

BOOSTING INDIVIDUAL PUPIL MOBILITY IN THE SUCCESSOR OF ERASMUS+

With the previous “Comenius Programme” being integrated in the broader Erasmus+ framework, **individual pupil mobility is now a less visible and certainly not prominent possibility** offered as part of Key Action 2, Strategic Partnerships. This new framework for pupils’ mobility within Erasmus+ has resulted in an increased burden for schools willing to submit project applications, which lack the resources, support, and enabling measures necessary to provide quality, accessible, and inclusive pupil exchanges. Moreover, since much less funding has been dedicated to pupil mobility compared to the previous programme, schools feel not encouraged to apply or tend not to re-apply after they have been rejected once. The European Commission’s mid-term evaluation indicates that there has been a **significant decrease in mobility for pupils**, due to the fact that individual mobility of pupils was not embedded in the programme as such any more.

As part of the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme, some national authorities’ reports (Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, and UK) suggested that individual pupil mobility should be moved under Key Action 1. We support the idea that **improvements should be made to make the application process more accessible and easier to navigate**, while cooperation between schools for internationalisation should remain a strong feature also in future pupil mobility schemes.

In the context of the revision of the Erasmus+ programme, and in view of creating a “**European Educational Areas**” where **500,000 school pupils are expected to be mobile by 2025**, we call on the EU to expand this opportunity to a wider range of young people and schools: to reach this objective we need more funding and the possibility for schools and expert mobility providers to work in partnerships, to ensure outreach and quality.

Invest more on pupil learning mobility for a stronger Europe

The number of mobile pupils decreased by 54%, in comparison with the Individual Pupil Mobility strand of the Comenius Program. While 1739 pupil mobility were realised in the school-years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 (under Comenius)¹, only 797 were realised in the school years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.²

The success rate of KA2 Strategic Partnerships for School Education in 2016 was 23% (excluding the category “Schools only”) and 31% (under the category “Schools only”) ³. These **low success rates** do not encourage applicants to invest time (often volunteer time of committed teachers) in drafting project applications.

It is proven that **learning mobility at school age helps young people acquire basic life skills and transversal competences**, contributing to their personal development, employability and active European citizenship. The revision of the Key Competences Framework clearly shows the need and willingness to put further emphasis on skills such as critical thinking, intercultural skills and problem solving, which are notably developed via learning mobility experiences.

Learning mobility has a transformative impact on pupils when it provides immersion in the local community: this is particularly possible when students attend a local school and are placed in a host family for a period ranging from 3 to 10 months. Mobility of groups of pupils can trigger motivation for mobility and curiosity about other cultures.

¹ Comenius in figures: EU support to schools, 2012 Edition.

² Data provided by DG EAC.

³ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2016, Statistical Annex.

Schools are the most inclusive environment since studying is compulsory until 18 years old in most EU countries. Therefore when mobility opportunities are offered at a young age there are higher chances that all people, despite any potential exclusion factor, have the opportunity to benefit from them. Moreover, promoting school students' mobility would enhance the exchange between school systems in Europe, contributing to the development of competence-based curricula and a stronger European and multiple perspectives in the way subjects are taught.

In the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme, **school education was identified as having the most promising potential** for an expanded participation in Erasmus+ activities in the coming years. This represents a unique opportunity to invert the current trend and foster pupil exchanges and their key role for European integration.

We therefore call for a **significant increase of financial resources for pupil mobility**: investing in the development of the young individual and in the acquisition of key competences that are vital in our interdependent and interconnected world is crucial for a united Europe.

Encourage partnerships between schools and exchange organisations

Non-profit exchange organisations can support schools in increasing pupils' mobility through Erasmus+, by applying for the EU funding on behalf of a consortium of schools, or by providing support as partners.

Nevertheless, this opportunity has been used so far to a very limited extent. The current and previous Erasmus+ Programme Guides have not explicitly indicated that partnerships between schools and exchange organisations (or other non-formal education providers) are a viable option. As a result, these **partnerships have not been adequately promoted and encouraged**. In addition to this, since Strategic Partnerships are a decentralised action, National Agencies have formulated their strategies within their national context and have advised applicants in different ways.

Within the Erasmus+ programme, partnerships between non-profit organisations expert in mobility and schools are promoted and implemented successfully within KA1 VET mobility of learners.

We believe that **partnerships between non-formal education and formal education sector should be encouraged and supported**, as stressed also in the European Parliament *Report on the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme (2017)*, which calls on the Commission to foster cross-sectoral cooperation.

These partnerships would allow formal and non-formal education providers to work in synergy and benefit from each other's competences. Thanks to their expertise and outreach, **non-profit organisations can be crucial partners in supporting a variety of schools** in applying for projects and managing administrative, risk management and organisational aspects of exchanges, as well as in providing quality educational support. Cooperation with exchange organisations for submitting and managing Erasmus+ projects on pupil mobility would provide support to schools in their process of internationalisation, thus making **quality mobility programmes⁴ accessible to more school students**, not only to those enrolled in schools which have the capacity to engage in EU-funded projects.

We therefore call on **clearer formulation of partnership opportunities in the next Erasmus+ Programme Guide** and on **harmonisation of understanding and practices across National Agencies**, which are the interface with potential applicants. A common approach that promotes and encourages partnerships between schools and exchange organisations should be adopted and implemented consistently, both at the European and at the national level.

⁴ Our organisations comply with the "European Quality Charter for Mobility", Recommendation (EC) No 2006/961 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006.

How exchange organisations can offer support to schools

- **Reaching out:** offering support to small schools in rural areas, as well as schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods of cities to draft and manage a mobility project. Exchange organisations are structured in local chapters and can look out for schools needing help.
- **Facilitating partnerships:** enabling contacts with schools from different countries, for in-person and virtual exchanges among teachers and pupils. E-twinning is a tool which supports the creation of partnerships. Exchange organisations are part of international networks of trusted partners who have strong relations with schools, therefore can reach out to schools in any other country.
- **Supporting schools in internationalisation:** assisting the school in developing an internationalisation plan and valorising in a systematic way the mobility experiences of the students, both in-person or virtual, individual or group ones.
- **Fostering Intercultural learning and the use of new pedagogical methods:** introducing experiential learning methods typical of non-formal education, which help students and teachers reflect on intercultural encounters, and therefore foster intercultural competence.
- **Ensuring quality:** offering trainings to students before, during and after the exchange, supporting teachers in managing risks, preparing for and supporting cases of cultural shock, emotional counselling and other typical scenarios in long-term international pupil mobility.
- **Making an impact in the local community:** the exchange experience is meaningful when it provides an immersion in the local community, which is beneficial both for the student, and the community itself. This is possible thanks to the placement of students in volunteer host families. Exchange organisations are expert in recruiting and supporting host families, making the exchange a learning experience also for them.
- **Promoting volunteering and active citizenship:** being non-profit and mission-driven, exchange organisations offer the opportunity to engage in volunteering activities, both during and after the exchange. Thousands of volunteers are active in different capacities, united by the common mission of increasing intercultural understanding. Through cooperation between schools and exchange organisations, pupils can be part of this growing community and engage in concrete experiences of lifelong learning and active citizenship.

Quotes from National Reports

- “We see that only larger schools/institutions can invest the time and resources needed.” (Belgium)
- “The implementation of simplified grants has not changed the burden of schools” (Estonia)
- “Project coordinators at schools are not prepared to undertake the task of administrative as well technical management and are, thus, overwhelmed by the requirements of their position” (Greece)
- “There are major difficulties in developing and implementing mobility projects in schools with high staff turnover (such as many of the schools in rural area)” (Romania)
- “There is perceived to be untapped potential in the cooperation between the school education and youth fields, which have the same target group, in order to ensure greater interconnection between formal and non-formal education.” (Czech Republic)
- “Possible area for synergy is using the know-how of the youth field” (Estonia)

Who we are:



EEE-YFU is the umbrella organisation for national YFU organisations in Europe and currently has 29 member organisations. Youth For Understanding is a non-profit youth exchange organisation, providing exchange programmes for 15 to 18 year old students in more than 50 countries worldwide. EEE-YFU works to support its member organisations to grow as quality and sustainable organisations.



EFIL is the umbrella of 30 national organisations running AFS Intercultural programmes in Europe, providing intercultural learning opportunities for school pupils, schools and volunteers. With its experience of over one century in pupil exchanges, reaching 12.000 pupils and 40.000 volunteers worldwide, AFS is a non-profit world-class intercultural education organisation which has given a significant contribution to help the world learn to live together.



The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe.



The European School Heads Association, is a professional organization for European School Heads. Members of ESHA are national organisations for school heads and deputy school heads within (pre-) primary, secondary and vocational education. Nearly all European countries are represented within ESHA by one or more organisations.



The Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) aims at enhancing the quality of Teacher Education in Europe and supporting the professional development of teachers and teacher educators at all levels. Its members are individuals and institutions involved in the research and practice of teacher education, both within and outside higher education.