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Empowering Teachers  
for Automatic Recognition  
ETAR project



Empowering teachers  
to make pupil mobility  
a reality for everyone!

2nd REPORT ON INDIVIDUAL PUPIL  
MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION OF ITS  
LEARNING OUTCOMES  
2024

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## Introduction

This report is the second European report on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes. It follows up on the [first report published in March 2023](#), and it is an initiative aimed at providing annually an update to the [Member states analysis](#) developed by the '[Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education](#)'.

The report is organised as follows:

**Section 1:** an update on the initiatives of the EU in 2024 to support progress toward an improved access to IPM and recognition within the European Education Area by 2025 (see pp. 24-30 of the Member states analysis, and pp. 6-10 of the 1st report on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes, for information on past initiatives)

**Section 2:** the estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility in the school year 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, as well as the assessment of the impact of the recent policy developments and initiatives (see pp. 37-71 of the Member states analysis) and a the impact of the ETAR project in the promotion of IPM in the countries involved.

**Section 3:** conclusions and next steps

## Initiatives to support progress towards an improved access to IPM and recognition within the European Education Area by 2025

### The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 - midterm evaluation process

In September 2023 the European Commission launched the public consultation opening the process of midterm review of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027, in view of the negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial framework (MFF) 2028-2034, starting in 2025. The report on the midterm review will be published in the first half of 2025. The European Federation for Intercultural Learning has contributed to this process by submitting a [position paper published in December 2023](#), and by taking part in interviews organised by ICF and stakeholder fora led by the European Youth Forum and Lifelong Learning Platform.

### European Education Area (EEA) interim review

In November 2023 the European Commission published the [European Education Area midterm review process report](#), summarising the process of dialogue with stakeholders until then, and announcing the continuation of the evaluation process in 2024. This report puts a strong emphasis on making progress in automatic recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad, calling for *a mentality change and paradigm shift regarding achieving, communicating about automatic recognition. It should be matched with a coherent set of policies and actions which improve transparency but still allow for diversity. Many tools are already in place and can be applied, it is thus a matter of political will, trust and implementation at Member states level.*

In April 2024 they launched the public consultation for the interim review of the EEA. EFIL has contributed to the online survey and also taken part in a focus group interview organised by the consultancy group Verian, tasked by the European Commission to conduct the evaluation. The report will be adopted by the European Commission in the second half of 2025 and will provide evidence base for further action as part of the 2026-2030 cycle of the EEA strategic framework.

### Council recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’

The European Commission’s proposal for a Council recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’ was published in November 2023, and in March 2024 the stakeholders involved in the ETAR project at European and national level endorsed a [common reaction](#), based on the input collected at the ETAR Conference on 14-15 March in Mechelen, Belgium. In the document, organisations were calling for a focus on the following priorities:

- Monitoring learning mobility in the school education sector, notably pupil mobility.
- Fostering Cross-sectorial, Whole school and Whole community approach for implementing school internationalisation strategies which include learning mobility experiences by all providers, notably also Long-term Individual Pupil Mobility.

- Ensuring the 20% inclusion target is monitored and met.
- Making progress towards automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

The [Council recommendation](#) was released on 14 May 2024, and [EFIL published a reaction](#) analysing how the final text was in line with the three priorities mentioned above.

In a nutshell, the Council recommendation addresses all the four points:

- **Monitoring learning mobility in the school education sector:**
  - the European Commission will work with the Member States, including through the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, and relevant stakeholders on further 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);
  - The European Commission will revamp and expand the Mobility scoreboard to cover all education and training sectors (point 23).
- **Fostering Cross-sectorial, Whole school and Whole community approach for implementing school internationalisation strategies:**
  - Cooperation among all learning mobility stakeholders for the implementation of the recommendation is mentioned as an overarching principle (point 5, page 18) and there is a specific mention of fostering cooperation between regional and local authorities, education and training providers, the youth and sports sector, civil society organizations and private bodies to promote and support outgoing learning mobility, and creating a welcoming environment for incoming learning participants from abroad (point 8b).
  - Providing systemic learning mobility opportunities as an integral part of school education (point 6), embedding incoming and outgoing mobility.
- **Fostering automatic recognition:**
  - The European Commission will support progress in this area through Erasmus+ (point 30), and calls Member states to:
    - provide guidance and training for education and training providers to ensure consistency in decision making on recognition,
    - facilitate consistent national approaches,
    - keep a record of decisions taken on recognition
    - support institutions in the use of EU frameworks and instruments such as Europass for this purpose.

Finally, on the inclusion target, the Council took a strong commitment to make learning mobility more inclusive (point 12) through several measures proposed, and set a target for inclusive learning mobility to be reached by 2030.

## Europass mobility revision

The European Commission has released the [new Europass mobility](#) which is “designed for use in any learning mobility context, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well as volunteering or work experiences, in particular abroad. In Erasmus+, Europass Mobility will

become the recommended template for preparing and documenting learning outcomes and has already been included in the 2024 call in the official Erasmus+ reference documentation”. Europass mobility will now serve not only as a certificate, but as a learning agreement. Both sending organisations and participants in learning mobility will be able to choose the set of learning outcomes that best fits the mobility experience. Therefore, the new Europass mobility is a flexible tool which can be used in the context of Long-Term IPM by including its specific learning outcomes, for example the ones outlined in the [Intercultura Assessment Protocol](#), one of the tools suggested within the [Training Model for education professionals](#).

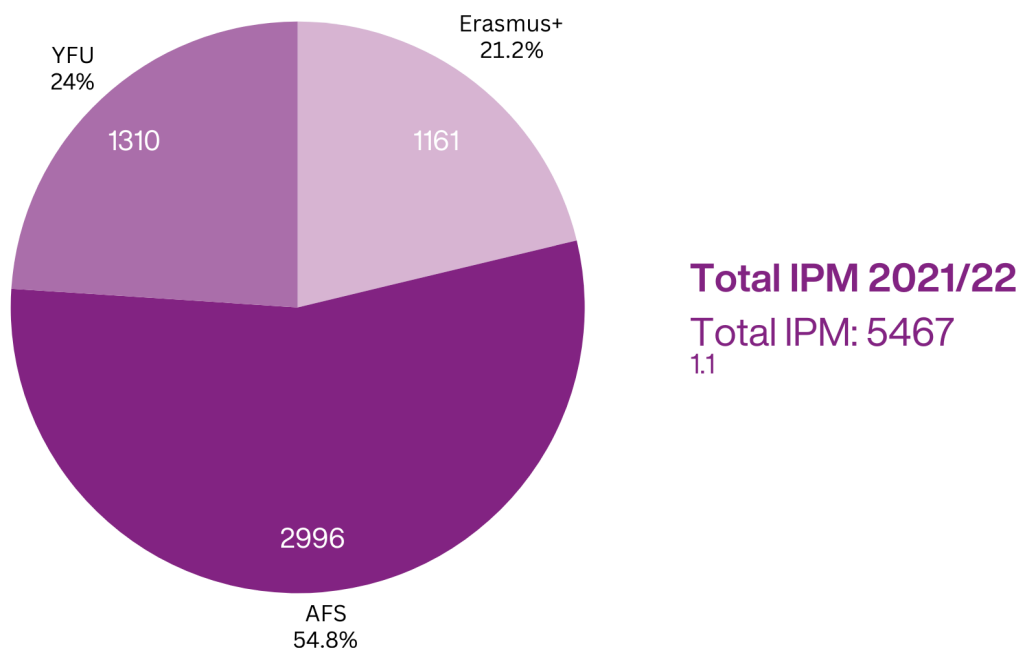
## IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes today

The European Commission publishes datasets on Erasmus+ mobility on the Erasmus+ portal. At the time of publishing this report, datasets on implemented mobilities are available for the calendar years from 2014 to 2022. The Erasmus+ project results platform provides data on Erasmus+ accredited institutions, as well as contracted projects.

AFS Intercultural Programs and Youth for Understanding have provided data on Individual Pupil Mobilities for the school years 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024.

While the open data published at the Erasmus+ portal and the Erasmus+ Annual Reports are based on calendar years, the information available from the Erasmus+ project results platform is based on call years, roughly coinciding with most school years in Europe. To be able to compare the different datasets, we have defined the school year as September-August. The datasets on implemented mobilities are quite detailed and contain data on eg. mobility start month and duration, as well as some personal data such as gender, age and background. The detailed data on participants also allows for adjustments to weed out errors in the datasets.

## Estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility in the school year 2021/2022

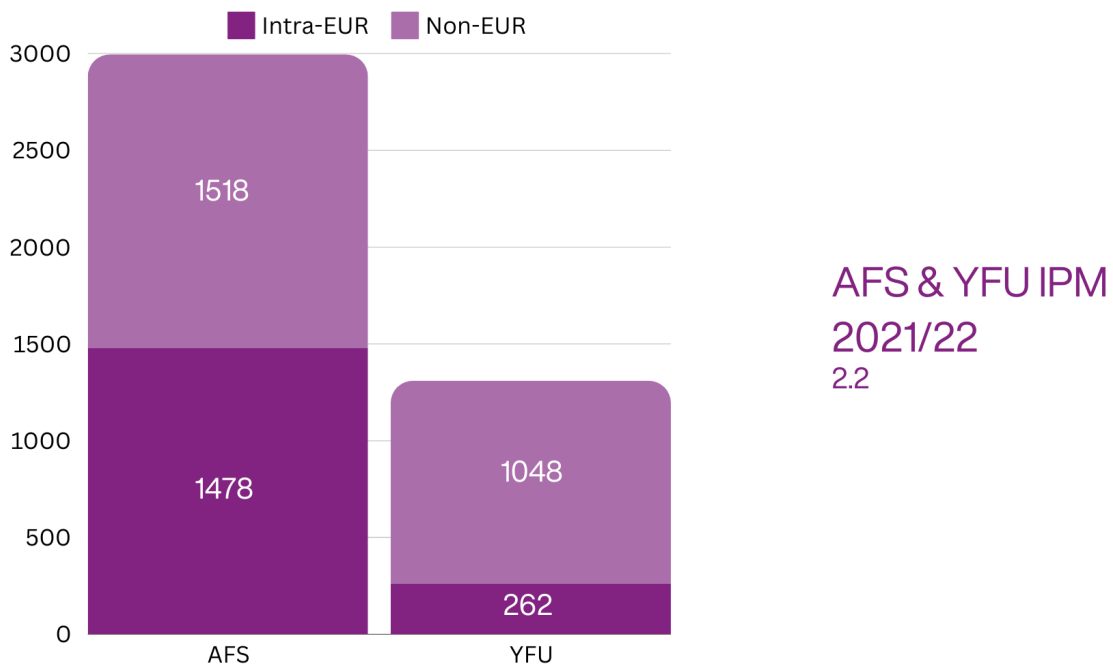
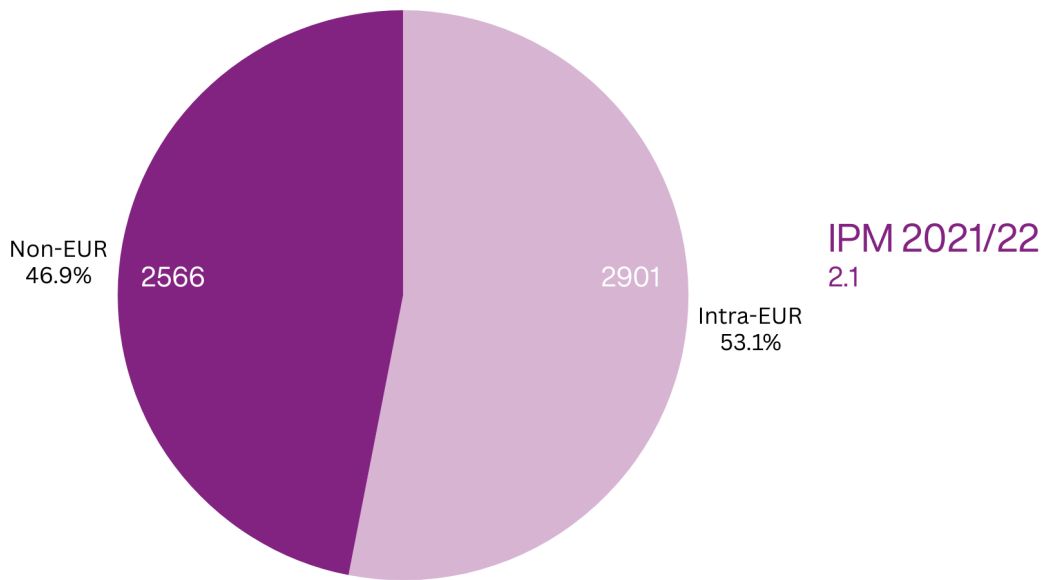


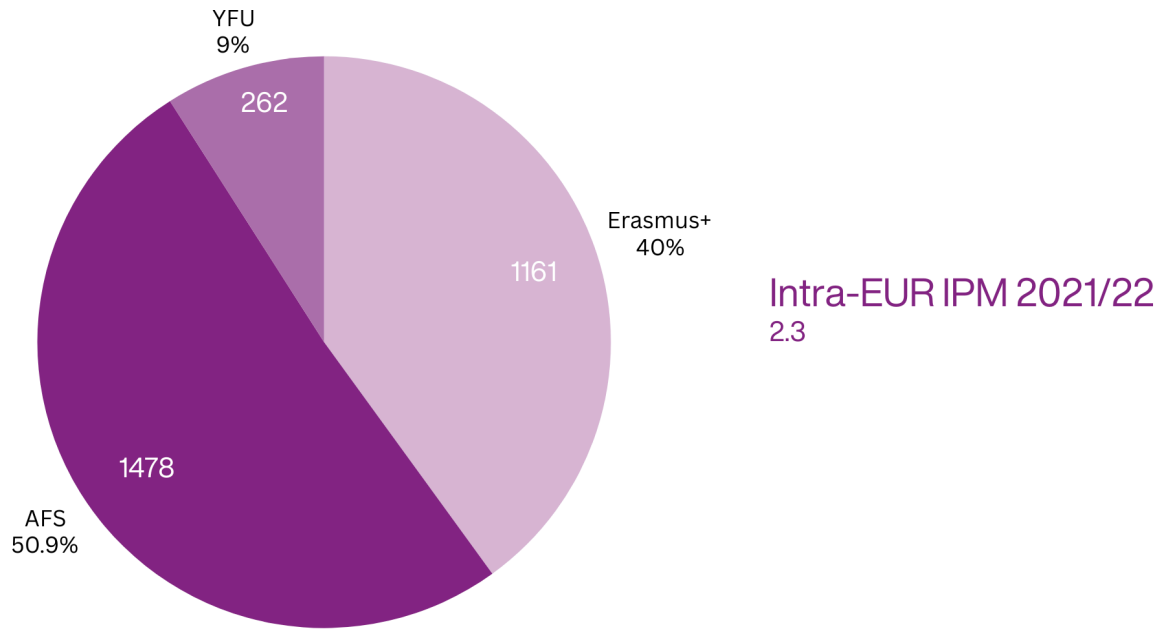
Based on data from non-profit mobility providers AFS Intercultural Programs and Youth for Understanding, and datasets on implemented mobilities in Erasmus+ we estimate the total number of pupils who went abroad on individual pupil mobilities amount to 5467 pupils in the school year 2021/22 (figure 1.1). These are far from the only providers of individual pupil mobility: based on the [Expert Network on Recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education Member States Analysis](#) (p. 39), we can estimate that for-profit providers hold 63% of individual pupil mobility programmes. While AFS, YFU and Erasmus+ are among the main providers of Long-Term IPM when it comes to non-profit organisations and publicly funded programmes, there are many more governmental and non-profit providers of Long-Term IPM whose mobility numbers are not available for this report (see p. 14 of the [1st report](#) for more details on other providers).



### Long-Term IPM worldwide and intra-EU

While AFS Intercultural Programs and Youth for Understanding organise global mobilities, Erasmus+ individual pupil mobilities are by nature intra-European. Intra-European mobilities consist of pupils going on a learning mobility from one European country to another.

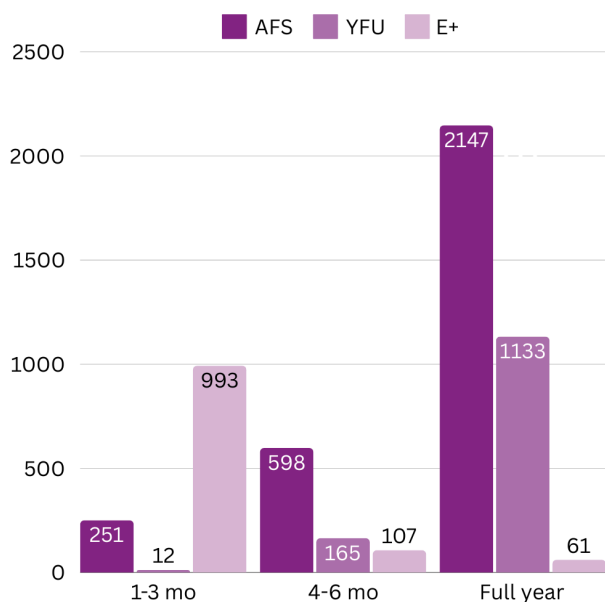




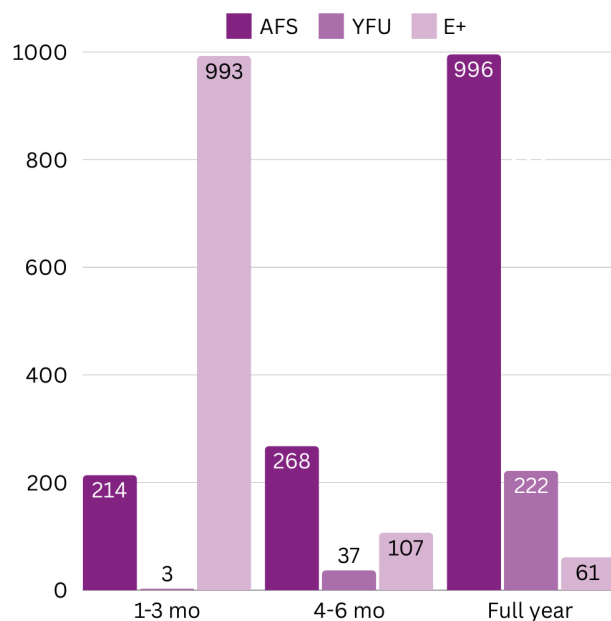
Based on the data collected, it needs to be noted that AFS provides a large number of intra-European mobilities, thanks to the diversity of its network in Europe, and the active promotion of intra-European mobilities through the [PEACE trimester exchange programme](#).

### Long-Term IPM duration

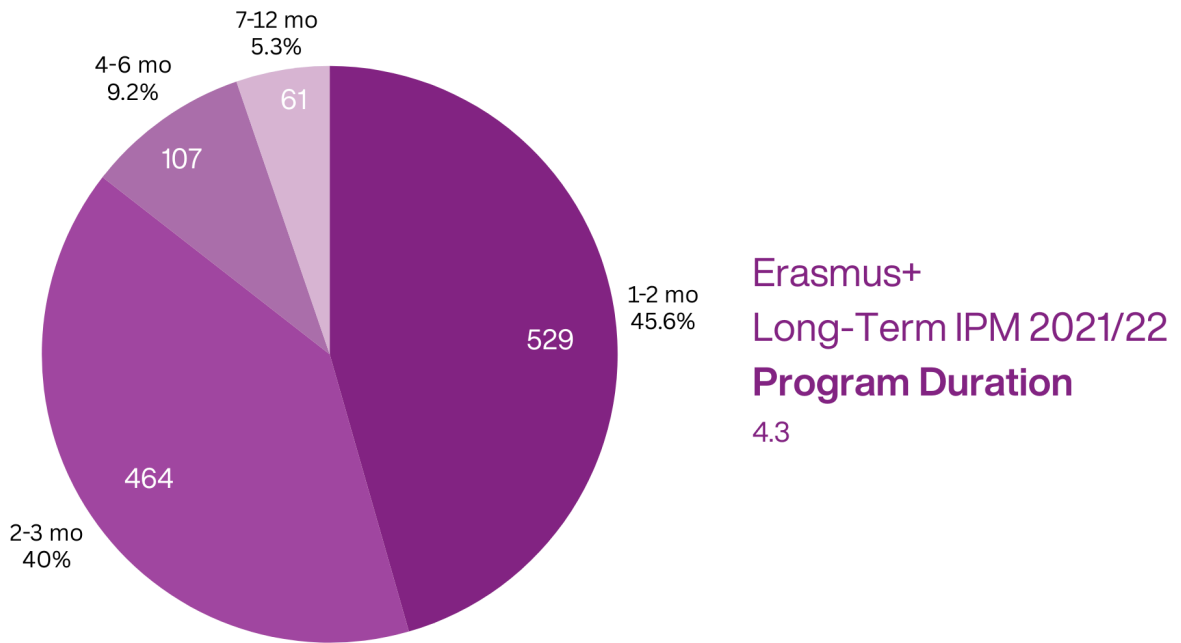
The duration of long-term learning mobility is defined as 30 days or longer in the Erasmus+ programme. While the duration of Erasmus+ learning mobilities depend on the project, AFS and YFU organise programmes with 3 different durations; trimester, semester or full school year abroad.



IPM 2021/22  
Program Duration  
4.1



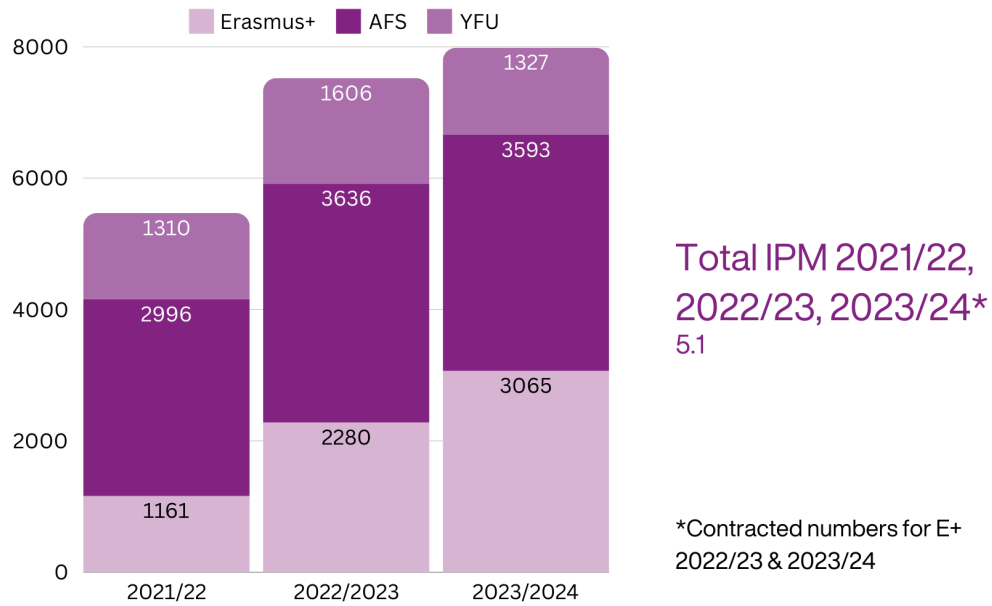
Intra-EUR IPM 2021/22  
Program Duration  
4.2

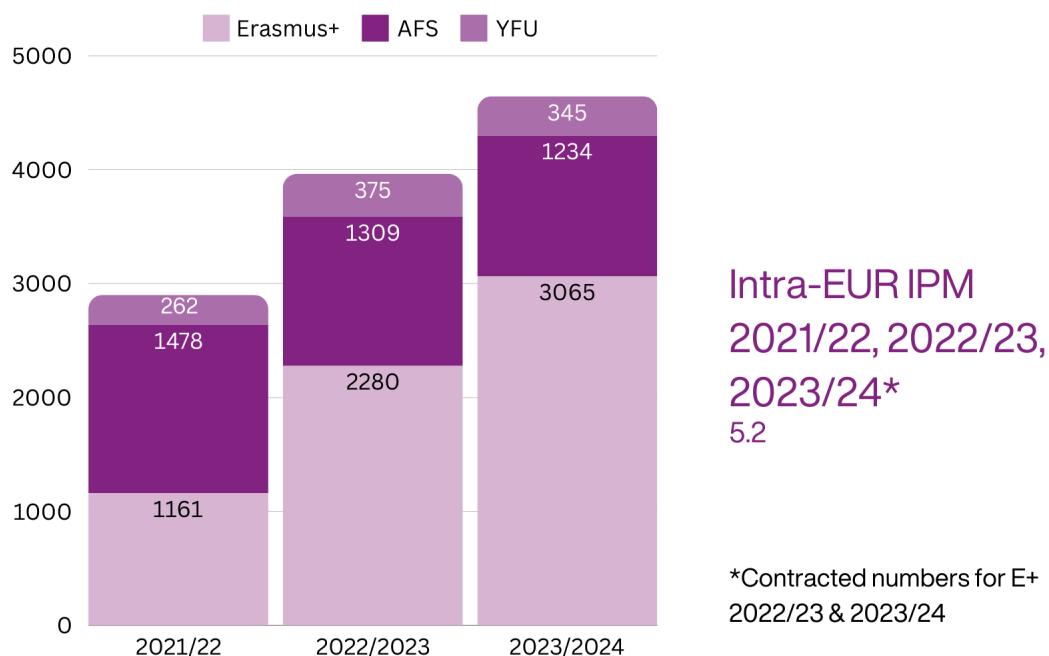


AFS and YFU remain the main providers of Long-Term IPM lasting a full school year. In the Erasmus+ programme most of the Long-Term IPMs last up to 3 months (85.6%), while the full school year is only 5% of the total.

## Estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility in the school year 2022/23 and 2023/24

While there are datasets available describing the implemented mobilities for the calendar years leading up to and including 2022, and consequently the school year of 2021/22, the European Commission has yet to publish data on the implemented mobilities for the school years 2022/23 and 2023/24. By utilising data on the contracted projects planning to implement IPM, we get a rough estimate of the number of Long-Term IPM planned within Erasmus+.

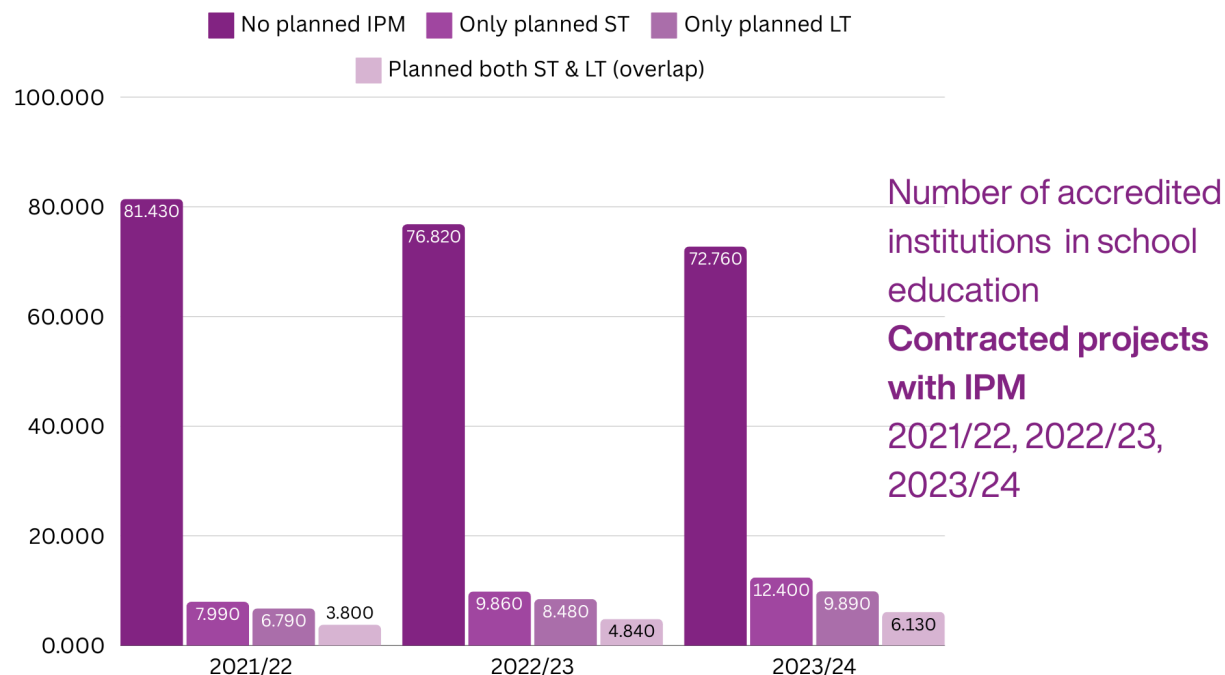




As the estimates provided above shows, the number of pupils enrolling in Long-Term IPM with Erasmus+ is still lower compared to the one of the main non-profit pupil exchange organisations, but is growing exponentially year after year. While this is a positive development, it needs to be noted that there is no information on the length of the Erasmus+ Long Term IPMs planned for the school years 2022/23 and 2023/24. These are likely to be mostly of 1-2 months, as presented in the estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility in the school year 2021/2022.

### The role of Erasmus+ in promoting IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes

The implementation of Long Term IPM by Erasmus+ accredited schools remains low, with only 10% of accredited secondary schools planning to run this specific type of mobility in the call year 2023/2024. At the same time, the number of E+ accredited secondary schools is increasing and thus the number of Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+ is increasing too, as described above.



If we look at Erasmus+ accredited organisations which are planning to implement either Short-Term IPM (less than one month) or Long Term IPM (more than one month), the percentage increases to 28%. It is interesting to note that the accredited institutions which decide to implement Long-Term IPM do not necessarily run Short-Term IPM: among the 565 institutions which plan to run LT IPM, only 349 also included ST IPM in their plans. While Short-Term IPM is seen as a way to start IPM and potentially engage with Long-Term IPM afterwards, it is not yet clear whether this correlation is correct. It would be interesting to explore whether the schools that were running ST IPM in the first call year, have then abandoned this mobility type and embraced Long-Term IPM.

Looking at the [data of Erasmus+ accredited schools involved in IPM country by country](#), we can clearly see that the overall 10% does not reflect the reality of all countries. In fact, **there are still 11 Erasmus+ programme countries where no Erasmus+ accredited school is planning Long-Term IPMs** (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Lichtenstein, Malta, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia) **and other 4 countries where the percentage is less than 5%** (Croatia, Denmark, Netherlands, Poland). The Erasmus+ programme should be the instrument that makes learning mobility more accessible to all young people in Europe, by **promoting specific mobility actions in the countries where these are not popular or even known, like Long-Term IPM within the secondary school cycle.**

In the [Erasmus+ programme guide 2025](#), automatic recognition remains a priority in the school education field in Key Action 1 (p. 73) and in Key Action 2 Cooperation (p. 227).

KA1 mobility on individuals, accreditation in the school sector:

***Contributing to the creation of the European Education Area by:***

- *building capacity of schools to engage in cross-border exchanges and cooperation, and carry out high quality mobility projects;*
- *making learning mobility a realistic possibility for any pupil in school education;*
- *fostering recognition of learning outcomes of pupils and staff in mobility periods abroad.*

KA2 Cooperation among organisations and institutions, school education:

***Recognition of learning outcomes for participants in cross-border learning mobility:*** *This priority aims to help put in practice the Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition. It supports embedding crossborder class exchanges in school programmes, building capacity of schools to organise learning periods abroad for their pupils, and creation of long-term partnerships between schools in different countries. At a strategic level, this priority aims for stronger involvement of school authorities at all levels in efforts to ensure recognition, and it supports development and sharing of tools and practices for preparation, monitoring and recognition of periods abroad.*

As underlined in the 1st Report on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes, the fact that this priority under KA2 Cooperation aimed at supporting automatic recognition actually focuses on fostering class exchanges, is a contradiction. In fact, automatic recognition is applied within Long-Term Individual Pupil Mobility programmes, and not in the context of short group mobility as class exchanges. Through this priority the objective of the European Commission is to foster school-to-school cooperation and trust, which would result in a change of attitude of teachers towards valuing diversity of school systems across Europe, along with the Principle 1 and 2 of the [Proposal for a European framework on recognition](#). Although trust and collaboration between schools is essential for implementing automatic recognition, omitting the focus on Long-Term IPM within this priority is worrying and generates several risks:

- 1) schools run class exchanges and develop mutual trust, but do not translate this mutual trust into a comprehensive automatic recognition policy which embeds Long-Term IPM in the internationalisation of schools. In fact, trust is not the only factor which fosters automatic recognition, but the definition of intended learning outcomes specific to Long-Term IPM, and their assessment.
- 2) schools might develop automatic recognition processes which are not tailored to Long-Term IPM, as they do not implement this specific mobility type and are not familiar with it.

In addition, based on the data shown in Chart 4.3, Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+ is still short, as recognition of learning periods abroad up to 3 months is quite easy as outlined in the [Member states analysis of the EU expert network on recognition](#). To make real progress towards automatic recognition, this needs to be applied to longer periods abroad, especially the semester and full school year ones.

As the Erasmus+ programme KA2 is meant to support cooperation among institutions to foster the EEA priorities, the priority of fostering automatic recognition in the school sector would need to embrace the principles of Europe on the Move and embrace all learning mobilities taking



place in the schools, whether these are run within a school-to-school partnership, or through private organisations: “Providing systemic learning mobility opportunities as an integral part of school education embedding incoming and outgoing mobility (point 6)”, in “cooperation among all learning mobility stakeholders (point 8b)”.

Considering that most of the Long-Term IPM of more than two-three months is taking place outside of the Erasmus+ programme, it would be even more strategic to encourage schools in developing automatic recognition policies comprising all the learning mobilities involving pupils, and therefore, building on the existing Long-Term IPM run by private organisations. In fact, currently school heads are not motivated to develop automatic recognition policies for Long-Term IPM happening outside of school-to-school programmes as the students are enrolling in such mobility programmes anyway, and are ready to repeat the school year.

### **The progress toward the implementation of the Proposal for a European framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education**

The progress made at national and European level on the implementation of the *Proposal for a European framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education* is described in [this report](#).

Compared to the 1st report, the main progress is the increased impact of the work of the Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs created thanks to the ETAR project. They have succeeded in raising awareness among policy makers, and notably the Erasmus+ National agencies in the three project countries, about the need for promoting Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+, given the low participation of Erasmus+ accredited schools in this action.

This has been particularly evident in Poland, where the topic of internationalisation of secondary schools through IPM has gained momentum in the second half of 2024, and regional school authorities and the Erasmus+ national agencies dedicated conferences to this specific topic, involving the ETAR project partners.

The work of the Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs will continue, [based on the recommendations developed as result of the piloting](#).

## Conclusions and Next steps

In 2024, the European Union continued to set automatic recognition of learning periods abroad as a priority, through the adoption of the new Europass mobility and the Council recommendation Europe on the Move. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on automatic recognition in the EEA interim review process, and in the Erasmus+ programme guide.

**However, there is no clear focus on the Long-Term Individual pupil mobility programme, which is the mobility type where automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education applies.**

In fact, this specific mobility action is neither promoted clearly within Erasmus+, nor associated clearly with the automatic recognition priority within the programme. Erasmus+ National agencies have not set targets of Long-Term IPM within the current Erasmus+ programme, and have no incentives in promoting it. In addition, the Erasmus+ programme priority on automatic recognition makes a reference to class exchanges instead of Long-Term IPM.

Knowledge of and legislation on Long-Term IPM is lacking in most Member States, and in 11 Programme countries there is no Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+. In order to support automatic recognition policies in general secondary education, the Erasmus+ programme should

- Promote explicitly Long-Term IPM, especially towards school leadership, and provide concrete tools on how to embed it in the internationalisation strategy and set a school policy for automatic recognition.
- Encourage schools to have an internationalisation strategy encompassing all learning mobility programmes, with Erasmus+ and beyond - hence pushing for addressing the issue of recognition of outcomes from Long Term IPM taking place outside the framework of Erasmus+.
- Setting the conditions for an increased access to Long Term IPM thanks to Erasmus+, by providing the possibility for schools to partner up with non profit pupil exchange organisations which are already running this type of mobility. Schools remain the owners of their internationalisation strategy, but need support for running Long-Term IPM, a mobility programme that is not known in several countries, and complex to manage from a risk management perspective.

Secondary schools across Europe are handling competing priorities and need to face the challenges of teacher shortages, increasing fragility and lack of basic skills of students. Internationalisation should remain a priority also in this challenging context, as it provides teachers and students with the competences needed to thrive in and contribute to a democratic and diverse society and stand for EU common values. However, secondary schools need clear directions on how to tackle automatic recognition, and all the existing resources should be pulled together for this purpose, encouraging cooperation among all stakeholders which have expertise and motivation to support the European Education Area.





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