

Empowering Teachers
for Automatic Recognition
ETAR project



1st REPORT ON INDIVIDUAL PUPIL MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION OF ITS LEARNING OUTCOMES

Author: Elisa Briga, European Federation for Intercultural Learning

Acknowledgments:

A special thanks to Emma Varan Oeien, Marta Beso and Nela Despotovic volunteers and interns at EFIL who contributed to the collection of data throughout 2023.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

© European Federation for Intercultural Learning, 2024

Cover image © by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Initiatives to support progress toward an improved access to IPM and recognition within the European Education Area by 2025	6
The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027	6
European Education Area Progress Report	6
Report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on automatic recognition	7
Council conclusions on further steps to make automatic mutual recognition in education and training a reality	7
Towards the Council recommendation on the European learning mobility framework	8
Europass mobility revision	9
Other initiatives	10
IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes today	11
The impact of Covid19 pandemic on IPM and related policy processes	11
Estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility in the school year 2021-2022	13
The role of Erasmus+ in promoting IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes	22
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	26
The attitude of teachers towards IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes	29
Conclusions and Next steps	31

Introduction

The European Education Area by 2025 sets among its objectives to make ‘learning mobility the norm’ and has launched initiatives towards promoting mobility specifically in the school sector, notably the Council recommendation on automatic recognition adopted in 2018 and the Proposal for a Council recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’ in 2023, to be adopted in 2024. The Erasmus+ programme, as the funding instrument supporting EU policy in the field of education, training, youth and sport, has also set priorities and actions to foster learning mobility in the school sector.

Within the effort of promoting learning mobility in the school sector, the EEA put a focus on removing financial and administrative barriers for **Individual Pupil Mobility**¹, through dedicated **Erasmus+ funding** and setting **recognition of the learning period abroad** as a priority for Member states.

In line with these policy developments, in 2020-2021 the European Parliament funded the Preparatory Action ‘[Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education](#)’ as the first initiative aimed at looking specifically at recognition practices across Member states and providing tools to policy makers and teachers to make progress towards the automatic recognition objectives set in 2018 in the [Council recommendation on automatic recognition](#), namely ‘*the outcomes from a learning period abroad are recognised in the home country, with the learner not being required to undergo extensive examinations or repeat the programme year in the country of origin*’.

This Preparatory Action was the follow up of the [Pilot project ‘Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility’](#) conducted in 2006-2008 which then led to the inclusion of this action within the Lifelong Learning Programme and the time, and the subsequent Erasmus+ programmes.

The Expert Network developed four outputs which are published on the [European School Education Portal](#) as of February 2023:

- a [Member States’ analysis of national policies on recognition procedures](#) - the first of its kind to gather this level of detail on long-term individual pupil mobility across Europe;
- a [proposal for a European Framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education](#) designed by all involved partners and stakeholders;

¹ Long-term individual pupil mobility is an educational programme for 14-18-year olds which: is a school–pupil exchange; involves individual pupils (rather than groups of pupils); is organised by any provider (public, non-profit or for-profit sector providers); is organised for periods of 2-3 months and up to a full school year; foresees local school attendance abroad, usually in the host country language (and not only the attendance of a language course); foresees any living arrangement (any type of host family, boarding school, hostels). In addition, individual pupil mobility programmes are temporary, and pupils return to their home country at the end of the exchange (Briga E., & Looney, J. (2021). ‘Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education. Member states analysis. European Union Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture)

- a [Training Model for education professionals on Assessment of Transversal Competences developed in long-term individual pupil mobility](#);
- [information packs for each country](#) including information for pupils going abroad and for pupils hosted there.

EFIL, as leader of the two initiatives mentioned above and main non-profit pupil exchange organisation in Europe, wishes to ensure the legacy of the Expert Network and the piloting of its outcomes at national and European level. For this purpose, EFIL has kept contact with the Expert Network members to update them on dissemination and piloting of the outputs, and has initiated the Erasmus+ project 'Empowering Teachers for Automatic Recognition' (ETAR) running in 2022-2024 and involving some of the Expert Network members. The project aims at piloting the Training Model and the European framework in three countries - Belgium Flanders, Estonia, Poland - where IPM is not popular and at the same time teachers are responsible for recognition of learning outcomes, hence able to apply the tools provided in the Training Model. Within the scope of implementing the European framework at European and national level, the ETAR project wishes to ensure that IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes are monitored and researched, hence providing input for evidence-based policy on this topic and contributing to making progress towards the EEA.

This report is the first European report on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes and it is an initiative meant to be continued in the years to come to provide annually an update to the Member states analysis.

The report is organised as follows:

Section 1: an update on the initiatives of the EU in the period 2022-2023 to support progress toward an improved access to IPM and recognition within the European Education Area by 2025 (see page 24-30 of the Member states analysis)

Section 2: an update on the analysis of individual pupil mobility and its recognition providing the overview of the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on IPM and 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 page 37-71 of the Member states analysis)

Section 3: a focus on teacher attitudes towards IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes based on the piloting of the Training Model within the ETAR project in 2022-23 and a survey to teachers conducted by EFIL in 2023.

Section 4: conclusions and next steps

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

The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027

Within the [Erasmus programme 2021-2027](#) Long-Term IPM can be funded through **Key Action 1 Learning Mobility of Individuals in the school sector**. Within this action, projects can be funded either through **E+ KA1 accreditation in the field of school education**, or through **Short-term projects for mobility of pupils and staff**.

Long-term IPM is defined in the Erasmus+ programme as a learning period for the pupil to study at a partner school or perform a traineeship at another relevant organisation abroad for **a period between 30 to 365 days**. An individual learning programme must be defined for each participant. An obligatory pre-departure training will be provided to all participants

Long-term IPM is considered a priority of the Erasmus+ programme and benefits from strengthened support: EUR 500 for organisational support for participant and EUR 300 for language learning. In addition projects that foresee Long Term IPM receive more points in the award criteria.

Recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education has been a priority under **Key Action 2 Cooperation Partnerships** since the launch of the programme.

European Education Area Progress Report

The [Report on Progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area](#) published in November 2022 announced that by the end of 2023, the Commission would propose a European learning mobility framework to make learning periods abroad for everyone a norm, rather than an exception. The new framework would encourage the Member States to make mobility experiences a valued part of all education and training pathways and embed the opportunity for mobility in education and training programmes. It will have a strengthened focus on inclusive mobility and will broaden the scope of the 2011 Youth on the Move Recommendation to cover all learners and staff in all education and training sectors, youth and sport, whether formal, non formal or informal. The framework will address the persistent impediments to mobility such as administrative burden, language barriers, lack of financial means, and lack of automatic recognition schemes.

Unfortunately the report does not make any reference to the Council recommendation on automatic recognition for what concerns the learning periods abroad in general secondary education, and only focused on the initiatives planned for automatic recognition in the Higher Education sector.

Report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on automatic recognition

The [Report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on automatic recognition](#) published in February 2023 and based on a [detailed evaluation](#) does explore the progress made in all fields tackled by the [recommendation](#), including recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education. Most of the data provided in the evaluation report is based on the Member states analysis by the '[Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education](#)' and it is clear that this sector is where recognition was less developed and less progress has been made.

Council conclusions on further steps to make automatic mutual recognition in education and training a reality

Based on the report mentioned above, the Council discussed the [Conclusions on further steps to make automatic mutual recognition in education and training a reality](#), which were adopted in May 2023. The Member states acknowledge that *automatic mutual recognition of the outcomes of a learning period abroad for learners in upper secondary education and training, including VET, remains underdeveloped. The diversity of education and training systems in the EU is a strength but it may present a challenge in this context. The recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad is a complex issue due to, for example, this diversity, variations in recognition procedures and the lack of common frameworks at the appropriate level in the Member States.* They also agree that *automatic mutual recognition hinges on the Member States working together to foster mutual trust and transparency and commit to engage in trust-based, mutually beneficial and generous cross-border cooperation to improve and support mobility opportunities, in particular long-term learning periods abroad in upper secondary education and training. Further efforts should be made to facilitate exchanges between staff, institutions, authorities, and other relevant actors. In this context, greater use should be made of the Erasmus+ programme and other relevant EU funds and programmes for enhanced cooperation and exchanges.*

The focus on building trust and transparency among Member states is particularly important as is one of the main principles of the [Proposal for a European Framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education](#). More concrete actions on how to foster this trust and transparency should be formulated, as well as the authorities in charge to do so. It needs to be noted that the Conclusions make reference several times to ENIC-NARIC centres as playing a key role in the implementation of the recommendation, however, they have no role in the specific recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education, which is regulated either by the school or by the Ministry of Education directly. This lack of clarity on the institutions expected to make progress in this area, might hinder implementation of the actual recommendation. Finally, Member states and the European Commission focus on EU programmes and tools to implement the recommendation, although the field of learning mobility is much wider than the one of the EU learning mobility programmes, and a holistic approach should be ensured when looking at policy

implementation, taking into account all mobility programmes for learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

Towards the Council recommendation on the European learning mobility framework

The European Commission has engaged in extensive consultations with stakeholders and citizens for drafting the proposal on a European learning mobility framework announced within the European Education Area initiative. The consultation included as key milestones, the [Open Public Consultation](#) from February to May 2023, the [Citizen panels on Learning Mobility](#), and the [Study on learning mobility 'Progress, obstacles and way forward : final report'](#) by PPMI. The Proposal for a Council recommendation 'Europe on the Move' was published in November 2023, with a [Commission staff working document](#), and is currently being discussed in the Council within the Belgian Presidency of the EU, with the objective of being adopted by May or June 2024. The Proposal for a Council Recommendation includes several positive elements in line with the Proposal for a European framework on recognition developed by the EU Expert network on this topic. In particular:

- multiple **references to automatic recognition**, and in particular among the actions includes ' Providing further support from the Erasmus+ programme by encouraging cooperation and mutual learning among Member States on ensuring the automatic recognition of qualifications and outcomes of the learning periods abroad carried out in education and training sectors at all levels, including for virtual and blended learning'.
- a focus **monitoring data on leaning mobility** ' Working with the Member States and relevant stakeholders on further improving the quality and availability of data and developing EU-level methodologies for data collection and analysis, including surveys, for example the European graduate tracking survey, on learning mobility in all education and training and youth sectors, that can also account for inclusiveness and territorial diversities, in full compliance with EU data protection legislation'...and ' Revamping the Mobility Scoreboard, in close cooperation with experts from the Member States, to follow up the implementation of the recommendation and expand it to cover all education and training, and youth sectors'
- a call to establish **structural cooperation**
 - **with stakeholders in the area of learning mobility in view of the implementation of the recommendation**
 - **among the bodies that manage and implement funding instruments at EU, international, national or regional level to ensure coordinated activities that support and promote learning mobility**, while avoiding overlaps and maximising the impact of resources;
 - **between regional and local authorities, education and training providers, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations and private bodies to promote and support outgoing learning mobility**, including for people with fewer opportunities, and creating a welcoming environment for incoming learning mobility participants from abroad;

- support to the application of **quality criteria for the preparation, implementation and follow-up of learning mobility activities**, including by building on quality standards developed within the Erasmus+ programme, the European Solidarity Corps programme and other learning mobility schemes, and by focusing on the accessibility and inclusiveness of such activities;
- support to education and training providers and organisers of youth learning mobility activities, youth work and volunteering in the **systemic use of EU frameworks and instruments, including Europass**, the multilingual classification of European skills, competences and occupations, European Digital Credentials for Learning, the European Qualifications Framework, **Europass Mobility** and Youthpass and/or national frameworks **to support the identification, documentation, assessment and where appropriate certification of competences developed through learning mobility**.
- Finally, the promotion of teacher mobility with a specific [Annex 'A policy framework for teacher mobility'](#), as a tool for professional development and for empowering teachers to engage in internationalisation of schools.

The initiatives related to monitoring of learning mobility and cooperation among stakeholders clearly point to the objectives of the Proposal for a European framework, in particular the 'Designation of national- and European-level organisations (respectively, by national ministries of education and the European Commission) which may host observatories on pupil mobility, with the remit to gather data, exchange information and good practices, promote analysis and research, and support peer learning among countries (see principle Principle 1: Promote trust and transparency across education systems).

European Education Area (EEA) mid-term review

In summer 2023, the European Commission engaged in the EEA mid-term review process, based on the findings of the 2022 progress report, and launched a [Call for Evidence](#) which stayed open from June to September. In addition, the European Commission and the European Parliament organised a [joint event in October 2023](#) to take stock of the achievements of the EEA so far, especially in the areas of citizenship education, supporting teachers and trainers, boosting equity and inclusion, automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad. This mid-term review will feed into the Council's review of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the EEA and beyond (2021-2030).

Europass mobility revision

The EU tool Europass mobility is being revised to best support recognition of learning outcomes of mobility periods. In particular, the objective is that within Europass mobility both learning agreements and reports on learning outcomes are developed, to ensure a standardised

process, and the possibility for the learner and the teacher to agree on expected learning outcomes, which then are the basis to define the actual learning outcomes to be recorded in the certificate upon completion of the period abroad.

Other initiatives

There has been several other initiatives within EEA which have a positive impact in the field of Individual Pupil Mobility and recognition of its learning outcomes as they focus on internationalisation of schools by promoting teacher mobility, global citizenship education, and quality assurance in school education:

- [Erasmus+ Teacher Academies](#)
- [Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainer's mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service training \(2022\)](#)
- [Council conclusions on the transformative role of education for sustainable development and global citizenship as an instrument tool for the achievement of the sustainable development goals \(SDGS\) \(2022\)](#)
- [The Council recommendation on Pathways to school success \(2022\)](#)
- [A continuous focus on making progress on school quality assurance](#)

IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes today

The impact of Covid19 pandemic on IPM and related policy processes

When Covid-19 broke out in March 2020, Europe went from being a continent characterised by a large influx of people, moving in and out of it, to closing its borders and decreeing a public health threat to what once distinguished living in Europe: mobility.

Individual Pupil Mobility, as one of the many types of learning mobility, was therefore affected heavily by the outbreak of the Covid-19. While some of the effects of the pandemic are the same as the ones witnessed by the larger learning mobility sector involving youth as participants², some others are more specific to IPM.

For what concerns the effects that impacted the overall sector in the same way, these are the ones on providers and young people.

In the IPM sector, providers are public bodies including schools, non-profit organisations and for-profit entities, all suspended the programmes in March 2020. While some non-profit organisations postponed their programmes to the following school year (2020-2021)³, schools stopped offering this opportunity. Non-profit organisations, being volunteers-based organisations, had also to deal with the consequences of the pandemic on volunteer motivation and engagement. The desk research study published by the EU-CoE youth partnership on the impact of Covid19 on learning mobility⁴ shows that 70% of the youth workers and youth leaders declared to be suffering the consequences of the pandemic as their learning mobility projects were cancelled for external and internal reasons. External factors are related with lockdowns, curfews, closure of borders, and limited access to public spaces that impacted on their projects. Instead, internal causes are related with difficulties in mobilising and motivating their volunteers and staff to participate in the mobility projects.

Learning mobility projects in the youth work and pupil mobility non-profit sector are developed thanks to wide networks of committed volunteers. According to the RAY-COR study⁵, the volunteer engagement dropped significantly at national and international level compared to the involvement of staff, both in terms of time dedicated (62%) and number of volunteers dropped (51%). Similarly, given the situation of reduced social contact, these organisations, which rely on their partners, contacts, and word-of-mouth connections, had a hard time in terms of recruiting new volunteers. In the absence of regular contact with young people, some organisations run the risk of losing their contacts and the regular networks that support their activities. Since peer-to-peer recommendation is one of the most popular forms of recruitment, breaking the chain of former participants recruiting new members can have a significant impact.

² Krzaklewska, E. Şenyuva, Ö. (2020). [Covid-19 and Learning Mobility: A Desk Research Study. Council of Europe.](#) p.14.

³ AFS and YFU resumed mobility programmes as from the school year 2020/2021, while Rotary decided to resume mobility programmes only as from the school year 2023/2024

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ RAY-COR: [The impact of the corona pandemic on youth work in Europe.](#)

Providers of learning mobility also had to change from physical to online modalities for continuing their projects aimed at intercultural exchange. This posed a problem within IPM for two reasons, the first one is the need for youth workers - volunteers and staff- and teachers to acquire new competencies and build digital skills that would allow them to adapt to the new situation. Secondly, going virtual did not make the activities cheaper, since the organisations were not prepared for this situation and had to invest in the necessary materials to face it, such as equipment, software, infrastructure and the aforementioned training.

There were also financial consequences, not only caused by higher costs for repatriating the students, covering for cancellation costs, and setting up complex risk management procedures and for re-converting to online activities, but by the decrease in funding especially for non-profit organisations as their budgets are based on income from mobilities which were suddenly stopped, and public and private funders cancelled or delayed their grants, and there were cases in which investors switched to the medical field. This led to the shrinking and closing of several organisations, and the loss of precious expertise as the staff had to be made redundant.

In addition, The well-being of young people was greatly affected by the pandemic due to the reduced social and physical contact. Thus, social isolation increased, and emotional support decreased, which was accompanied by increased symptoms of depression and anxiety⁶. Young people's mental health turned out to be an urgent issue also in relation to learning mobility and IPM specifically as youth enrolling in the mobility programme needed much more psychological support and volunteers and staff involved in counselling the exchange pupils needed additional training.

For what concerns long-term IPM run by worldwide networks of non-profit organisations - AFS and YFU specifically-, the repatriation and counselling of exchange pupils has been particularly challenging as due to the immersive nature of the IPM experience and the fact that most participants had already been abroad for 5 months by March 2020.

In the case of AFS Intercultural Programs, some 7,000 students had to end their study abroad programs early due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers and staff around the world worked day and night to reunite participants with their families in their home countries and continued to provide all program support and services to those participants who remained under the care of host families before returning home. AFS rapidly reconfigured and deployed a virtual learning platform, based on the AFS Global Competence Certificate, to provide those thousands of young people with ongoing support, community and learning during the crisis⁷.

When the next cycle of IPM was meant to start with the school year 2020/2021, both AFS and YFU decided to continue the programmes, with very strict Covid-19 protocols and risk management measures. In the AFS worldwide network 500 pupils went on mobility in this specific school year⁸, out of which 270 Europeans. In the YFU network, more than 400 Europeans went on IPM in the same school year, mostly overseas. Within AFS the Virtual

⁶ S, Mastrotheodoros. M, Ranta. (2022). [The effects of Covid-19 on young people's mental health and psychological well-being](#). Council of Europe.

⁷ <https://afs.org/study-abroad/covid-updates-hub/#afs-nav-trackrecord>

⁸ <https://afs.org/2020/09/09/study-abroad-resumes/>

[exchange](#) programmes were widely promoted as a valid alternative to physical mobility, in particular the AFS Global You Adventurer where young people learn about connecting with people across cultures and become part of a global community. The fact that pupil exchange organisations based on volunteer youth work continued offering activities during the pandemic had a positive impact on young people's well being. As the RAY-COR study⁹ shows there is a strong connection between mental well-being and youth work, with 74% of the young people surveyed agreeing that being involved in youth work gives them something worth doing and something to look forward to, as well as a sense of belonging, greater life fulfilment, and reduced anxiety and depression.

The Erasmus programme is supporting the recovery of volunteer youth work organisations and cross sectoral cooperation after the pandemic, as well as recognising mental health as an issue to be tackled.

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

The wider participation in IPM started again in the school year 2021-2022.

Here below is an estimate of the numbers of pupils participating in long-term IPM in the specific school year 2021-2022. The estimate is based on several data sources: planned Erasmus+ Long Term Individual Pupil Mobility (LT IPM) projects which can be found on the [Erasmus+ Project Results Portal](#); actual sending numbers from AFS and sending numbers from YFU provided by the respective organisations.

Long term IPM is hereby defined as IPM of a duration between 1 and 10 months, as indicated in the Erasmus+ programme guide as from 2021.

For what concerns AFS and YFU the data is related with certainty to the school year cycle, including the mobilities starting from September 2021 and including all mobilities up to June 2022. In the case of Erasmus + the data is related to 2021 projects, hence projects that were planned to be implemented in the budget period June 2021-June 2022, which might have been extended.

For what concerns Erasmus+, there are two groups of E+ data: "Edu/YO" and "Other", based on the coordinator type of the projects.

- "Edu/YO" stands for School/Institute/Educational Centre - General Education (secondary level) + Youth Organisation
- "other" comprises other relevant bodies, enterprises and organisations.

The [Erasmus+ report 2022](#) presented on 30 November 2023 at the European Education Summit shows that 'the number of Long-Term IPM contracted participants has increased by 87.5% between call years 2021 and 2022 - from 1520 to 2850. Based on the data available on the [Erasmus+ Project Results Portal](#) in relation to the school year 2021, the amount of planned

⁹ RAY-COR: [The impact of the corona pandemic on youth work in Europe](#).

Long Term IPMs was 992. The discrepancy of the estimate related to E+ Long-Term IPMs in 2021 is probably due to the fact that the Erasmus+ Project Results Portal records the planned mobilities for projects awarded in 2021, while the Erasmus+ report 2022 shows the contracted participants in 2021. This report does analyse the Long Term IPMs for the school year 2022-2023 as these data were not yet fully available for AFS and YFU, but the E+ Long Term IPMs planned by accredited organisations for 2022 were 2057, indeed showing an important increase, then reflected on the 2850 contracted E+ IPMs in 2022.

Compared to the estimates provided in the Member states analysis, the estimate below does not include the projection of volume of IPM by for profit entities and the actual data of the following IPM providers:

- Non-profit organisations
 - Volunteer
 - Rotary (only hosting numbers)
 - Experiment in International Living
 - ASSE International Student Exchange Programs
 - Foundations
 - ASSIST Scholarship Programs
 - Fundación Amancio Ortega
- Public sector
 - Governmental agencies
 - Nordic Cooperation
 - Ettarsprogrammen Bilateral exchanges (managed by the Sweden Council of Higher Education)
 - Programmes funded by the US Department of State
 - The Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX)
 - The Flex Programme
 - The Kennedy YES Programme
 - School-to-school
 - OFAJ/DFJW (French-German youth exchange)

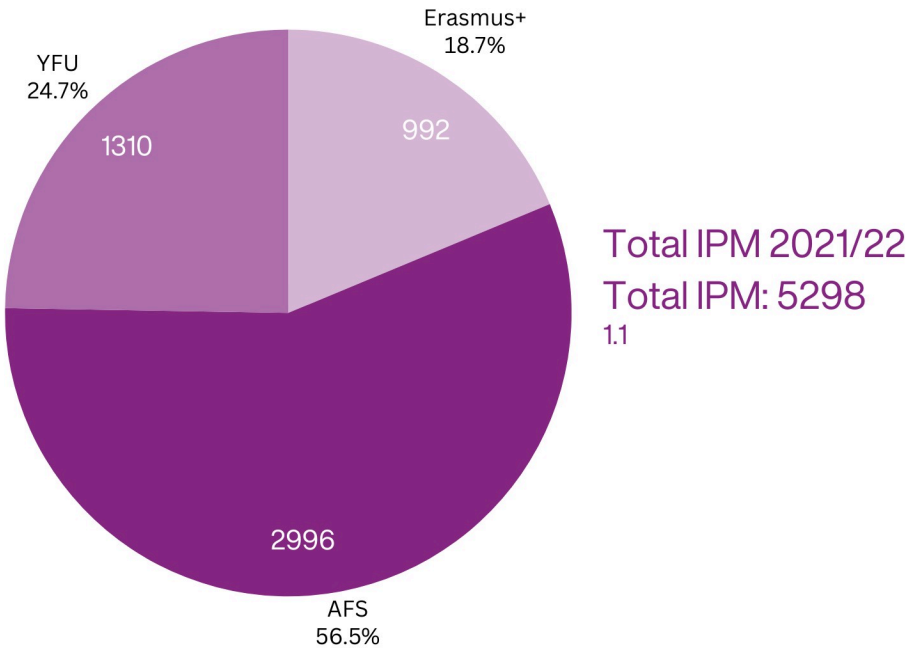


Chart 1.1 shows the total number of documented individual pupil mobilities from European countries, and how they are divided by provider. Note that Russia is included in the numbers from AFS, both other european pupils being hosted in Russia as well as russian pupils going on mobilities abroad.

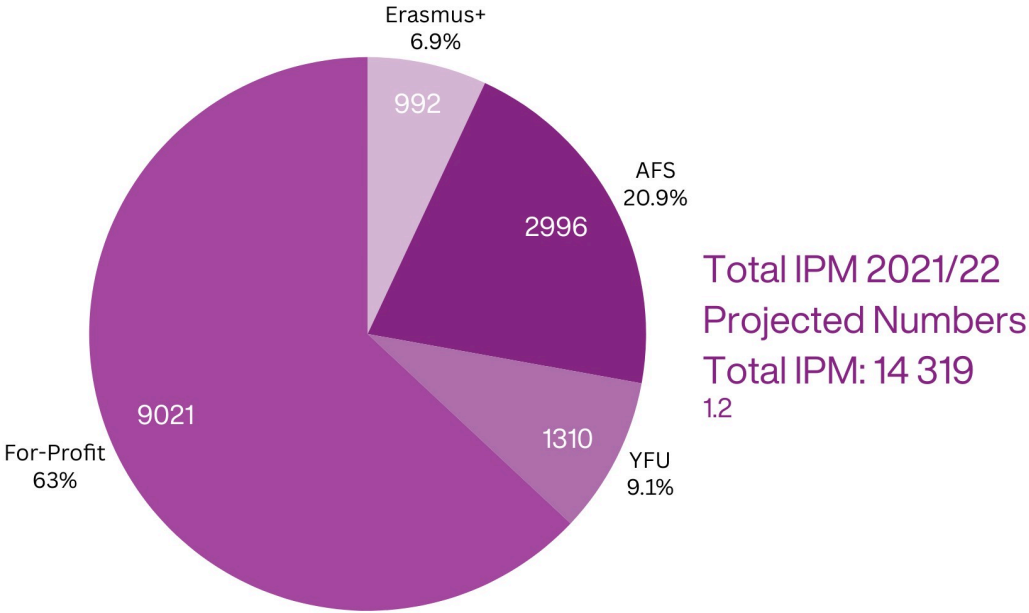


Chart 1.2 tries to depict a more realistic estimate of the numbers of IPM. There is no data on for-profit providers of IPM, but based on the member states analysis ‘Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary school’ published by the European Commission in 2021, the for-profit actors are estimated to provide 63% of the IPM market. Because of the lack of data, it is not possible to determine the share of intra-european IPM or the different lengths of the programmes.

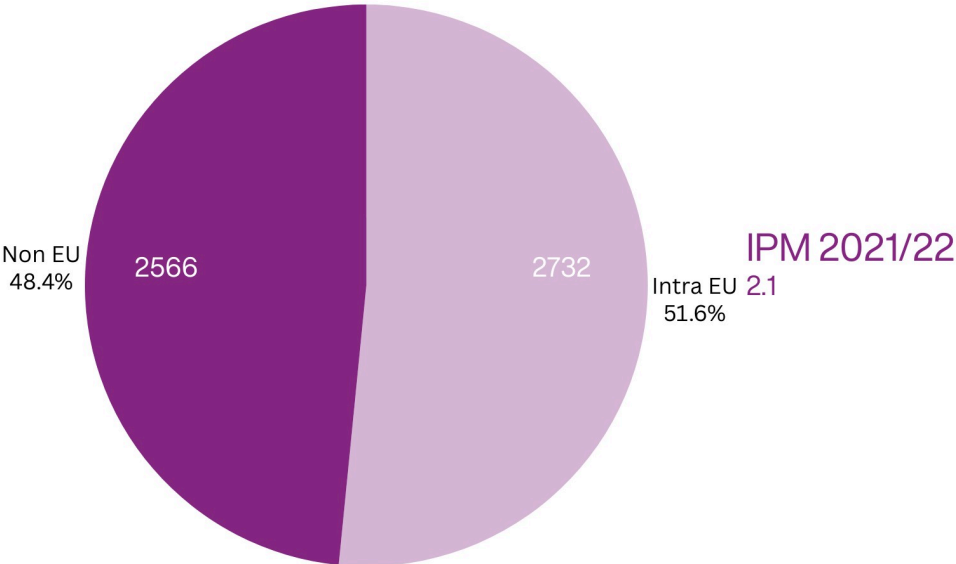
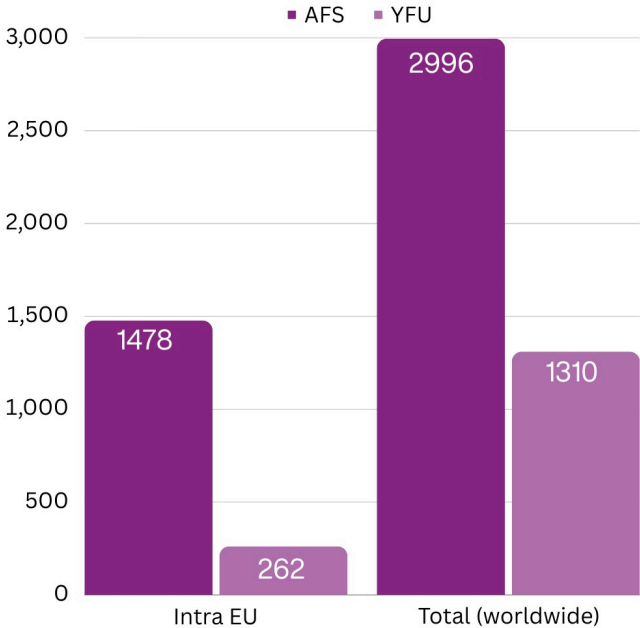
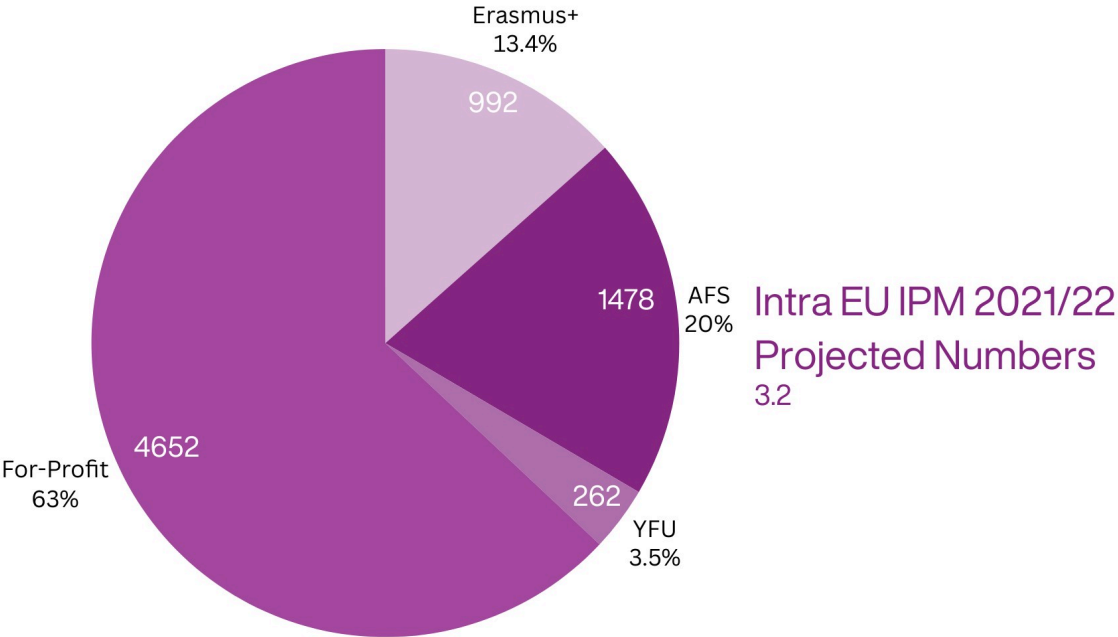
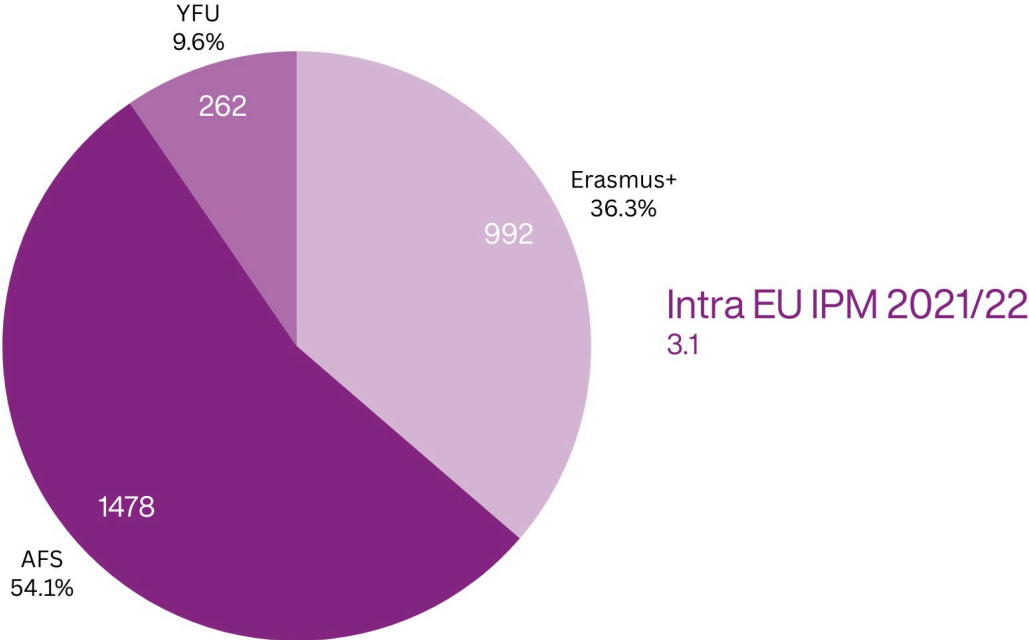


Chart 2.1 shows the share of IPM that take place outside Europe, i.e. a pupil going from a European country, to a non-European country versus IPM that takes place internally in Europe, i.e. a pupil going from a European country, to a European country. Erasmus+ programmes by nature are intra-european, while AFS and YFU both send pupils abroad outside and inside Europe.

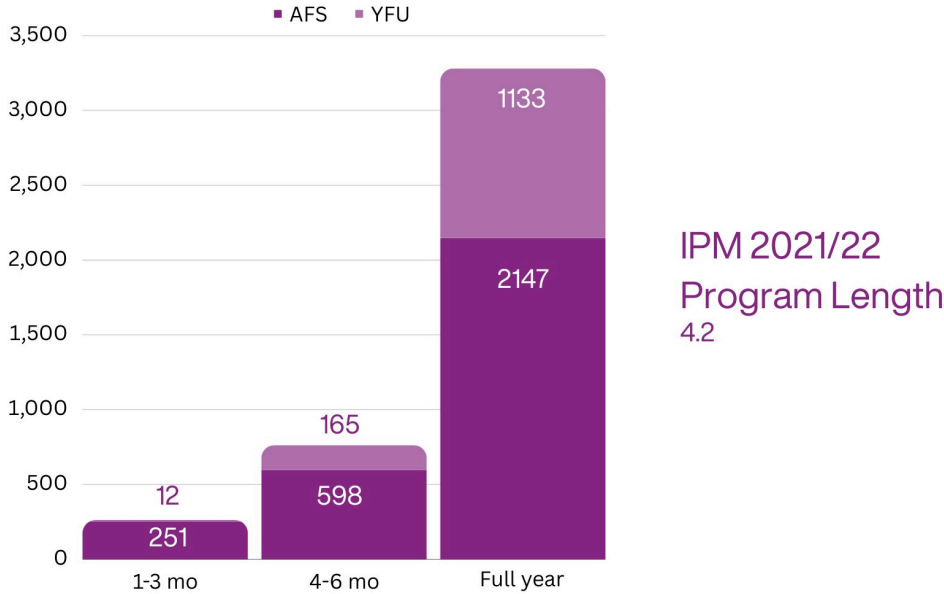
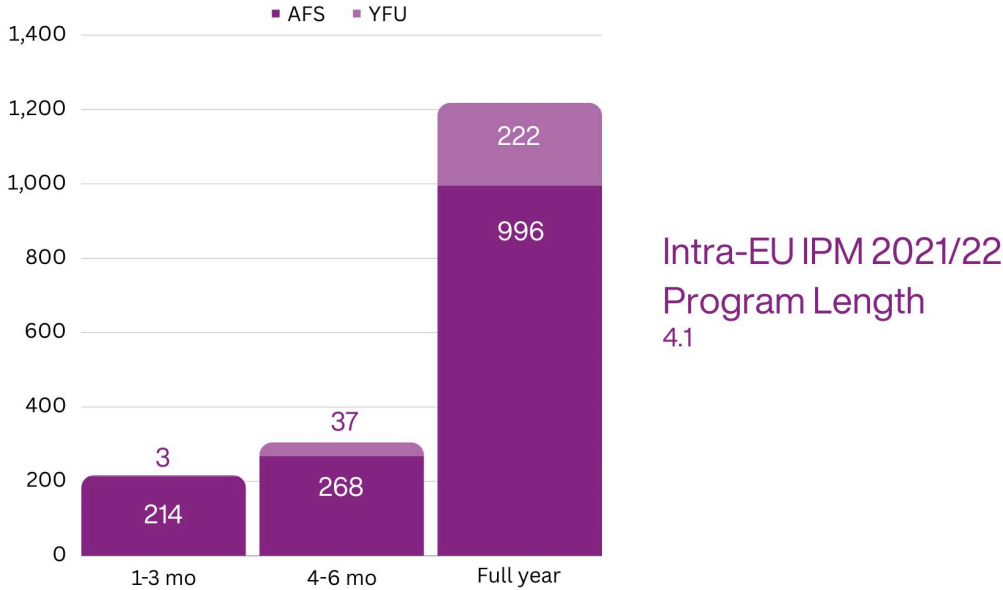


AFS & YFU IPM
2021/22
2.2

Chart 2.2 therefore compares the number of pupils going on mobilities intra-eur, and the number of pupils going on mobilities worldwide, Europe included, with AFS and YFU.



Charts 3.1 and 3.2 show the total number of IPM within Europe, and the approximate share of the for-profit actors. Note that Russia is included in the numbers from AFS, both other european pupils being hosted in Russia as well as russian pupils going on mobilities in Europe.



Charts 4.1 and 4.2 show the number of pupils going on programmes by different lengths with AFS or YFU. AFS and YFU have three different programme lengths: trimester (1-3 mo.), semester (4-6 mo.) or a full school year (10-11 mo.). A long term IPM in the eyes of E+ is a mobility that lasts longer than one month, the length of the long term IPM is not further specified.

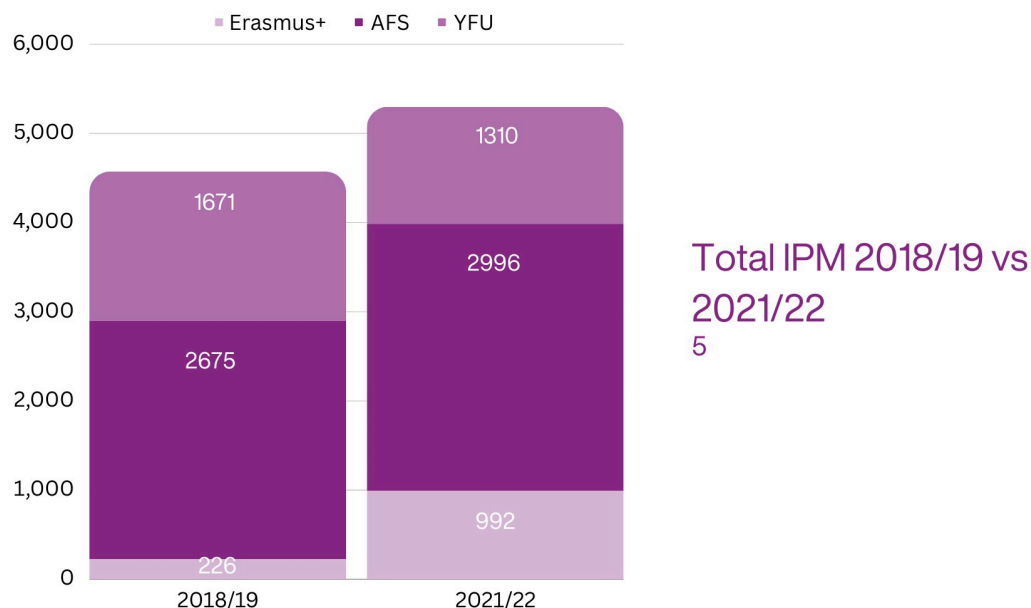


Chart 5 compares the estimates of IPMs in the school year 2021/2022 with the ones of the school year 2018/2019 for what concerns the three set of data which are present in both estimates, namely AFS, YFU and Erasmus+ volumes, we see that IPM has increased from 4572 to 5298 and the highest percentage of increase is the one of the Erasmus+ IPMs, going from 226 to 992, while YFU IPMs have slightly decreased.

What needs to be noted is that there is no data on the length of the Long-Term IPM within Erasmus+ for the set of data 2021-2022 and the definition of IPM within the Erasmus+ programme has changed from the minimum duration of 2 months to 1 month. In addition the data refers to Erasmus+ projected mobilities, not actually implemented mobilities. Based on informal contacts with schools, it seems that IPMs of 1-2 months are the vast majority within the Erasmus+ programme.

An interesting data to add to the estimate above, is that the [report by the Italian Observatory on pupil mobility and internationalisation](#) funded by Fondazione Intercultura in cooperation with the statistical agency IPSOS shows an increase of individual pupil mobility of 11.5% compared to 2019 and the projections show that in the school year 2022-23, 11.500 secondary school students went on a long term study period abroad.

For what concerns the school year 2022-2023, data from the three providers considered in this estimate is still not available. However, it needs to be reported that as from this cycle non-profit volunteer led networks of pupil exchange organisations were faced with the consequences of the pandemic on society at large, namely the decrease in interest and openness of families to host an exchange pupil¹⁰. As the capacity for hosting is decreasing and not meeting the demand

¹⁰

<https://www.rtf.be/article/penurie-de-familles-daccueil-pour-les-etudiants-etrangers-depuis-le-covid-19-et-la-montee-des-prix-cest-de-plus-en-plus-complique-11233026>

of individual mobility from pupils, the number of IPMs are stagnating or decreasing for what concerns these providers which rely on an IPM programme based on host family placement.

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

As the estimates provided above shows, the number of pupils enrolling in IPM with Erasmus+ is still low compared to the one of the main non-profit pupil exchange organisations and the length of the mobilities tend to be of 1-2 months.

Looking closely at the data provided in the Erasmus+ project results portal, we can see that **among the 3246** secondary schools and youth organisations, and 'other organisations' (relevant bodies, enterprises and organisations) which were **Erasmus+ accredited in the school sector in the period 2020-2021, only 14.26% planned to engage in Long-Term Individual Pupil Mobilities**. In addition, in some countries like Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Romania there is no accredited organisation planning Long Term IPM.

If we look at the number of accredited institutions running Short Term and Long Term IPM, we see that there is only a 5.85% overlap, showing that schools prefer very short individual mobilities and engaging in short term IPM does not necessarily determine a willingness to run longer IPMs.

E+IPM 2021-2022 - percentage of organisations involved

The Erasmus+ programme is meant to be a funding instrument to promote the progress towards a wider access to all learning mobility actions in the school sector, and IPM was included as a novelty in the new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 also to support the implementation of the Council recommendation on automatic recognition. However, **the data collected shows that the Erasmus+ programme is not funding the type of IPM which requires recognition of learning period abroad, namely a mobility of at least 2-3 months as outlined in the Member states analysis**. As in the previous Erasmus+ programme, the vast majority of schools still prefer to include group mobilities of pupils and teacher mobilities in their accreditation plan, although the funding instrument, thanks to accreditation, has vastly improved access to different mobility actions. It needs to be noted that the Covid19 pandemic might have had an impact on the willingness of schools to engage with a more challenging mobility type such as Long Term IPM.

At the same time, the Erasmus+ guide currently does not provide a clear incentive for Long-Term IPM in general and also as the key mobility action within which the principles of the Council recommendation on automatic recognition can be implemented. While in the Erasmus+ guide 2021 it was mentioned that accreditation applications including IPM would have been favoured, this criteria for selection is no longer mentioned in the subsequent versions of the guide.

In the [Erasmus+ guide 2024](#), among the priorities under Key Action 2 'Cooperation partnerships' we find '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 and 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 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.

Within this priority there is no clear mention of IPM, nor Long-Term IPM as defined in the Erasmus+ guide (at least a month) nor an incentive for running IPMs longer than a month for which recognition of learning outcomes is actually needed. The guide includes a mention of group mobility of pupils (class exchanges) as a tool for fostering automatic recognition of learning periods abroad. Class exchanges are undoubtedly a tool to promote cooperation and building of trust among schools, but much more structural reforms are needed for a shift to recognition of learning outcomes of periods abroad within Long-Term IPM.

The Member states analysis of the EU Expert Network on recognition concludes that:

In the case of shorter periods abroad (between 2 and 6 months) pupils are readmitted and reintegrated in their class, but their learning abroad is often not recognised. Consequently, pupils need to take tests on all the content they did not follow while abroad and thus face great pressure. Through a recognition process and personalised study plans, pupils may build on what they learned abroad and see how it connects with the curriculum of their sending school. Therefore, specific measures are needed to foster recognition of periods of between 2 and 6 months to ensure learning is actually recognised.

*Recognition of a full school year abroad requires an established and transparent system so that pupils may be admitted to the next grade. Catching up quickly with missed content cannot be a solution, as it is for shorter programmes. Therefore, **recognition of periods of between 6 months and a full school year present the most challenges and require policy intervention, compared to recognition of shorter periods abroad which can be fostered through training and support to teachers solely.***

In addition, **in the Erasmus+ guide there is no reference to the existing tools provided by the Expert Network** in support to the schools and policy makers for making progress towards automatic recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education. This leads to the risk of having several institutions developing new tools which are not based on the research work which has already been conducted.

The European Commission has also issued the [Erasmus+ Handbook for Individual Pupil Mobility](#) with a chapter on recognition of learning outcomes and no reference to the outputs of the Expert Network published on the European Commission's page on the European Education Area and on the European School Education Portal.

As the estimates on E+ planned Long Term IPM show, **schools**, especially with students from disadvantaged backgrounds which are the ones that should primarily benefit from the E+ IPM funding, **are hesitant about sending a minor abroad alone for a long period of time and providing support in complex situations also deriving from increasing mental health issues, and at the same time recognising IPM learning outcomes.** The Council recommendation Europe on the Move sets the **target of 20% of disadvantaged learners to be beneficiaries of Erasmus+ funded learning mobility. A baseline and clear objectives need to be set to evaluate the reaching of this target within Erasmus+ Long Term IPM.** As running Long Term IPM is complex, disadvantaged learners might be the first one to not be considered for this type of mobility, as teachers prefer to provide IPM opportunities to well performing students. This is a very understandable approach, as well performing students are an easier target to handle within a Long Term IPM programme, and secondary schools do not have - and cannot be expected to have- the competence to outreach to disadvantaged youth and their families to motivate them for mobility, and the infrastructure and competence to deal with this specific type of mobility programme which requires 24/7 psychological support to the students and a complex system of risk management.

European networks of non-profit pupil exchange organisations, notably AFS and YFU, have looked into the possibility of supporting schools in starting offering Erasmus+ IPM, by providing the expertise and infrastructure mentioned above. Within the Erasmus+ framework this support can be provided in two ways:

- applying for Erasmus+ accreditation as ‘organisations with a role in school education’ with the role of Consortium leaders coordinating a group of secondary schools, or
- acting as supporting organisations of E+ accredited schools.

In the countries where non-profit pupil exchange organisations were considered eligible and received accreditation, namely in Belgium French speaking Community as of 2020/2021 and Iceland as of 2022/2023, this determined a great change, as AFS in these countries is the only E+ accredited organisation offering Long Term IPM. However, National authorities determining eligibility of applicants for E+ accreditation in the school sector are not open to open eligibility to non-profit pupil exchange organisations, and the [European Commission has issued a guide discouraging E+ accredited organisations to work with supporting organisations](#) in general, without any distinction in relation to the type of mobility and the type of supporting organisations. **In 24 out of 27 EU countries non-profit and volunteer-led pupil exchange organisations, belonging to the AFS and YFU worldwide networks,** have been running IPM programmes since the 1950s. These organisations aim at supporting schools on their internationalisation journeys, in terms of both formal and non-formal education, while ensuring a wide diversity of host country destinations, pupil safety and IPM quality. In addition, they aim at providing wider access to IPM and outreach to target groups that have not benefited from this type of experience due to their socio-economic disadvantage.

While the fact of including the implementation of the Council recommendation on automatic recognition within the Erasmus+ priorities in the school sector is very much welcome and shows the synergies between policy and funding, many decentralised Erasmus+KA2 projects between schools do not seem the most effective way to solve structural issues that emerged in the [Member states analysis by the Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of learning periods](#)

[abroad in general secondary education](#). Incentivising Long-Term IPM within the E+ accreditation in the school sector, also with the support of non-profit pupil exchange organisations and funding KA3 Policy experimentation projects on this priority would be advisable.

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 project 'Empowering Teachers for Automatic Recognition' (ETAR) aims at piloting the implementation of the *Proposal for a European framework on Recognition of Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad in General Upper Secondary Education* at national level in three countries (Belgium-Flanders, Estonia, Poland) and at European level.

The Proposal for a European framework consists of five principles:

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

Looking at these five principles, and after 18 months into the project, we can outline the following outcomes and reflections.

The project has looked at implementing these principles at two levels, one related to the practice through **teacher training**, and one related to the policy by creating **Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs** in the project countries and at European level to steer cooperation and advocacy in line with such principles.

For what concerns **teacher training**, about 80 teachers have been trained across the three countries based on the Training Model developed by the Expert Network, contributing to their competences in line with the principles 1,2,3,4. Teachers have been extremely positive about the Training Model as the data from the pre and post test show below.



93,2%

think it's a chance to share their knowledge, experience and ideas with other participants and trainers

89,8%

think the Training Model helped raise their awareness of policy in terms of internationalisation and mobility

89,9%

think it's a chance to extend their knowledge and skills regarding the Learning Agreement as a tool for assessing transversal competences

88,1%

think it's a chance to extend their knowledge and skills regarding assessment of the transversal competences gained via pupil mobility

However, in two countries (Belgium Flanders and Estonia) partners have faced great difficulties in recruiting teachers to participate in the trainings for two main reasons: teacher shortages hence increased workload for teachers in the profession, and internationalisation of schools through Long-Term IPM not seen as a priority by the school leadership and the Ministry of Education. **In all the three countries, very few of the teachers trained are actually teaching to pupils who are enrolling in a Long-Term IPM in the school year 2023-2024**, hence few will be able to put the learnings from the training into practice during the duration of the project and receive support. Looking at the number of institutions Erasmus+ accredited and planning Long Term IPMs (see Section 3 of this report) we see that in all three countries the numbers are very low: seven in Poland, none in Estonia, and none in Belgium Flanders. This means that partners should mostly reach out to teachers in schools where students enrol in IPMs with AFS and YFU. However, **as in these countries the IPM programme offered by AFS and YFU has been seen by schools a a gap year, teachers do not have nor the motivation neither the mandate from their school leadership to actually recognise the learning outcomes developed by pupils in such programmes**, as this is extra workload and they have no incentive or political direction to invest the already limited time in such an effort.

The project is also **training Teacher trainers** in the three project countries and beyond, reaching countries where IPM is not developed at all, namely in Cyprus.

In relation to the **Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs**¹¹ project partners have been successful, especially in Estonia and Belgium Flanders, to gather a wide range of stakeholders to discuss implementation of the five principles at a policy level, with the objective of creating a more favourable environment also for the teacher training offered within the project. The Knowledge and Stakeholder Hubs worked on defining actions at national level in line with the five principles, and this will be available on the **website pupilmobility.eu**, which aims at being the European Knowledge and Stakeholder hub on IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes. They have also submitted a [joint position to the public consultation on the learning mobility framework](#) and presented the progress made so far at the EEA mid-term review event in October 2023. In particular the hubs see the need to ensure **promotion of Long-Term IPM by the school authorities at all levels** (Ministry of Education, School leadership, Erasmus+ National agencies), as a **pre-condition for piloting recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education**, and raise awareness on the fact that **all students have the right for recognition of their learning outcomes, whether their IPM is within Erasmus+ or with private providers**.

Short term IPM which is now the format mostly implemented IPM within the Erasmus+ programme, together with Long Term IPM of 1-2 months, is a great tool for internationalisation of schools. **Long Term IPM, in the framework of Erasmus+ or through the many programmes offered by public and private providers should be fostered next to Erasmus+ as a tool for internationalisation, especially in view of making progress on policies and practices for the recognition of learning outcomes of the period abroad.** Erasmus+ as a programme should foster an holistic approach of schools to all the learning mobility opportunities offered, acknowledging that IPMs of 6-10 months might be mostly implemented through other programmes than Erasmus+. This principle of cooperation among stakeholders and different mobility programmes is fostered in the Proposal for Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move'.

¹¹ <https://pupilmobility.eu/knowledge-and-stakeholder-hubs/>

The attitude of teachers towards IPM and recognition of its learning outcomes

While conducting the Member states analysis in 2020-2021 it became clear that teachers are the key actor of change to make progress towards recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education. In fact, **in 25 EU countries teachers are responsible for recognition of learning outcomes for periods between 2 and 5/6 months, while in 19 EU countries they are in charge for recognition of periods abroad of a full school year, though recognition is rare in 10 of these countries.**

Based on the additional findings of this report it is evident that teachers also need to be motivated for investing time in the recognition of learning outcomes of their students who enrolled in a Long-Term IPM and need directions in this sense from the school authorities.

In order to better understand the needs of teachers in relation to recognition of learning outcomes of IPM and what triggers their motivation to engage with this topic, EFIL conducted a survey among teachers in Europe in the first half of 2023.

The total number of respondents is a **small sample of 32 secondary school teachers from 11 countries** (Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania). Because of the small number of respondents the analysis cannot be considered truly representative or form the basis for definitive conclusions about teachers' attitudes towards individual pupil mobility, but it can give an indication of such.

The great majority of respondents responded positively to individual pupil mobility. The vast majority of respondents were positive towards sending their pupils on mobilities abroad and receiving foreign exchange pupils in their classes. In addition, a big percentage of the respondents stated that it is unfair for the pupils to have to repeat the school year after their mobility abroad and that individual pupil mobility is an essential element of school internationalisation. Lastly, the majority agreed that if they knew they could help the process of recognition, they would educate themselves about it and that they would feel more confident sending their students on a mobility abroad if they attended a teacher training.

Whereas a large majority of respondents were positive towards IPM in general, a modest majority were positive towards the education the pupils receive while abroad. Whereas in the previous paragraph between 60-90% of the respondents responded positively to IPM, this paragraph describes a modest majority, a group consisting of 53-65% of the respondents. The majority stated that they believe pupils can achieve the same level of competences studying abroad as if they stayed home and that studying in another language can be as efficient as studying in your native language. Nearly half of the respondents agreed that their pupils received the support of teachers in the hosting school during their mobility abroad, while the nearly other half were neutral.

Some statements received mostly neutral answers. This might be because the respondents don't know enough about the subject or because they simply position themselves as neutral on the matter. A majority of teachers were neutral towards the statements about the equal fairness and objectiveness of the grading systems of the different EU member states and if their pupils had been neglecting their studies while abroad.

Although most of the teachers stated a generally positive attitude towards IPM, a slight majority answered that it is overwhelming to actively encourage the re-integration of pupils after their mobility abroad; only 28.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Although the sample is quite diverse the number of respondents proves problematic when analysing the answers to this statement, as many countries are only represented by a single respondent. Keeping this in mind, the respondents from France, Czech Republic and Ireland all responded neutral (1/1 respondent/country). All the European respondents who disagreed with the statement were from the Netherlands (4/14). Finally, the respondents from Portugal (4/4 respondents), Italy (2/2 respondents), Romania, Poland, Greece and Belgium (1/1 respondent/country) all agreed with the statement.

Teachers who have experience with IPM, e.i. sending their students on a mobility abroad or receiving a foreign exchange student in their class, were generally more positive to IPM than the average, but also more negative or neutral to some aspects of IPM. Slightly more respondents who had sent some of their students on a mobility were neutral to sending more of their students abroad and more of them were neutral to receiving a greater number of foreign exchange students in their class. A greater number of them were not convinced that studying in a foreign language can be as efficient as studying in your native language and of the equal fairness and objectiveness of the grading systems of the different EU member states and more of them also agreed with the statement that it is overwhelming to reintegrate students after their mobility. Fewer teachers who had previously received foreign exchange students in their class were convinced of the equal fairness and objectiveness of the grading systems of the different EU member states and a greater number of them also agreed with the statement that it is overwhelming to reintegrate students after their mobility. On the other hand, a greater number of both groups were convinced that their students could achieve the same level of competences abroad, that the pupils were supported by their teachers while abroad and most did not agree/neutral that their students had been neglecting their studies.

A greater number of teachers who themselves had spent a learning period abroad or who had received some kind of training on the recognition of learning outcomes of IPM, were generally positive towards IPM. They were the group that agree most with the statements that they would like to see more pupils going abroad, receive more foreign exchange students in their classes, that pupils can achieve the same competences while studying abroad, that it is not fair that pupils should have to repeat the year after their mobility and that IPM is an essential element of school internationalisation, in addition, they agreed least with the statement that their students had been neglecting their studies abroad.

Conclusions and Next steps

We understand that automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education is still very much underdeveloped hence the road towards making progress is long and complex, and that the Erasmus+ programme is just one of the instruments supporting such efforts and has its challenges as a wide programme to be managed and regulated. At the same time, we have identified some actions that can make the difference and ensure progress is made towards improving access to Individual Pupil Mobility across Europe and implementing automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education:

- Involvement of the school leadership in promoting internationalisation and making it possible for teachers to be mobile and attend trainings aimed at embedding internationalisation in secondary schools
- Providing information on IPM and recognition of learning outcomes in the Eurydice page, making reference to the outcomes of the EU Expert network, and updating information regularly.
- Using the Europass Mobility as both a learning agreement and certificate of achieved learning outcomes, tailoring it to the needs of Long Term IPM, namely with indications on how to define learning outcomes 'broadly in line' with the ones of the curriculum of the sending school and focusing on intercultural competence development as central to the mobility programme.
- Opening up the Erasmus+ programme in the school sector to non-profit organisations expert in IPM which can support schools in ensuring quality and outreach of the IPMs longer than 1-2 months.
- Include references to the outcomes of the EU Expert Network on recognition in the Erasmus+ guide and in the Erasmus+ Guide on IPM, to ensure that the existing tools and information are used.
- Funding Erasmus+ KA2 and KA3 projects aimed at making progress through stakeholder cooperation through the model of the Stakeholder and Knowledge Hubs as observatories on IPM and its recognition, in line with the Proposal for a Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move'.
- Promotion of hosting of Long-Term IPM, as the mobility programme can be fostered only if the hosting capacity increases, and host schools are provided with the tools to welcome and support a pupil on IPM.
- Set up a European Commission Working group on Monitoring Individual Pupil Mobility as from 2026, in line with the call for monitoring learning mobility included in the Proposal for a Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move'.