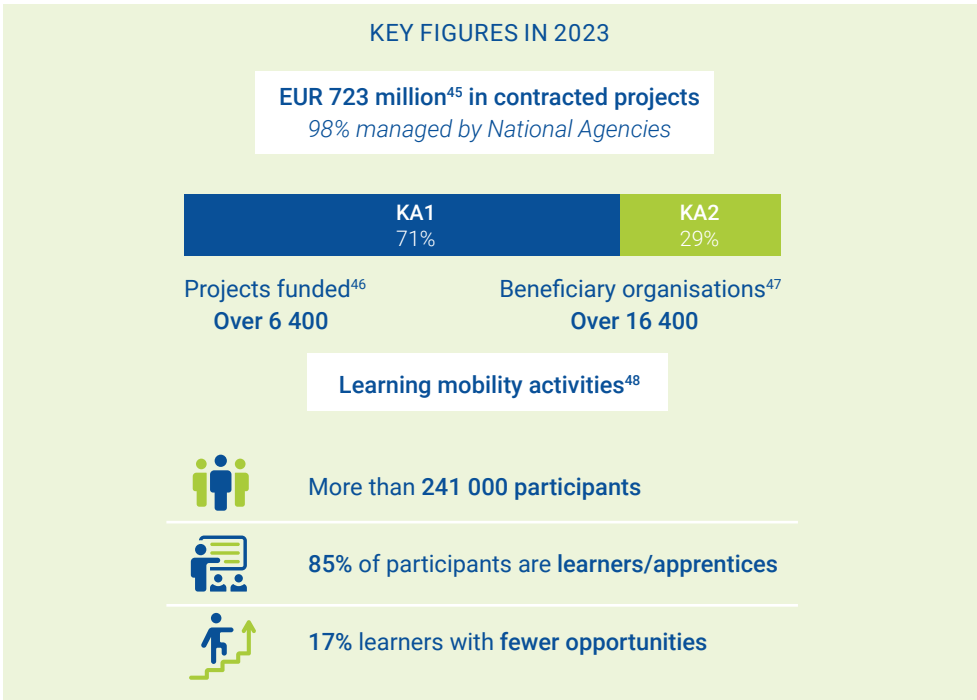


Figure 4: Figure in the VET sector in 2023
Source: Erasmus+ Annual Report 2023, p. 57

3.1 National VET Team

National VET Teams are the networks supported by the Erasmus+ Programme aiming to connect European policy initiatives, tools, and priorities with the beneficiaries of the programme. The teams are composed by experts in the VET field, e.g. the representatives of regional and local authorities, teachers and other staff of VET institutions, researchers, etc. Each team decides on its annual objectives and activities, such as activities to support applicants and beneficiaries in the implementation of their projects, studies to explore barriers or best practices in the sector, or any other kinds of initiatives that help to improve the quality of the programme's implementation.

4. The future of Erasmus+

The future perspective for the Erasmus+ programme is promising, with continued growth programmed until 2027 and a new programme set to start in 2028. A new mandate of the European Commission started in December 2024, whose political guidelines prioritise competitiveness, social rights, and quality jobs, among other things (Commission's priorities). Its first priority is to adopt a new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness:

We need a new European Prosperity Plan to:

- Make business easier and deepen our Single Market.
- Build a Clean Industrial Deal to decarbonise and bring down energy prices.
- Put research and innovation at the heart of our economy.
- Boost productivity with digital tech diffusion.
- Invest massively in our sustainable competitiveness.
- Tackle the skills and labour gap.

*Figure 5: A need for a new European Prosperity Plan
Source: Europe's Choice, Priorities 2024-2029 – European Commission p. 6.*

Tackling the skills and labour gaps is significant for people's careers and prospects as well as for Europe's competitiveness. To do so, in March 2025, the Commission proposed the Union of skills, an overarching strategy to focus on investment, adult and lifelong learning, skill retention, and the recognition of different types of training.

In this context, the importance of the VET sector is explicitly mentioned in the guidelines:

*"It is also important to give vocational education and training (VET) the prominence it deserves. It prepares people for work and gives them the skills that companies are looking for. This is why I will propose a European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training, notably to boost the number of people with a secondary VET degree."
(Commission's priorities)*

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, appointed Roxana Mînzatu as executive vice-president for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness. Her

mandate is to guide the work on strengthening Europe's human capital. Erasmus+ is the part of this portfolio and, as expressed in the guidelines, it will be strengthened and will continue to support the development of vocational education and training, with a focus on skills for today and for the future.

Ambitions for the next programming period will first be set in the framework of the adoption of the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework. In parallel, the co-design process for the next Erasmus+ programme 2028–2034 has begun with stakeholders' consultations. For the moment, the words that stand out the most in the feedback received from different programmes' actors are stability of actions and programmes' structure, including the overarching priorities. However, before the start of the next programme, there are still major obstacles to be removed to achieve the objectives of the programme and that of the EEA, as indicated in the "Europe on the Move" Council Recommendation, and this will only be possible through the collaboration of all actors involved and through the reinforcement of their expertise, for which the National Teams of VET expert have an important role to play.

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JULITA PIENKOSZ:

**Beyond Borders:
Examining the Impact of Mobility on
Vocational Students in East-Central
European Countries**



INTRODUCTION

Studies on the impact of Erasmus+ demonstrate that educational mobility is one of the key mechanisms supporting the development of students' psychological traits as well as their skills crucial for the labour market (Zimmerman et. al., 2024; Zimmerman and Neyer, 2013; Brandenburg et al., 2016; Dolga et al., 2015). Research on Erasmus+ has largely focused on higher education students, demonstrating its role in fostering professional competencies, personal growth, and cross-cultural adaptability. However, much less attention has been given to how similar mechanisms operate among vocational education and training (VET) students (Pachocki, 2018).

In the framework of an LTA (Long-term Activity) running from 2022 to 2025 and involving six countries from East-Central Europe, complex research has been conducted focusing on the impact of Erasmus+ mobility programmes on VET education. Building on the objectives, researchers wanted to find how mobility projects affect VET students' skills and competences, teachers' methodological tools and their attitude, school culture, as well as the school environment. This article seeks to explore the following key analytical questions that can deepen understanding of the impact of mobility experiences on VET students from six countries from East-Central Europe:

- Which student's competencies and skills are most significantly influenced by mobility experiences? Are they primarily working and transversal skills that are relevant to the labour market, or do they also include social and personal aspects, such as motivation to learn or strengthening relations in school?
- Are there any differences between East-Central European countries in terms of perceived mobility impact on students' working skills, transversal competences, motivation to learn and interschool relationships?
- What is the mechanism behind this impact? How do mobility programs become a significant influence on students' lives?

1. Key characteristics of IVET in the analysed countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Understanding the broader social context is essential for assessing the role of mobility in shaping vocational education in the studied countries: Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Latvia, Slovenia, and Romania. The organisation of initial vocational education and training (IVET) varies across these countries, with different structures, types of vocational schools, and levels of employer engagement (Zablocka and Stasiowski, 2022). There are various organisational solutions in the field of practical education. In Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Slovenia, and Czechia, a system that involves employers has been adopted. In Romania, Poland, and Slovenia, schools and training

centres also play a substantial role, particularly through placement programmes (Zablocka and Stasiowski, 2022).

The studied countries also face a common challenge: to reform their education systems, include IVET and meet new social and economic demands after political and economic transformation in the early 1990s. Despite the efforts to enhance the quality and public perception of vocational schools, general education remains the preferred path in many countries (Romania, Latvia, Poland, and partly Hungary). Key obstacles include negative parental opinions, cultural factors, and historical influences. IVET systems also face skill mismatches with the needs of the labour market (Latvia, Romania, Hungary), shortages in vocational teachers and trainers (Poland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary), and weak school-employer cooperation (Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Romania) (Zablocka and Stasiowski, 2022).

1.1 Statistical data on VET systems and VET mobilities

Over the years, the popularity of vocational education has varied across the studied countries. Czechia and Slovenia have the highest shares of vocational students, with around 70% of upper secondary students enrolled in VET programs. Poland and Romania have maintained steady participation rates of around 50%–56%, while Hungary has seen the most dramatic increase, rising from 23% in 2015 to 53% in 2022. Conversely, Latvia has consistently had the lowest share of students in vocational education.

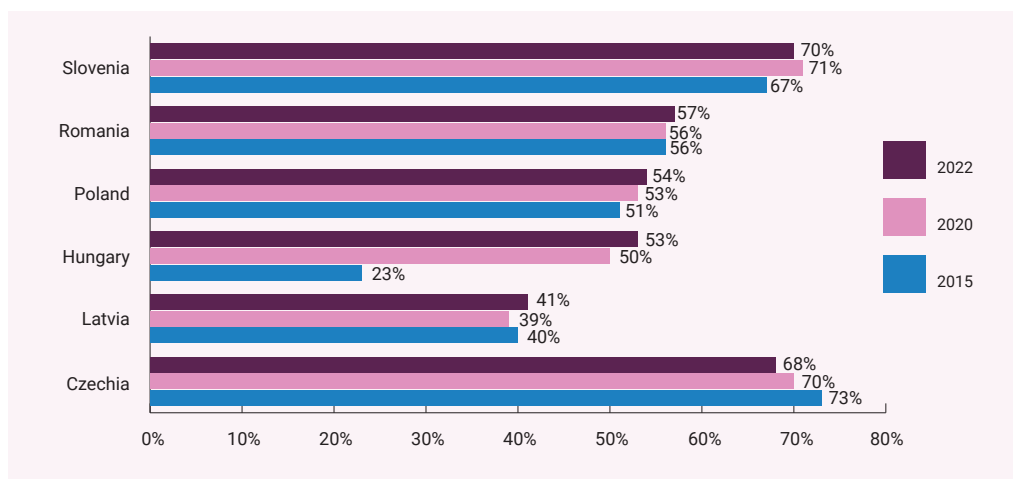


Figure 1. IVET students as % of all upper secondary students
Source: CEDEFOP, Key indicators on VET

Work-based learning (WBL) is a core component of IVET, equipping learners with the skills and qualifications needed for specific occupations. According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), WBL includes all forms of learning in real work environments, such as apprenticeships, internships, traineeships, and on-the-job training, often

combined with classroom education. Post-2020 European VET policies emphasise strengthening WBL as a key element of IVET, facilitating the transition from education to employment and developing labour market relevant skills (CEDEFOP 2024). In 2022, Cedefop data showed that 60.1% of recent VET graduates (aged 20-34, ISCED levels 3 or 4) in the EU had gained work experience as part of their studies, with such experiences typically being long and paid (CEDEFOP 2024). However, significant geographical differences exist. From 2015 to 2022, Latvia and Hungary led with all IVET students engaged in WBL. Poland and Romania followed, with 14% and 11% participation in 2022, respectively. On the contrary, while Romania increased students' involvement in WBL from 3% in 2015 to 11% in 2022, Poland demonstrated a slight decline from 16% to 14%. No data is available for Slovenia, and Czechia data from 2020 and 2022 is missing.

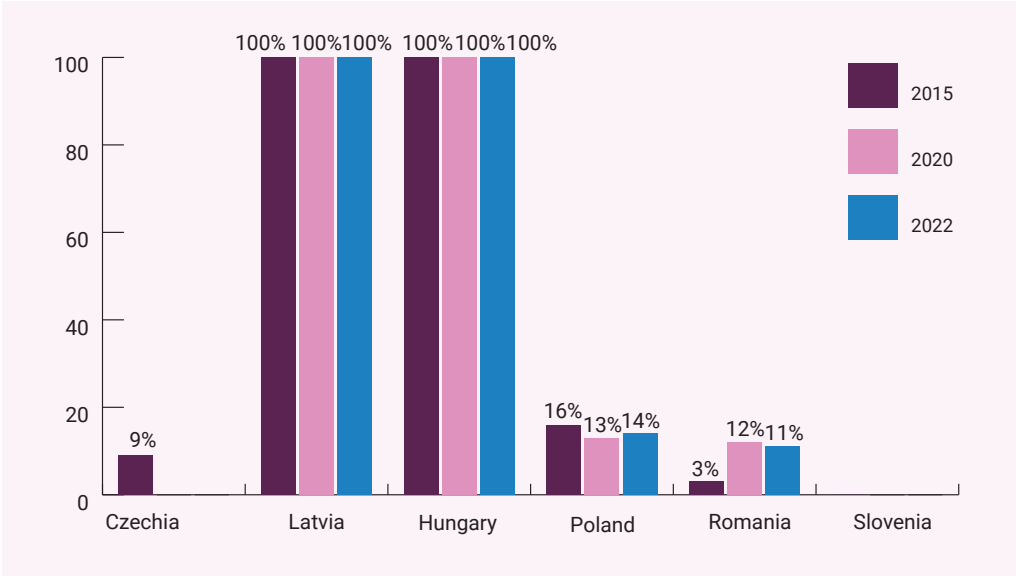


Figure 2. IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET
Source: CEDEFOP, Key indicators on VET

Employment rates serve as a key indicator of VET effectiveness. Over the years, all studied countries have produced rising employment rates among VET graduates. Czechia (85%), Hungary (84%), and Latvia (83%) now report some of the highest employment rates, while Poland and Romania also show steady improvements. The upward trend highlights the growing relevance of VET programmes in addressing labour market needs.

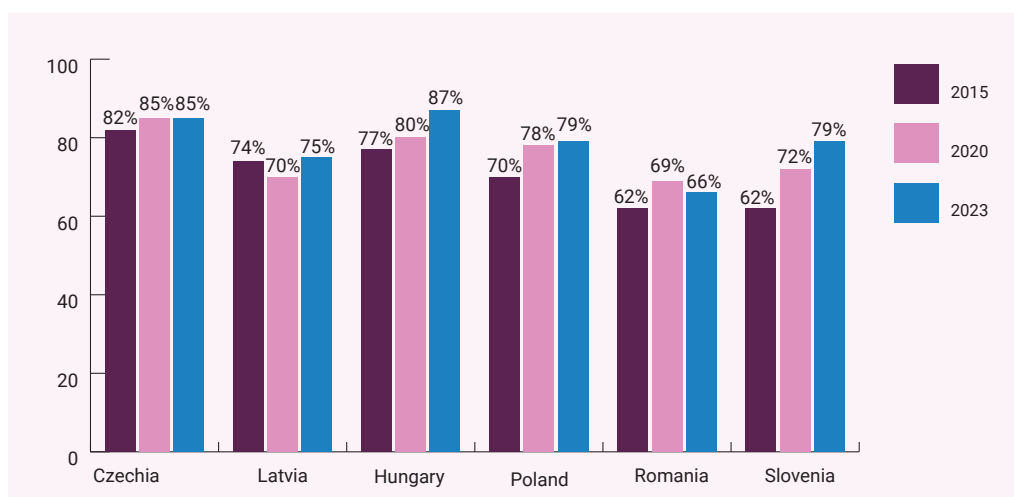


Figure 3. Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34-year-olds) (%)
Source: CEDEFOP, Key indicators on VET

Internships and apprenticeships carried out under the Erasmus+ programme play an important role in enhancing the quality of vocational education and facilitating young graduates' entry into the labour market. The goal of mobility is not only to develop participants' professional skills but also to align education systems with the needs of the European labour market. The programme promotes international cooperation, qualification recognition, open access to educational materials, and social inclusion.

Most mobilities, mainly that of vocational school (IVET) students, last from 2 to 3 weeks, during which students gain experience in foreign companies and enterprises. They specialize in fields such as tourism, gastronomy, IT, agriculture, healthcare, hair and beauty services, and arts education. Erasmus+ mobility allows them to familiarize themselves with modern training methods and diverse work environments. Between 2015 and 2019, the highest number of vocational mobility placements was recorded in Poland (116,728 mobilities). Other countries with significant participation included Romania (21,846), Czechia (17,561), Slovenia (7,988), and Latvia (3,009). Regarding the most popular Erasmus+ mobility destinations, Southern European countries and Germany are recognised for their high-quality vocational education systems and attractive internship opportunities (Zablocka and Stasiowski, 2022).

2. Sample and data gathering procedure

The data used in the analyses were collected as part of the study *'The Impact of VET Placements on National Educational Systems in Central and Eastern Europe'*, covering the 2014–2020 financial perspective. The study was conducted in six Central-Eastern European countries: Poland, Latvia, Hungary, Czechia, Romania, and Slovenia. The goal of the study was to investigate and describe how Erasmus+ learner mobility influences vocational education at three levels: 1.) impact on

students' skills, knowledge, and attitudes, as well as teaching staff and methods; 2.) changes within schools, including daily practices and collaboration with local authorities and businesses and 3.) systemic effects, such as potential reforms in education policies, laws, and vocational training frameworks.

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods. The target group consisted of all the 2014–2020 Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Key Action 1 (mobility of learners) beneficiaries (mostly schools). The online survey was carried out between September and November 2023, and it was sent out to every school to be completed by school leaders, coordinators, or other members of the staff. A net sample completion rate differs in each country, a total of 909 filled questionnaires was obtained, with response ratings varying among countries.

COUNTRY	N	COMPLETION RATE
Czechia	162	42%
Hungary	85	18%
Latvia	40	89%
Poland	463	25%
Romania	102	20%
Slovenia	57	22%
Total	909	

Table 1. Net Sample Completion Rate by Country

In-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted with school coordinators of mobility programmes and school directors. A total of 88 IDIs were conducted, with between 12 and 25 interviews per country. This approach provided a comprehensive perspective on the role of mobility in shaping vocational education on different, micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

3. Results

3.1 The Impact of VET placements on students

The perceived impact of mobility on students' competencies, competences and their personal aspects was assessed through an online survey and in-depth interviews with school coordinators, heads of schools, and teachers, where respondents evaluated how mobility influenced various aspects of students' development. In the online survey, respondents answered 19 statements related to the impact of vet placement on students' skills, competencies, competences and personal traits using a 5-point Likert scale. The original survey question for these statements asked: *'How do VET placements affect the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of learners who participated in training abroad?'* Respondents had to express their level of agreement.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for each statement in the questionnaire relating to the perceived impact of mobilities on students. The most significant perceived impact was related

to the improvement of the ability to work in an international environment. This is reflected in the highest average score (4.58) and the smallest standard deviation (0.625), indicating a strong consensus among respondents across all countries. The responses regarding the effects of mobility on several different skills and competences varied within a relatively broad range, with mean scores ranging from 4.58 to 3.68.

STATEMENTS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Enhancing the ability to work in an international environment	4.58	0,625
Increasing communication skills	4.42	0,675
Enhancement of intercultural skills	4.42	0,765
Increasing team- working skills	4.40	0,747
Increasing cultural awareness	4.36	0,796
Expanding vocational skills	4.33	0,759
Increasing motivation towards learners' VET field	4.29	0,766
Increasing motivation towards foreign language learning	4.29	0,790
Improving communication in a foreign language	4.23	0,783
Increasing tolerance attitudes	4.22	0,863
Increasing awareness of the characteristics of individual workplaces	4.19	0,793
Broadening the knowledge of foreign language general vocabulary	4.18	0,791
Broadening the knowledge of foreign language professional vocabulary	4.16	0,805
Increasing motivation towards learning in general	4.14	0,808
Increasing independence in the learning process	4.12	0,834
Enhancement of relations with other learners at your school	4.03	0,927
Enhancement of relations with their teachers at your school	4.02	0,885
Enhancement of relations with your school community	3.87	0,945
Increasing ICT skills	3.68	0,985

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for 19 statements on the perceived impact of mobility on students
Source: own calculations, N= 894

Given the large number of variables (19 statements), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was initially conducted to identify the underlying structure and reduce dimensionality. Two factors emerged, explaining 62.4% of the variance. However, some variables exhibited cross-loadings or weak associations, making one of the factors difficult to define. Notably, the variable related to the perceived impact on ICT skills showed a low factor loading (0.50) on both factors, indicating weak alignment with either dimension. Pearson correlation analysis further confirmed that ICT skills had relatively weaker associations with competencies, competences, and personal traits compared to other variables, suggesting that it may represent a distinct construct rather than integrating into the broader framework.

To refine the categorization, a hierarchical cluster analysis was performed, excluding the ICT skills variable. The resulting dendrogram (see Figure 4) revealed two main branches: one capturing the *perceived impact on students' foreign language skills*, and the other *encompassing skills*,

competences, and relationships. The first branch reflects the development of foreign language abilities, including improved communication and an expanded vocabulary, both general and professional. The second branch includes various dimensions of student development: **intercultural competences, transversal competences, learning motivation, working skills and relationships**, which encompass improved interactions with peers, teachers, and the broader school community. These branches were subsequently used to create combined indicators for further analysis.

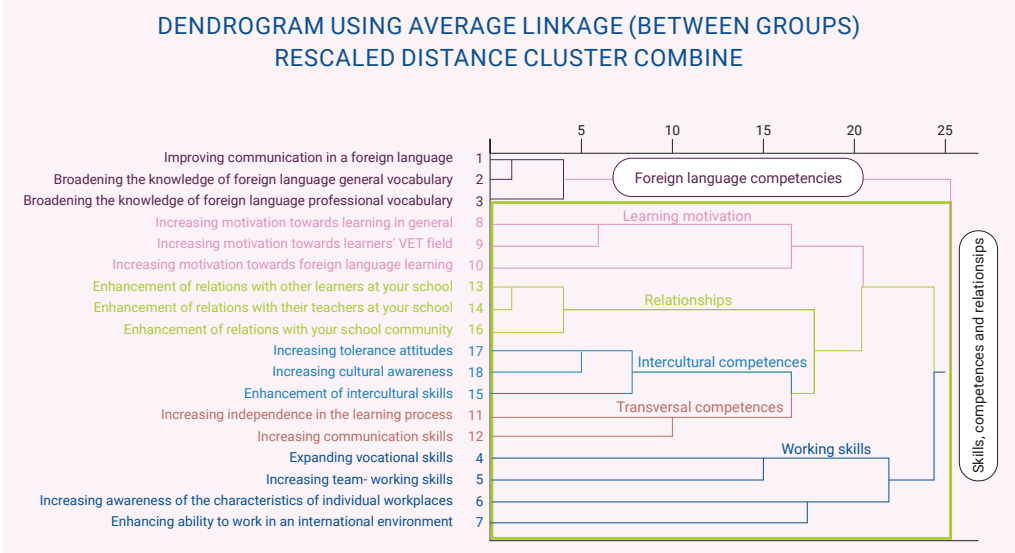


Figure 4. Dendrogram with subgroup titles from the hierarchical cluster analysis
Source: own calculations, N=894

After clustering, reliability analysis was conducted. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated for each indicator to determine the reliability of the groupings. The results of this analysis are presented below once the calculations have been completed.

INDICATORS	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
Working skills	892	1.00	5.00	4.37	0.597	0.830
Intercultural compe- tences	894	1.00	5.00	4.33	0.729	0.886
Transversal compe- tences	894	1.00	5.00	4,27	0,695	0.809
Learning motivation	894	1.00	5.00	4,24	0,686	0.851
Foreign language com- petencies	890	1,00	5.00	4.18	0.729	0.909
Relationships	894	1.00	5.00	3.97	0.846	0.910
Total	894					

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of indicators measuring the individual impacts of students' mobility
Source: own calculations, N=894

The analysis shows that mobility had the strongest influence on skills relevant to the labour market, with working skills standing out as the most impacted among outbound students (mean: 4.37). This finding confirms that mobility placements have largely achieved their goals, helping students acquire and refine professional competencies that they further develop in education and apply in the labour market. International apprenticeships not only allow students to test their skills in a specific role and environment but also provide insight into work and vocational training across Europe.

The perceived impact of mobilities on transversal competences ranked third with a mean of 4.27, including key soft skills, such as effective communication and the ability to learn independently. Research highlights their role in fostering flexibility and a positive attitude, which are essential for collaborative work (Robles, 2012; Finch et al., 2013). Another vital aspect is learning autonomy, which is crucial in the context of lifelong learning (LLL) and the knowledge-based economy. As a driver of productivity and competitive advantage (Pieńkosz and Maj, 2024), the ability to learn independently and continuously develop skills is highly valued in today's dynamic labour market.

Regarding students' intercultural competences, as the perceived impact of mobility, ranked second, with a mean of 4.33. This highlights its alignment with key EU priorities, particularly 'Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement.' Mobility experiences foster tolerance, equality, and cultural awareness, all of which are essential for strengthening European identity and active citizenship. These findings confirm that mobility programmes play a vital role in promoting common EU values and preparing students for engagement in an interconnected world.

Students' learning motivation was the fourth most impacted area (mean: 4.24), followed by foreign language competencies (4.18). This suggests that mobility programmes not only enhance specific skills but also foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn, which is fundamental for their long-term personal and professional development. Increased motivation can lead to greater engagement in academic activities, a stronger commitment to lifelong learning, and a more proactive approach to self-improvement.

At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest perceived impact was observed in the improvement of internal school relations among mobility students (3.97) and the development of ICT skills (3.68).

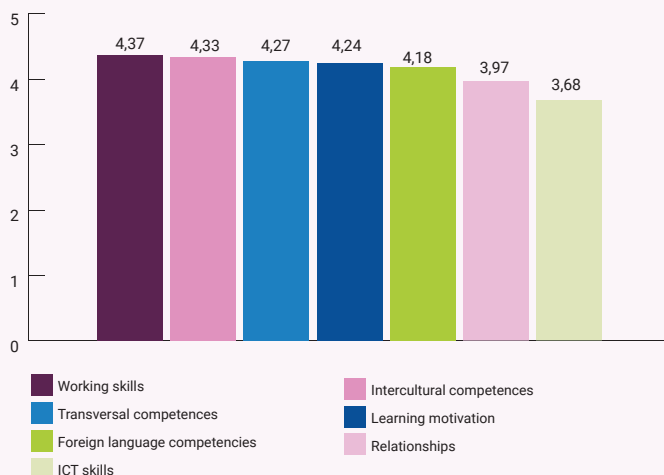


Figure 5. Comparison of indicators related to the impact of mobility on students' skills and personal traits (mean values)
Source: own calculations, N=894

3.2 Differences in the perceived impact of mobility on students across countries, based on selected indicators

In the following section, we will examine cross-country differences in selected indicators, prioritising the most relevant to students' future professional development — namely, working skills and transversal competences — as well as the essential ones for their academic experience, specifically learning motivation and interschool relationships. To illustrate cross-country differences in the perceived impact of mobility programmes, box plots for selected key indicators are presented. This method allows us to visualise the distribution of responses, highlighting median values, variability, and potential outliers.

3.2.1 The perceived impact on working skills

The analysis of the perceived impact of mobility programmes on students' working competencies reveals notable differences among the surveyed countries. Romania recorded the highest mean score (4.7), followed by Poland and Slovenia (4.5), and Hungary (4.2). In contrast, Czechia (4.0) and Latvia (4.1) had the lowest means, indicating a lower perceived impact of mobility on students' working skills development. The median values reflect this trend, with Romania at 5.0, Poland at 4.8, and Czechia and Latvia at 4.0, reinforcing the lower perceived impact in those countries. Examining the interquartile ranges (IQRs) reveals significant differences in how countries perceive the impact of mobility programmes. In Czechia (3.5) and Latvia (3.8), a larger portion of respondents rated the impact lower, indicating more variation in perceptions. Conversely, Romania and Slovenia show higher lower quartiles (4.6), suggesting a more consistent, positive evaluation. The broader IQRs in countries like Czechia and Hungary reflect a wider range of opinions, with some schools rating the impact very high and others very low.

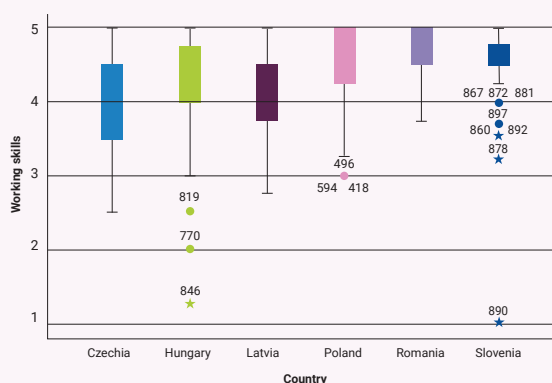
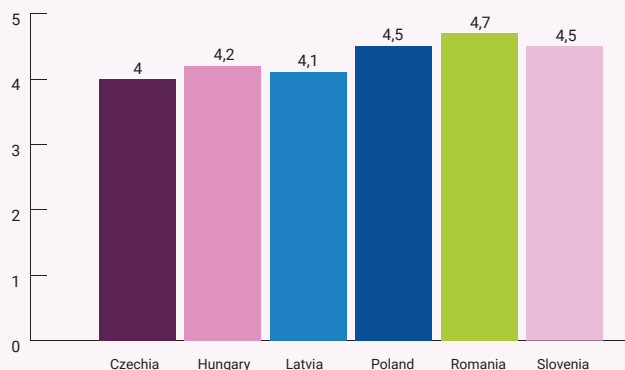


Figure 6. Comparison of the indicator of the perceived impact of mobility on students' working skills across countries (on the left mean values, on the right box plot)

Source: own calculation, N=892

3.2.2 The perceived impact on transversal competences

The analysis of perceived impact on students' transversal competences across countries affirms notable variations. Mean and median values indicate consistently high ratings (4.0–4.5), but interquartile ranges and outliers highlight key differences. Czechia, Hungary, and Latvia have the lowest mean scores (4.0) and broader distributions, particularly in Czechia, where responses range from 2 to 5. Hungary shows the most extreme lower outliers (below 3.5). Poland, Romania, and Slovenia have the highest median scores (4.5) and favourable distributions, though Poland's spread is slightly wider. Considering both mean and median values, school representatives in Romania and Slovenia reported the greatest perceived impact of mobility on transversal competences. Czechia and Latvia exhibit the greatest variability, with lower whiskers extending to 2 and 2.5, respectively, indicating more negative evaluations.

These findings suggest that the impact of mobility on transversal competences is generally perceived positively. However, broader data spreads reflect divergent opinions within countries, particularly in Hungary, Czechia, and Latvia.

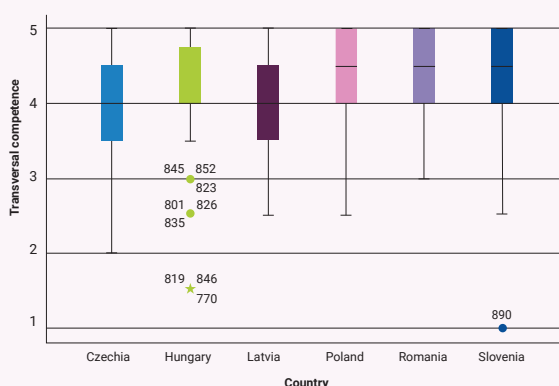
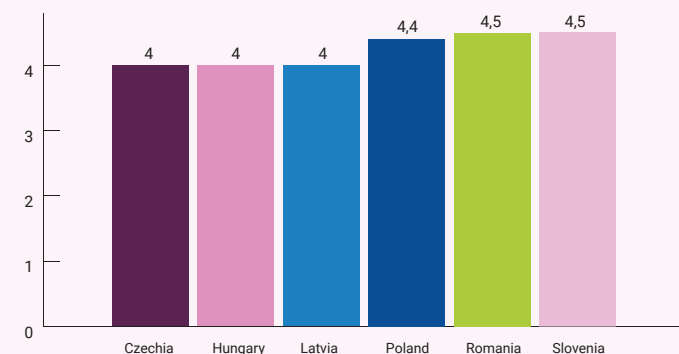


Figure 7. Comparison of the indicator of the perceived impact of mobility on students' transversal competences across countries (on the left mean values, on the right box plot)
Source: own calculation, N=894

3.3.3 The perceived impact on learning motivation

Similarly to transversal competences, notable differences between countries regarding the perceived impact of mobility on students' motivation are noticeable.

Czechia, Hungary, and Latvia report the lowest perceived impact (means of 3.8–4.0), with broader distributions suggesting a more moderate perception. On the other hand, Poland (mean 4.7) and Romania (mean 4.6) show higher scores, with upper quartiles reaching 5.0, indicating a consistent belief in mobility's positive effect. Slovenia falls in between, with a mean of 4.2 and a more compact interquartile range (4.0–4.6), reflecting a stable yet moderate perception. Similar to the impact on students' transversal competences, the greater variability in Czechia, Hungary, and Latvia suggests more divergent opinions on mobility's impact in those countries, with lower whiskers as low as 2.0–2.2.

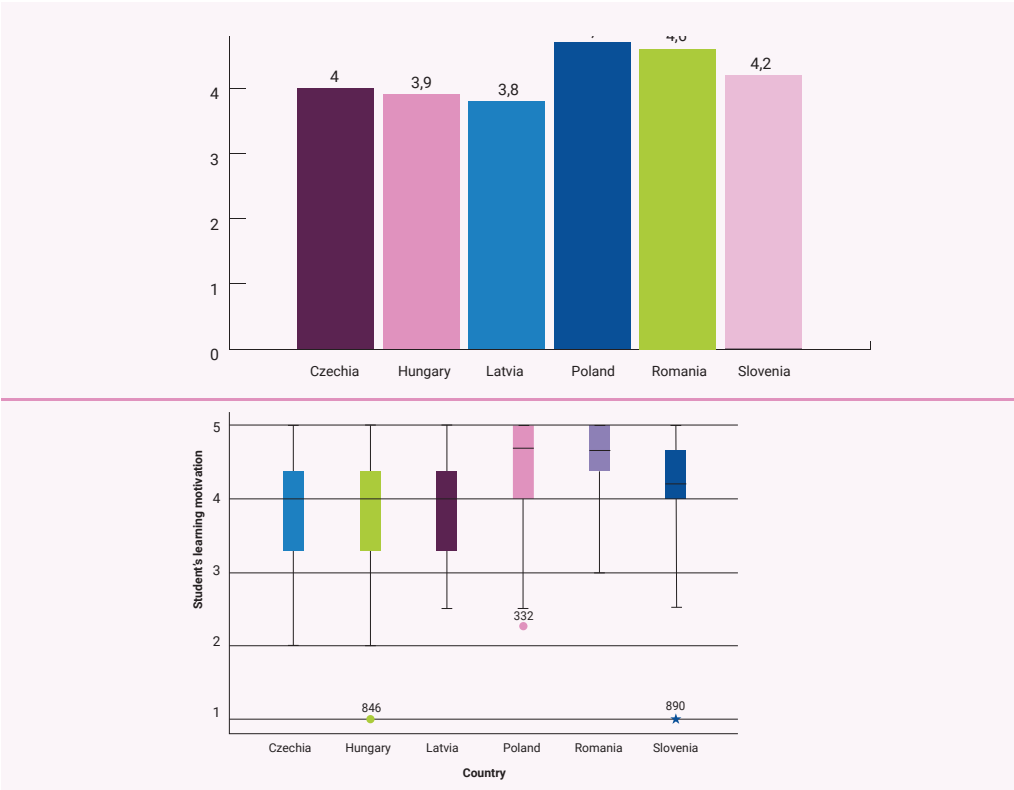


Figure 8. Comparison of the indicator of the perceived impact of mobility on students' learning motivation across countries (on the left mean values, on the right box plot)
Source: own calculations, N=894

3.3.4 The perceived impact on inter-school relationships

The impact of mobility extends beyond the individual, influencing relationships with peers and teachers upon return. However, this aspect received the lowest impact scores. The relationship indicator consistently shows the lowest values across all countries, even in Poland, Romania and Slovenia, where other aspects scored high.

The perceived impact of mobility on relationships varies significantly between countries. Czechia, Hungary, and Latvia report the lowest perceived impact (means of 3.4–3.6), with Latvia having the lowest mean (3.4) and a lower quartile of 2.8, indicating weaker perceptions. Poland, Romania and Slovenia show higher perceived impacts on students' school relationships (means above 4.0), with Romania leading at 4.5, followed by Slovenia (4.2) and Poland (4.1), indicating stronger consensus. Again, variability is greatest in Czechia, Hungary, and Latvia, where lower quartiles and whiskers extend downward, indicating more mixed opinions among respondents. In contrast, Romania and Slovenia show more consistent and higher ratings, with lower whiskers at 3.0 and 2.8, reflecting broad recognition of mobility's positive impact on relationships.

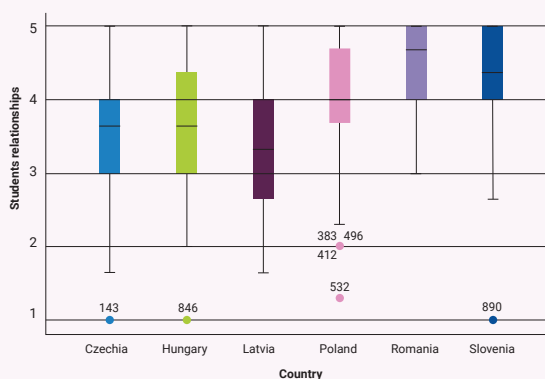
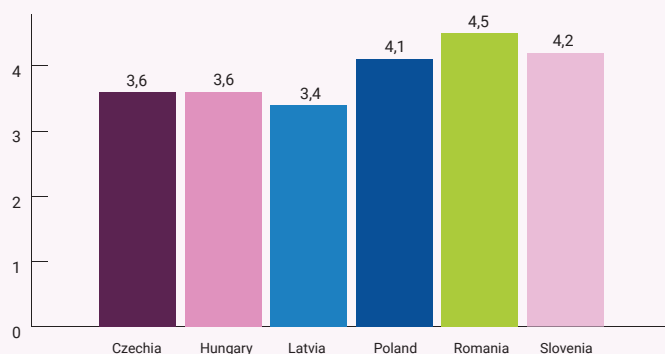


Figure 9. Comparison of the indicator of the perceived impact of mobility on students' relationships in school across countries (on the left mean values, on the right box plot)
Source: own calculations, N= 894

3.3 The mechanism of mobilities impact

Empirical studies exploring the significance of higher education student mobilities (Brown, 2009; Nada et al., 2018; Cushing et al., 2019; Nada and Legutko, 2022) show that such experiences can have a transformative effect on learners, fostering the development of intangible personal traits. However, transformative learning does not occur automatically – students must engage deeply with the new culture and reflect on their experiences (Otten, 2003). Murphy-Lejeune (2003, p.101) describes studying abroad as a *'natural learning situation that stimulates many more aspects of learners' personalities than are usually catered for in educational institutions.'* Similarly, Cushing et al. (2019, p.213) emphasise the development of *'intangible personal characteristics or soft skills'* as a key outcome of international experiences. However, some researchers question the transformative potential of short-term mobility, arguing that significant transformations cannot be expected within such a short time (Sigalas, 2010).

Based on qualitative interviews with school coordinators and school directors, this study further explores the mechanisms through which mobility influences learners, focusing on its potential aspects for transformative learning, even within short-term mobility programmes. While these experiences are brief, several factors contribute to their transformative potential. The findings suggest that meaningful learning and personal growth begin even before students depart. Schools participating as respondent-informants in country reports use different selection criteria for participants, which shape the learning conditions. We identified three types of selection criteria for students taking part in mobility placements.

All schools demonstrate a strong focus on selection and preparation. Students are made aware of the privilege of participating, while also understanding their responsibility to represent not only their school but also their entire country abroad.

1. **Cumulative Advantage** type strongly focuses on academic performance, particularly in foreign languages and vocational subjects, favouring students with strong initial dispositions. For many studied schools in all countries, the most important factors in selecting students for study visits are their grade point average, behaviour grade, and foreign language proficiency. Variations of this type also exist, with a strong emphasis on achievements in vocational subjects and language proficiency.
2. The second identified type is **broader selection** type. Some schools place less emphasis on academic achievements and instead focus on other factors when selecting students for mobility placements. Among them, personality characteristics are significant, with a preference for more extroverted and adaptable students, as they are expected to adjust and engage more easily on-site. Additionally, schools prioritise students' interest in their field and their motivation to develop further in it. Responsibility is another key factor: schools look for students who are responsible, able to adapt to new environments, and follow the rules. These students usually have no absences or behavioural issues. In this type, there are also efforts to support students who may struggle more academically. While language skills are important for communication with foreign partners and managing an internship in a foreign language, some schools strive not to disadvantage students who do not have perfect language skills. They offer language preparation before departure to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to participate.
3. **Inclusive Selection** type ensures broader participation, including students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or those with learning difficulties. It seems that schools in rural areas or towns are most focused on social exclusion issues during recruitment. One participant notes that people from families with better financial situations (who can afford to travel abroad) tend to have higher average grades. For this reason, students' desire for their personal development or their socio-economic situation over their academic results, is often taken into account to a greater extent in recruitment.

Recruitment processes are usually quite complex and engage students from the very beginning. Some schools assess foreign language proficiency through language tests. Other factors are considered to include the evaluation of vocational practice, the teacher's opinion, and the student's involvement in school life. Additionally, an interview is conducted, during which students must prepare their CV in English, introduce themselves, explain their motivation for the internship, and answer questions related to vocational topics. This process requires students to be engaged, reflect on their skills and experiences, and prepare for mobility, which fosters self-awareness. Such activities can lead to deeper reflection on personal goals and motivations, ultimately not only expanding their knowledge but also shaping their attitudes and values.

According to the school representatives, participating in an international apprenticeship often becomes a transformative experience, altering students' perceptions and behaviours. They must adapt to a new culture, language, and work system while confronting the theoretical knowledge acquired in school with practical vocational experience, often at an employer's site. They gain professional competencies, learn specialised vocabulary, and understand their industry in a different cultural context. Moreover, for many students, it is also their first experience of independence away from their families.

The mobility period can be a time of crisis and reflection. Students notice differences in work methods depending on the profession and the host organisation; they encounter various approaches to learning and performing job-related tasks. Sometimes, this critical analysis leads to tensions, while at other times, it makes students appreciate the organisation of education and work in their schools, for example, by recognising deficiencies in the equipment of foreign training sites.

Another occasion for crisis and reflection may occur when students notice significant differences between vocational education in their home country and abroad. They observe variations in work methods depending on the profession and the host organisation, encountering diverse approaches to learning and job-related tasks. Sometimes, this critical analysis leads to tensions, especially when apprentices perceive the advantages of foreign infrastructure, greater access to



equipment, mentoring support, and, most importantly, the opportunity to engage in more diverse and stimulating tasks. At other times, however, it fosters appreciation for the organisation of education and work in their home institutions.

The adaptation process goes beyond just learning a profession — there is a deeper learning mechanism at play. Students learn through interactions with new environments and peers, which is an essential component of social education and aligns with the concept of situated learning, where knowledge is acquired through participation in real-life contexts.

Mobility often leads to a shift in perspective. Students begin to appreciate their schools, their roles in the school community, and their chosen profession more. Daily tasks and diverse responsibilities help them better understand the specifics of their field. They become more aware of their career path and reflect more frequently on their future. Many confirm their career choices after mobility. However, in some cases, gaining a deeper understanding of the job convinces students that their chosen profession is not the right fit for them, prompting them to change their career direction.

Reports from teachers indicate that students become more motivated to learn after returning from mobility, as reflected in improved attendance, better academic performance, and greater commitment to their chosen educational or vocational path. The learning process continues beyond the mobility experience itself: students continue to develop and apply the skills acquired abroad.

Based on the study, we can conclude that many schools experience a so-called ‘transfer of skills’ — a lasting impact on both the school itself and other students. Upon returning, students share their experiences, inspiring their peers to participate in similar projects. This strengthens the long-term impact of the programme, benefiting both individuals and the entire school community.

According to school representatives, mobility significantly enhances students’ employability, although its impact largely depends on the industry. In sectors with high demand for workers, graduates often obtain employment regardless of their participation in Erasmus+. Nevertheless, international experience strengthens their professional standing: listing foreign apprenticeships on a CV and possessing a Europass Certificate significantly increases their competitiveness.

Conclusions

The results of the conducted analyses align with existing literature on the impact of mobility on students’ skill development, particularly concerning labour market demands (Zimmerman et al., 2024). At the same time, this study expands the scope of research by also considering the effects of mobility experiences on students’ attitudes and their functioning within the school environment, including peer and teacher relationships. Additionally, it addresses a research gap by analysing a specific type of mobility that extends beyond formal school education – namely, international experiences of vocational education and training (IVET) students in real workplace conditions during internships and apprenticeships.

The analysis revealed that international internships have the most significant impact on developing job-related skills. This includes both hard skills, which are industry-specific, and soft skills, which are crucial in today's work environment. It is worth emphasising that in Central and Eastern European countries, where the study was conducted, deficiencies in the organisation of practical vocational education and training are still evident. From this perspective, international apprenticeships fulfil their core function by addressing these gaps and strengthening students' professional competencies.

At the same time, positive changes were observed in students' attitudes, particularly regarding tolerance and cultural awareness – the key components of intercultural competence. Educational mobility also enhances transversal skills, such as communication abilities and independent learning – an essential aspect of lifelong learning. Notably, this effect may be particularly pronounced when internship arrangements extend beyond workplace responsibilities and require participants to develop life skills, such as managing their daily routines independently.

It is important to note that while the impact of mobility on peer relationships within schools received the lowest scores compared to other indicators (except for ICT skills, which were rated the lowest), there is still evidence of positive effects. This suggests a meaningful, albeit less visible, influence of mobility on students' social development.

Respondents from all countries positively evaluated the impact of mobility programmes on various aspects of student functioning. However, cross-country analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the impact of mobility on working skills, transversal competences, learning motivation, and relationships. The highest values for these indicators were recorded in Romania, Poland, and Slovenia, with Romania displaying particularly high, consistent, and cohesive evaluations across all examined aspects. In contrast, the lower indicator values in Latvia, Hungary, and the Czechia were primarily due to greater variation in opinions, resulting in a broader distribution of data, ranging from highly negative to highly positive evaluations.

However, interpreting these cross-country differences requires being cautious due to methodological limitations and cultural factors. The voluntary nature of participation in the study may have led to self-selection among respondents, and the variations in the perception of participation – whether as an obligation or a personal choice – could have influenced the results. Another limitation is that the impact of mobility was assessed by school representatives rather than students themselves, which may have affected how the outcomes were perceived.

Future analyses should focus on identifying factors that differentiate the impact of mobility, particularly regarding working skills. Key variables may include the industry in which the apprenticeship takes place, the mode of mobility organisation (e.g., apprenticeships with an employer versus other arrangements), and the duration of mobility. Previous research indicates that these factors can significantly influence competency development, particularly in vocational fields (Pachocki, 2018). Regarding interschool relationships, additional variables such as school size and the scale of mobility programmes within a given educational institution should also be considered.

The findings suggest that student mobility is not merely a one-time experience but rather a catalyst for long-term personal and professional development, aligning with the concept of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The transformative learning process begins before the mobility experience and continues long after its conclusion, highlighting the need for ongoing monitoring of its long-term effects.

Further research is necessary to confirm insights from qualitative analyses regarding the potential of international internships and apprenticeships to promote educational equity. In particular, there is a need to verify the hypothesis that mobility effects are most pronounced among students with initially weaker predispositions, such as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Similarly, the phenomenon of skill transfer within schools – where students who did not participate in mobility programs still benefit from their peers' experiences – requires further investigation. Qualitative studies have identified this phenomenon, but additional analysis is needed to determine whether this mechanism is more pronounced in schools with larger-scale mobility programmes, long-term international projects, or in smaller schools where peer interactions are more intensive.

By recognising mobility as part of a long-term learning process, we can better understand its transformative potential and its impact on students in educational, professional, and social dimensions.



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3

**HELGA MÜLLER – ÉVA ROZMÁN –
LJILJANA MRAZ –
SIGITA JASINSKA:**

**Erasmus Driven Innovation in
Schools – Let's Broaden our Horizon!**



[INTRODUCTION]

The European ambition is that a mobility project in schools should not “merely” provide the participants with a multicultural, foreign language development and travel experience, but should have a long-term impact on the institution as a whole, with innovation in any field, a leap to the next level of professional and structural development.

Erasmus+ vocational education and training (VET) mobility projects have a profound impact on the function, development, and international relations of educational institutions. They not only support the professional and personal development of individual participants but also contribute to school innovation, the renewal of pedagogical methodologies, and internationalisation. Ultimately, they play a notable role in improving the overall quality of education.

1. Integration of the impact and outcomes of Erasmus+ mobility projects into school operations

1.1 The impact of mobility programmes on school life and operations

One of the most significant effects of Erasmus+ mobility programmes is their potential to drive institutional innovation and development. Schools actively participating in mobility programmes become increasingly open to international cooperation, which brings long-term benefits such as:

- Implementation of new pedagogical approaches: Educators participating in Erasmus+ projects gain insights into innovative teaching practices of foreign institutions that can be integrated into their teaching.
- Curriculum development: Experiences gained during mobility programmes can be incorporated into institutional curricula, such as through new modules or optional courses.
- Strengthening international partnerships: Partnerships established during mobility projects facilitate new joint initiatives that ensure sustainability in the long run. Schools can engage in international research, teacher and student exchange programmes, and collaborative curriculum development.
- Enhancing the institution's reputation and attractiveness: Participation in Erasmus+ projects boosts the school's prestige, making it more attractive to both students and teachers. What is more, a school recognised at the international level is more appealing to prospective students and their families.
- Advancing digitalisation and sustainability goals: Mobility programme experiences contribute to the development of institutional digital strategies and the expansion of environmentally friendly educational solutions.
- Fostering a multicultural perspective: Erasmus+ projects broaden international perspectives, fostering a more open and inclusive school community.

1.2 The significance of teacher mobility

Staff mobility programmes — including job shadowing, teaching assignments, and professional development courses — play a significant role in integrating educational innovations into school practices. Through staff, especially teacher mobility, educators acquire new teaching methods and pedagogical approaches that enhance the quality of education; establish international professional networks, facilitating long-term knowledge exchange and joint project development; improve their digital competencies, which are essential in modern education, and develop innovative educational content that can be widely applied within the institution.

One of the greatest advantages of staff mobility is the dissemination of teaching and learning innovations, which creates a multiplier effect within the teaching community. All VET institutions participating in Erasmus+ mobility programmes should strive to ensure the sustainable use of staff mobility outcomes. The knowledge and experience gained through teachers' mobility can be utilised by institutions in various ways, such as organising methodological training, mentoring internal training, and developing digital teaching technologies.

Teachers who have participated in mobility programmes can conduct knowledge-sharing workshops for colleagues, presenting newly acquired pedagogical methodological tools and techniques. Educators with mobility experience can launch internal mentoring programmes, supporting their colleagues in the practical application of new methods. Finally, Erasmus+ projects often introduce teachers to innovative digital teaching tools, which can be incorporated into the institutional strategies of their home institutions.

1.3 The impact of student mobility

Both short- and long-term student mobility programmes provide opportunities for professional, language, and intercultural development. Through international experiences, students enhance their professional skills through practical training at foreign companies and educational institutions, which directly improves their employability. Beyond gaining practical skills and experience, participating students also expand their language competencies, which are essential for thriving in an international work environment. Moreover, they increase their intercultural awareness, fostering openness, tolerance, and commitment to European values. Finally, students improve their personal and social competences as well: they develop independence and adaptability, contributing to their personal and professional growth in long-term.

Maximising the impact of student mobility within schools

Not only individual participants but also the whole school community benefit from the outcomes of student mobility projects. Sharing the experiences gained from Erasmus+ projects motivates peers and so, supports institutional development. To ensure that student mobility experiences could be accessible for as many students as possible, schools should implement some strategies,



such as organising Erasmus+ project days, integrating career orientation programmes, and supporting multicultural school initiatives.

During Erasmus+ experience-sharing sessions and project days, students who have participated in mobility programmes can hold presentations for peers, teachers, and parents to share their insights and experiences. Through these presentations, they can show the results, as well as the challenges, in their apprenticeship programme abroad. Moreover, international experiences can help students better understand labour market expectations and career opportunities, and they could understand how to integrate Erasmus+ mobility programmes in their career orientation. As during Erasmus+ mobility programmes, students are also culturally influenced by meeting foreign people and adapting to foreign or international work culture, the results of these impacts could be incorporated into the school culture and practices. It could support multicultural school initiatives as Erasmus+ projects can inspire school events, such as international days and intercultural clubs, strengthening global awareness within the school community.

1.4 Assess and sustain project impact

Identifying the organizational impact of Erasmus+ programmes is often difficult. Study visits, work experience and cultural exchanges are the key elements of Erasmus+. These mainly result in personal development, which also has an indirect impact on the institution. The difficulty in identifying the institutional added value arises from the fact that the experiences gained at an individual level (e.g. language skills, intercultural sensitivity, professional development) are not always integrated into the functioning of the institution as a whole.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of Erasmus+ mobility projects, institutions should consider the following key factors:

- The requirement in the Erasmus+ Guidelines to measure the impact of projects needs the use of a concrete and well-structured set of indicators, not only to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the project, but also to use the results at an institutional level and to inform strategic development. Projects can be assessed from several aspects which, in line with school strategies, provide relevant feedback on the state of progress towards the objectives set of and on the further steps needed. Such measurable elements could be the number and type of pedagogical innovations, measured by evaluating newly introduced teaching methods, and their impact in terms of renewed pedagogical culture, improved learning outcomes, and increased motivation of pupils. In terms of internationalisation, a key element could be the increase in the number of international contacts, identified by recording new partnership agreements, joint projects, memoranda of understanding, eTwinning or EPAL-based collaborations, and their impact in terms of strengthening the school's international strategy, opening new project opportunities, and the possibility of exchanging good practices.

In terms of direct results, important indicators are the feedback from students and teachers, which can be analysed through structured questionnaires, focus group interviews, reflective diaries, and the data will help the institution to improve the educational environment and to better identify the impact of mobility. An essential element of measurement is the documentation of the integration of results, ensuring that the Erasmus+ project is not an isolated event but an integral part of the school's development plan. This could be done through institutional self-assessments, board minutes, and analysis of internal strategy documents that include the incorporation of the mobility experience. Long-term monitoring of the impact of the programme, the basis for strategic planning and the social utility of mobility should be the aim of participant follow-up, which can be carried out by creating an alumni database and longer-term follow-up of the students' placement or further education.

- Broad dissemination of project outcomes: Dissemination strategies, such as publications, online knowledge-sharing platforms, and participation in conferences, ensure that the results are accessible to a wider audience beyond the immediate school community. Dissemination of the results could be interesting and beneficial for the partners of the school, both in a narrow and a broad context, such as the parents of the students, dual companies of the VET school, local authorities, other VET institutions in the city or in the region, etc.
- Integration into institutional strategies: School leadership should take an active role in embedding Erasmus+ programme impacts into the long-term institutional planning, which includes incorporating teacher training outcomes and fostering sustainable international collaborations at a strategic level.

Although Erasmus+ projects contribute to enriching school life, improving the quality of education, and developing the international outlook of the community, these results are often not sustainable at an institutional level. In the background of why schools cannot guarantee the sustainability of Erasmus+ results, there might be some main reasons, such as the lack of strategic integration, sporadic dissemination of the results, and sustainability problems. Many educational institutions do not have a strategy for integrating Erasmus+ programme results into their long-term development plan. Another problem can be that dissemination covers small areas and communities, and so, experiences and lessons learned from foreign programmes by individual participants are not always shared at a systemic level. And third, the school is not highly committed to sustaining the results of the Erasmus+ programmes in the long term and the new methods and improvements are not always maintained in the school after the projects finish.

2. Debate group on European values: the project in Andrásy György Catholic School of Economics, Eger, Hungary

For more than a century, the Andrásy György Catholic School of Economics and its predecessors have been educating young people, mainly in business-related professions in North-Eastern Hungary. Today it offers vocational training in economics, tourism and logistics for young people. The institution started its international grant activity in 2017 and has successfully implemented Leonardo, Comenius, Innovation Transfer, Erasmus+ KA1, KA2 small-scale and partnership projects in the last 18 years. The school started its internationalisation journey with one teacher and now coordinates a team of 5 people and has established partnerships with 27 European and associated countries.

In the field of mobility, both short- and long-term mobility, thematic projects and teacher job shadowing and course attendance are carried out in the field of school education (SCH) and vocational education and training (VET). Internationalisation permeates the whole institution running language preparation and bilingual classes. Beside English, which students speak at B2-C1 level, a second foreign language, such as German, Spanish, French, Russian and Italian is taught at the school, which is developed through the cooperation with the corporate and school partners in France, Finland, Spain, Germany, and Austria.

The KA1 debate project, *“Two sides of the coin – argue and be accepted”* was launched with a Turkish school. For several years now, it has been a traditional part of the Turkish school lessons that students examine and evaluate different stories in the most versatile way possible and then try to convince their peers about their viewpoints by expressing their reasonable arguments. The experience of developing debating and communication skills was so impressive that Andrásy György Catholic School decided to test it in its school environment too. The students involved in the project were eager to join English language activities even outside the classroom. Integrating an international debate project in English into the school curriculum has significant pedagogical values from several aspects. The project contributes to the development of students' language competences, their intercultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and active citizenship in a complex way.

2.1 The main benefits of the project

1. Develop language competences

The project creates natural, live communication situations in which learners use a foreign language in an authentic way for real purposes. The debate situations enlarge students' vocabulary, make them use grammatical structures, and improve their listening skills and speaking proficiency. Learners gradually become more confident in their language skills, which strengthens their motivation to communicate in a foreign language in the long term. This is particularly emphasised in bilingual and language preparation classes.

2. Develop critical thinking and argumentation skills

The use of debating techniques is an excellent tool for developing students' critical thinking. Through the project, students learn how to take a stand, organise arguments, respond to counter-arguments and deliver a logically structured speech. These skills go beyond the school environment as they form the basis for informed citizenship and the culture of democratic dialogue.

3. Intercultural learning

Working together with partners creates opportunities to meet other cultures. Discussions expose not only different perspectives but also different ways of thinking from diverse cultural backgrounds. This helps develop tolerance, openness, and empathy and contributes to a stronger European and global identity.

4. Social and environmental awareness

The themes of the project (e.g. sustainability, human rights, social justice) significantly contribute to the development of students' sense of social responsibility. The debates provide an opportunity to learn about and interpret global issues from their own point of view and accept the views of others.

5. Develop self-reflection and self-expression

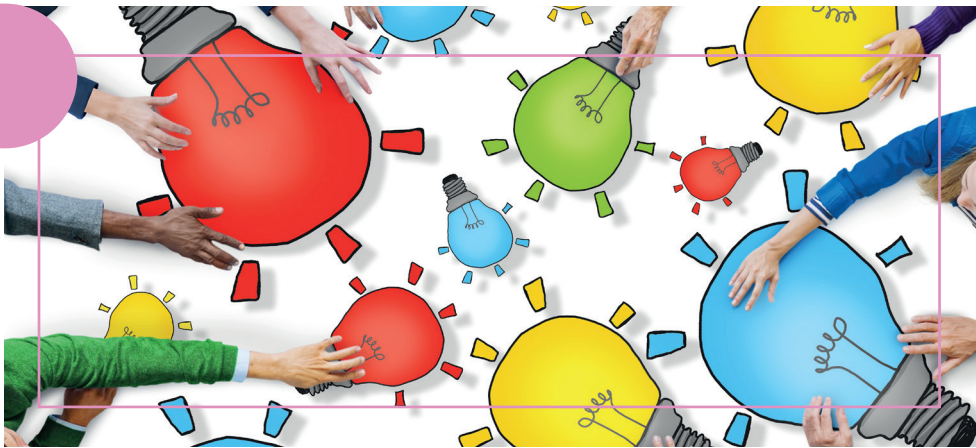
Debate gives students the opportunity to formulate their own ideas, present them in a structured way, and reflect on the opinions of others. This strengthens their self-awareness, emotional intelligence and responsible communication behaviour.

6. Project-based learning and collaboration

The international debate project enhances students' collaborative skills as they work together to develop argumentation systems, assign roles through practical exercises and prepare for debates. The motivating power of project-based learning contributes to students' active learning.

2.2 The influence and significance of the project

This project not only serves to develop foreign language and rhetorical skills, but also achieves complex, competence-based pedagogical objectives – in line with the challenges of 21st - century education and international educational goals. The popularity and competence-building impact of



the English language debate group gave rise to the idea of launching such a group in Hungarian language, too. The students and their teacher meet on a weekly basis. The best students in this project also participate in a national debate competition. Demonstration sessions were given by teachers, who have also attended a course on the theory and practice of debating. The success of the demonstration sessions is reflected in the number of teachers teaching the subjects of humanities who use the debate method even in the classroom.

For the 2024/25 school year, the school has decided to participate in the Jean Monnet programme. The way the Debate Group functions is fully compatible with the Jean Monnet objectives and could even represent a very innovative and relevant pedagogical approach within the framework of the Jean Monnet programme. We aim to engage students in debates on the main social, environmental, and political challenges facing the European Union. Through the debates, students will deepen their understanding of the operation of the EU, its decision-making mechanisms and values, while developing their critical thinking, argumentation techniques, and active citizenship skills. The central methodological tool of the project is an international English-language debate group that promotes intercultural dialogue and the shaping of a European identity.

The school has been able to embed the debating skills project in several areas, which, if it is successful, would have an impact on the subject structure and the overall educational programme of András György Catholic School.

- 1. Practising European values and democratic participation:** Regarding the Jean Monnet programme, it aims to integrate EU themes into education, with a particular focus on citizenship, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The debate group provides an opportunity for students to engage in sharp, critical thinking debates on EU-related topics, such as EU green policy and sustainability, Human rights and the rule of law in the EU, EU expansion, migration policy, and education policy.
- 2. Developing active European citizenship:** In the debates, students learn to interpret and evaluate European decision-making mechanisms, institutions, and policies. In this way, students develop their active citizenship competences, which are directly linked to the Jean Monnet objectives.

3. **Critical thinking on the future of the EU:** The debate group is an excellent opportunity for students to discuss the EU development paths and challenges (e.g. digital age, geopolitical role, common foreign policy, etc.). This helps them form their own opinions and reflect on the European Union as an informed and knowledgeable citizen.
4. **International cooperation – in line with Erasmus+ objectives:** The Jean Monnet modules aim not only to raise awareness of the EU, but also to build a common European identity, which is achieved in an almost experiential way through an international debate project.
5. **Educational innovation – methodological innovation:** The debate group is an educational format, a competence-based and learner-centred approach. The Jean Monnet programme promotes innovative teaching methods that address EU issues in an interactive and participative way, rather than in a frontal way, enhancing the debate culture among students and the whole school community.

3. International baccalaureate career-related programme in the OGRE Technical School, Latvia

Vocational excellence requires setting ambitious goals and undertaking activities previously not considered core or typical to VET institutions. Striving for vocational excellence requires becoming not only an important regional and national but also an international actor. In Latvia, the Ogre Technical School (www.ovt.lv) can be seen as a 'trailblazer' and trendsetter for VET innovation and excellence. Apart from the core VET functions, the school is undertaking new advanced activities, some of them pioneering not only nationally but also in the Baltics.

The vision of Ogre Technical School is to become an internationally recognised, accessible, and demanded Sectorial Centre of Excellence and Innovation, which offers competitive lifelong vocational education. To ensure the quality of the educational process, four departments have been established at Ogre Technical School: 1) Forestry, Wood Products and Hunting Department, 2) Computer Science, Electronics and Administrative Work Department, 3) Design and Art Department, and 4) Hotel and Restaurant Service Department, in which 1641 students study 20 professions in vocational secondary education after general basic education.



Picture 1: Ogre Technical School

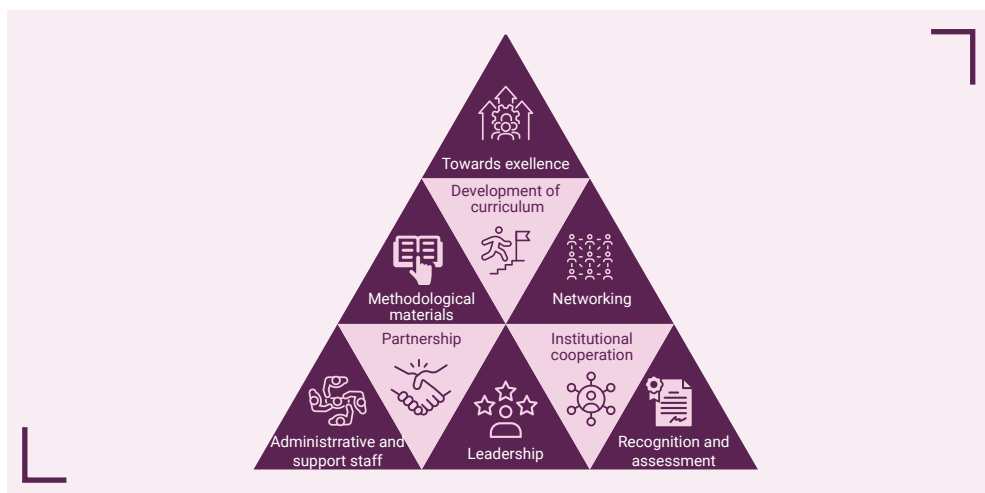


Figure 1: Interrelated areas fostering excellence in vocational education

The priorities of Ogre Technical School are personalization, internationalization, lifelong learning, digitalization, and green education. Digital literacy and sustainability are prioritized through the school's educational framework. Incorporating digital tools into the learning process allows students to stay ahead in an increasingly digital world. Furthermore, the school emphasizes green education, preparing students to address environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices across different sectors. Ogre Technical School offers students personalized and individual, if necessary, advice and support in solving each challenge individually. By strengthening learning skills and abilities step by step, students become independent lifelong learners. Crucially, Ogre Technical School recognises that these skills are not confined to the local context. In today's interconnected world, international experience and intercultural competence are essential for success. Therefore, internationalization plays a vital role in the school's strategic vision.

This commitment is exemplified by the school's active participation in the Erasmus+ programme. Through Erasmus+, the staff and the students have the opportunity to engage in enriching experiences abroad, fostering personal growth, broadening their horizons, and developing valuable skills that are highly sought in the global marketplace. These experiences not only enhance their academic and professional prospects but also contribute to building a more inclusive and understanding global community. By embracing international collaboration and exchange, Ogre Technical School equips its students with the tools they need to thrive in a diverse and rapidly changing world, becoming truly global citizens ready to contribute to a sustainable future (Figure 1).

Building upon the valuable insights gained through Erasmus+ experiences, Ogre Technical School has sought innovative approaches to integrate contemporary pedagogical practices into its curriculum, focusing specifically on cultivating a growth mindset. The international perspective afforded by Erasmus+ proved useful in recognising the importance of empowering students to be able to embrace challenges as opportunities for development, thereby fostering resilience, stamina, and enhanced problem-solving skills. This realisation led Ogre Technical School to explore suitable frameworks for promoting such a mindset, ultimately identifying the International

Baccalaureate (IB) programme as a compelling model of best practice. In January 2020, the School started to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (The International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme: IBCP), in addition to high-quality secondary professional education (Figure 2). IBCP is recognised worldwide, respected by the world's leading universities, carefully developed, constantly improved and updated.

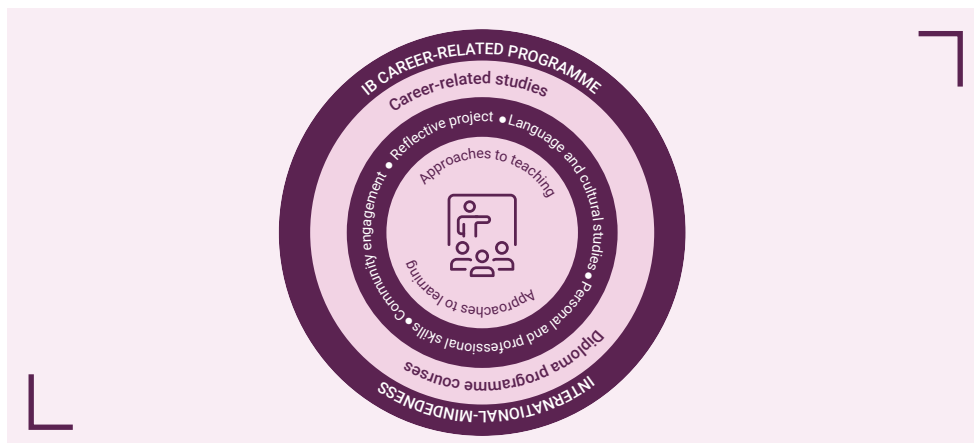


Figure 2: IBCP model - www.ibo.org

Ogre Technical Schools' commitment to best practice is closely linked to internationally recognised programmes such as Erasmus+ and IBCP. The integration of these global initiatives ensures that the school's education model is adaptable, relevant and prepares students for the challenges of a rapidly changing and interconnected world. By incorporating best practices into its professional education system, the school not only improves student learning outcomes but also ensures that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and global understanding to excel in both the local and international labour market. Combining the students' benefits from Erasmus+ and IBCP results in a very strong and varied educational experience. Both Erasmus+ and IBCP offer unique opportunities for students to develop international awareness, professional skills, and educational achievements.

The IBCP is a career-oriented programme that uses these experiences to build students' international understanding and develop skills in the working environment. The IBCP consists of academic and professional courses that transform and prepare students for their career challenges and opportunities, making them curious, knowledgeable and caring young people who help build a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

The IBCP provides an opportunity to receive an internationally recognised bilingual certificate in career development, develop individual professional skills and competences, and engage in a global network of education providers.

The educational framework of Ogre Technical School effectively integrates internationally recognised programmes, promoting best practices that advertise both academic excellence and career readiness. Through the Erasmus+ and IBCP, the school provides its students with global exposure, professional skill development, and personalised learning experiences. This project significantly improves the educational offer at Ogre Technical School, students' academic and professional training, as well as promotes global citizenship, adaptability, and the skills needed to succeed in a competitive labour market. By continuously developing and adopting best practices, focusing on a growth mindset, digitalization, and sustainability, the school ensures that its students are not only ready for today's challenges but also prepared to contribute to the future of work in a globalized society.

4. Visit of EU – HTL Mödling, Austria visits the European Union institutions in Brussels

An Austrian technical college and a German school have launched a joint Erasmus+ project to help their students better understand the European Union, get actively involved in democratic and political life and develop their intercultural competences. The project involves students working together using innovative digital tools while conducting in-depth research on the functioning of the European Parliament and political parties.

Students work on a common Padlet platform where they share their research on the political groups in the European Parliament and on German/Austrian political parties. They pay particular attention to research 1) the leading candidates of the parties and 2) their positions on migration policy and climate protection.

Online collaboration allows students to compare political systems in other countries and to develop their source analysis and critical thinking skills. During online meetings, project participants create presentations interactive worksheets to show each other and deepen their peers' knowledge. This process not only improves their social and political knowledge but also strengthens their communication and teamwork skills. Through the research and presentation work, students learn how to search for authentic sources, argue in a structured way and convincingly present the information they gather. The experience gained in this way can be useful not only in their school life but also in their future careers.

The project culminates in a study trip to Brussels, where students experience first-hand how the EU institutions work. During the preparation for the trip, students write blog posts reflecting on the learning process and become more aware European citizens. During the trip, they create daily Instagram posts with photos, descriptions, and relevant hashtags to share their experiences with a wider audience. This not only contributes to developing their digital literacy skills but also makes the results of the project more visible to the broader school community as well as the public.

This Erasmus+ cooperation has an outstanding impact on the participating schools. Innovative teaching methods and the use of digital tools enhance the quality and relevance of education.

The development of international links contributes to the modernisation of the curriculum and promotes the international recognition of institutions. The project helps schools become more open to international cooperations and supports the continuous development of teachers and students. Erasmus+ provides an opportunity for educational institutions to exchange experience, learn about other best practices and integrate new methods into teaching. The project not only develops civic awareness and intercultural competence but also helps students become active, informed, and engaged European citizens. Moreover, participating students become more confident in communicating in a foreign language, better understand European political processes and incline to be more open to other cultures.

The skills acquired during the project – critical thinking, digital literacy, problem-solving, and collaboration – are beneficial not only in school and professional life, but also in everyday life. These competences help students succeed in the 21st-century labour market and actively participate in the development of their society as responsible citizens. The long-term impact of the project will be significant for both institutions and students, fostering an open, innovative and collaborative educational environment.



5. New type of class with teacher's job shadowing in Obrtnička škola Koprivnica, Croatia

5.1 Introduction of the school

Obrtnička škola Koprivnica is a vocational secondary school in the north-west of Croatia. It has 550 students from the ages of 14 to 18 and about 100 employees. In the VET school, more than 20 different vocations are taught in the field of electrical and mechanical engineering,

information technology (IT), construction, food and catering industry. This is one of the only few Croatian vocational schools that have been participating in European mobility projects since 2009. Collaboration, hard work, and years of experience have created the school's international network of more than 20 partner institutions in almost 15 European countries. In 2018, successful professional work in vocational education and participation in various international projects resulted in being nominated as a competence centre for IT and electrical engineering. By 2023, the consequence of this nomination was a new building with modern equipment for educating students as well as adults in these two fields.

5.2 Erasmus+ as a tool for gathering knowledge

The new building was equipped with state-of-the-art tools and equipment, but the teachers were not completely prepared for using it - they needed more knowledge and experience how to teach, as well as to prepare new modern curricula. Being a school that has already implemented Erasmus+ for 10 years, it realised an opportunity in educating the teachers, i.e. training the trainers, through Erasmus+ job shadowing. A hardworking and persistent IT teacher, working with 3D printers and 3D modelling, found a Slovenian partner school that has been successful in these areas. The Slovenian colleagues were more than welcome to share their knowledge, so in 2021 and in 2023, the Croatian teacher participated in a four-week Erasmus+ job shadowing in Šolski centre Postojna, Slovenia. The objectives of his training were to acquire advanced competences in 3D modelling, programming and printing as well as improve his teaching competences in these areas. During these 4 weeks, he participated in 3D modelling and 3D printing classes where he learnt the details of modelling in a new 3D programme as well as working with students.

It is important to emphasize that this project focuses deliberately on the work of just one teacher. He is definitely not the only one who improves the education in the school based on Erasmus+ but he did a great job to show how training just one teacher can make a huge difference in the whole community.

5.3 Result of the joint project

5.3.1 Results in the VET profession

Based on these Erasmus+ mobilities, the teacher structured a new type of class. Previously applied mostly theoretical teaching was replaced by project-based and work-based learning. In the subject 'Embedded computer systems', students now learn by building a 3D project from the beginning to the very end (e.g. a fan or a Christmas tree with lights). Through one school year, their tasks model a 3D model, prepare the materials, programme a 3D printer, print in 3D, install electrical and electronic parts in the model, and programme them to work. Through these tasks, students achieve all the goals of the subject and create models that work precisely. These projects also result in many new themes in students' final papers, where they make various DIY (do-it-yourself) projects such as 3D printers, drones, building models with smart lighting, CNC machines, board erasers, rescue rovers, etc. Some of them are kept by the students for themselves, while others are donated to schools to help in improving future learning.

5.3.2 Results in the school

When a project is successful and people love what they do, the results naturally flow outside the particular profession and influence the whole school in ways that were not even planned. Through the work of the teacher as well as that of students, the school was decorated, and new things constantly appeared in the school building. During the reconstruction of the old school building, many useful gadgets and new 3D products were made; moreover, school wall decorations, such as a map of partner countries for our Erasmus+ wall was prepared.

In collaboration with the catering sector, the teacher 3D modelled a cake mould for a project of promoting catering occupations. The moulds in the shape of a nettle were printed out and are now used to make a nettle biscuit developed by the teachers and representing Koprivnica (nettle is a plant called kopriva in Croatian). What is more, the teacher also developed various school/ Erasmus+ promotional materials, such as key chains, post-it holders, smartphone holders, pen holders, etc., which are used during Erasmus Days and similar events to promote their school, its occupations, and Erasmus+ projects.

5.3.3 Results outside the school

The cake moulds and the promotional materials help promote the school in the region and beyond, but these are not the only results that advertise the school outside its walls and share the acquired knowledge. The teacher has helped many elementary schools learn the basics of working with their 3D printers and use them in their education. He has also started a programme of summer workshops for pupils in elementary schools at the age of 11 to 14. These workshops take place after the end of the school year, last 5 days and usually include around 10 pupils, who learn the basics of 3D modelling and printing. It is an excellent way to promote the VET school, vocational occupations, the IT sector, and Erasmus+ projects as well as it helps pupils choose their future occupation.

5.4 Outcomes of the session

Participants tested and evaluated the practices they had learnt and summarised their own experiences along three questions: 1) The key areas of schools that Erasmus+ projects can affect, 2) The methods that should be used to achieve these impacts, 3) How the project participants could be motivated to integrate the project results into their school life. The results of the discussion are listed as follows.

5.4.1. Which key areas of the school can the projects impact?

An Erasmus+ project could impact several different areas of the school, it has an influence on both the school and the students. First, it has a beneficial effect on the quality of education. The need to apply digital technology and methods when implementing Erasmus+ projects contributes to the integration of online learning tools and digital learning materials in the everyday teaching-learning process, as well. Due to the requirements of continuously using a foreign language during

an Erasmus+ project, the practical and context-related use of foreign languages, especially in an international environment is promoted, which accelerates internationalization processes of the school. Consequently, internationalization results in the expansion of the school's contacts and that of cooperation with foreign partners.

On the other hand, Erasmus+ projects have a significant impact on the students, too. Participating in international projects improves students' skills: the practical professional, linguistic, intercultural, personal, and the social ones. What is more, students gain international experience, which could be beneficial both in their personal and professional lives. Finally, apprenticeship in international projects supports students' career orientation: they increase students' labour market opportunities and provide abroad work experience for them.

5.4.2. What methods are used to achieve the required impact?

There are several useful methods that support achieving, moreover enlarging the required impacts of Erasmus+ projects. The support of the school management is key to ensuring that Erasmus+ programmes are truly embedded in the institutional strategy. Besides the management, the involvement of teaching staff is essential: presentations and workshops should be organised for teachers and educators to learn about best practices and methodological innovations acquired during Erasmus+ projects. Many teachers and students are not brave or motivated enough to participate in international programmes due to their shortage in foreign language knowledge or simply their personality. To overcome the fears and see problems as challenges, they need mentoring. The workshops and presentations are perfect opportunities for internal knowledge sharing: the students and teachers who have participated in Erasmus+ projects are encouraged to mentor their peers and share their experiences at the school level.

On the other hand, knowledge and experience sharing as well as the dissemination of the project results should be done for a broader audience. To be as successful and efficient as possible, digital platforms should be used. Regarding collaboration during and after the projects, various online platforms could be used, such as Padlet, eTwinning, Moodle, etc. While making the project results more widely available both for the narrow and the broader community of the institution, the school website and social media platforms are appropriate and effective.

The results of an international project should be intensively incorporated into the teaching-learning process. Foreign experiences, best practices, and new and efficient methods should be integrated into the curricula, in the form of elaborating international modules for students and developing students and teachers' digital skills. As Erasmus+ projects have an effect on students' different competences, such as mother tongue, foreign language, professional skills, communication skills, etc., to prepare students for successfully participating in projects as well as to validate the outcomes of the programme requires multidisciplinary cooperation. One of the benefits of international projects is that they encourage teachers of different disciplines and subjects to cooperate.

Finally, all projects, especially the international ones need systematic feedback and evaluation. The project coordinator, the school director, and the teachers should regularly collect feedback on the impact of the project, which will help continuously improve it and sustain the results in the long term that were achieved in the project.

5.4.3 How are project participants motivated to integrate the project results into their school life?

The phrase ‘project participants’ refers to all possible participants of the project, such as the director of the school, teachers, and students.

To be able to run a successful and efficient Erasmus+ project in long term, it is essential to motivate and involve as many students and teachers as possible, especially for active participation. To increase their motivation, trainings should be provided for them to share best practices among them. Participants’ inspiration can be raised by a well-elaborated reward system, where results and learning outcomes are recognised and validated officially and participants are given certificates in the framework of school ceremonies.

On the other hand, project results could be made more visible in the school through organising exhibitions and workshops and holding presentations on the experiences so that participants could be proud of the outcomes and the jobs they did in Erasmus+ programmes. However, doing dissemination activities is fundamental to make the project results known to wider audiences. For that, both traditional and online media channels could be effectively used: articles in printed or online newspapers, blogs or vlogs, social media posts, interviews on local TV channels, etc.

What can significantly enhance the impact of international projects is building an alumni network: involving former Erasmus+ student participants in mentoring the next generation. And finally, the core for reaching the most adequate and powerful influence is the support of the school management as through this body the results of the project could be incorporated into the development strategy of the institution.

Conclusion

Erasmus+ mobility projects not only support the development of individual participants but also bring about profound transformations in the operation of schools. By successfully integrating the outcomes of mobility programmes, institutions can become more innovative, internationalised, and competitive. It is crucial to actively incorporate project results into educational processes, promote pedagogical innovations, and continuously develop international partnerships to ensure a lasting impact.

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4

**JUDIT EMMA TÓTH –
TAMARA TUZA:**

**Participation in Democratic Life –
Fostering Active Citizenship through
Erasmus+ Programmes**



[INTRODUCTION]

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide underscores the significance of this topic of participation in democratic life and active citizenship, as well as emphasizes that participating countries must take action to promote its advancement.

„The Erasmus+ Programme addresses the citizens’ limited participation in democratic processes and their lack of knowledge about the European Union and tries to help them overcome the difficulties in actively engaging and *participating in their communities and in the Union’s political and social life*. Strengthening citizens’ understanding of the European Union from an early age is crucial for the Union’s future. In addition to formal education, *non-formal learning* can enhance the citizens’ understanding of the European Union and foster a sense of belonging.” (Erasmus+ Programme Guide – 2025 (Version 2))

This study explores the potential of the Erasmus+ programme to enhance participation in democratic life, with a focus on engaging young people and communities in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. We examine practical methods and tools for promoting democratic values and active citizenship within Erasmus+ and other international initiatives, such as Jean Monnet Actions. By sharing best practices, we aim to offer valuable insights into strengthening community engagement and fostering civic participation.

1. The significance of the priority ‘Participation in democratic life’

Promoting active participation in democratic life is essential for fostering a sense of responsibility, citizenship, and social engagement among students.

From the student’s perspective, being actively involved in democratic processes equips them with a deeper understanding, enhancing their ability to critically assess and contribute to the world around them. By engaging with democracy at a young age, students learn not only about their rights but also about their duties as responsible members of society. This priority helps students develop a sense of ownership in the communities they are part of, fostering personal growth and empowering them to act on social issues that matter to them.

From the teachers’ point of view, promoting participation in democratic life serves as a key tool for fostering a participatory culture in the classroom and beyond. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students to understand the importance of democratic values, such as equality, freedom, and justice. By integrating democratic participation into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, teachers can create opportunities for students to practice decision-making, debate, and collaboration. This process not only strengthens students’ engagement with democracy but also builds essential personal and social skills, such as communication and problem-solving. Teachers can become facilitators of a learning environment where young people can experiment with

democratic processes in a safe and structured manner, encouraging them to actively participate in shaping their own futures.

From an institutional standpoint, prioritizing participation in democratic life helps build a more inclusive and cohesive educational environment. VET institutions, in particular, play a pivotal role in promoting democratic values among students who are preparing to enter the workforce. These institutions are often at the forefront of bridging the gap between formal education and real-world experiences, making them ideal spaces to cultivate active citizenship. Through school-based initiatives such as student councils, debates, and community engagement projects, VET institutions can instill the values of democracy, social responsibility, and collective decision-making.

Moreover, at the societal level, encouraging youth participation in democratic life helps strengthen the foundations of democratic governance. A society in which young people are actively engaged in democratic processes is more likely to foster civic-minded citizens who are informed, responsible, and proactive. By prioritizing democratic engagement, educational institutions equip students with the tools needed to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, from global issues like climate change to local concerns, such as social inequality. Ultimately, this priority contributes to the cultivation of a democratic culture that is resilient, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all its members.

2. SALTO: Overview of horizontal priority of „Participation in Democratic Life“ in Erasmus+ VET

SALTO is the abbreviation for Support for Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities. It includes a network of eleven Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the fields of Youth and Education & Training. As a part of the European Commission's Training Strategy, SALTO provides non-formal learning resources for educators, youth workers and leaders, and organises activities to provide relevant support within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes and beyond. In these programs, projects encouraging participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement, fostering active citizenship and community involvement through formal/non-formal learning activities are prioritized. By supporting projects integrating digital tools, methodologies to improve learning and participation, emphasis is put on enhancing digital skills and competences.

The *SALTO Participation and Information* Resource Centre (SALTO PI) is dedicated to fostering democratic participation and media literacy across Europe. It was established in 2018 and is hosted by the Estonian Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agency. SALTO PI provides trustworthy information and resources for educators, youth leaders, and other stakeholders, develops resources, offers a variety of materials, including training tools, research, articles and videos, organises training courses, and hosts events to promote its aims.

2.1 SALTO PI's efforts

The principles that guide SALTO PI's efforts to promote democratic participation and media literacy across Europe are *inclusivity, innovation, evidence-based approach and adaptability*. SALTO PI believes that every young person has the right to be involved in decisions affecting their life. They strive to ensure that participation is accessible to all young people, regardless of their background or circumstances and believe that participation can happen through youth work, education, policy making and the public sector, as well as the private sector, family life, and sport. They prioritize the development of alternative and innovative forms and methods for young participants. This includes, for example, leveraging new technologies and digital media to engage young people in meaningful ways. Moreover, participation must be informed and evidence-based. SALTO PI uses research results and data to guide their strategies and ensure that their approaches are effective and relevant. Recognising that participation is constantly changing, SALTO PI adapts to new trends and evolving needs: they actively seek new ways to engage youth and support their participation in democratic life.

All the latest updates, calls, events and activities of SALTO PI can be found via the [*Participation Pool website*](#), where an online collection of resources is also available and open for browsing based on e.g. resource type, target group, and language.

2.2 Participation in Democratic Life in VET

As highlighted, the VET sector plays a crucial role in fostering democratic engagement by preparing learners to participate in democratic processes in their professional lives. Through activities, such as involvement in school councils, workplace meetings, or other democratic processes, VET learners are encouraged to engage with democratic principles, discuss workplace inequalities, and advocate for their rights. By fostering a participatory culture within VET institutions, these learners are better equipped to understand and contribute to democratic processes both in their careers and in their personal lives.

National Agencies (NAs) support the "Participation in Democratic Life" priority through the NA Participation Network, which consists of 50 Participation Contact Points across Europe. These points assist in implementing the priority within their countries, ensuring that individuals in the VET system have the tools and resources necessary for meaningful civic participation. This network serves as a valuable resource for project developers and teachers intending to integrate democratic participation into their Erasmus+ VET projects.

Incorporating democratic participation into Erasmus+ VET projects can take several forms, such as through direct involvement in democratic processes or through learning activities that allow students to experience democratic participation in practice. One of the key ways that can be achieved is by embedding participatory culture throughout the project life cycle – from planning through implementation to evaluation. By adopting an inclusive approach that involves all stakeholders in decision-making processes, the project can foster a deeper understanding of democratic engagement.

The allocation of €68,973 in the VET sector for projects focusing on participation highlights the growing recognition of the significance of civic engagement and democratic values in vocational education and training. Erasmus+ projects in the VET sector cover a range of key topics related to participation, as seen in Figure 1.

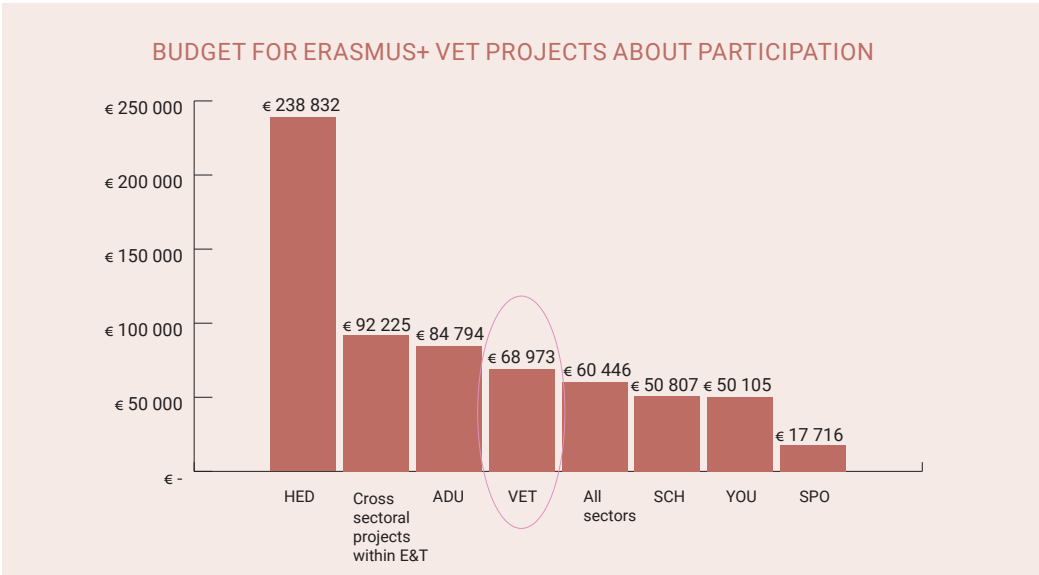


Figure 1: Budget for Erasmus+ VET Projects about participation
Source: Overview of horizontal priority „Participation in Democratic Life“ in Erasmus VET, 06.12.2024, Presented by Éva Jarosi (Participation Contact Point), Content by SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre

Coordinators of Erasmus+ projects in the VET sector responsible for participation come from a diverse range of sectors: non-governmental organizations/associations lead 34.9% of projects, followed by schools/institutes in general education (secondary level) at 19.2%, and vocational training schools (secondary level) at 8.4%. Other coordinators belong to foundations (6.7%), youth groups (6.5%), and various public bodies, including local, national, and regional authorities. Additional coordinators include educational institutions across all levels, higher education, social enterprises, and European or international public bodies.

2.3 Enhancing civic engagement and democratic participation in Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2 VET projects

One way to implement this ‘participation’ priority is by incorporating civic engagement activities within Key Action 1 (KA1) mobility projects. A relevant example would be a marketing apprentice supporting a local NGO by creating a campaign to raise awareness on a civic issue. This type of activity allows the participant to gain professional experience while simultaneously contributing to the community, embodying the principles of democratic participation. Additionally, Key Action

2 (KA2) projects, such as the “Get Involved” project, that focus on democratic citizenship, also offer opportunities to engage learners in civic actions. These types of projects emphasize democratic participation and encourage individuals to explore democratic processes, critical thinking, media literacy, and other relevant topics related to active citizenship. Cooperation partnership projects can include activities like volunteering, petitioning, activism, and discussions with decision-makers, providing participants with hands-on experience in creating change within their communities.

Moreover, youth participation tools such as the Youth Participation Toolkit can be instrumental in fostering democratic engagement in VET projects. Modules like “Learning by Doing” and “Young People Leading Projects” promote practical engagement, encouraging participants to take leadership roles in their projects. This enables students to experience firsthand the value of civic involvement and leadership and empowers them to become active participants in their communities and society at large.

Another important aspect of promoting democratic life in VET projects is the importance of reflective and inclusive evaluation practices. By involving participants in the evaluation process and ensuring that their voices are heard, projects can create more meaningful and impactful outcomes. This shared decision-making process also ensures that learners feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the projects they are involved in, further strengthening their connection to democratic values.

By creating opportunities for students to learn by doing, engage with democratic institutions, and practice civic engagement, VET projects can contribute to the development of active, informed citizens. Through the NA Participation Network and the resources available, project developers and educators have the support they need to integrate these principles into their Erasmus+ initiatives, ultimately fostering a culture of active citizenship, democratic participation, and European values across Europe. (SALTO: SALTO Participation & Information)

3. Best practices

3.1 Best practices implemented in Hungary

3.1.1 National Talent Programme in Hungary

The National Talent Program is committed to supporting young people in becoming winners in their own fields of talent. The primary goal of the renewed programme is to identify as many talents as possible, provide a visible and accessible support system for everyone, and connect young people with future supporters and employers. A successful program can be developed by identifying and addressing students’ needs.

Whether in the arts, sports, or sciences, the programme offers scholarships and initiatives that help outstanding talents from Hungary and beyond enhance their performance and achieve their dreams.

Each year, a wide range of grant opportunities is announced not only for talented individuals but also for professionals and organizations that support them. The programme is designed to create transformative opportunities, contributing to both personal success and the future of Hungarian society. (Nemzeti Tehetség Program)

3.1.2 The 60-hour Erasmus Ambassador training programme

The project of the Agricultural Vocational Centre of the Central Hungarian Region revealed surprising results through Erasmus+ programme surveys. In a 2022–2023 project, involving 232 students, only 26% of participants responded positively to the question: „Has your interest in participating in elections, other democratic processes, and the life of your local community increased?” Students often had misconceptions about the Erasmus+ programme, including how many times they could participate, the validation process, and available destination options. It seemed clear that information on international opportunities was not spreading effectively, which highlighted the need to strengthen peer-to-peer communication. In response, the School Ambassador Programme was launched, and national support was successfully applied for the 2023–2024 school year.

The programme aims to create a well-prepared, motivated, and inspiring community of students of the Agricultural Vocational Centre of the Central Hungarian Region who have previously participated in Erasmus+ programmes. This community is intended to provide support and ideas to their peers and each other on how to make the most of international learning opportunities effectively. They are to inform others about the international possibilities and competition opportunities that are available to schools as well as motivate their peers to involve in the programmes. It is essential that the selected students should develop their interpersonal, foreign language, communication, problem-solving, and other soft skills through specific trainings and sessions, enhance their self-image, and strengthen their position in the labour market. Education for responsibility is a foundational component of the year-long programme, playing a central role in shaping students not only as skilled individuals but also as responsible global citizens. The programme encourages participants to take ownership of their actions, decisions, and behaviours, fostering a sense of accountability both in their personal and professional lives.

This aspect of responsibility also involves understanding the consequences of one's actions on society and the environment, making students aware of their roles in creating a positive and sustainable impact. Alongside this, fostering global thinking is integral. Students are encouraged to see beyond local or national boundaries, to develop a broad perspective on global issues. This helps them critically assess societal situations not only within their immediate environment but also at a larger, international level. By learning to evaluate and reflect on different cultural, social contexts, students gain a deeper understanding of how interconnected the world is and how their actions can influence global issues, such as climate change, human rights, and social inequality. Another objective is to extend their knowledge about the European Union.

In the 2023–2024 academic year, this project was launched for the first time, involving 14 young participants from 7 different Hungarian VET schools. In addition to being involved in skill development programmes and career counselling, students took part in numerous exciting visits to broaden their horizons. The programme was initially funded by the National Talent Program Fund in Hungary, and from the 2024–2025 academic year, it receives funding from the Jean Monnet Action programme for a duration of three more years – this long-term support enhances the importance of the programme.



3.2 #GetInvolved: Supporting democracy and citizenship in VET – Best practice from Austria

The rise of anti-democratic tendencies globally and within the EU, even in nations with strong democratic traditions, has highlighted the urgent need to strengthen civic competences. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 reveals declining levels of democratic competence among youth, alongside a growing disconnect between young people and political institutions. Vocational education and training (VET) graduates, in particular, show lower levels of electoral participation and democratic beliefs compared to peers from general education. Additionally, citizenship education in VET receives less emphasis, diversity, time, and funding than in general education. ([Link to the study](#))

The Erasmus+ KA2 project “*#Getinvolved*” (project number: 2020-1-DE02-KA202-007408) ran from November 2020 to February 2023 with a budget of €345,000 and involved five partner organizations from Germany, Austria, Italy, and Poland to address the identified challenges. The project aimed to foster democratic thinking, participation, and awareness within VET by empowering students, apprentices, teachers, and institutions. The core insight of the initiative centred on recognising that exclusion stems from systemic structures and processes, rather than perceived shortcomings of marginalized individuals.

The Key project outputs included a self-monitoring tool, the #GetInvolved label, and a comprehensive “Train-the-Trainer” workshop and handbook, all emphasizing integrated approaches to embedding democratic citizenship education. These resources highlighted the importance of participatory initiatives, learner empowerment, curricular flexibility, and workplace-based learning, while fostering collaboration with companies, NGOs, and communities. (#GetInvolved)

3.3 EuroApprentices: A European initiative for VET ambassadors in Slovakia

As a best practice, the EuroApprentices initiative was launched by the German National Agency (NA) in 2017. This platform supports VET students with Erasmus+ experience, through connecting 12 NAs: Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Italy, Poland, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Sweden. Slovakia, with Sweden, joined the initiative in 2023, is one of the most recent members. The initiative is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. In collaboration with the European Commission, the initiative aims to build a European network of Erasmus+ VET Ambassadors, strengthen their capacity and representation, explore future structures for Erasmus+ VET graduates, promote democratic participation, inclusion, and diversity within the network, and empower apprentices by amplifying their voices.

Participating NAs meet three times annually, these are preparatory, international, and strategic meetings. Each National Agency organises at least one national or multinational activity yearly, fostering team building and collaboration. An international meeting, hosted by a rotating member country, gathers ambassadors to discuss relevant topics. Online meetings are held to prepare for and review these events, ensuring smooth operations and task fulfilment. EuroApprentices exemplifies collaboration, providing a platform for VET students to grow as ambassadors and active European citizens. It is important to emphasize that the funding opportunities of this projects can help turn innovative ideas into reality. Any other countries may join the programme. (LTA EuroApprentices)



4. Other opportunities

The following programs, which will be introduced in more detail, are not exclusively designed for Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, but VET schools and students are also eligible to apply and participate. These initiatives aim to enhance knowledge, promote European values, and foster active citizenship among young people, regardless of their educational background. VET institutions and their students can benefit from these opportunities, which provide a broad range of learning experiences related to the European Union, democracy, cultural exchange, and mobility. The programmes are designed to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities needed to engage with the wider European and global community.

4.1 Jean Monnet

The Jean Monnet actions offer opportunities in the field of higher education and in other fields of education and training. The Jean Monnet actions contribute to spreading knowledge about European Union integration matters. The following actions are supported:

- Jean Monnet Actions in the field of higher education
- ***Jean Monnet Actions in other fields of education and training***
- Jean Monnet policy debate (higher education and other fields of education and training).

In the framework of Jean Monnet Actions in other fields of education and training, schools and VET providers should establish teaching of a specific EU-based subject (values, history, how the EU works, cultural diversity, etc.) in the classroom. Activities must be taught during the school year and may include project weeks, study visits, and other immersive activities.

Providers may create learning experiences themselves or with the support of higher education institutions or other relevant organisations (NGOs, Associations, etc).

As a result of an initiative, schools and VET providers should be able to

- empower teachers to teach about the EU using engaging methods and to bring facts and knowledge about the European Union to their learners;
- improve learning outcomes on EU matters;
- strengthen EU literacy;
- create interest in the European Union and constitute a basis to enhance participation of pupils and students in the democratic process and leave them better equipped to become active citizens. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025; Jean Monnet Actions: stimulating teaching and research on the European Union)

4.2 European Parliament Ambassador School Programme

The European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) aims at increasing students' awareness of European parliamentary democracy, the role of the European Parliament, and European values. It also encourages them to actively participate in EU democratic processes. The programme targets students with diverse educational, social, and geographical backgrounds.

In addition to student engagement, EPAS emphasizes institutional involvement, offering opportunities for teachers of participating schools to attend training sessions. These trainings equip educators with the knowledge and tools to better support students in understanding and engaging with European democracy. (Ambassador Schools.)

4.3 Discover EU

DiscoverEU is an action of the Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027). It aims at offering young people up to 18 years old a travel experience that fosters their sense of belonging to the European Union, allows them to explore the diversity of Europe, its cultural heritage and history, connects with people from all over the continent, and helps young people ultimately discover themselves.

The European Commission and EACEA will provide the successful young people with travel passes to explore Europe within a specified timeframe, typically for up to one month.

In addition to the standard DiscoverEU initiative, the **DiscoverEU Inclusion Action** (DiscoverEU Inclusion Action) offers greater accessibility to young people facing various challenges. While DiscoverEU is open for young people up to the age of 18 years old, the Inclusion Action extends opportunities to the ones who are aged from 18 to 21. Launched in 2022, this initiative allows organisations, institutions, and informal youth groups to receive additional support for projects that enable young people with more opportunities to explore Europe under the same conditions as other DiscoverEU participants.

Both DiscoverEU and its Inclusion Action provide short-term individual or group travel experiences across Europe, primarily by rail, with alternative transportation options available when necessary. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025; DiscoverEU)

4.4 Erasmus+ Youth Exchanges

Youth exchanges allow groups of young people from different countries to meet, live together, and work on shared projects for short periods. These projects take place outside the school environment. On a youth exchange, one can expect to participate in activities such as workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, outdoor activities, etc. Youth exchanges last between 5 and 21 days (excluding travelling time). Since the programme operates on a project basis, Participation in Democratic Life – Fostering Active Citizenship through Erasmus+ Programmes can also be a topic for the project. (Youth exchanges; Erasmus+ Youth Exchanges: all you need to know)

4.5 Visegrad Funds – Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic

The International Visegrad Fund supports regional cooperation between civil society organisations to advance their relations, exchange and share ideas, and promote mutual understanding. When promoting European values in Central Europe, they work together towards a better-connected future. (Visegrad Fund)

5. Identifying experiences, challenges, and best practices – Results of group work

After the participants gained a deeper understanding of the session's topic and became familiar with various projects and resources, they discussed the following questions in groups:

1. What project-related experiences do you have on the topic of Participation in Democratic Life – Fostering active citizenship through Erasmus+ programmes? What is the relevance of this topic, and what opportunities are there to implement it to the Erasmus programmes?
2. What are the possible challenges, barriers, and limits implementing this priority?
3. How can you boost intercultural understanding among students? What tools can you use to encourage students' engagement with each other's cultures?

The groups collaborated to generate a wide range of ideas, insights, and dilemmas as they explored the questions in depth. After the discussion, the key points and perspectives were compiled and summarized for each question, capturing the diversity of thoughts and approaches shared during the group work.

5.1 Fostering active citizenship through Erasmus+ Programmes – best practices

Participation in democratic life and fostering active citizenship through Erasmus+ programmes are crucial aspects of preparing students for meaningful involvement in democratic processes. Many students today lack exposure to the environments that cultivate democratic values, which highlights the urgency for schools to address this gap. A relevant and effective solution is the establishment of student councils. These councils provide students with firsthand decision-making experience and a sense of responsibility, aligning perfectly with the objectives of fostering active citizenship. By involving students in significant school decisions, beyond just minor matters, they gain practical experience in democratic processes, ownership, and accountability.

Erasmus+ programmes can further contribute – by offering high-quality training for teachers, school staff, and decision-makers – to democratic values, ensuring that their preparedness directly impacts the students' educational experience and democratic development.

Additionally, inclusivity and social diversity should be prioritized as essential components of fostering active citizenship. Actively involving students from various social backgrounds helps foster inclusivity and equips students with the ability to navigate complex, diverse environments. Exposure to various perspectives within Erasmus+ enriches students' understanding of democratic principles and encourages their active participation in community-building contributions.

5.2 Possible challenges, barriers, and limits of the priority

Balancing neutrality, especially in politically or socially sensitive topics, it is crucial to ensure unbiased communication and teaching. To address this challenge, clear guidelines and strategies must be established to avoid unintentionally entering political discourse. One of the limits of this priority lies in the necessity to consider the socio-economic context of students. Many face responsibilities at home, such as contributing to family income or assisting with agricultural work, which often conflict with their educational goals. Cultural heritage, while valuable, can sometimes limit students' exposure to broader opportunities. Bridging this gap requires culturally sensitive approaches, which may be a challenge within the framework of Erasmus+ programmes.

Another significant challenge arises from the uncritical acceptance of information on social media. This presents a barrier to students' ability to engage in informed decision-making. A key solution to this challenge is building media literacy and encouraging critical thinking, which are essential to combat misinformation. Schools must prioritize direct, face-to-face communication, as overreliance on text and voice messages on social media platforms has diminished students' verbal communication skills. Rebuilding this essential skill is vital for effective democratic participation.

In terms of enhancing student involvement, incorporating citizenship topics into school curricula and engaging students through events, such as World Day celebrations or cultural initiatives can be a powerful tool. However, integrating such activities within the Erasmus+ programme comes with its own challenges, as the implementation requires balancing the need for inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and educational objectives.

5.3 Boost intercultural understanding

To boost intercultural understanding among students and encourage their engagement with each other's cultures, it is essential to emphasize the existing cultural diversity within the classroom. Encouraging students to share their regional or personal cultural backgrounds helps normalize diversity, fostering openness, and reducing hesitation in engaging with other cultures. Additionally, focusing on common values and shared humanity during discussions on cultural differences is the key to building mutual understanding and respect.

Various tools can be used to promote intercultural sensitivity among students. For example, online pop quizzes can be employed to connect students across countries in an engaging

and low-pressure environment. Forum theatre and role-playing techniques can simulate cultural scenarios and encourage empathy by placing students in diverse roles. Encouraging the participation in online intercultural activities or role-playing scenarios before in-person exchanges allows students to gradually become comfortable with cross-cultural interactions.

Involving Erasmus+ participants or other international students can also contribute to developing these skills. These interactions provide opportunities for students to share their experiences and cultural practices, breaking stereotypes, and stimulating curiosity. However, it is important to recognise that intercultural understanding is an ongoing process, requiring sustained effort, structured activities, and consistent exposure. Through these strategies, we can enhance students' engagement with each other's cultures and encourage a deeper, more meaningful connection.



Conclusion

The workshop concluded with actionable takeaways, leaving participants inspired to apply the shared knowledge and ideas in their own contexts. With valuable inputs from experts and educators, this session served as an essential platform for strengthening the foundation of active citizenship through Erasmus+; moreover, the workshop provided participants with a deeper understanding of the priority of Participation in Democratic Life. Through networking and sharing good practices, colleagues who took part are now better equipped and inspired to promote this priority in their own countries and implement the strategies they have learnt to foster greater engagement in democratic processes.

The final question to the participants was: *"Summarising in one sentence, how would you motivate your students about this priority?"* Among many interesting and inspiring answers, the following sentence should be emphasized: *„You may not recognise yet, but the smallest move can increase a large wave, so be a hardworking bee and you see the world, YOUR world becomes a better and brighter place. Connect, experience, and enjoy!"*

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5

**ÉVA TÓTH – BRANKO PLEADIN –
KATRIN REIN –
URTĚ SAVICKIENĚ:**

Green Transition in Erasmus+



INTRODUCTION:

WHAT DOES GREEN TRANSITION MEAN IN ERASMUS+?

As the European Green Deal is one of the six key priorities of the European Commission, „...the EU is committed to becoming **climate-neutral** by 2050, with zero emissions. This will require some drastic changes in behaviour for both producers (industry) and consumers, moving away from a linear economy based on throw-away, single-use consumption, towards a circular economy, where nothing is wasted. Projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme have contributed to European actions on climate by developing innovative learning methods in non-formal and formal education to teach about sustainability issues and climate change.” (The European Green Deal)

In the context of vocational education and training (VET), integrating sustainability into curricula and extracurricular activities has become a priority. The collaboration between VET institutions across Europe has facilitated the implementation of green practices, fostering both formal learning and real-world environmental actions.

1. Sustainability in VET

Regarding the concept of sustainability, the participants of the roundtable discussion reflected on the issue from different points of view; however, they agreed on the main problem. Branko Pleadin, the representative of Croatia noted that while sustainability is widely discussed, it is often narrowly associated with environmental protection, neglecting its relevance in other spheres of human activity. In today's society, there is an excessive emphasis on short-term consumption, with energy, resources, and media all being created for rapid use and easy disposal. The problem extends beyond environmental concerns, highlighting the societal issue of shortened attention spans, particularly among the youth. In his view, sustainability should be a starting point for all human activities, yet it has become a goal we now chase as we try to repair the damage caused by unsustainable practices, such as climate change and resource depletion. (Collection of Green Projects for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps)

As for the Estonian participant, Katrin Rein, she shared a personal experience that encapsulates the effort to incorporate sustainability into Erasmus+ activities. She recounted organizing the first transnational **Green Morning webinar** during a regional VET Team network meeting in Latvia. The hybrid format of the event, with participants both in a conference room in Riga and joining remotely from countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, and Romania, presented numerous potential challenges. Despite the technical complexities, the event ran smoothly, featuring engaging presentations and discussions on green priorities in VET. Ms. Rein humorously remarked that those were the longest 60 minutes of her life, but the successful execution of the webinar was a testament to how new, sustainable practices can be integrated into educational projects.

2. The need to talk about green skills in VET

Although we receive plenty of warnings from the media and experts to focus on sustainability as well as think according to this idea in our everyday life, participants of the roundtable discussion indicated fundamental to deal with it in the education process, too. Mr. Pleadin emphasized that it was essential for schools to provide students with the foundations for sustainable thinking. While professional knowledge and skills necessary for sustainability can be acquired both in and outside of school, fostering a “sustainable way of thinking” from an early stage is crucial. Schools should encourage reflection and proactivity through examples of sustainability. At the same time, government organizations must create a functional environment where students, once they become professionals, can develop and apply sustainable solutions. (Collection of Green Projects for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps)

Ms. Rein added that young people must be prepared for a changing labour market, highlighting that many today jobs will not yet exist; however, new jobs will appear in the near future. This is now reflected in new educational initiatives, such as the **“Sustainable Technologies”** curriculum that is introduced by two VET schools in Tartu, Estonia. This four-year program equips students with practical skills in areas that are expected to see future labour market demand, like Industry 5.0, IT, design, and the green economy. The innovative approach includes design thinking, project-based learning, and team supervision, ensuring that graduates are prepared for both the job market and further studies in related fields like engineering, materials technology, and computer science.

2.1. Practical examples of green initiatives and international collaboration

Among many countries, Croatia, and personally Mr. Pleadin, has been actively involved in incorporating green practices into Erasmus+ projects. His approach underlines the integration of sustainability with formal learning outcomes, demonstrating how interdisciplinary collaboration can enhance students’ engagement with real-world environmental issues.

“We always try to incorporate various activities related to sustainability and environmental protection into our projects. We also try to connect these activities with learning outcomes in regular educational programs. This is actually the point of education, that all learning outcomes are interconnected, i.e., to achieve a certain level of interdisciplinary approach.” (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

The key example of this approach can be found in one his previous projects, where students from different vocational fields collaborated on a school garden project. This joint activity was carried out before and after the students’ mobility abroad, demonstrating how green practices were woven into the educational experience.

The key interdisciplinary activities included:

- Mechatronics technicians designed a solar irrigation system for the school garden.
- Hairdressers and beauticians planted medicinal herbs, which were later used to create natural cosmetics and hair care products.

- Cooks incorporated herbs from the garden into their culinary creations.
- Economics students managed the marketing activities for the project.

This project provided students with hands-on experience in applying their professional skills within a circular economy framework, reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of green practices in VET education.

Another notable initiative involved a tree-planting activity during a mobility exchange in Slovakia. Despite initial scepticism about student interest, the project team was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic response:

“We organised a tree planting activity in an area where the forest was damaged by a storm. Although we were initially a little sceptical about how the students would react to such an activity, it turned out that they really liked it.” (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

This activity revealed a gap in basic environmental skills among students, such as planting and maintaining greenery, which underscored the importance of hands-on environmental education. It can be concluded that students are eager to engage in extracurricular green activities, especially when they witness their peers’ involvement. This peer-driven approach fosters a greater commitment to sustainability and demonstrates that learning by example is a key driver in sustainability education.

Ms. Rein from Estonia spearheaded the Green Mornings initiative, a monthly online event where VET schools and sustainability experts come together to share insights on environmental topics. The simplicity and accessibility of this format have contributed to its success and widespread popularity.

“The charm of this format lies in its simplicity – it is not very difficult to organize a 30-minute Teams meeting once a month on Friday mornings. It is also not difficult for participants to find those 30 minutes to get food for thought on sustainability topics.” (Katrin Rein, Estonia)

The Green Mornings have covered a wide range of topics, from hydrogen technologies to digital waste, and have attracted participants from both Estonia and abroad. These sessions have proven to be valuable for peer learning, offering practical examples of sustainability in VET education. Since September 2023, the initiative has evolved to allow VET schools to host these events, providing them with a platform to showcase their sustainability efforts.

*Examples of **topics covered** during the Green Mornings include:*

- Sustainable practices in the construction and wood industries.
- School catering collaborations between educational institutions and local communities.
- The use and efficiency of solar panels in schools.
- Reducing digital waste and understanding digital footprints.

Ms. Rein highlighted how these events fostered collaboration and peer learning, with recorded presentations being used as teaching materials. The positive feedback from the VET community has encouraged the continuation of the series, solidifying its role in promoting sustainable practices through shared knowledge.

Urtė Savickienė from Lithuania led the **“Zero Waste More Taste”** project, which emphasized blended mobility and tangible outcomes related to sustainability. The project, which involved collaboration with international partners, demonstrated how the combination of digital and physical meetings can enhance preparation and execution, leading to impactful results.

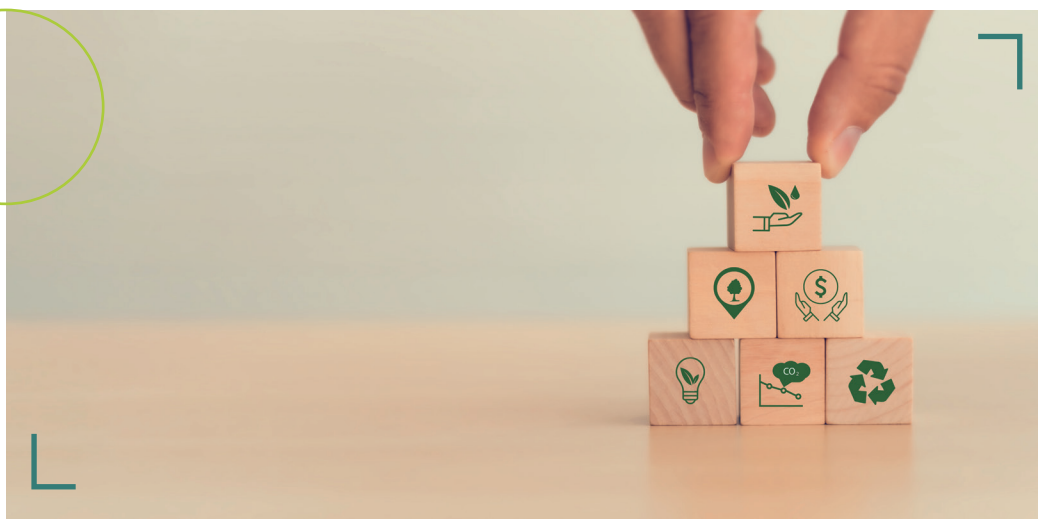
“The international aspect was crucial for this project, as it was a continuation of other international activities. I think the best strategy and the key to success was a very fruitful preparation period, followed by a theoretical part of the training where all participants met digitally as part of blended mobility.” (Urtė Savickienė, Lithuania)

This approach allowed participants to refine the program, establish strong connections, and ultimately produce tangible outcomes. The collaboration fostered during this phase not only enhanced the project’s immediate impact but also laid the groundwork for future partnerships.

The strategies used in the project included:

- A well-structured preparation period that sets clear goals for all participants.
- Blended mobility, which combined digital meetings with physical mobility to strengthen relationships and fine-tune project outcomes.
- Practical activities that produced visible results for both schools and the public, contributing to the project’s lasting impact.

The success of “Zero Waste More Taste” underscores the importance of international collaboration in VET projects, particularly when aiming to address global sustainability challenges through local actions.



3. The role of technology and blended mobilities in sustainability

With the increasing availability of digital tools and virtual learning platforms, Erasmus+ projects are finding new ways to reduce their environmental impact. By integrating blended mobility and technology, these initiatives not only enhance learning outcomes but also contribute to greener practices within vocational education and training.

All roundtable participants indicated that incorporating technology and pointing out blended mobility definitely increase sustainability in Erasmus+ mobilities. Rudolf Razka from Austria, who works on environmentally friendly certification for VET centres, highlighted how digital tools and blended learning can play a significant role in minimizing the environmental footprint. Virtual elements can be integrated to reduce the need for physical travel, thus lowering the overall travel footprint. By substituting certain aspects of physical mobility with virtual interactions, they are able to maintain the quality of exchanges while minimizing energy and resource use. (The evolution of green travel in Erasmus+)

Mr. Pleadin built on Mr. Razka's ideas by explaining how virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can support sustainable practices in VET. He noted that VR and AR could help students develop professional knowledge and skills in energy- and resource-saving ways, such as virtual training in certain fields can reduce the need for physical resources and energy consumption, which would otherwise be used in hands-on learning environments. However, Mr. Pleadin emphasized that a sustainable mindset needed to be cultivated independently of these technologies. In his previous Erasmus+ projects, digital platforms played a key role in sustainability efforts by allowing for the dissemination of digital materials, reducing the need for physical gatherings, and eliminating printed teaching materials. These practices align with green principles by reducing waste and environmental impact.

Ms. Rein echoed these sentiments, particularly through her work with the Green Mornings initiative. She discussed how virtual platforms and blended learning had been successfully integrated to reduce environmental impact while enhancing collaboration. Virtual exchanges and blended learning not only complement physical mobility but also reduce the necessity for international travel. By combining virtual project preparation with shorter, more focused physical visits, the initiative optimizes both learning outcomes and the environmental footprint. Ms. Rein also emphasized the potential of digital platforms to host virtual labs, simulators, and AR tools, which can replace resource-intensive physical setups. Additionally, these platforms provide opportunities for VET providers to connect with green industries, fostering partnerships that promote sustainable work-based learning.

Finally, Ms. Savickienė highlighted the significance of blended mobility in Erasmus+ projects, stressing that while physical mobilities remain a priority, blended approaches could greatly improve project quality while minimizing the carbon footprint. Tools like carbon tracking apps can help assess the environmental impact of travelling for mobilities, suggesting alternatives closer to home. Furthermore, digital platforms allow for post-mobility follow-ups and continuous collaboration without the need for repeated travelling, enhancing both the sustainability and effectiveness of Erasmus+ projects.

4. Balancing cultural immersion and sustainable travel in Erasmus+

Cultural exchange is one of the core principles of Erasmus+ programmes, and it offers invaluable opportunities for both students and teachers to develop cross-cultural understanding and practical skills. However, as the environmental impact of travel becomes an increasingly important consideration, integrating sustainability into mobility programmes presents challenges as well as opportunities. The key question is how to balance the need for cultural immersion through travelling with the imperative to reduce the environmental footprint of such exchanges. This issue is central to many ongoing Erasmus+ projects, and various innovative approaches are being explored to address it. (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps green transition and sustainable development strategy)

One of the primary ways in which sustainability is being integrated into Erasmus+ mobility activities is through the promotion of green travel. For instance, the approach to sustainable travelling involves not only choosing eco-friendly transportation methods but also instilling sustainable practices in students and teachers before, during, and after their mobility experiences. (The evolution of green travel in Erasmus+)

“Since our students and teachers’ mobilities are mainly in the KA1 programme and are aimed at professional development in professions that require practical work, we primarily focus on physical mobility. However, we ensure that green forms of travelling are used whenever possible. This may mean taking longer routes by train, bus, or van, but it helps us reduce our environmental impact.” (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

This effort extends to encouraging participants to practice sustainability during their time abroad, such as using reusable packaging, reducing water and electricity consumption, and relying on public transport or walking. Although these actions may seem small, when practiced by all participants, they have the potential to create a significant environmental impact.

“By encouraging green practices, we aim to influence not only the mobility participants but also the wider community, who are likely to follow their examples.” (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

Despite these efforts, the specific nature of vocational education in certain fields means that blended mobilities – combinations of virtual and physical exchanges – are not always applicable, such as vocational training in areas like crafts, factories, or schools often necessitates hands-on, in-person learning. However, virtual mobility is increasingly being used to prepare students for their physical exchange.

“Blended mobilities are more useful when preparing joint mobility with students from foreign partner schools. These virtual interactions allow students to engage in collaborative projects that can lay the groundwork for physical exchanges later.” (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

Ms. Rein, who coordinates the „Green Mornings” programme in Estonia, agreed that blended mobility was here to stay, though she emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between virtual and face-to-face interactions.

“Nothing replaces human contact, and it is essential to find a balance between virtual communication and face-to-face meetings. We have always organized physical meetings for our target group, such as a two-day thematic seminar, which includes presentations, hands-on working groups, and site visits. However, we also have added a virtual element to our program, allowing for a more sustainable way of connecting people.” (Katrin Rein, Estonia)

Ms. Rein’s programme involves a mixture of physical and virtual activities, providing participants with the benefits of both hands-on cultural immersion and the practical advantages of digital tools. The “Green Day” format targeted administrative managers from vocational schools, where participants visited a brewery in Tartu to learn about sustainable production processes. This hybrid model not only offers cultural experiences but also reduces the environmental footprint of the event.

The advantages of blended mobility are also supported by research conducted by Ms. Rein’s team. A recent survey among teaching and non-teaching staff in vocational schools revealed that, while many had not yet participated in blended learning mobility, those who had found it highly beneficial.

“Of those who had participated in blended learning mobility, 90% considered it relevant. The main benefit is seen in the preparation for physical learning mobility. The virtual part allows participants to get to know the host organization, discuss key details of their upcoming mobility, and familiarize themselves with important aspects of the programme before their physical journey begins.” (Katrin Rein, Estonia)

This reflects the growing recognition that blended mobilities provide a strong foundation for in-person exchanges and can contribute to more sustainable overall mobility experiences.

In Lithuania, the balance between traditional and virtual mobility is evolving in countries with fewer transportation options as

“In Lithuania, our railway network is not as developed as in some other European countries, which makes it difficult to integrate sustainability into all mobility activities.” (Urtė Savickienė, Lithuania)

Despite this, Ms. Savickienė’s approach focuses on integrating sustainability across all stages of mobility, from travelling and accommodation to the choice of project themes.

“It is important not just to address sustainability in practical arrangements but also to integrate green subjects as core project themes.” (Urtė Savickienė, Lithuania)

As sustainability now a compulsory part of Lithuania’s vocational education and training curriculum, Ms. Savickienė and her team work to design projects that focus on sustainability. This approach aims to ensure that sustainability is not just an add-on but a fundamental aspect of the curriculum and project design, which in turn can contribute to long-term environmental benefits.



5. Looking ahead – Green Transition and future Erasmus+ projects

As the Erasmus+ programme continues to evolve, it is clear that sustainability will play an increasingly central role in shaping the future of vocational education and training. The green transition is not only a priority but also an essential part of preparing future generations for the challenges and opportunities of a more sustainable world. To that end, future projects must reflect an integrated approach that aligns with environmental goals while still providing the immersive, hands-on experiences that Erasmus+ is known for.

5.1. Balancing individual action and collective responsibility

Mr. Pleadin highlighted an important starting point for sustainability efforts: small, individual actions. He stressed that while the ambition to tackle ecological challenges on a global scale is admirable, real impact begins with simple and everyday practices.

"It's about starting with what we can do independently and then gathering like-minded people around us." (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

His school's approach is to encourage both students and teachers to engage in sustainable practices - whether that is reducing waste, using less water, or taking part in broader EU initiatives promoting sustainability.

Looking ahead, we have to see that the focus will remain on making sustainability part of the school's everyday culture. By starting small, they aim to gradually expand these actions to a larger scale, ensuring that sustainability becomes not just a buzzword but a mindset that permeates through every project and initiative. It is also up to Erasmus+ stakeholders to develop collective awareness, reinforcing the idea that individual actions, when multiplied, can lead to significant change.

5.2. Estonia's commitment to a green future

Estonia has made tremendous strides in embedding sustainability into VET practices, largely through its Green Mornings initiative and related policy recommendations. These efforts have made a tangible impact on the discourse around sustainability, but there is still much to be done. In the coming years, Estonia will continue to develop platforms for VET schools to share best practices and collaborate on sustainability initiatives. Next year, Ms. Rein's team plans to implement principles of sustainable schools and to continue hosting thematic seminars with universities and companies, which will serve as a catalyst for cross-sector cooperation. One of their primary goals is to ensure that sustainability is deeply embedded into both the curriculum and the ethos of the VET schools.

Ms. Rein stressed that although sustainability topics might feel over-discussed, the reality was that many teachers, educators and students still have not fully embraced these ideas. To that end, Estonia's Green Mornings initiative will continue, ensuring that sustainability remains a central conversation within VET circles. Moreover, Ms. Rein hoped that international cooperation through webinars and seminars would allow other countries to learn from Estonia's experience, thereby multiplying the impact of sustainable education across borders.

5.3. Lithuania's green priorities and peer-to-peer learning

Lithuania offers a unique perspective, highlighting the role that national agencies and institutions play in promoting sustainability within Erasmus+ projects. As part of Lithuania's efforts, the National Agency practices a "green" approach internally - ensuring that their office is paperless and adopting sustainable practices in their daily operations. This is an essential part of the ***"practicing what you preach"*** approach.

Ms. Savickienė emphasized the importance of peer-to-peer training as a way to foster knowledge exchange. Rather than simply presenting information in a top-down manner, Lithuania has adopted a more interactive, less formal approach to teaching sustainability in Erasmus+ projects. By providing space for beneficiaries to share their experiences and best practices, the programme creates a platform for mutual learning and support. This has proven to be highly effective as it allows organizations to learn directly from one another in real-world contexts.

Several initiatives help to accelerate the green transition, such as the introduction of sustainability considerations in project evaluations and the creation of a ***"green priority" workgroup***. This group plans to host multiple events to train both national and international Erasmus+ beneficiaries on how to implement sustainable practices in their projects. A significant step forward was the publication of practical tips for sustainable project implementation. This comprehensive guide walks project managers through each phase of the project cycle, from planning to execution, ensuring that sustainability is embedded at every stage.

6. Moving forward together

The road ahead for Erasmus+ is one of collaboration, innovation, and continued focus on sustainability. Mr. Pleadin's call for individual actions, Ms. Rein's emphasis on cross-sector cooperation, and Ms. Savickienė's focus on peer-to-peer learning offer complementary approaches that will likely serve as a roadmap for future Erasmus+ projects.

The green transition is not a one-off effort; it is an ongoing process that demands a collective commitment from every stakeholder. Whether through individual actions, institutional initiatives, or international cooperation, sustainability must remain at the heart of Erasmus+ as it moves forward. By learning from each other's experiences and continuously refining best practices, the Erasmus+ community can help build a greener, more sustainable future for generations to come. (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps green transition and sustainable development strategy)

7. Integrating AI, sustainability skills, and green curriculum in VET education

7.1 Role of AI solutions in making Erasmus+ greener

As Mr. Pleadin pointed out, it was an undeniable fact that AI solutions consume a lot of energy, which is mostly produced from non-renewable energy sources. However, the main problem regarding the sustainability of these technologies does not lie in this. Artificial intelligence has developed so rapidly that, generally speaking, we have lost "real" intelligence somewhere along the way. Although the application of AI tools is very useful in many activities, most users, especially the younger generations, who are looking for instant solutions, use such technologies without any critical thinking. Although the immediate access to information is essential for the young generation, they ignore its credibility. In this segment, the role of educational institutions is extremely important to guide students in the correct use of AI technology in terms of accurately asking questions, generating (new?) information, checking the credibility of data, and the ethical approach to using artificial intelligence. The biggest mistake people, especially the youth, make when using AI tools is that they apply it to 'think' for us, instead of supporting us in the thinking process.

7.2. Skills are needed from VET learners to foster sustainability

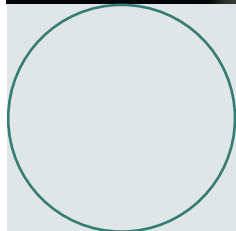
Through numerous examples of sustainability, schools should provide the basic knowledge for their students and direct them to reflection and proactivity.

"Everything else, and by that I primarily mean professional knowledge and skills necessary for a sustainable approach, the students will learn along the way, either in school or outside school, and apply them by themselves. So, professional examples from practice are desirable, but I believe that it is crucial to create the foundations in a 'sustainable way of thinking' among students." (Branko Pleadin, Croatia)

According to Mr. Pleadin, it is the duties of educational institution as well as government organizations to provide a functional environment in which one day these students, as experts in certain fields, will be able to create and apply sustainable solutions.

7.3. Incorporate green skills in the curriculum

Following Mr. Pleadin, although some educational programmes have particular subjects related to sustainability and green skills, the introduction of cross-curricular topics is much more important. The education systems of all EU countries are very flexible, and teachers should have both the competence and the opportunity to include topics of sustainability in the subject curricula. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the concept of sustainability should not be focused only on vocational subjects at all, as this topic can and must be included in any academic field, such as teaching the mother tongue or a foreign language, history or geography, even physical education. Mr. Pleadin declared that it was possible to teach basic skills related to sustainability and an eco-friendly approach through any subjects. In addition, teaching special vocational subjects, more detailed knowledge, and skills for the application of sustainable technologies can be taught. However, in this approach, the most important element is the cooperation of teachers in harmonizing and coordinating teaching topics.



Conclusion

The integration of sustainability into Erasmus+ mobility projects is a work in progress. As these examples illustrate, while travelling is essential for cultural exchange and apprenticeship in vocational education and training, there are increasing efforts to minimize its environmental impact. Through promoting green travel practices, the incorporation of virtual components in mobility programmes, and the integration of sustainability as a key theme in vocational education and training are considered significant initiatives that reflect a growing awareness of the need to balance cultural immersion with eco-friendly travelling. The future of blended mobilities seems promising, offering a model for reducing the environmental footprint of international exchanges while still providing meaningful educational experiences.

In conclusion, the roundtable discussion highlighted the immense potential of Erasmus+ to serve as a catalyst and role model for the green transition in vocational education and training across Europe. The diverse perspectives shared by the participants demonstrated how sustainability can be woven into the fabric of vocational education and training, from Austria's certification process for environmentally friendly training through Croatia's integration of sustainability into Erasmus+ projects, and Estonia's green transition initiatives, to Lithuania's impactful "Zero Waste More Taste" project. Each initiative emphasized the importance of collaboration, innovation, and practical outcomes in driving change and preparing students for the environmental challenges of the future.

As we move forward, it is essential to continue fostering international cooperation and sharing best practices to further enhance the green aspects of Erasmus+ programmes. The collective efforts discussed in this roundtable exemplify the significant role that VET can play in promoting sustainability, not only within educational institutions but also in the broader community. By remaining committed to these efforts, we can ensure that the Erasmus+ programme continues to evolve as a force for positive environmental change, equipping future generations with the skills and mindset needed to contribute to a more sustainable world.

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6

**KATALIN MOLNÁRNÉ STADLER –
JÓZSEF MARTON –
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LILIYA ELENKOVA DR.:**

**Quality Assurance – EQAVET –
Learning Mobility**



INTRODUCTION

The relevant VET policy documents emphasise that internationalisation and the quality transnational mobility of learners and staff offered by the Erasmus+ programme continued to be at the core of the global vision for the modernisation of vocational education and training (VET) both on European and national levels. On the European level, the new EU VET policy 2020 (Council Recommendation) identifies the geographical mobility of VET learners as a priority. The Recommendation states that internationalisation and widening the learning mobility opportunities for learners contribute greatly to increasing the attractiveness of VET and also defines an EU-level target to be achieved by 2025, namely that 8% of learners in VET should benefit from a learning mobility abroad. The recently adopted Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' – learning mobility opportunities for everyone changed this EU-level target to 12% by 2030. On national level, the VET 4.0 Medium-term sectoral development strategy (VET 4.0 Medium-term policy strategy for the renewal of VET and adult learning devotes a separate chapter (Chapter V, pp. 102-104.) to the international aspects of VET, where the increased participation of Hungarian VET students and VET teachers-trainers-instructors in Erasmus+ mobility programmes is a policy objective.

However, it is not enough to increase only the number of learning mobility opportunities and/or the number of vocational learners and staff (teachers, trainers, educators) participating in learning mobility but it is also essential to assure and raise the quality of learning mobility experience as this can be one of the driving forces to motivate students and the staff for learning abroad. The recently adopted Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' – learning mobility opportunities for everyone states that:

„Learning mobility has proven to be highly valuable for learners in gaining the competences needed for personal, educational and professional development. Cross-border learning experiences increase intercultural understanding and help foster a common European identity. Organising learning mobility, both incoming and outgoing, is also a strong driver for education and training institutions and non-formal and informal learning providers to improve the quality of learning on offer.” (Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move', pp. 102-104.)

The Recommendation calls on member states to strive to achieve by 2030 in VET the EU-level target, namely that the share of vocational learners participating in a learning mobility experience abroad should be at least 12%.

Quality assurance involves the systematic review of educational provision to support better learning for all students throughout Europe. Strong quality assurance systems and common quality criteria have a key role to play in enhancing transparency and trust between countries and also in creating the conditions for boosting better-quality student mobility across Europe, thus making the European Education Area a reality. Quality assurance can be internal and/or external and implemented on three levels: 1. system, 2. institution/provider and 3. programme/project level.

The session investigated how the quality assurance approaches and tools that foster the quality of mobility in vocational education and training – with special regard to the EQAVET Framework on system/institutional level and the Erasmus+ quality standards on project level – can contribute to developing and promoting high-quality learning mobility experience and improving opportunities for learners. The best practice presentations of the 4 countries (Hungary, Germany, Estonia, and Bulgaria) have covered all these aspects.

1. Best practice Hungary: Integrating learning mobility into the EQAVET-based quality management system for formal VET institutions

Since 2019, a comprehensive reform of the Hungarian VET system has been implemented and a national quality management system (QMS) for formal VET institutions has been developed. In the meantime, the Erasmus+ learning mobility programmes – as underpinned by both European and national VET development policies – have gained an increased importance in institutional development, modernisation and internationalisation strategies of VET institutions; therefore it is advisable to integrate the learning mobility related quality criteria into the general quality management system of VET institutions.

The best practice of Hungary provides practical solutions for such integration.

1.1 EQAVET-based quality management system for formal VET institutions in Hungary

Since 2000, Hungary has made significant efforts and invested, allocated considerable resources to transfer VET institutions into learning organisations continuously pursuing quality management. On this quality journey in 2021 – in the process of the comprehensive reform of the VET system and as one of the tools to achieve the objectives set in the VET 4.0 Medium-term sectoral development strategy – a new institutional quality management system was designed and developed and is currently being implemented in all formal VET institutions in Hungary with the aim of better serving the needs and demands of the labour market/economy, and improving the quality, attractiveness and effectiveness of VET. This national VET quality management system is based in full on the updated, modernised European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, the so-called EQAVET Framework (Council Recommendation).

Formal VET institutions were required to elaborate their own quality management system by 31 August 2022, with the professional support available from the sectoral governance bodies and the EQAVET National Reference Point. The implementation process started on 1 September 2022.

The quality management system requirements and the rules governing the introduction of quality management in formal VET are stipulated in the new pieces of legislation. The new 2019 act on vocational education and training (Adult education and training in the VET Act LXXX of 2019) requires that the activity of the VET institution must be based on a quality management

system. The implementing regulation of the new VET act (Government Decree 12/2020 (Eurydice, Adult education and training) defines the VET quality management system and its components. The QMS and its components are described in full detail in the Self-evaluation Guidebook (Önértékelési Kézikönyv, 2022) issued by the minister responsible for VET on 9 February 2022.

1.2 Structure of the quality management system for formal VET institutions

In line with the relevant legislation, the components of the comprehensive quality management system of VET institutions integrate the EQAVET indicative descriptors and the EQAVET indicators applicable at the VET provider level. The system is strongly improvement-oriented, and each evaluation is followed by improvement actions. An important feature of the QMS is that it combines the centralised approach with an approach that allows local flexibility. This flexibility also makes it possible to integrate learning mobility into the general QMS of those VET institutions where mobility is of strategic importance.

In the following, the components of the VET institutional QMS will be presented alongside examples of the included learning mobility aspects.

1.2.1 Quality policy

In the quality policy, the VET institutions develop their mission and vision, set the strategic goals and quality objectives, declare the commitment of the institution's leadership to quality and continuous quality improvement, as well as define the organisational framework of the QMS and the conditions required for its operation.

An example to complement the institutional vision: Our international application activities support the professional and methodological renewal of our teachers and trainers, and the acquisition of abroad experience by our students.

1.2.2 Self-evaluation

The institutions conduct comprehensive self-evaluation every second year (starting from 1 September 2022). The Self-evaluation Guidebook issued by the minister responsible for VET contains the description of the comprehensive self-evaluation system, the procedure and the methodology of the self-evaluation process. It includes the set of 21 VET-specific EQAVET-based self-evaluation criteria – adapted to the current legal environment as well as the professional and operational features of the Hungarian formal VET institutions – against which the institutions evaluate their activity and the results achieved, in the four self-evaluation areas (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, and Review).

In the process of self-evaluation, the institutions assess and evaluate the achievement of the strategic goals and quality objectives, the efficiency of the regulated processes, the VET indicators to be collected on annual basis, the developments in digital readiness and environmental sustainability of the institution, as well as the functioning and the effectiveness of the VET teacher-trainer performance evaluation system. Moreover, they survey the needs and the

satisfaction of the relevant partners, analyse the results, identify the strengths and the areas for improvement, develop action plans, and implement improvement actions.

An example to complement the self-evaluation criteria: VET institutions that treat internationalization and participation in the Erasmus+ programme as strategic goals may supplement their self-assessment criteria with relevant requirements, so that the self-assessment could also cover these aspects. For example: To the self-evaluation criterion covering the assessment and evaluation of the digital readiness and environmental sustainability of the institution the following supplement can be added: „The institution uses the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme to develop digital literacy and environmental sustainability.”

1.2.3 VET teacher-trainer performance evaluation

As the professionalism of teachers and trainers, and the quality of their work are crucial factors for improving the quality of VET, the professional competences and the performance of VET teachers and trainers as well as the quality of their work are evaluated every three years, by the director of the VET institution, in 10 evaluation areas according to the institutional procedure elaborated based on the methodological recommendation published by the minister responsible for VET. This methodological recommendation contains the methodology, procedure, evaluation criteria, evaluation methods, and the tools of VET teacher-trainer performance evaluation.

The director, with the involvement of other institutional leaders, evaluates the teacher's/trainer's work, the fulfilment of the EQAVET-based evaluation criteria, identifies both the strengths and the areas for improvement, and approves the action plan prepared by the teacher/trainer in response to the findings of the evaluation. This new performance evaluation system in VET also affects the teachers'- trainers' salaries.

	EVALUATION AREAS OF VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS	EXAMPLES OF ADDITIONAL CRITERIA
1.	Qualification – vocational qualification, specialisation	Knowledge of foreign languages used in the international projects of the institution.
2.	Professional experience	Professional practical experience abroad, e.g. active participation in Erasmus+ projects.
3.	Labour market value	Impact on the effectiveness of the organisation – active contribution to internationalisation goals.
4.	Professionalism (professional competencies, skills, and capability)	Impact on the effectiveness of the organisation – active contribution to internationalisation goals.
5.	Use of VET-specific, relevant and up-to-date methods	Using the competence development opportunities of Erasmus+ projects.
6.	Pedagogical planning	Contribution to the planning of international projects.
7.	Pedagogical assessment and evaluation	Contribution to the evaluation and validation of the results of international projects.
8.	Cooperation with other teachers and trainers, parents and partners in dual training	Contribution to the dissemination of the results of Erasmus+ projects, knowledge sharing.
9.	Activities in support of personality development, team leadership and management, and student learning	Participation in the use of the personal development potential of Erasmus+ projects.
10.	Innovation activity and professional commitment	Active involvement in the internationalisation of the institution.

Table 1: Examples to complement the VET teacher-trainer performance evaluation criteria

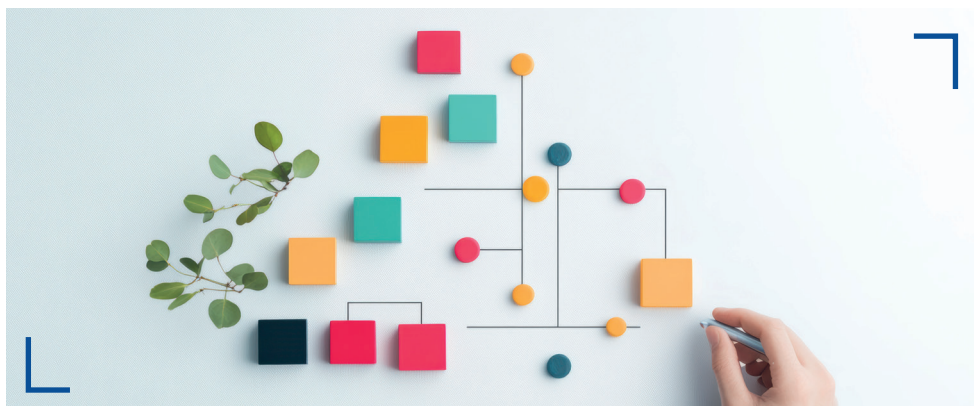
1.2.4 Process model

The process model of VET institutions identifies 11 processes, which are mandatory to be regulated by all institutions, as these processes are linked to the key objectives of the sectoral VET 4.0 Strategy and the core operation of the institution. These 11 processes are grouped in 3 process areas as follows:

- **Leadership-management (4):** Strategic planning, Planning of a specific school year, Human resource management, Institutional self-evaluation
- **Education-teaching-training (4):** Planning of vocational education and training, Career guidance, enrolment, admission of pupils, Cooperation of teachers and trainers, Development of the methodological culture and toolbox
- **Support functions and providing resources (3):** Providing economic resources, procurement activity, Management of the institution's administrative tasks, Handling complaints

The institutions are free to define and include other institutional processes in their process model depending on their specific goals, objectives, and improvements.

An example to complement the process model: “The processes in the Education-teaching-training process area can be supplemented by the regulated „Process of Implementing Erasmus+ Mobility Programmes”.



1.2.5 Indicator system

The indicator system of VET institutions identifies 24 fundamental VET-specific indicators, which are needed to define and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of formal VET institutions, and which are mandatory to be measured and collected by all institutions on an annual basis. They integrate the EQAVET indicators, which can be generated and applied on VET provider level as Placement rate, Satisfaction of graduates and employers with the acquired skills and

competences, Completion rate, Drop-out rate, Share of SEN/disadvantaged pupils, and Share of teachers and trainers participating in in-service training and the amount invested.

The institutions can also use and include in their institutional indicator system additional VET indicators to measure the effectiveness of their goals/objectives and improvements, to monitor the functioning of their processes and to underpin the improvements.

An example to complement the indicator system: Indicators related to internationalisation can be added: the number and the proportion of VET students studying abroad. The number and the percentage of VET teachers and trainers participating in Erasmus+ in-service training. The average satisfaction of foreign training partners.

1.2.6 System of collecting feedback from partners

Within the system of partners' needs and satisfaction surveys, institutions define 5 relevant partners whose needs, demands and satisfaction are key to the institution's functioning and the achievement of their objectives. The views and the opinion of learners, parents, teachers-trainers, dual training providers, and companies employing graduates should be mandatorily asked at least once in a two-year self-evaluation cycle, in the context of partners' needs and satisfaction surveys, by using the centrally elaborated measurement tools and partner questionnaires. The institutions are free to expand the scope of their partners to be surveyed and the survey questions upon their own decision, in case they consider it necessary.

An example to complement the partner questionnaires: Example of questions that can be added to the teacher satisfaction survey in relation to the Erasmus+ programme: "The director of the institution takes an active role in representing the institution on the international stage and is personally involved in Erasmus+ projects".

The methodology of integrating learning mobility into the EQAVET-based quality management system for formal VET institutions is described in full detail in the publication elaborated by the National VET Team of the Tempus Public Foundation (Szabó, 2023), where a full range of additional examples for such an integration are also provided.

2. Best practice of Germany: Quality assurance in learning mobility

Quality assurance in vocational education and training in Germany is anchored in several key pillars designed to ensure continuous improvement in training quality. The dual vocational education and training system in Germany, which combines theoretical and practical learning across both companies and vocational schools, has a particularly well-integrated quality assurance mechanism that supports students' mobility across different learning environments. This system accounts for approximately 70% of VET, facilitating practical experiences that are essential for effective learning mobility. In contrast, purely academic, school-based VET pathways make up about 30%, offering a more theoretical focus with less direct practical experience. (Data Report on the Vocational Training Report 2024).

2.1 The Quality Assurance Framework for the dual VET system in Germany

The central part of the quality assurance framework for the dual vocational education and training system in Germany is the collaborative development and implementation of national training standards. This is driven by strong partnerships among educational institutions, business companies, and some key stakeholders, such as the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) and Chambers of Crafts (HWK). These chambers act as intermediaries and negotiation partners, facilitating consensus among the federal government, state authorities, employers, and employees. The legal framework established by the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) ensures that all trainees receive contracts outlining their rights and obligations, thereby promoting transparency and support for learning mobility. Regular quality assessments by the IHKs and/or HWKs guarantee compliance with these standards, fostering ongoing monitoring and enhancement of training providers, which is vital for effective learning mobility (Guellali, 2017)

2.2 Eleven pillars of quality assurance in dual VET in Germany

The eleven pillars of quality assurance in dual VET in Germany, as defined by BiBB (Data Report on the Vocational Training Report 2024), highlight the collaborative effort. *These eleven pillars are as follow:*

1.	Collaboration among the state, employers, and employees to shape the dual system.
2.	Vocational education and training planning based on indicator-supported reporting.
3.	Continuous improvement through modernization, research, development, and pilot projects.
4.	Structuring training regulations based on the occupation principle.
5.	State-recognised training occupations designed to be practice-oriented and regularly updated.
6.	Vocational guidance support for young people in selecting training paths.
7.	Trainers possessing both personal and professional qualifications.
8.	Training venues that are well-equipped and conducive to a mobile learning environment.
9.	Regulation of rights and obligations in the training contract.
10.	Assessment of trainees' occupational proficiency by an examination board following a valid procedure.
11.	Collaboration between companies and vocational schools in implementing vocational education and training.

Table 2: 11 pillars of the quality assurance in the German dual training

The above pillars – minimum standards – result from negotiations involving social partners and reflect a commitment to quality through consensus. The consensus principle fosters viable decisions enhancing the acceptance of quality assurance measures. Germany's quality assurance framework for dual VET distinguishes itself from the process-oriented European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) by emphasizing the establishment,

adherence to, and monitoring the minimum standards. Furthermore, the competent bodies within the German dual VET quality assurance system operate on an “intermediate level,” bridging the established system and provider levels known from EQAVET.

2.3 Role of Germany in European quality assurance for VET

Germany has significantly contributed to the development of European common quality criteria in VET and in 2008, founded the German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (DEQA-VET), alongside the other EU Member States. DEQA-VET fosters a “culture of quality improvement” and serves as a resource for all VET stakeholders to share information and support initiatives. This aligns with the EQAVET goal of enhancing vocational education and training quality, improving transparency and coherence in education policy across member states, and promoting permeability and lifelong learning.

2.3.1 Quality assurance in learning mobility and ERASMUS+ in Germany

In the context of quality assurance for learning mobility and ERASMUS+ projects in Germany, EQAVET plays a vital role with several mechanisms already in place. To maintain an engaging and dynamic discourse, the German National Agency's VET Team experts have introduced additional best practices aimed at reinforcing EQAVET objectives. These initiatives are listed as follows:

A) Accessible publications and materials

The German National Agency produces accessible publications and materials focusing on learning mobility within Erasmus+ priorities. A recent publication, “Education for Sustainable Development in Transnational Mobility according to EQAVET” outlines the necessity of sustainability, describes implementation steps (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, and Review), and provides practical descriptors. A case study from the tailoring sector illustrates the application of these principles in preparing workshops, identifying problems, fostering reflection, and enhancing knowledge transfer.

B) Podcast series: “EQAVET made easy – Quality assurance in ERASMUS+ projects”

This podcast provides project coordinators with valuable insights into best practices supporting learning mobility. Each episode addresses key questions regarding the EQAVET indicative descriptors – quality criteria and the EQAVET indicators, such as:

- What quality criteria and indicators does EQAVET recommend?
- How can project leaders integrate these quality criteria and indicators from initiating projects?
- How can quality be monitored and documented?
- How can feedback from participants and partners be effectively utilized?

The podcast highlights best practices, including intercultural questioning, structured reflection with external trainers, and implementing quality plans using SWOT analysis and the SMART approach.

C) Live midday session

A live midday session for project coordinators and institutions further explores the EQAVET-related themes following the release of brochures and podcasts. This interactive 40-minute session provides nation-wide support from VET experts, fostering continued engagement with quality assurance practices.

The above-mentioned best practice initiatives enhance knowledge sharing and improve the quality and quality assurance of learning mobility, thus making Germany a leader in VET quality standards.

3. Best practice of Estonia: Quality assurance – EQAVET – Learning mobility – Transnational peer review

The best practice of Estonia shared the results of a European transnational project titled „European Peer Review Quality Areas and Criteria for Vocational Education and Training (VET)“.

Quality assurance and quality improvement are increasingly important for both institutions providing vocational education and training and education authorities throughout Europe. The high-quality VET is attractive and has a major impact on individuals' equal opportunities, their employment, competitiveness of the working life, mobility, and the operating environment of the society as a whole. Quality is created through long-term, systematic and goal-oriented work. Since 2009, the EQAVET Recommendation (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council) has supported improvements in quality assurance and the development of a culture of quality management in VET.

A tool developed to improve quality management in vocational education and training is the **“Transnational Peer Review”**. The peer review process, in which a peer review group evaluates the procedures and processes of a VET provider, is a useful tool in many ways to involve and motivate staff, students, working life and other key stakeholders in quality improvement, from which both the reviewed VET provider and the peers can benefit. This involvement is an important value of peer review, and it creates a development atmosphere and a quality culture in the organisation where everyone does quality work in their own role and work. The focus lies on the promotion of a culture of continuous quality improvement, mutual learning, trust, and openness.

As part of the Estonian good practice presentation, an example of the place and role of international peer review was given, promoting a sustainable approach to vocational education and training. The Estonian National VET team worked out a website to elaborate sustainable development competences of teachers, school directors, and school teams. A series of events called 'Green Days' was launched: joint study tours, training days, and virtual Green Morning webinars were organised. Erasmus+ quality standards expect beneficiary organisations and participants in the programme to adopt environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour,

such as promoting sustainable travel modes, virtual cooperation, virtual mobility, and blended mobility. The EQAVET peer review will support continuous quality improvement, focusing on the promotion of a culture of mutual learning / mobility, trust and openness; better understanding of the practical aspects of sustainability and its quality dimensions for VET providers.

Since 2019, HAKA is the leader of the EQAVET Erasmus+ transnational Peer Reviews of VET providers in Estonia. The joint project, which was carried out by the partner EQAVET national reference points of Croatia, Estonia, Finland, and Slovenia, promotes transnational Peer Reviews in line with the EQAVET Framework. The aim for the project period was to update the European Peer Review Quality Areas to increase understanding of VET providers' perspectives on sustainability and its dimensions of quality. In 2021, as a part of the EU projects supporting the operation of the EQAVET NRPs, a handbook entitled "European Peer Review Quality Areas and Criteria for Vocational Education and Training (VET)" was written and published. Representatives of VET providers from each partnering country were valuable partners in the development of the publication. In addition, the criteria and indicators were piloted and then further developed based on the feedback received from VET providers and other pilot participants. During piloting, the VET providers found the international peers' suggestions very enriching.

This handbook is designed for international peer review, wherein at least one of the evaluators is from another country as the reviewed VET provider. The handbook is considered a practical toolbox that describes the peer review methodology in detail. According to this, peer reviews rely on 15 quality areas (QA) that relate to the core activities of VET. For international peer reviews, the following European Peer Review Quality Areas for Vocational Education and Training have been developed:

QA 1	Strategic planning and development	QA 9	External relations
QA 2	Quality Assurance	QA 10	Internationalisation
QA 3	Knowledge Management	QA 11	Pedagogical framework and planning the pedagogical processes
QA 4	Management and Leadership	QA 12	Teaching and learning
QA 5	Management of infrastructure, facilities, and finances	QA 13	Work-based learning (WBL) outside the school
QA 6	Planning and Management of Human Resources	QA 14	Assessment and Certification
QA 7	Equality and Equal opportunities	QA 15	Learning results and outcomes
QA 8	Internal relations		

Table 3: 15 quality areas in Estonian peer review

Each Quality Area defines the corresponding criteria, indicators, and sources of evidence. Furthermore, each Quality Area includes the principle of continuous improvement and the EQAVET Quality Assurance Cycle – planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

The quality areas, criteria, and indicators have been revised in consideration of the EQAVET Framework and its additional components, as well as in line with the new developments, changes in the operating environment of VET. The VET provider is free to select the quality areas



and the criteria and indicators that best suit their development goals and needs for peer review. The criteria help the VET provider being reviewed and the peers to speak a common language.

The criteria set out in Quality Area 10 “Internationalisation” will also help to improve the quality of the delivery of Erasmus+ learning mobility programmes.

4. Best practice of Bulgaria: Quality assurance in learning mobility

The National VET Team of Bulgaria presents the Handbook on Quality in Learning Mobility to the VET community every year with the aim to promote its use. The value of such tools increases even more if they find application outside the original target group. Presenting this Handbook to the VET community is exactly such an increase in added value.

Since its establishment in 2012 as the ECVET team, the National VET Team has been working in various directions to ensure the maximum promotion of VET, as well as quality assurance in the education system. The activities include explaining the changes in the national educational standards and the processes of validation and recognition of learning outcomes, as well as sharing best practices, networking, and participating in various events. In this context, the presentation of the Handbook on Quality in Learning Mobility is also defined as sharing a best practice among the VET community.

In 2015, the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth launched the development of a framework for the quality of learning mobility. The aim is to achieve a clear and shared understanding, to develop guidelines, definitions, and specific indicators. In the first edition (2019), 22 quality principles and 119 indicators were formulated, while in the second one in 2024, the principles were dropped and the indicators were updated and reduced to 117. The indicators were grouped into dimensions: Rational, Organisation, Formal framework, Resources, Participants, and Virtual mobility. The quality Handbook provides a detailed explanation of how to use the indicators, as well as additional tools are presented for each indicator to help achieve it.

The National VET Team presents the Handbook to the VET community every year as part of the dissemination activities. The feedback received during the seminars and afterwards proves that this tool has had added value in several areas. The Handbook

- is a practical tool for quality assurance when conducting learning mobility;
- facilitates the development of mobility projects;
- facilitates the development of accompanying monitoring and control tools, which ensure significant points of a mobility, such as preparation, implementation, evaluation, risk management, active participation, etc.;
- is a visual system that can be used as an example when developing other systems for different quality assurance purposes.

Furthermore, the indicators serve as a checklist for practitioners to ensure the quality of educational outcomes, as well as to monitor the progress.

The Handbook itself is arranged in separate dimensions, each dimension has several sections and each section has separate indicators. It helps even at the initial stage of project development to cover all the necessary elements for a quality implementation and to set indicators. The Handbook includes elements, such as objectives, methods, target groups, commitments of the host organization, timeframe, programme, responsibilities, risk and conflict management, agreements, insurance, selection, dissemination of information, etc.

The training covers, first of all, what the Youth Partnership is between the Council of Europe and the European Union and its context, as well as the need and the process of the handbook creation. It is explained that this Handbook was written with the conviction that there is no intrinsic contradiction between quantity and quality in learning mobility activities. It is perceived that they are two sides of the same coin: more attention to quality can be conducive to higher numbers of participants and activities, while it increases satisfaction among participants and organisers, as well as educational results. It is expected that the VET community will use it as a reference material throughout all phases of the project.

The training continues with presenting all dimensions, sections and indicators, explaining in depth the links between sections and indicators. One of the modules of the training is how a monitoring and control process is carried out to ensure the quality implementation of each learning mobility. It also explains the possibility of creating additional tracking tools, such as checklists to mark progress. It is evident from the reactions of the participants that they perceive the tool as very useful and practical, covering all dimensions and providing as many indicators as possible. In addition to being used for quality assurance in learning mobility, it can also serve as an example for developing a quality assurance tool in other areas.

The experience shows that the presentation of the Handbook on Quality in Learning Mobility to the VET Community helps increase the practical value of this good tool for improving the quality of learning mobility; expand the capacity of the VET community to carry out high quality learning mobility projects and harmonize the quality and the quality assurance measures in learning mobility both on national and European levels.

5. Identifying the success factors of Erasmus+ mobility programmes – Result of group work

Participating in the Erasmus+ programme, in compliance with the “Erasmus Quality Standards for mobility projects” (Erasmus Quality Standards for mobility projects) serves to ensure and continuously improve the quality of learning mobility programmes. In order to guarantee the effective internal quality assurance measures of VET institutions, it is helpful to recognise the most important success factors for effective mobility. The participants in the section's work identified four groups of success factors that fundamentally determine the quality of Erasmus+ learning mobility programmes.

5.1 Planning and preparation of the mobility programme

Real changes in the capacity of the organisation and the individual competences of the programme participants can only be achieved if the mobility programme is linked to the strategic goals as well as the identified needs of the organisation. The project goals that are defined on the basis of the actual institutional needs, the selection of target group members and the precise planning of the project implementation promise the success of the project. Finding a relevant partner/partner organisation that guarantees the achievement of goals and that of the defined learning outcomes greatly contributes to the success of the project.

What is more, thorough preparation of the participants (accompanying teachers/trainers, students and parents involved) is also essential. The preparation process includes the following steps:

- Language preparation for the target country: vocabulary used in real-life situations and during professional practice.
- IT preparation of students (and their parents): communication tools, preparation of Europass CV, work diary, portfolio.
- Cultural preparation: knowledge about the country, rules of conduct, cultural differences, tolerance, and stereotypes.
- Social preparation, team building: common expectations and rules, tolerance, cooperation and conflict management, managing homesickness, travel-related anxiety, health and accident prevention.

5.2 Signing a contract with the host partner, participants, and contributors

Written commitments are a significant guarantee for the safe and high-quality implementation of a mobility project. The essential types of contracts depend on the cooperating partners. They can incorporate the following documents:

- Grant agreement, which must be concluded between the sending organisation and each person participating in the mobility, regardless of the role of the participant

(student, teacher/trainer, other participants, such as accompanying teacher, hosted expert, participant of preparatory visit, etc.).

- The learning agreement is the tripartite agreement, which is concluded between the sending institution, the receiving institution and the participant. The learning agreement defines the expected outcomes of the learning mobility, the way in which they will be achieved, and the tasks and responsibilities of the participant, the sending organisation and the receiving organisation. It is an important document for ensuring quality and for creating transparency and trust between the three parties involved in the mobility activity.
- Commissioning contract with those who are involved in the management of the project, e.g. project team members who provide training to students, prepare contracts and agreements, and/or handle invoices and documents.
- Service provider contracts: in connection with the mobility activity, contracts or agreements must/should be signed with service providers (providers of travel, food and accommodation services). It is crucial to know that it is the beneficiary organisation that is responsible for the results and the quality of the activities carried out during the whole mobility projects, regardless of the involvement of other organisations.

5.3 Definition, evaluation, and validation of learning outcomes. Impact of the mobility programme

This step includes four elements, as follows:

5.3.1 Defining learning outcomes and developing a work programme

When developing the learning outcomes and the work programme of the mobility project, the expectations of the target group, the institution and the dual partner, as well as the goals of the project must be aligned with the opportunities of the foreign partner. When defining the learning outcomes of the mobility, along with the professional learning outcomes, foreign language learning outcomes may/should also be elaborated and included in the work programme of the mobility. Moreover, the learning outcomes of mobility should also be linked to intercultural competences.

5.3.2 Measurement and evaluation

To measure the achievement of the learning outcomes, evaluation forms should be elaborated and prepared, in which several experts, the foreign mentor, the accompanying teacher, the professional trainer, and the director of the institution rate the achieved level of each learning outcome. During the evaluation process, the participants and the evaluators discuss together the evaluation results and set further development goals. It is the particular VET institution that accurately defines the indicators that should be assessed and evaluated when measuring the achievement of the objectives as well as the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ mobility programme.



5.3.3 Validation of acquired learning outcomes

Students' learning outcomes can be included in several documents and processes: their study process during the academic year and annual performance evaluation. Students' learning outcomes are integrated into their learning process and can be included in the portfolio that is part of the project task of the professional exam. Regarding teachers/trainers, their learning outcomes can be included in the teachers/trainers' performance evaluation, in Hungary, which must be concluded every third year, and in fulfilling their mandatory in-service training obligations. Erasmus+ programme participants receive a Europass mobility document, which contains the description of the mobility experiences and the skills acquired during the mobility experience. The participant's Europass Mobility document proves their experiences and skills as an annex to their job applications.

5.3.4 Incorporating the results

A) Incorporating the results of mobility activities into the organisational operations

VET institutions are expected to integrate the results of the implemented mobility activities into their daily operations to benefit the organisation as a whole, its staff and learners.

B) Incorporating the quality management tasks of internationalisation into the organisation's Quality Management System

Integrating learning mobility into the quality management system of vocational education and training institutions is an essential tool for raising internationalisation to a strategic level.

Conclusion

High-quality VET is attractive and has a significant impact on equal opportunities for individuals, employment, competitiveness in professional life, mobility and the operating environment of society as a whole.

The Hungarian best practice offers practical solutions for integrating Erasmus+ learning mobility programmes into the quality management system of VET institutions. In VET institutions, where institutional internationalisation is a part of the institutional development and modernisation strategy, it is advisable to incorporate quality criteria related to learning mobility into the general quality management system of VET institutions. In 2021, in the process of the comprehensive reform of the VET system and as one of the means to achieving the goals set out in the VET 4.0 Medium-Term Sectoral Development Strategy, a new institutional quality management system was designed, developed and introduced in all formal VET institutions in Hungary, with the aim of better serving the needs, the quality, the economy, and the efficiency of VET, and the labour market. This national VET quality management system is fully based on the updated and modernised European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET Framework).

Germany's quality assurance framework in vocational education and training, particularly within the dual VET system, ensures high-quality learning mobility. The collaboration among the state, businesses, and stakeholders fosters a structured, practice-oriented system that supports the needs of mobile learners. Germany's active role in implementing EQAVET and Erasmus+ projects further strengthens transparency, permeability, and lifelong learning opportunities across Europe.

The best practice from Estonia shared the results of a European transnational project. The "Transnational Peer Review", in which a peer review team assesses the procedures and the processes of a VET provider, is a useful tool for involving and motivating the staff, students, working life and other key stakeholders in quality improvement, from which both the VET provider under review as well as the peers can benefit. The focus is on promoting a culture of continuous quality improvement, mutual learning, trust and openness. The criteria set out in the quality area "Internationalisation" also improve the quality of the implementation of Erasmus+ learning mobility programmes.

The Bulgarian National VET Team has prepared a Bulgarian translation of the Handbook on the quality framework for learning mobility that was published by the EU Commission and promoted it in the VET community. Since then, lectures and webinars have been held every year. Feedback suggests that the handbook is an excellent tool for improving the quality of learning mobility and increasing the capacity of the VET community to implement high-quality learning mobility projects.

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