



Erasmus Student Network

# More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility

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The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network  
to the Council Recommendation on  
a new Learning Mobility for all

Recommendations document



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**Authors:** Neli Kalinova, Martina Bo, Iva Ljubičić, Juan Rayón González.  
**Education Department of the Erasmus Student Network AISBL year 2022/2023.**  
**Editor:** ESN's Communication Department | **Contact us at:** [policy@esn.org](mailto:policy@esn.org)

# Introduction to ESN's contribution to the Learning Mobility Framework Council Recommendation

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the largest organisation representing and supporting mobile learners in the European Union and beyond. ESN works on every aspect and stage of the mobility experience, from the promotion of mobility opportunities to the reintegration of mobile learners after their experiences by creating vibrant alumni communities that give back to their societies. Through its research and policy activities, ESN has become a key actor in European discussion about learning mobility and the internationalisation of education, but ESN is way more than an alumni engagement and advocacy organisation. **ESN's key activity across its 44 countries and more than 500 local student organisations are dedicated to the support of current, future and prospective mobile learners.** Every year ESN local volunteers support more than 350.000 thousand of them, working closely with all the institutions and stakeholders involved in mobility.

Three concepts constitute the bedrock of ESN's policy posture towards learning mobility, as described in the General Policies of the organisation: **more mobility, better mobility and more accessible mobility.** The Erasmus Student Network believes in international opportunities for all, with a special focus on the removal of barriers for those who face particular challenges to participate.

**This contribution to the call for evidence builds on ESN's main research and policy work over the last few years,** including an analysis of the progress made since the publication of the Youth on the Move Council Recommendation in 2011, a comprehensive "state of play" on learning mobility in Europe with a special focus on Higher Education, and a final set of recommendations that also incorporate **direct wording proposals** that ESN expects to see in the Council Recommendation.

The scope of this contribution is not limited to the Higher Education field, as many of the proposals are relevant to all educational sectors. **ESN uses its expertise in the Higher Education field and its excellent connections with organisations active in other fields to build proposals that can help to widen participation in mobility among all sectors.**

The proposals in this contribution target the European institutions, Member States, other subnational levels of government and different kinds of educational institutions. ESN firmly believes that the ideas included in this document can play an important role in building the new learning mobility framework.

## Final Recommendations

The following set of recommendations builds on the analysis of the progress made since the publication of the current Council Recommendation, the state of play in the field of learning mobility and the experience of the Erasmus Student Network supporting mobile learners for more than three decades. All recommendations are based on an analysis of the sources referenced in this contribution.

The focus of the recommendations targets learning mobility with a cross-sectoral perspective. Most of the recommendations are more relevant in the Higher Education context, but are quite transferable to other sectors.

The recommendations seek to influence both the wording of the Council Recommendation and the follow-up initiatives that will appear at the European and National levels. They also seek to contribute, in the relevant aspects, to the Midterm review process of the Erasmus+ programme.

The recommendations are clustered in thematic blocks. Each block includes an introduction to ESN's position on the specific topic, several targeted recommendations and **specific wording proposals**, following the usual style of Council Recommendations.

The recommendations build on ESN's latest policy and research work, including the ESNsurvey - XIV edition<sup>1</sup>, and the SIEM Recommendations for more inclusive and engaging mobilities<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022), For more inclusive & engaging Erasmus+ mobilities: technical recommendations of the SIEM project, [siem-project.eu](https://siem-project.eu)

## 1. Funding for organisations and individuals

Fair and inclusive funding mechanisms and opportunities should be at the core of mobility policies and programmes. A commitment of public institutions at all levels is needed to make mobility a reality for all, with a reinforced role for national and regional authorities, who are set to benefit the most from learning mobility.

Funding distribution should focus on providing more opportunities to those who have more challenges accessing them. This means that mechanisms to allocate funding to educational institutions should have an inclusive approach, moving beyond the allocation of funds based on past performance and considering the characteristics and ambitions of the institutions.

Details matter when it comes to funding. Learners should be provided with a clear understanding of the exact conditions of funding opportunities so they can plan their mobilities properly and reduce the mental burden of going abroad. Institutions facilitating mobilities should set out systems such as calculators so that any learner can understand funding conditions easily.

### Recommendations

- 1. Inclusive distribution of mobility funding to institutions:** The allocation of mobility funding should consider the realities of different institutions and their existing mobility rates, trying to level the playing field among institutions by allocating extra funding to those lagging behind in terms of participation rates, and especially those with a high percentage of students with fewer opportunities. Institutions should be encouraged to diversify their mobility, focusing especially on those fields of study where numbers are lower. Applications for mobility projects should therefore give space to propose innovative practices that can boost participation in mobility.
- 2. Selection of participants to access mobility funding:** Selection of participants in mobility should not be done solely following academic criteria, trying to incorporate other elements that can make it more inclusive for underrepresented groups. Participation in learning mobility should seek to mirror the diversity of the different educational sectors, and the main focus in the next few years should be to prioritise access to the mobility of all underrepresented groups.
- 3. Higher grants for those who need them:** High grants for learners that need them should be a priority. Therefore, programmes should increase grant levels and consider personal and socioeconomic background when allocating grants to individuals, compensating for the “opportunity cost” that many students face when deciding to go on mobility. The range of people who can receive such grants should be broadened, in

order to make sure that all learners who otherwise could not participate in mobility can access it. All institutions with a role in education policy should contribute to increasing the financial contribution to learning mobility, as well as encourage other actors such as private companies to offer complementary financial support to learning mobility. Grants should be indexed to inflation and revised every year to avoid a loss of purchasing power among mobile learners.

4. **Pre-departure funding should be the norm:** The Council Recommendation should stress the importance of making sure that mobility grants are given to participants before their mobilities start, regardless of the sector. **Grant agreements** across programmes and sectors should state the right of mobile learners to receive their grants at the beginning of their mobilities, or regularly at the beginning of the month. All learners should receive their grants before mobility, but those with fewer opportunities should have special priority. This pre-departure payment should be promoted to reassure learners considering going abroad who might have financial concerns.
5. **Adapting mobility support to the costs of hosting cities:** Mobility grants should be adjusted to the costs of the city of destination by giving more flexibility to define the final amount to the educational institutions operating the mobility. A national minimum grant can be established for a certain country, with the possibility of including a top-up depending on the living expenses of the city of destination.

## **Wording proposals for the Council Recommendation**

### **Whereas:**

*Adequate financial support is key to making participation in mobility a reality for all. Increasing the financial support can help learners with fewer opportunities to participate in mobility and create a positive and inclusive image of mobility opportunities.*

*Better financial conditions go beyond higher grant amounts, and they also include pre-departure payments for all mobile learners and clear financial information on the exact conditions of their grants.*

### **The Council recommends the Member States and the European Commission work along the following lines:**

- (a) *Provide additional financial support to those educational institutions with lower mobility numbers, ensuring a level playing field, and exploring the creation of additional financial support mechanisms to build the capacity of institutions supporting the participation of learners with fewer opportunities.*

- (b) *Ensure pre-departure payments of all mobility grants by removing all potential legal hurdles and monitoring the implementation of European and national funding programmes. Data on the timing of grant payments will be collected by the European Commission and shared regularly in the Mobility Scoreboard.*
- (c) *Gradually increase grant rates and adapt them to match the actual costs of the city of destination by reviewing funding schemes, including those in Erasmus+.*
- (d) *Ensure full portability of grants and loans to further support the learning mobility of young people.*

## **2. Mobility promotion and preparation**

Mobility promotion and preparation initiatives are key to convincing those learners who might not have considered taking part in a mobility opportunity, helping to overcome environmental and attitudinal barriers.<sup>3</sup> Promotion and pre-departure preparation strategies should be multilayered and involve stakeholders representing learners in the design and implementation, and should also be adapted to the different target groups and their specific needs. Data from previous participants should be used to target the messages to the common challenges faced by learners, as well as the key attraction factors that convinced them to participate in mobility in the first place.

Promotion and pre-departure preparation strategies should be embedded in broader internationalisation strategies at the institutional and national level. Mobility alumni and incoming international learners should be core pillars of these strategies.

Since online communication is more likely to reach those who are already interested, on-site promotion in educational centres and other public and private spaces should also be considered. Promotion initiatives should reach all learners but focus especially on those of young age.

New online collaborative formats such as virtual exchanges and blended learning should also be used to promote and prepare students for learning mobility opportunities, serving as stepping stones towards long-term learning mobility abroad.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Allinson K., Gabriels W.,(2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, [siem-project.eu](http://siem-project.eu)

<sup>4</sup> European Students' Union and Erasmus Student Network, "*Bringing the student perspective to the debate on mobility, virtual exchange and blended learning*", 2021

## Recommendations

- 1. Creation of national cross-sectoral mobility promotion strategies:** Member States should develop cross-sectoral mobility promotion strategies, including targets for participation in different sectors and an analysis of their current state of play. These strategies should be gathered and analysed by the European Commission, focusing on the results over time.
- 2. Incorporating mobility promotion in the planning of mobility experiences:** sharing your experience as a learner abroad should be considered a key part of the mobility experience, contributing to higher awareness and increased interaction with local communities.<sup>5</sup> Member states should support educational institutions to incorporate this component in the planning of mobility and facilitate the recognition of the time and competencies gained while doing it.
- 3. Structured collaboration with mobility promoters:** Organisations representing learners engaged in mobility promotion should be provided with institutional support for their dissemination work. Member States and the European Commission should put in place measures to support their engagement with other educational institutions and to offer them visibility in institutional spaces. These organisations should be included in the planning of the promotion strategies, and funding should be made available according to their outreach capacity. Such organisations should also be involved in the pre departure preparation of learners, with the organisation of activities and structures like pre-departure mentorship sessions.
- 4. Comprehensive internationalisation from an early age:** mobility promotion initiatives should be embedded in internationalised educational curricula and planning that incorporates international realities into educational content from an early age. Digital technologies and blended initiatives, combining short-term mobilities which prioritise neighbouring countries and online collaboration, should be prioritised at an early age to help learners acquire an internationalisation culture they can boost throughout their lives. These initiatives will not only help to convince learners to go abroad, but also prepare them to make the most out of their mobility.

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<sup>5</sup> Allinson K., Gabriels W.,(2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, [siem-project.eu](https://siem-project.eu)

## **Wording proposals for the Council Recommendation**

### **Whereas:**

*A new approach to mobility promotion and the preparation of learners before taking part in a mobility experience abroad is needed to boost participation rates in mobility, helping to remove attitudinal and environmental barriers among potential participants. The involvement of learners in the design and implementation in the creation of such strategies will be a key part of its success.*

*Diverse internationalisation at home initiatives such as online collaborative learning, participation in international volunteering organisations and a more internationalised curriculum across educational sectors can also have a positive impact on the participation of learners in mobility while improving the overall quality of education.*

### **Hereby recommends that Member States and the European Commission:**

- (a) Within one year of the adoption of the Council Recommendation, Member States will publish a cross-sectoral mobility promotion strategy, either as a standalone document or as part of their internationalisation strategies in the fields of education and training.. It is recommended that the strategies include targets for mobility in the different sectors, using commonly agreed indicators as a reference. The strategy should prioritise the promotion of learning mobility opportunities among young people, including also a strong lifelong learning dimension. The European Commission will gather those strategies and publish them in the European Education Area portal.*
- (b) Support hosting educational institutions to incorporate mobility promotion to local communities as a core part of the educational experience abroad of mobile learners.*
- (c) Collaborate with organisations of learners active in mobility promotion, allocating financial and institutional support when possible. In order to foster a pan-European approach to learning mobility promotion, the European Commission shall create a special label recognising those trustworthy organisations with a proven track record of promoting learning mobility.*

## **3. The role of host countries, cities and organisations**

Even if the role of hosting organisations is widely acknowledged when it comes to guaranteeing quality mobility for learners, discussions on how to widen participation normally focus solely on policies implemented by sending organisations and institutions in order to increase participation. Based on the existing evidence and in ESN's experience supporting learning mobility, the Erasmus Student Network reaffirms that Member States, cities and organisations

can play a key role and implement strategic measures focusing on their profile as hosts of mobile learners. Great support measures<sup>6</sup> exist across Europe at all levels, but they should be boosted and scaled up.

The first step to boost this strategic hosting role is reflecting on the current situation regarding the hosting of mobile learners, and the creation of a clear policy of attraction of international talent, with a specific focus on inclusion. Reinforcing visibility to the learners hosted by the country, city and institution will help to create a mobility culture that also contributes to increasing outward mobility.

**Financial support to incoming learners** can be an extremely positive measure to make mobility more inclusive. This support can be provided at any level and can take the form of subsidised and affordable housing, subsistence support, public transport support or cultural promotion support, among others.

Available information on support mechanisms and the experience of previous learners should be made available and widely disseminated, building on existing platforms.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, improving the exchange of information between sending and hosting organisations is key. Programme regulations and support documents (such as the Charters in Erasmus+) should clearly define the responsibility of each organisation regarding each aspect and stage of the mobility experience.

## Recommendations

1. **Boosting financial support to incoming learners responding to their needs:** Member States, regions and cities should boost support financial support measures for incoming learners, helping them to make mobilities more affordable while becoming better integrated. These measures can be done in aspects such as housing, food and subsistence, public transport, culture or other areas, and prioritise learners with fewer opportunities, and can be done at the region or city level, with educational institutions having an important role as well if they manage enough resources. Access to this extra support can be conditional to being part of the fewer opportunities group.
2. **Establishing support services to respond to the needs and challenges of learners:** The establishment and adaptation of support services in aspects such as administration and health, both physical and mental, can also be extremely important to reassure

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<sup>6</sup> The Erasmus Student Network launched the revamped concept of the “Erasmus Destination of the Year” in 2023, awarding cities with great support services for incoming students.

<sup>7</sup> Allinson K., Gabriels W.,(2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, siem-project.eu, Figure 8 - Encouragement of non-mobile students

prospective mobile learners about their stay abroad. Empowering local associations supporting learners through financial support and institutional recognition can improve the available support for incoming learners while helping to create a culture of learning mobility.

3. **Providing adequate information to help learners choose their mobility destination:** Information on the availability of support measures and services should be widely shared, next to detailed information regarding the academic (for mobilities happening in the non-formal education sectors) aspects of the mobility. Institutions and Member States should use data from previous participants to adapt this information sharing and show learners how others value their experiences.
4. **Attract companies as hosting organisations for quality traineeships:** National Authorities should incentivise and support companies which decide to host mobile learners such as trainees and apprentices, with a special focus on those who allocate financial resources. National Agencies should work with local and regional authorities to ensure that mobile learners that participate in these learning experiences in a workplace also have access to personal and social support systems, which can be provided by existing learner organisations such as ESN if the necessary support and information is provided to the local associations and the incoming students. Quality standards for traineeships should consider the specifics of international traineeships, and existing quality frameworks in programmes like Erasmus should be adapted to better respond to the needs of mobile trainees.<sup>8</sup>

## Wording proposal for the Council Recommendation

### **Whereas:**

*Hosting countries, cities and organisations have a fundamental role to play in making mobility a reality for all. Beyond ensuring a quality experience for learners, actions such as better information sharing, financial support measures to incoming learners or support services that address the needs of learners with fewer opportunities can also help to make mobility more inclusive while making them more attractive destinations.*

### **Hereby recommends that Member States and the European Commission:**

- (a) *Support the allocation of resources and support measures for mobile learners by host regions, cities and educational institutions, contributing to key aspects of the mobility such as housing, transport, or mental and physical health support.*

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<sup>8</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition, p. 92-94

- (b) *Empower local, national and international volunteering organisations that offer support to mobile learners, encouraging the collaboration at all levels, the provision of financial, legal and logistical support, and the collaboration in creating connections with the local community.*
- (c) *Improve the availability of information about the conditions of countries, cities and educational institutions, with a special focus on support services available for learners with fewer opportunities.*
- (d) *Incentive companies and organisations to host mobile trainees, working with National Agencies and learners' organisations to improve quality standards for work based mobility.*

## 4. Multilevel policy-making and administrative capacity

The disparity between Member States and educational institutions in a range of aspects, from participation rates in learning mobility<sup>9</sup> to satisfaction with the support provided by institutions<sup>10</sup>, point to the importance of multilevel policy-making related to mobility. The European Union should have a stronger steering role, with a reinforced mandate from Member States which should eventually lead to Treaty reform. Next to this, Member States should strengthen their commitment to learning mobility through new policies, stronger institutions working in the field, better financing and stakeholder engagement initiatives. Even if European programmes should continue to provide the base for the organisation of most mobility activities in the European Union due to its high European added value, there is still a lot that Member States need to do to increase the accessibility and quality of mobility in their countries.

### Recommendations

- 1. Reinforcing the policy and strategy role of National Internationalisation Agencies in Education and Youth:** The National Agencies dealing with Erasmus+ should not be limited to an administrative role in the management of the programme, receiving a reinforced mandate from their National Authorities to be responsible for policies related to internationalisation of education. This increased policy role should result in more research, stakeholder engagement, capacity building and dissemination activities about learning mobility.
- 2. Boosting national funding of mobility opportunities through co-financing and complementary initiatives:** The continuous increase in EU funding to mobility should

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<sup>9</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, [Education and Training Monitor 2020](#), Figure 55 - Outward degree and credit mobility of graduates, 2018 [%]

<sup>10</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition, p. 41-47

be accompanied by a commitment from Member States and their different levels of government to boost their national financial support to learning mobility opportunities. The preferred form of financial support for learning mobility should be national co-financing of the Erasmus programme, ensuring higher availability of grants and an increase of individual grant levels for learners. This funding should be allocated in a strategic way that also serves to boost the administrative capacity of organisations involved in learning mobility, focusing both on outgoing and incoming mobility. The European Commission should monitor this financial support and report on it through the revamped Mobility Scoreboard and the Education and Training Monitor, analysing the different types of support created by the Member States and the effectiveness of the funding in improving access and quality.

- 3. Increasing local, regional and national administrative support for smaller organisations involved in mobility:** Member States should support the participation of smaller educational institutions by creating local and regional support offices that offer direct help with the application, management and evaluation of mobility projects. Municipalities and regional governments can set up internationalisation offices that offer targeted support to newcomers and less experienced organisations, helping educators to focus more on the educational side of the project while reducing the administrative burden. Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that wherever similar offices exist, awareness of EU-funded opportunities and participation in projects tends to be higher. These offices could be in direct touch with National Agencies, which could offer direct guidance by setting up communities of practice where organisations of learners are also represented.
- 4. Creating new stakeholder engagement models at the national and institutional levels with the participation of learners:** The involvement of organisations representing learners in European policies and programmes regarding learning mobility, such as the Erasmus Student Network, has been a key element of its success. However, stakeholder engagement in policy decisions at the national level has not followed the same pattern in most countries, and learners are less involved in the creation of strategies, policies and initiatives. As national policies related to learning mobility and programme management become more important, National Authorities and National Agencies should incorporate new stakeholder engagement models that include learner organisations in defining national priorities and in decisions related to monitoring, funding, and capacity building or promotion, among others. This involvement will immediately result in a boost in the quality of mobilities, as well as an increased awareness about these opportunities.
- 5. Qualitative allocation of extra organisational/administrative support to educational institutions:** Organisational support plays a key role in the development of internal

procedures to support quality learning mobility among organisations. Mobility programmes should allocate considerable resources to boost the administrative capacity of organisations. Beyond the regular amount allocated automatically depending on the number of learners, there should also be a possibility for organisations to request extra funding if they want to implement more innovative practices related to mobility promotion<sup>11</sup>.

- 6. More Human Resources for learning mobility in DG EAC:** Mobility numbers will only increase if the European Commission has enough human resources to support national policy making and work in the implementation of mobility policies and programmes. DG EAC suffers a chronic staff shortage that hampers progress in mobility, despite the great efforts of its staff. More in-house capacity should be created, rather than relying so much on consultancies for policy work.

## Wording proposals for the Council Recommendation

### **Whereas:**

*Member States can support learning mobility by allocating financial resources, creating policies and bodies that work on the topic, and working with organisations representing learners to get a better understanding of their needs. Member States that implement more support measures complementing EU programmes tend to have higher mobility numbers.*

*National Agencies responsible for learning mobility can have a fundamental role in the development and implementation of strategies, policies and programmes related to learning mobility, with educational institutions benefiting directly from their work. Agencies whose role goes beyond administration and also have a high involvement in learning mobility policies are better positioned to support increasing mobility numbers, while ensuring quality learning experiences.*

*Education policies and programmes in the European Union have benefitted from a high level of involvement of learners representing, who have helped to promote mobility opportunities and identify issues faced by both mobile and non mobile learners related to mobility. Higher involvement of learners in decision making processes related to mobility at the national and institutional level should be further enhanced.*

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<sup>11</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022), For more inclusive & engaging Erasmus+ mobilities: technical recommendations of the SIEM project, [siem-project.eu](https://siem-project.eu)

**Hereby recommends that Member States and the European Commission:**

- (a) *Allocate financial resources to support learning mobility, either as co-financing of EU programmes or through the creation of complementary initiatives that help to expand opportunities for learners.*
- (b) *Strengthen the role of National Agencies supporting learning mobility, equipping them with sufficient resources and empowering their role in policy-making, stakeholder engagement and evaluation of learning mobility in the national context.*
- (c) *Boost the administrative support to smaller organisations that seek to be involved in learning mobility, working with cities and regions to establish support offices that cooperate with National Agencies and organisations supporting learners.*
- (d) *Include organisations representing learners in decision-making processes, providing them an advisory role and including them in the design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of policies and programmes at the national level.*

## **5. Impact and quality of mobility**

Learning mobilities should be planned taking into account the benefits they can bring to all the actors involved, including the participants and their peers, sending and host communities, educational institutions and educational systems at large. **Mobilities in all sectors should be planned thinking about the acquisition of competencies through formal, non-formal and informal learning**, and prioritising learning related to inclusion, civic engagement, sustainability and digital transition. Concrete measures, such as facilitating access to voting from abroad, will not only benefit mobile learners but **all mobile citizens**.

Educational institutions should implement **whole-institution strategies where the different departments acquire responsibilities for learning mobility**, focusing on all kinds of aspects including teaching and learning, support services, housing and social services, and the cultural life within institutions.

The **greening of mobility** should put the acquisition of green competencies at the core, offering financial and educational incentives for those who travel green to their mobility destinations. The focus should be on empowering people to be more sustainable.<sup>12</sup>

Mobile learners should be provided with **guidance before, during and after their mobilities** to help them reflect on their learning throughout their mobility journeys. A more youth-oriented approach for mobilities in formal education involving young people should be applied, adapting

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<sup>12</sup> Recommendations based on key GreenErasmus, a project coordinated by ESN, [www.project.greenerasmus.org](http://www.project.greenerasmus.org)

tools such as the Youthpass and learning lessons from the support systems existing in that sector.

Mobility in formal education should strive to recognise the competencies acquired through the participation in non-formal and informal learning activities, such as volunteering in local communities.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, **language learning** should be a core part of all mobility experiences, with support being offered by sending and hosting organisations.

## Recommendations

- **Recognition of civic engagement while on exchange:** Participation in civic engagement activities on mobility should be a priority in the planning of exchanges. The learning outcomes should be recognised, using established systems such as ECTS whenever possible, and learning objectives should be incorporated in learning agreements or equivalent documents. Civic engagement should be used to boost the interaction between members of the local community and mobile learners. Host organisations should promote engagement opportunities at the beginning of the mobilities, and collaborate with learners organisations to improve the quality and impact of these opportunities.
- **Prioritise institutional transformation through learning mobility by implementing whole institution approaches:** All the departments of an educational institution involved in learning mobility should be involved in the support to mobile learners, and consider the added value of hosting international learners for the transformation process of an institution. In institutions with enough capacity, specific staff members in the departments where exchange students need more support should be designated to offer targeted support in those areas.
- **Ensure awareness of their rights as European citizens among mobile learners:** Mobility programmes should be used to help citizens to be fully aware about their rights as European citizens, or non EU citizens residing in Europe. National Agencies should work with relevant Ministries, local authorities and learner organisations to ensure that all mobile learners are aware of their rights and they exercise them while abroad. The participation of mobile learners in the upcoming elections to the European Parliament should be a priority.

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<sup>13</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition, p. 87-89

## Wording proposals for the Council Recommendation

### **Whereas:**

*The participation of mobile learners on community engagement activities contributes to the acquisition of civic and democratic competences, and spreads the benefits of learning mobility to the host communities.*

*Mobile learners still face considerable barriers to fully access their rights while abroad, including voting in national and European elections, and full integration in host communities remains a challenge that should be addressed.*

### **Hereby recommends that Member States and the European Commission:**

- (a) Facilitate the recognition of informal and non-formal learning on mobility, incorporating more informal learning components in formal mobility experience. Adapt tools such as the Youthpass so all young people can enhance their competences regardless of the type of sector, working to create synergies between educational institutions and organisations active in different sectors and seeking to involve all mobile learners in community engagement initiatives while abroad.*
- (b) Put measures in place to ensure a full awareness of their rights among mobile citizens, removing administrative barriers that prevent mobile citizens to fully exercise their rights while abroad.*

## **6. Monitoring and evaluation**

Good monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are at the core of successful public policies, and learning mobility is not an exception. There is tremendous room for improvement in how learning mobility programmes and experiences are monitored and evaluated at all levels, and part of the success of the upcoming Council Recommendation will depend on its ambition in these areas, bringing a rethinking of existing processes in mobility programmes.

Innovation and the implementation of new practices among participating organisations should be rewarded by the European Commission, National Agencies and National Authorities. Funding mechanisms should be revised so incorporating proposals that enhance the quality and impact are easier to incorporate into mobility projects.

A revamped approach to the use of data in mobility should be at the core of the new Council Recommendation. Learning mobility is a key part of the work of the EU in the field of education, but the current way data is being used is not supporting a continuous improvement of the

programme. The European Commission and the National Agencies lack enough human resources to analyse, use and disseminate all the data they collect, and there is a lack of transparency regarding Erasmus+ data from participant institutions and final beneficiaries.

## Recommendations

- 1. Including a new set of indicators and targets in the Council Recommendation for all educational sectors:** The renewed ambitions of the Council Recommendation should be backed by a set of indicators and targets that will allow to measure progress, improve the use of data and analyse the effectiveness of public policy. In 2011, the Council Recommendation on benchmarking of learning mobility created a set of targets that were unfortunately not achieved but paved the way for clear improvements that would have been even higher had not the COVID pandemic arrived. These targets should be adapted to the reality of each sector. The Erasmus Student Network recommends the creation of a target of 40% of Higher Education graduates in the European Union by the end of 2030 with a learning mobility experience of at least 2 months abroad, and the creation of a new youth mobility indicator that measures participation in any kind of mobility opportunity, including non-formal and informal learning. Progress on the targets should be published annually in a revamped edition of the Mobility Scoreboard.
- 2. Stronger monitoring of mobility projects incorporating a capacity-building approach<sup>14</sup>** : The monitoring of mobility projects by National Agencies and the European Commission should be reinforced, with a major focus on those aspects that are linked to existing barriers to mobility such as the lack of recognition of periods of study abroad. Performing below quality standards should have implications for institutions, and improvement should be supported and rewarded. More data from monitoring should be made public by institutions and National Agencies, allowing for better comparison between institutions. National Authorities and National Agencies should create capacity building initiatives linked to the areas where institutions are lagging behind. Organisations representing learners should be included in monitoring processes, building on the success of quality assurance mechanisms.
- 3. A new Mobility Scoreboard to understand the situation of learning mobility across the European Union:** The revamp of the Mobility Scoreboard is listed as one of the objectives of the new Council Recommendation. The new document should build on the different sources related to learning mobility, combining information on national policies and the quantitative progress achieved in participation in learning mobility and other aspects, such as recognition of periods of study abroad and funding, including

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<sup>14</sup> ESN's position on the monitoring of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education can be found on the following link: <https://www.esn.org/news/new-monitoring-framework-erasmus-charter-higher-education>

co-financing schemes, grant levels in each country and timing of grant payments. The progress towards inclusion objectives, both outgoing and incoming, should also be reported there. There should also be an analysis of how organisations of learners are involved in decision making processes related to learning mobility.

- 4. Better in-house research capacity through a stronger collaboration with the Joint Research Centre:** The Joint Research Centre has produced some of the most relevant publications in the field of learning mobility in recent times, but there does not seem to be a structured collaboration with DG EAC and other relevant parts of the Commission working on learning mobility. The vast amount of data collected through Erasmus+ could be used to improve mobility policies and programmes across Europe. In a context where the Commission is proposing a number of policy innovations and the interest in learning mobility has been confirmed by the recent European Citizen Panels in learning mobility, this stronger collaboration in mobility research Boosting the research work in the field done by JRC could reduce the dependency on external consultancies and improve evidence based policy making in mobility.

## Wording proposals for the Council Recommendation

### **Whereas:**

*The monitoring of mobility projects, during and after its implementation, is fundamental to ensure the enhancement of their quality and identify potential areas for improvement.*

*The systems of Charters and accreditations have proved effective at reducing administration, but should be accompanied by strong monitoring systems where all the actors, including learners, are involved, ensuring that areas for improvement are identified and the necessary measures are put in place.*

*Quantitative and qualitative data on the experience of mobile learners and the performance of organisations involved in learning mobility are key to properly evaluate the progress made regarding the access, quality and impact of these experiences.*

*The work done by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in the fields of education, youth and fairness can contribute to better evidence-based policy making in the field of learning mobility, helping the European Commission, National Authorities and educational institutions to define their strategies.*

### **New mobility targets**

1. *The Council has agreed to set up a new set of mobility targets, building on the ones created in the benchmarking Council Recommendation and adjusting the level of ambition to the increased funding in the Erasmus+ programme.*
2. *The Council agrees that by 2030, an average of 40% of Higher Education graduates in the European Union should have a physical learning mobility experience, be it of studies, traineeship or a combination of both, of at least 2 months. The European Commission will report to the Council on the progress towards this target through the Mobility Scoreboard and the Education Training Monitor.*
3. *The Council agrees on the creation of a “Youth Mobility Indicator”, which will set the foundation to collect aggregated data on the participation of young people in all types of learning mobility.*

### **Hereby recommends that Member States and the European Commission:**

- (a) *Reinforce monitoring mechanisms of mobility projects, making sure that commitments acquired in mobility projects in aspects such as funding, recognition or implementation of programme priorities are duly implemented, and offering support to participant institutions and organisations.*
- (b) *Develop a new structure for the Mobility Scoreboard that combines the analysis of national policies with available quantitative data from individual participants and educational institutions, and that incorporates more information on the co-financing and programmes put in place by Member States.*



## Erasmus Student Network (2023).

More mobility, better mobility, more accessible mobility: The Contribution of the Erasmus Student Network to the Council Recommendation on a new Learning Mobility Framework.