



Empowering Teachers  
for Automatic Recognition  
**ETAR project**

**Empowering teachers  
to make pupil mobility  
a reality for everyone!**

# **Report on Piloting of the Proposal for a European framework**

on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad  
in general secondary education



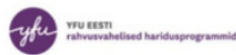
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**Author:** Elisa Briga, Marta Kowalczyk-Waledziak



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# Introduction

The project 'Empowering Teachers for Automatic Recognition' (ETAR) aimed at piloting the implementation at national and European level of the [Proposal for a European Framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in general secondary education](#) (the framework). This framework was developed in 2020-2021 by the first ever EU Expert Network on the topic of Long-Term Individual Pupil Mobility and recognition of its learning outcomes, funded by the European Parliament to support progress towards the objectives of the [Council recommendation on automatic recognition](#) (2018) within the European Education Area initiative.

The framework outlines five principles for automatic mutual recognition of the learning outcomes of study periods abroad for general upper secondary pupils:

- Principle 1. Promote trust and transparency across education systems
- Principle 2. Value diversity of education cultures and contexts
- Principle 3. Ensure that pupils are fully supported in their sending and host schools during mobility and throughout reintegration and recognition processes upon return
- Principle 4. Promote flexibility in summative assessment of learning outcomes of study periods abroad
- Principle 5. Support development of national frameworks, along with guidelines, tools and training to support consistent and fair recognition processes

In addition, the framework underlines that in order to promote automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education, Individual Pupil Mobility needs to be strengthened by communicating the benefits of this specific type of programme, and by improving the evidence base.

For conducting the pilot of the framework, the project partners created in the respective countries (Belgium Flanders, Estonia, Poland) and at the European level, so-called 'Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs' (K&S Hubs) on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes. These K&S Hubs consist in the structured cooperation among organisations that have a role in promoting and/or managing Long-Term Individual Pupil Mobility Programmes. Notably these stakeholders range from Erasmus+ National agencies in the field of Education, pupil exchange organisations, school networks, school students representatives, parents representatives, teachers and school heads, regional school authorities, governmental representatives.

More information on the Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs can be found here: <https://pupilmobility.eu/knowledge-and-stakeholder-hubs/>

In the period 2022-2024 this cooperation consisted in:

- Regular stakeholder meetings
- Drafting of the actions to be carried out within the framework at the respective national and European levels, based on a set template, in the second half of 2023
- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the end of 2023, for the implementation of the actions set in the framework for 2024.

- Support for the organisation of the ETAR conferences held in 2024 in Belgium (14-15 March), Poland and Estonia (27 September).
- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the continuation of the cooperation within the K&S Hub after the project ends.

In January 2023 the University of Bialystok and the European Federation for Intercultural Learning defined research design for the assessment of the Pilot of the national and European frameworks. The research design is based on two tools:

- The analysis of the actions and tasks set in the National and European Framework templates, and the progress recorded throughout 2024.
- The regular reporting of ETAR project partners on the actions implemented and the input received during the stakeholder groups meetings throughout 2024.

The collection of data on the baseline and the progress related to the actions set in the frameworks took place at the following stakeholder meetings:

- K&S hub meeting 3, November/December 2023. In this occasion, the stakeholders agreed on the actions to take in 2024, and set the baseline for each action by assessing the current situation at the time of the meeting.
- ETAR Conference, Mechelen, Belgium, 14-15 March 2024. In this occasion the participants are divided into country groups and into the European level group to discuss progress on Long Term IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes in their specific context. This is an opportunity to assess the implementation of the actions set in the Draft National framework in the three project countries and at European level, as well as to define new actions.
- K&S hub meeting 4 and 5, in Estonia in the first half of 2024. On this occasion the stakeholders assessed the implementation of the actions and prepared for further cooperation after the end of the project.
- ETAR Conferences in Poland and Estonia, 27 September 2024. During the national conferences in the two respective countries, the stakeholders met to assess the implementation of the actions and agreed on the way forward through a new Memorandum of Understanding.
- K&S hub meeting meeting 4 in Belgium Flanders and at European level in autumn 2024. The stakeholder group met to assess the implementation of the actions and agreed on the way forward through a new Memorandum of Understanding.

The frameworks developed at national level in Belgium Flanders, Estonia and Poland, and at European level can be accessed on [pupilmobility.eu](http://pupilmobility.eu) under Knowledge and Stakeholders Hubs. They include the actions and tasks set, as well as the baseline identified in November 2023, the objectives set for 2024 and the progress made by October 2024.

The Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs have taken into account the analysis of implementation of their joint actions to then define the scope of their cooperation after the project, defined in the Memoranda of Understanding signed in the second half of 2024.

This report provides an analysis of the implementation of each of the six principles of the European framework, across the three countries and at European level. Finally, it concludes with an overall assessment of the implementation of the framework.

From a methodological point of view, while drafting the report it became evident that some actions and their implementation contribute to multiple principles of the framework and there are overlaps. Therefore, in this report the progress made within the different principles is described by outlining the actions and their impact that best fit under a given principle. This might result in the fact that some actions are described under a different principle compared to the one identified originally in the framework template.

# Analysis of implementation of national and European frameworks

## Principle 1. Promote trust and transparency across education systems

Within this principle, the Proposal for a European framework indicated two main actions, namely to study the feasibility of a European framework for school system quality assurance, and identify national and European-level organisations which may host observatories on pupil mobility. As the first action requires an initiative from the European Commission on the topic of Quality assurance in schools within the European Education Area, the project partners have focused on grassroot-level actions that could lead to visible progress in a short time. Therefore, their efforts were focused on the creation of the Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs with the purpose of “networking among national organisations involved in pupil mobility (including Ministries of Education, universities, mobility providers, and associations for school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents) as a way to support knowledge sharing and cooperation, and build greater trust and transparency”<sup>1</sup>.

While at the level of the three countries, the main role of the newly established **K&S Hubs** has been the one of building trust among stakeholders and exchanging information and good practices, both at European level and in Estonia a focus has been put also on monitoring Long-Term IPM and providing systematic information on this topic. The K&S Hubs, which can be identified as the national stakeholder groups mentioned under Principle 1, can be the first step towards “designing observatories with the remit to gather data, exchange information and good practices, promote analysis and research, and support peer learning among countries”<sup>2</sup>.

In all three countries a lot of progress has been made as, by the end of the project, **there is structural cooperation between stakeholders in the area of Long-Term IPM through the Knowledge and Stakeholder hubs, which will continue meeting and advancing policy in this area in 2025 and beyond**, as stated in the Memoranda of Understanding signed in the period September/November 2024. In particular:

- In Poland, they launched a Call for action and gathered 180 signatures, and in the last nine months of the project, they were invited by the Ministry of Education, the Erasmus+ NA and several regional school authorities to give presentations on Long Term IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes.
  - Collaboration with Kuratoria oświaty (regional education boards) in:
    - Wielkopolskie (Gorzow and Poznan):
      - Conferences on internationalisation of Polish schools targeting teachers and school heads, and involving also participants of Long-Term IPM (19 June and 27 November 2024)
    - Podlaskie (Bialystok),
    - Małopolska (Krakow)

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<sup>1</sup> Proposal for a European Framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in general secondary education, Looney, Briga, European Commission, 2024. Page 9

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

- Meetings at the Ministry of National Education on 1st February 2024 and 13 August 2024 to discuss the need and possibilities for implementing the EU recommendations on the mobility of secondary school students, including the recognition of learning outcomes obtained abroad.
  - Participation as speakers and experts in long-term individual pupil mobility to the conference “Erasmus Quality Standards in School Practice,” organised by the Erasmus+ National Agency on 15-17 October 2024.
- In Estonia, the involvement of governmental representatives (Ministry of Education, Erasmus+ National agency, Estonian Union of Cities and Local Governments) and all relevant civil society organisations (teachers, school heads and parents association, school student unions) has been there from the start of the K&S Hub. Thanks to the three year long cooperation stakeholders have more and more awareness of the Long-Term IPM sector in Estonia thanks to the data collected, and the difficulties faced to get schools involved with Long-Term IPM and training on recognition of its learning outcomes. They are very motivated to move forward together and find ways to offer the Training Model to teachers, and school heads, also considering that the free movement in Europe for learning is set as a priority in the National Education Strategy 2035. The Estonian Teacher Association participating in the Erasmus+ Advisory Body reports that several of its members flagged that the complexity of Long-Term IPM and the many commitments of teachers prevent schools from joining this action of Erasmus+, and that non-profit organisations experts in IPM could support schools.
  - In Belgium Flanders the K&S Hub gathered mainly pupil exchange organisations and all four main school networks, hence having the potential for a system impact in schools. The already existing cooperation among some of the stakeholders and the fact that Long-Term IPM is well established as a gap year programme, led to the definition and implementation of more concrete actions within the framework.

In Belgium (Flanders) and in Estonia - thanks to the growing cooperation with the Erasmus+ National agency - the project partners were able to address the Erasmus+ accredited schools during the dedicated information sessions, and inform them about the Training Model and the other tools provided for automatic recognition. Moving forward, both in Poland and Belgium (Flanders) the Erasmus+ National Agencies wish to work more closely with non-profit pupil exchange organisations to promote Long Term IPM within the Erasmus+ programme, as the take up of this mobility by Erasmus+ accredited schools is very low.

Next to the work at country level, the three K&S Hubs contributed to the public consultation on the Council recommendation for a learning mobility framework (named afterwards Europe on the Move), which was held in the first half of 2023. These contributions were all collected in the [joint position paper published by EFIL in April 2023](#).

At the European level, the K&S Hub has focused on contributing to the policy process which led to the adoption of the Council recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’ in May 2024, supporting the joint position paper of April 2024, as well as the [reaction to the Commission’s proposal in March 2024](#).



In terms of advancing research and monitoring on Long-term IPM, the main progress has been the publishing by EFIL of the annual European report on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes, and the inclusion in the Council recommendation 'Europe on the Move' of the following provisions to 'work with the Member States, including through the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, and relevant stakeholders on improving data quality and availability and developing EU-level methodologies for data collection and analysis on learning mobility in all education and training sectors and in the youth and sport sectors' (point 22); and revamping the Mobility scoreboard and expanding it to cover all the education and training sectors (point 23). Unfortunately at national level there has not been progress on estimating the number of pupils enrolled annually in Long-Term IPM, due to the multitude of private for-profit organisations offering this type of programme. This difficulty in gathering data from different providers confirms the need for a different monitoring system, based on the registration code of exchange pupils (see principle 3).

Moving forward, EFIL will continue disseminating the EU Expert Network and ETAR outcomes, and publishing the annual report which includes data on Long-Term IPM from the AFS and YFU Networks, and Erasmus+, as well as an overview of the Erasmus+ accredited schools implementing Long Term IPM. In addition, EFIL will map the results of KA2 and KA3 projects on Long-Term IPM and recognition, and contact Eurydice to work together for showcasing more accurate information in the [section of internationalisation in schools](#), at least referencing to the outcomes of the EU Expert Network. What is more, the objective of monitoring learning mobility as enshrined in Europe on the Move should be supported by specific projects involving national IPM stakeholder groups and European level civil society organisations.

Finally, the ETAR Conference in Mechelen in March 2024 has resulted in first steps of cooperation among Long-Term IPM stakeholders in countries beyond the project partnership, namely in Italy, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, and EFIL is following up regularly with Permanent Representations of Member states to the EU to advocate for a take up of the Expert Network and ETAR outcomes. In addition, further progress was made in three of these countries, namely Spain, Portugal and Cyprus as teachers trainers involved in the ETAR Training courses have embedded the Training Model in their training practice.

## **Principle 2. Value diversity of education cultures and contexts**

This principle informs how learning agreements for Long-Term IPM should be drafted, namely based on learning outcomes broadly in line with national curricula and with a focus on valuing the specific learning outcomes of this immersive experience, which consist in intercultural competence, and the exposure to a different school system and culture.

In Belgium (Flanders) and Poland, pupil exchange organisations - part of the project partnership- focused on promoting Long-Term IPM and making information about educational systems and educational realities in possible hosting countries, available to sending schools. In addition, in Belgium (Flanders) they are directly supporting schools in implementing Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+, and therefore offering their expertise on how to draft learning agreements. In Estonia, project partners have worked towards the development of learning agreements in line with the national curriculum. However this task has proved difficult as there

are very few Long-Term IPM programmes taking place within a school-to-school partnership, thus there are very few existing practices.

At European level, EFIL has influenced the revision of the Europass Mobility, which now does not only serve as certificate but also as Learning Agreement, and has a flexible format which allows to integrate the intended learning outcomes of IPM, including the ones set in the Intercultura Assessment Protocol. In addition, there is space for setting a reintegration plan as needed upon return from Long-Term IPM.

The results of the actions undertaken by stakeholders under this principle show that it is still difficult to draft Learning Agreements that are based on valuing diversity, as school systems are very much based on the attainment of results, as set in the national curriculum. Next to the promotion of Long-Term IPM and its specific learning outcomes, it is essential to provide to teachers and school heads practical solutions and training courses on how to build Learning Agreements which are in line with the definition of automatic recognition and take into account the added value of Long-Term IPM.

### **Principle 3. Ensure that pupils are fully supported in their sending and host schools during mobility and throughout reintegration and recognition processes upon return**

In the Proposal for a European Framework, this principle sets out a series of measures that the sending and host schools should undertake to ensure the quality of the Long-Term IPM and the full support to the student. At European level, stakeholders advocate for the rights of the students within this specific learning mobility programme, and EFIL includes information on such measures in the training courses to teachers. Most of the actions to fulfill this principle need to be taken at national level, hence the work of the three K&S Hubs in Belgium (Flanders), Estonia and Poland has been key to try and make progress. In all three countries there is not a clear legislation regulating Long-term IPM. In Estonia and Belgium Flanders the focus was put on requesting the Ministry of Education to set a specific registration code for pupils in long-term IPM, both outbound and inbound, within the national education information system. The registration code would have multiple functions, it would be a way to easily monitor learning mobility (Principle 1) and it would provide a powerful message to schools, namely that long-term IPM is legal and regulated, and therefore can be safely included in internationalisation strategies without incurring administrative issues. In addition, schools receive funding based on the number of registered students. Thus, registering pupils on long-term IPM would allow the school to receive the adequate funding for supporting the inbound and outbound students. Unfortunately in both countries the advocacy on this matter has not been successful and the authorities and administration involved have rejected this request in the past.

However, this action receives wide support in the stakeholder hubs and is included in the MoU for cooperation after 2024, especially in Belgium Flanders where they committed to reach out to all the agencies having a role in registering attendance and absence at the secondary school. In Poland, the stakeholders have asked the Ministry of Education for a comprehensive legislation on long-term IPM. At European level this aspect has been addressed by the K&S Hub in their advocacy process towards the Council recommendation Europe on the Move, where at point 6 we read 'Providing systemic learning mobility opportunities as an integral part of school

education embedding incoming and outgoing mobility.’ However, considering the resistances at national level in relation to a registration code for students on a long-term IPM, more advocacy is needed at European level to establish a taskforce to define the ‘Long-Term IPM’ status, which would then contribute to monitoring long-Term IPM, as called for in Principle 1 and in the Council recommendation Europe on the Move.

In all three countries the pupil exchange organisations focused on maintaining the contact with the pupils on a long-Term IPM and supporting their re-integration in the sending school. EFIL and EEE-YFU at European level encourage their Members to facilitate school-to-school contacts to better support the student in mobility and the learning agreement process.

In addition, in all three countries and at European level the training of teachers was seen as essential for guaranteeing adequate support to the mobile students, with a special focus on the learning agreement as a tool where to define all the measures put in place to accompany the students in their mobility experience. More specifically, in Belgium Flanders, AFS works with the Erasmus+ National Agency EPOS to prevent different authorities from proposing different ways of working when it comes to recognition of study periods abroad. They try to work with one template throughout the Dutch-speaking Belgian education system to represent competencies achieved abroad. This to make sure that schools do not have to work with different learning agreements depending on whether or not the student concerned goes on exchange within an Erasmus+ programme, with or without an exchange organisation or enrolls in a mobility programme within or outside Europe.

#### **Principle 4. Promote flexibility in summative assessment of learning outcomes of study periods abroad**

This principle goes hand in hand with principle 2, where schools are invited to value the diversity of the school system of the country where the exchange pupil is hosted, and reflect this attitude in their approach to the learning agreement which supports automatic recognition of the learning outcomes, provided they are broadly in line with the curriculum of the sending school. As in principle 2, the main actions of stakeholders across the three countries and at European level, has been training teachers on identifying the specific learning outcomes of long-term IPM and on the use of the learning agreement. In fact, the Learning agreement is the tool used to adapt the assessment of learning outcomes to the specific context of long-term IPM and to give students the time and space to focus mainly on the mobility experience , therefore developing a set of unique transversal competences such as learning to learn and tolerance of ambiguity. The adaptation of assessment can also be seen as an instrument of support to students, as fostered within principle 3. In fact, the assessment of learning outcomes by the sending school upon return is part of the reintegration plan, as well as the plan for catching up on the few contents defined as essential. As for principle 2, more practical examples of learning agreements including flexible summative assessment are needed to promote this approach further, although some collection of good practices has started.

## **Principle 5. Support development of national frameworks, along with guidelines, tools and training to support consistent and fair recognition processes**

This principle encompasses many of the actions undertaken within principles 2, 3 and 4, and calls for including measures for the implementation of these principles under the same umbrella of a clear legislative framework.

In all countries involved and at European level, the fact of having a structured cooperation among stakeholders and defined actions to support IPM and its recognition, has been a first step towards a comprehensive approach to support consistent and fair recognition processes. In Poland specifically, the Call for Action addressed to the Ministry of Education is aimed at designing organisational and legal solutions for the recognition of learning outcomes. With a proactive attitude, the Polish K&S Hub has worked on the drafting of a Manual on Long-Term IPM for teachers and school principals to navigate the current Polish legislation, although there are no specific official guidelines. The involvement of an experienced school principal in this process has been very beneficial.

The main achievement within this principle is therefore the fact that the K&S Hubs which support a national framework for long-term IPM, will continue their work after the project ETAR comes to an end.

In addition, the K&S Hubs have supported the ETAR project efforts related to training teachers to a great extent, and are now ready to continue implementing teacher training courses at national and European level based on the Training Model, which has proved successful through its piloting ([see report](#)).

### **Strengthening Individual Pupil Mobility**

Next to the five principles, **the Framework puts forward the need to strengthen long-term IPM** in order for policy makers, teachers and school heads to be willing to recognise the learning outcomes. This principle includes the communication of the benefits of long-term IPM and the gathering of data on IPM towards a more solid evidence base - linked to principle 1 and the creation of observatories.

In Estonia, stakeholders have faced great difficulty in promoting long-term IPM and therefore training of teachers on its promotion and recognition of learning outcomes, despite learning mobility being a priority in the national education strategy. The K&S Hub therefore focused on developing leaflets to promote long-term IPM and its impact, and - by the end of the project - it raised interest on the topic among teachers, thanks to the many dissemination activities implemented and the final ETAR conference in September.

In Poland, stakeholders have focused their efforts on the visibility of long-term IPM run by non-profit pupil exchange organisations and thanks to the cooperation initiated with the regional school authorities, the Erasmus+ National Agencies and the Ministry of Education, there is the chance for a systemic promotion of IPM in schools. In particular, showcasing the testimonials of

exchange students has proved to be a powerful tool as part of this awareness raising initiatives during 2024.

In the case of Belgium Flanders, this principle was implemented by advocating for the eligibility of non-profit pupil exchange organisations for the Erasmus+ KA1 accreditation in the school sector. Allowing expert non-profit organisations to work with schools for widening access to long-term IPM does strengthen it, as this type of mobility becomes more known and supported by schools.

Finally, the cooperation among stakeholders at national level created the platform to identify country-specific issues related to long-term IPM, which require an intervention from the authorities. In Belgium Flanders, stakeholders identified several issues regarding the retention of the so-called 'growth package' ('Groeipakket' = child allowance) for pupils who attend IPM. The regulations are not clear and are not applied consistently, which means that young people who enrol on a long-term IPM are at risk of losing their child support.

## Conclusions

The two main key achievements at national and European level resulting from the pilot of the [\*Proposal for a European Framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in general secondary education\*](#) are:

- The creation of Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs and their continuation after the end of the pilot. In all three countries the hubs received the attention of Erasmus+ NAs and other key governmental authorities. The commitment of the stakeholder groups and the actions undertaken towards the authorities testify the key role of civil society grassroots organisations in raising awareness about EU policies in the field of education. In addition, the coordination of the ETAR project by EFIL - a European umbrella organisation - points to the power of European level initiatives, which support national level implementation of EU recommendations.
- The delivery of training to teachers to raise awareness on IPM and its recognition, and the commitment to continue its implementation by adding more and more practical examples of learning agreements based on the principles 2,3,4.

In addition, at European level the main progress was contributing to the shaping of the Council recommendation Europe on the Move. Stakeholders have committed to continue working together on advocacy and applying for joint projects if needed, to ensure the outputs of the Expert Network and the ETAR project are taken into account when creating the new Erasmus+ programme and when implementing Europe on the Move. Pupil exchange organisations and School Students Unions will keep focusing on the promotion of long-term IPM within a wider and holistic internationalisation strategy of secondary schools, and on the cooperation between non-profit IPM experts and schools for widening access to long-term IPM through a increased use of this action within the Erasmus+ KA1 school accreditations. The Association for Teacher Education in Europe will focus on promoting the inclusion of the tested Training Model in Initial

teacher education programmes, and Continuous Professional Development of teachers. In fact it has proved to be a powerful tool to promote the key principles of the Proposal for a European Framework, and to equip teachers with competences for internationalisation of schools in general.

At all levels, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the principles outlined in the Proposal for a European framework are implemented, and comprehensive policies for long-term IPM and its recognition are adopted. The fact that school heads and teachers do not see long-term IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes as a priority within their internationalisation strategy, is hindering both training and policy change in this area, as the urgent need for action is missing. Erasmus+ could be a powerful instrument to promote the uptake of long-term IPM as a school-to-school programme, therefore encouraging the development of recognition tools and strategies. However only 5% of Erasmus+ IPMs are lasting a full school year, and long-term IPM programmes run by private organisations are seen as a personal matter of the pupil, not an opportunity for internationalisation. At the same time, school leadership and parents do not favour long-term IPM until it will be clearly promoted within school policies through clear guidelines both for administrative, curricula and assessment aspects.

As schools are becoming more and more involved with Erasmus+ and implementing short individual mobilities of 1-2 months, there is the hope that this will be a first step contributing to principle 1 and 2, opening up the school curriculum to valuing diversity and trusting the school systems in other countries.

Moving forward, the European Federation for Intercultural Learning will continue maintaining the European Knowledge and Stakeholder Hub and be in regular contact with the national K&S Hubs.



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