



European  
Commission



# Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education

*Member States Analysis*

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Directorate B – Youth, Education and Erasmus+

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**Expert Network on  
Recognition of outcomes of  
learning periods abroad in  
general secondary education**  
*Member States Analysis*

edited by European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL) and  
European Institute of Education and Social Policy (EIESP)

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**Layout and graphics:** CESIE

### **Acknowledgements**

The 25 members of the Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education have provided an essential contribution to this Member states analysis:

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Ana Mayer, Directorate-General for Education (DGE), Ministry of Education, Portugal

Andreea Madar, European Educational Exchanges -Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU)

Arja Krauchenberg, European Parents Association (EPA), Austria

Beatriz Tourón and Sara Martínez Navarro, Erasmus+ National Agency SEPIE, Spain

Chrystalla (Stalo) Papageorgiou Afxentiou, Ministry of Education, Cyprus

Diana Saccardo, Ministry of Education, Italy

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Horacy Dębowski, Central Examination Board CKE, Poland

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Jens Vermeersch, Flemish community Education GO!, Belgium

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Liliane Esnault, Forum of European Regions for Research, Education and Training (FREREF), France

Lucija Karnelutti, Organising Bureau of School Students Unions (OBESSU), Slovenia

Margit Timakov, Estonian Association of Teachers, Estonia

Marta Kowalczyk-Walędziak, Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), Poland

Mojca Ifko Pinosa, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia

Nellie Tattersall, Post Primary Languages Ireland PPLI, Ireland

Nicolae Antoniu Pellegrini, Arad County School Inspectorate, Romania

Roberto Ruffino, Fondazione Intercultura, Italy

Sara Martín Díez and Maria Mélanía Llinás Pascua, IES Pérez Galdós Secondary High School, Spain

Teijo Koljonen, Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI, Finland

Tiziana Mussato, National Association of School Principals ANP, Italy

Uta Wildfeuer, Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch AJA, Germany

A special thanks to the European NGOs European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), European Educational Exchanges – Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU), the European Parents Association (EPA), European School Heads Association (ESHA), Organising Bureau of School Students Unions (OBESSU) for having provided information on the EU countries not covered by the members of the Expert Network.

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## Executive Summary

The 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further learning<sup>1</sup> is one of the building blocks of the European Education Area by 2025<sup>2</sup>. The recommendation notes that currently recognition of learning periods abroad in upper secondary education and training is underdeveloped and that practices vary significantly across countries<sup>3</sup>. It therefore calls on Member States to “...*make substantial progress towards **automatic mutual recognition** [so that...] the outcomes from a **learning period of up to one year abroad** in another Member State during upper secondary education ... are **recognised** in another, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieved learning outcomes in the country of origin, **provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula** in the country of origin.”*

The 2018 recommendation<sup>4</sup> highlights **three main principles** to facilitate mobility and recognition of learning periods abroad during upper secondary education and training. They are to:

- “support upper secondary education and training institutions on general principles and tools for recognition, for example through guidance material or training;
- promote the use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes-based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions...., and
- promote the benefits of mobility among upper secondary education and training institutions and learners and their families<sup>5</sup>”.

This member states analysis (MSA) sets out current recognition processes in the 27 EU Member States regarding general upper secondary education<sup>6</sup>, in consideration of the above principles. It identifies barriers and enablers to automatic mutual recognition and suggests potential ways forward at both European and national levels. It is the first of its kind to gather this level of detail on long-term individual pupil mobility<sup>7</sup> across Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, COM/2018/268 final, 22.05.2018.

<sup>3</sup> Technical specifications, EAC/10/2019 Preparatory Action: Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

<sup>4</sup> Council Recommendation (2018/C 444/01), op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary education is aimed at pupils between 14 and 18 years of age. In this paper, we refer to all students in this age group as general upper secondary pupils, including pupils in countries with single-structure primary education/ lower secondary education as well as countries where no distinction between lower and upper secondary education is made.

<sup>7</sup> Subsequent references to individual pupil mobility, pupil mobility or exchange refer to long-term study abroad periods (i.e. longer than 3 months).

The analysis also sets the foundation for ongoing cooperation and peer exchange among Member States, and for monitoring and evaluation of individual pupil mobility at both European and country levels.

The report is organised as follows:

**Section 1** provides an overview of the report and defines long-term individual pupil mobility programmes for which automatic mutual recognition is important.

**Section 2** sets out a brief history of individual pupil mobility in Europe and an overview of its providers, as well as an overview of relevant European Education Area (EEA) initiatives. Individual pupil mobility may be seen as a transformative experience in which pupils are fully immersed in another cultural context. While pupils follow curricula of the host school, they also develop intercultural, social, personal and language competences, which are at the centre of European citizenship, a key aim of the EEA.

**Section 3** sets out the methodology for the country mapping of current recognition processes. It describes the core research questions for the mapping exercise, research methods, and challenges and limitations faced.

**Section 4** which is at the heart of the paper, summarises the results of the country mapping exercise. It provides a typology of different recognition processes and identifies gaps between current practices in different countries and the longer-term aim of automatic recognition of learning outcomes of study abroad for upper secondary school pupils. The first part of this section looks at key data on pupils participating in mobility, the length of mobility, the age of pupils enrolling in mobility, and how sending and hosting schools support them. These data highlight the need to encourage greater take-up of mobility opportunities, to open access and to ensure that recognition is assured.

The section then goes on to examine approaches to recognition in different EU countries for different lengths of individual pupil mobility. A key finding is that there is currently a patchwork of approaches across countries, which creates challenges for schools, pupils and families navigating mobility and recognition processes. This may also create uncertainty as to whether pupils will be able to have the learning outcomes of their study period abroad recognised. Good practices, such as learning agreements which clearly spell out expectations for the pupil's learning period abroad and for recognition, are highlighted.

**Section 5** builds on the analysis of country reports to identify the common barriers and enablers to recognition. The different barriers identified again highlight the patchwork nature of recognition policies and practices, uncertainty for pupils as to whether their learning will be recognised; poorly aligned assessments; limited access to opportunities for mobility and recognition; and other disincentives. Enablers point to existing good practices and policies that address barriers and that may be adapted to different country contexts.

**Section 6** sets out policy suggestions on ways to move forward. It suggests concrete steps toward closing the gap between current practices and the goal for mutual automatic recognition at both national and European levels. At national level, these include suggestions to:

- **Bring together a broad set of stakeholders** to discuss the overall vision for individual pupil mobility within the European Education Area, and to develop a strategy appropriate for the country's context.
- Create guidelines, tools and training to support schools in the development of effective learning agreements and recognition procedures. Recognition processes need to be transparent, fair, consistent, and applicable to any individual pupil mobility programme. In particular, learning agreements can increase the transparency of expectations for pupil learning during mobility and recognition processes.
- **Further strengthen the learning outcomes approach** in general upper secondary school curricula. Efforts to ensure that learning outcomes set out in curricula are readily understood across borders may facilitate the development of learning agreements and recognition of learning.
- **Consider flexibility in assessment.** Pupils may demonstrate learning during mobility with thesis papers, or other projects, portfolios including artefacts from the learning period abroad, which may count toward the pupil's final marks and complement more 'traditional' assessments.
- **Consider fostering mobility in specific grades.** Timing of participation could be aligned so as not to interfere with critical learning periods and graduation requirements, and therefore promote mobility at a younger age.
- **Improve outreach and communication on the benefits of mobility for general upper secondary pupils.** This may lead to a virtuous cycle, with effective recognition processes leading to readiness of pupils to participate in mobility, and a critical mass of exchange pupils leading to readiness for automatic mutual recognition.
- **Support implementation.** Concrete steps and a clear timeline toward automatic recognition should be defined. In addition, sufficient resources will need to be allocated to ensure effective implementation of new policies and processes.

At the European level, suggestions are to:

- **Strengthen trust and transparency among countries**, first, as foreseen in the 2017 recommendation on automatic recognition, by developing "...a cooperation process aimed at building the necessary level of trust between Member States' different education and training systems."
- **Pilot automatic recognition processes through the Erasmus+ pupil mobility programme.** The Erasmus+ programme can serve as a vehicle for countries to trial automatic recognition in their country context, while being supported by a European-level programme.
- Create a European observatory on pupil mobility and promote the development of similar structures at country level.
- Further strengthen international links between associations for school principals, teachers, pupils, school inspectorates and other external school evaluators.

The **Annexes** to the report include the 28 abridged country reports<sup>8</sup>. Each report concludes with targeted suggestions on addressing barriers to automatic mutual recognition in line with the principles set in the Council Recommendation.

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<sup>8</sup> For each of the 27 Member States: Belgium has two country reports, one for Flanders (NL) and one for the French-speaking community (FR).

## Introduction

### Principles and objectives

The 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further learning<sup>9</sup> is one of the building blocks of the European Education Area by 2025<sup>10</sup>. The recommendation notes that, currently, recognition of learning periods abroad in upper secondary education and training is underdeveloped and that practices vary significantly across countries<sup>11</sup>. It therefore calls on Member States to “...*make substantial progress towards **automatic mutual recognition** [so that...] the outcomes from a **learning period of up to one year abroad** in another Member State during upper secondary education and training are **recognised** in another, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieved learning outcomes in the country of origin, **provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula** in the country of origin.*”

In addition, the recommendation<sup>12</sup> also highlights three main principles to facilitate mobility and to achieve automatic mutual recognition of learning periods abroad during upper secondary education and training. They are to:

- “support upper secondary education institutions on general principles and tools for recognition, for example through guidance material or training;
- promote the use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes- based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions...., and
- promote the benefits of mobility among upper secondary education institutions and learners and their families”<sup>13</sup>.

This Member States analysis (MSA) sets out the current recognition processes in the 27 EU Member States within the context of long-term individual pupil mobility in general upper secondary education<sup>14</sup> and in consideration of the above principles. As general education is the most frequently attended type of secondary education in most EU

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<sup>9</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Accompanying the Proposal for a Council Recommendation ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, Brussels, 22 May 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary education concern pupils between 14 and 18 years old attending general education. In some countries they might still attend single-structure primary education or lower secondary education, and in some other countries there is no distinction between lower and upper secondary education.

Member States, the findings of this analysis are relevant for most 14-18-year-old pupils in the EU<sup>15</sup>.

More, specifically, the objectives of this analysis are to:

- map policies and practices supporting learning abroad in general upper secondary education;
- identify common enablers and barriers to achieving automatic recognition of learning;
- analyse how the principles set in the Council Recommendation can be applied to national education systems and contexts in Member States; and
- outline potential ways forward for the adoption of policies on recognition adapted to each national context.

While the main focus of the analysis is on recognition processes, selected issues related to long-term individual pupil mobility are also addressed as to some extent they are intertwined. Indeed, opportunities for recognition may bolster pupil decisions to participate in long-term mobility.

This Member States analysis is one of several outputs of the Preparatory Action **Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education** (referred to as the 'project' in this report) which was launched in December 2019 and will conclude in December 2021<sup>16</sup>.

In the first phase, this project brought together individuals with expertise in recognition processes to create an international network (deliverable 1). Experts have contributed to the mapping of relevant policies and practices across the Member States and to the analysis (deliverable 2). Subsequent deliverables will build on this MSA, including the development of a proposal for a European framework on recognition (deliverable 3); preparation of content for an online information site (deliverable 4); design of a training model for education professionals on assessment of transversal competences developed in long-term individual pupil mobility (deliverable 5); and dissemination of outcomes (deliverable 6).

## The structure of the report

The Member States analysis is structured in six sections.

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<sup>15</sup> The percentage of pupils attending general upper secondary education in Europe, according to the statistics collected through the country reports, is 56.3 %. However, there are significant differences between countries, ranging from 28 % (Czechia) to 87.8 % (Luxembourg), and 16 countries having a percentage between 50 % and 87.8 %.

<sup>16</sup> EAC/10/2019 Preparatory Action: Expert Network on recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education, [https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/funding-opportunities/expert-network-on-recognition-of-outcomes-of-learning-periods-abroad-in-general-secondary-education\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/funding-opportunities/expert-network-on-recognition-of-outcomes-of-learning-periods-abroad-in-general-secondary-education_fr)

The next section, (**section 2**) provides a brief history of individual pupil mobility in Europe, and an overview of relevant European Education Area (EEA) initiatives. Pupil mobility was initially promoted as a way to support mutual understanding and peace. It is also seen as a transformative experience in which pupils are fully immersed in another culture. While pupils follow curricula of the host school, they also develop intercultural, social and personal and citizenship competences.

**Section 3** sets out the methodology for the country mapping of current recognition processes. It describes the core research questions for the mapping exercise, research methods, and challenges and limitations faced. This mapping exercise is the first of its kind to gather this level of detail on individual pupil mobility and recognition in each of the 27 EU Member States.

**Section 4** which is at the heart of the paper, summarises the results of the country mapping exercise. It provides a typology of different recognition processes and identifies gaps between current practices in different countries and the longer-term aim of automatic recognition of learning outcomes of study abroad for upper secondary pupils.

**Section 5** builds on section 4 to provide an analysis of the common barriers and enablers to recognition.

**Section 6** sets out policy suggestions on ways to move forward. It suggests concrete steps toward closing the gap between current practices and the goal for mutual automatic recognition at both national and European levels.

The **Annexes** to the report include the 28 abridged country reports<sup>17</sup>. Each report concludes with targeted suggestions on addressing barriers to automatic mutual recognition, in line with the principles set in the Council Recommendation. Within the spirit of the Open Method of Coordination<sup>18</sup>, these suggestions will need to be considered and debated at country level.

## A note on key terms: long-term individual pupil mobility and recognition

Every discipline uses terms in a specific way to communicate and clarify important concepts. Here we set out detailed definitions of “long-term individual pupil mobility” (later in the text referred also as “individual pupil mobility”, “mobility”, “exchange”, “learning period abroad”, “study abroad”), “recognition” and “readmission” and “reintegration” following mobility. These definitions also help to establish the scope of our research.

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<sup>17</sup> For each of the 27 Member States: Belgium has two country reports, one for Flanders (NL) and one for the French-speaking community (FR).

<sup>18</sup> The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is defined as “... an EU policy-making process, or regulatory instrument, formally initiated by the Lisbon European Council in 2000. The OMC does not result in EU legislation, but is a method of soft governance which aims to spread best practice and achieve convergence towards EU goals in those policy areas which fall under the partial or full competence of Member States....” Additional information on the OMC may be found here: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-AaG-542142-Open-Method-of-Coordination-FINAL.pdf>

**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)<sup>19</sup>;

In addition, individual pupil mobility programmes are temporary, and pupils return to their home country at the end of the exchange.

**Recognition of learning periods abroad of up to one school year in general upper secondary education** means that “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”<sup>20</sup>.

**Readmission** refers to the period following study abroad when the pupil rejoins peers of the same age in their sending school class. Unless there is a procedure in place for recognising the learning period abroad, the pupil needs to catch up with all the curriculum missed while abroad and pass tests based on the school curriculum of the given year in order to complete the school year successfully and then be admitted to the next grade.

**Reintegration** refers to the process which follows readmission or recognition of learning periods abroad. This includes the support teachers provide to the pupil to catch up with any content missed, and opportunities the pupil may have to share learning from their experience abroad with their class, and possibly with the whole school community.

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<sup>19</sup> adapted from UNESCO, Youth exchange: Meeting of Governmental and Non Governmental Officials Responsible for Programmes of Youth Exchange, 1987; M. Baiutti 2019 and 2021; European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme guide 2020 (Version 3), p.110 (Eligible participants: pupils aged 14 or older. Duration of activity: 2 to 12 months).

<sup>20</sup> adapted from the definition on automatic recognition in the European Commission Proposal for a Council recommendation “on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad”, COM(2018) 270 final, 22.05.2018.



## Background and context: long-term individual pupil mobility and relevant EEA initiatives

In this chapter, we first provide a brief history of long-term individual pupil mobility programmes which were created to support mutual understanding and peace. Since mobility programmes were first introduced in the 1940s, provision has grown exponentially, although pupil take-up of mobility opportunities is uneven across countries. A number of public, non-profit and for-profit providers<sup>21</sup> now offer a variety of programmes with different aims and different way of operating. The diversity of programmes ensures that pupils have a range of options for study abroad. At the same time, the patchwork nature of the sector means that pupils, parents and schools need access to good information on how to navigate different programme options. Opportunities to have the learning outcomes of study periods abroad are not always assured.

The European Education Area (EEA) builds on and continues the tradition of mobility as a way to promote mutual understanding, citizenship, European identity, tolerance and non-discrimination through education<sup>22</sup>. To foster intra-EU mobility, the EEA aims to improve “the overall coordination and coherence” of mobility and recognition, and the EU-level cooperation and opportunities for peer learning across countries to foster the transparency and trust necessary for EEA to succeed<sup>23</sup>.

### Background and context of long-term individual pupil mobility

#### History

**Individual pupil mobility programmes** pre-date the introduction of initiatives supporting a European Education Area by several decades. The initial impetus for these programmes was to **provide opportunities for youth across countries and cultures to meet and develop mutual understanding for a more just and peaceful world**. The European Education Area carries on this tradition.

The first secondary school pupil exchanges were introduced by educational and volunteer-led associations at the end of the 1940s<sup>24</sup>. They built on the experience of

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<sup>21</sup> Sometimes referred to as commercial pupil exchange organisations, or travel agencies.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “on achieving the European Education Area by 2025”, 30.09.2020, COM (2020) 625 final.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions “on achieving the European Education Area by 2025”, 30.09.2020, COM (2020) 625 final, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> In 1947 AFS Intercultural Programs, at the time American Field Service, introduced the individual pupil exchange programme between the US and the rest of the world. For more information: S. Chinzari, and R.

university student exchanges and short-term youth exchanges which were first introduced by non-profit organisations and governmental bodies in the 1930s<sup>25</sup>. Several pupil exchange programmes, targeted primarily at pupils in general upper secondary schools, were initiated by public institutions as a way of promoting cultural diplomacy<sup>26</sup>.

In the same period, the French–German Youth Office<sup>27</sup> was created to offer youth mobility programmes, including longer-term pupil exchanges. In addition, schools and regional authorities started school-to-school partnerships (including both group and individual pupil exchanges). Because language learning was the main motivation for study abroad, the United Kingdom, France and Germany were popular destinations in the mobility scene in Europe<sup>28</sup>, while the United States was the main destination outside of Europe. Catering to this need, several for-profit agencies were created to offer short-term programmes to support language learning.

In the 1970s, most of the long-term pupil exchange programmes were offered by non-profit organisations. Over time, these programmes have increasingly included a focus on intercultural education, and the introduction of intra-European exchanges (i.e. beyond France, Germany and the UK) have widened the spectrum of intercultural experiences.

In the 1980s, for-profit language programmes started offering long-term pupil exchange programmes, and their share of the market has grown significantly<sup>29</sup>. In addition, with the democratisation of opportunities for travel, there is some evidence that a number of pupils now organise their own study abroad, enrolling in a school in another country, without the involvement of a mobility provider or their school<sup>30</sup>.

In 2009, **an individual pupil mobility action was integrated within Comenius** – the EU funding programme for school education 2007-2013, following a pilot project led by the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)<sup>31</sup>. This action was then integrated in the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 as one of several mobility formats under “Strategic partnerships in the field of school education”. The new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 has just been launched, with a focus on increasing pupil mobility opportunities. **Individual pupil mobility has thus been taken up by the European Union as a tool for promoting European citizenship and internationalisation of school education, foreseeing direct cooperation between sending and host schools.**

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Ruffino, *Where the border stands – from war ambulances to intercultural exchanges*, HOEPLI, 2014, p. 90. Youth for Understanding started pupil exchange programmes in 1951, and Rotary in 1958.

<sup>25</sup> R. Ruffino, “Intercultural education and pupil exchanges,” in *Intercultural competence for all Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world*, Pestalozzi series No.2, Council of Europe Publishing, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO), <https://www.fgyo.org/>

<sup>28</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Ruffino, 2012. The two national observatories on individual pupil mobility (Scuole Internazionali in Italy and Weltweiser in Italy) note that a number of pupils enrol in a school abroad outside the framework of an exchange programme for periods up to a year. From anecdotal evidence, country experts report that parents arrange these stays abroad thanks to their international friendships and contacts. This is an unresearched phenomenon.

<sup>31</sup> Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility Pilot Project (2006-2008), Service Contract (n° 2006-2867/001-001).

Today, most pupil mobility takes place as a private initiative of pupils and their families through governmental programmes and pupil mobility organisations (see Tables 1 and 2). Over the years, **parents and sending schools have depended on the mobility provider** rather than the host school to ensure **the educational quality of the exchange programme**. Based on this reality, in the EU countries where recognition procedures have developed, there is no close cooperation between sending and host school (with the exception of France and the French–German bilateral agreements where recognition is based on a school-to-school partnership model).

Within the Erasmus+ programme, on the other hand, **schools are the organisers of individual pupil mobility**. Mobility, as the main tool to internationalise the school curriculum, becomes part of the school’s pedagogical offer. Consequently, **the issue of recognition of the learning period abroad has become a central concern for all EU countries**, including in countries that have no tradition of individual mobility as part of their secondary school education.

Although this analysis focuses on recognition of learning periods abroad within general upper secondary education, it should also be noted that individual pupil mobility is also practised in initial vocational education and training (IVET); usually, the same legislation that is used for recognition within general secondary education applies. However, the implementation is very different due to the fact that VET schools foresee the development of precise skills for obtaining the qualification which then provides access to the labour market. The duration of a mobility within IVET is usually 1-3 months and most mobility programmes within IVET include a traineeship, and therefore an additional party – the company where the pupil is placed – alongside the sending and host schools. In addition, it is common that these exchange programmes are organised with the support of a mobility provider specialised in IVET which supports the schools in contacts with the companies. These mobility providers are generally not the same as those offering individual pupil mobility programmes and that mostly target pupils in general secondary education (see 2.1.2. Providers). However, some pupils enrolled in IVET do access the mobility programmes offered by the providers presented in this analysis, although there are no data on how many of them do so.

Much work has been carried out by the EU on mobility and recognition in IVET in recent years thanks to the Erasmus+ programme, the ECVET system for recognition<sup>32</sup> and the IVET mobility scoreboard<sup>33</sup>. A separate study would be needed to explore how to take further steps towards automatic recognition in this sector, considering its specificities, and at the same time looking at synergies with progress in automatic recognition in general upper secondary education.

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<sup>32</sup> European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), <https://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/what-is-ecvet>,

European Commission, Study on EU VET instruments (EQAVET and ECVET), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/mobility-scoreboard>

## Providers

Individual pupil mobility programmes are offered by public, non-profit organisations, and for-profit agencies. For all providers, recognition of the learning outcomes of study periods abroad is based on the legislation of the sending country. Decisions on recognition as well as for readmission and reintegration are typically made by the sending school. Some mobility programmes may also set out requirements for recognition.

- **Public sector providers**, include schools which initiate partnerships with other schools independently or within specific bilateral or multilateral individual pupil mobility programmes, and governmental agencies which run programmes through country-level agreements. These programmes are usually scholarship-based, or participants pay only direct costs (e.g. travel).
  - **Schools** run individual pupil mobility programmes based on the **school-to-school partnership model**, where sending and host schools work together, with the aim of fostering international cooperation between their schools. Schools organise the mobility programme and recruit participants from among their pupils. School-to-school partnerships may be specific to the sending and host schools, or may be part of a multilateral programme (e.g. Erasmus+<sup>34</sup>, Nordic Cooperation<sup>35</sup>), or bilateral agreement (e.g. French–German youth cooperation<sup>36</sup>). Most of these exchanges last less than a full school year and **recognition of the learning period abroad is based on a learning agreement involving both sending and host school, which needs to meet the requirements for recognition set by the sending country, if any.**
  - **Governmental agencies**, organise individual pupil mobility programmes based on **bilateral or multilateral country-level agreements**<sup>37</sup>, which are not based on a school-to-school partnership model. These programmes have often been initiated as a tool for cultural diplomacy and governments may cooperate with pupil exchange organisations (for-profit and non-profit) to administer programmes<sup>38</sup>. Governmental agencies may develop general promotion campaigns targeted at both individual pupils and schools. **No special measures are put in place for recognition of the learning**

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<sup>34</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme guide 2020 (Version 3), 2021 (Version 1).

<sup>35</sup> The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, *About the Nordic Council of Ministers*, <https://www.norden.org/en/information/about-nordic-council-ministers>, Nordplus programme, *The Nordplus Handbook 2021: Individual student exchange – theoretical studies*, <https://www.nordplusonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/nordplus-handbog-2021-uk.pdf>

However, no individual pupil mobilities took place within Nordplus in 2018-2019, and this action is used rarely (Information received on 6.11.2020 from the Swedish Council for Higher Education coordinating the Nordplus programme).

<sup>36</sup> Brigitte Sauzay and Voltaire programmes managed by the French German Youth Office (OFAJ/DFJW), the agreement on recognition of a full school year abroad for French pupils spending the 10th grade in Germany.

<sup>37</sup> Ettarsprogrammen Bilateral exchanges between Sweden and Austria, France, Germany or Spain managed by the Swedish Council of Higher Education, Programmes funded by the USA Department of State: the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), the Flex Programme and the Kennedy Lugar YES programme.

<sup>38</sup> More information on placement organisations: <https://www.discoverflex.org/placement-organizations>, <https://www.yesprograms.org/about/placement-organizations>

**period abroad; pupils need to meet the requirements for recognition, if any, as set by the sending country.**

- **Non-profit organisations** may include volunteer-led organisations or foundations. In both cases, outreach is targeted at individual pupils rather than schools. Non-profit organisations might encourage sending and host schools to establish contact with each other.
  - **Foundations**<sup>39</sup>, usually offer scholarship-based programmes. The programmes identified through the MSA country mapping select high-performing pupils who aim to develop English language proficiency and academic excellence through study in North American countries. They run the programmes with the support of local mobility providers which have direct contacts with schools in the host country for placements.
  - **Volunteer-led organisations**<sup>40</sup> promote individual pupil mobility programmes as a tool for building a “more just and peaceful world” and are organised as international networks of similar organisations which have a shared governance and quality criteria. After the pupil has enrolled in a programme, the sending organisation and the sending schools develop a close relationship. The corresponding volunteer-led organisation in the host country finds a host family for the pupil. Based on the placement in the host family, a host school is then identified. Although a wide range of study abroad destinations is offered, most participants still choose host countries where the most popular foreign languages are spoken (see Tables 1,2,3,4). Participants pay fees of varying amounts, and several scholarships are also offered. **No special measures are put in place for recognition of the learning period abroad, and pupils need to meet the requirements for recognition set by the sending country, if any.** In some countries, pupils might get support from the non-profit organisation operating the programme<sup>41</sup>.
- **For-profit agencies** may be structured as national agencies with direct contacts with host schools abroad, or as international networks<sup>42</sup> (i.e. international agencies with branches in several countries). They aim to respond to market demand for foreign language learning, international experience and/or to help the pupil strengthen their curriculum vitae. The programmes are promoted directly to pupils and their families. They typically focus on destinations where popular languages are

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<sup>39</sup> Fundación Amancio Ortega, *Scholarships to the USA*, [www.becas.faortega.org](http://www.becas.faortega.org); ASSIST Scholarship programme (exchanges to the US from 12 EU countries), <https://www.assist scholars.org/en/index>

<sup>40</sup> E.g., AFS Intercultural Programs (<https://afs.org/>), Youth for Understanding (<https://yfu.org/>), Experiment in International Living (<http://federationeil.org/>), Rotary (<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/youth-exchanges>). ASSE International Student Exchange Programs is an international non-profit organisation, partnering up with for-profit agencies in some countries ([https://asse.com/about\\_RP/](https://asse.com/about_RP/))

<sup>41</sup> E.g. AFS Portugal, AFS Italy, accredited Expedis organisations in Belgium (FR).

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Education First-EF (<https://www.ef.com/wwen/>), STS (<https://www.sts-education.com/>), WEP (<https://www.wep.travel/>).

spoken (English, Spanish, French, German)<sup>43</sup>, and organise placements with paid host families or on school campuses. These **programmes are sometimes built around the criteria set by the sending country for obtaining recognition of the learning period abroad**, and pupils might be placed in schools abroad offering a curriculum similar to the one in the sending school in order to meet these criteria.

The diversity of providers ensures pupils have a great number of opportunities. At the same time, schools, pupils and their families are confronted with complexity when they decide to engage with long-term individual pupil mobility, and in some countries recognition differs between programmes.

## A unique learning process

Literature in the field<sup>44</sup> identifies intercultural competence<sup>45</sup> as the main learning outcome of individual pupil mobility programmes, which are educational projects combining at least four aspects – **international, intercultural, linguistic, curricular**<sup>46</sup> – for the development of European and global citizens<sup>47</sup>.

Ruffino describes study abroad as a potentially transformative experience for pupils<sup>48</sup>. During the exchange, pupils find themselves in a “minority” (minority in comparison with the culture of the host country), in a situation where emotions and intelligence are equally challenged. Ruffino suggests that an extended intercultural experience in another country is likely to lead to a new vision of the world, a new way of being: what the ancient Greeks called a *metanoia* – a conversion of the mind<sup>49</sup>. An extended experience, he argues, needs to be **long enough to lead participants through a “values crisis” and help them to overcome it**<sup>50</sup>: **becoming somewhat fluent in**

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<sup>43</sup> STS has 10 destinations in the EU, out of which German speaking countries (Austria, Germany), Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands: <https://www.sts-education.com/high-school/>,

EF has 4 destinations in the EU for its EF Language Year Abroad: France, Germany, Italy, Spain: <https://www.ef.edu/aya/>

WEP has 8 destinations in the EU: Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden), Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain.

<sup>44</sup> In addition to the expectation that pupils will develop competences in interdisciplinary areas such as history along with personal growth and proficiency in one or more languages and dialects, one commonly expected learning outcome of their study period abroad is that pupils become more interculturally competent (Bachner & Zeuschel, 2009a, 2009b; Baiutti, 2017, 2018, 2019; Barrett, 2018; Granata, 2015; Hansel & Grove, 1985, 1986; Roverselli & Paolone, 2012, 2013; Ruffino, 2012; Weichbrodt, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Deardorff, D., ‘Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization’, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10/3, 2006, p. 241-266.

<sup>46</sup> M. Baiutti, *Protocollo di valutazione Interculturale. Comprendere, problematizzare valutare la mobilità studentesca internazionale* (Intercultura Evaluation Protocol. Understanding, problematising and evaluating international student mobility), ETS, Pisa, 2019, p. 176.

<sup>47</sup> Ruffino, 2012. In addition, the *National Observatory on internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility in Italy-8<sup>th</sup> report* (2016) highlights that 79 % of former AFS participants recognise their belonging to the European Union vs. 40 % at national level. This finding is based on 900 interviews with former AFS participants who went abroad between 1977 and 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Baiutti, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Ruffino, 2012, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

**the host country language is part of this learning journey.** Ruffino also emphasises that for this *metanoia*<sup>51</sup> to happen, a **well-developed learning plan is essential**<sup>52</sup>.

The opportunity for the pupil to profit from the mobility experience may be enhanced through the support of the sending and host organisations (schools and pupil mobility providers) and an assigned mentor at the school. In 2006 the European Union adopted the **European Quality Charter for Mobility**<sup>53</sup> which includes key principles to support mobility as a quality educational experience including, i.e. a learning plan, mentorship, recognition, reintegration and evaluation. These principles were further developed in the publication *Principles for Quality in Learning Mobility in the Youth Field*<sup>54</sup>.

***Box 1 – Disconnecting from the home country as an essential element of quality learning mobility***

Recognition systems that require pupils to keep up with the homework from their sending school can be very challenging. Pupils on exchange are required to have exceptional stress-management skills to deal with the integration in a new culture, a new language, a new school – and following the sending school curriculum at the same time adds to this stress. In addition, when pupils face challenges in integrating in the host country – which is part of the learning process – they have the tendency to re-connect with their comfort zone, namely home. This interferes with the ‘values crisis’<sup>55</sup> and reflections which are key for the development of intercultural competence. Therefore, it may be important to limit the extent to which they contact family and friends while abroad, while regular communication with the contact teacher in the sending school is encouraged. In this era of social media, disconnecting may be extremely difficult.

**Source: Compiled by the authors.**

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<sup>51</sup> a conversion of the mind.

<sup>52</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 “on transnational mobility within the Community for Education and Training Purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility”, (2006/961/EC), OJ L 394, 30.12.2006.

<sup>54</sup> Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, *Principles for Quality in Learning Mobility in the Youth Field*, Council of Europe and European Commission, June 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

## Initiatives to support progress toward a European Education Area by 2025 (general secondary school level)

The European Education Area (EEA) is the successor to the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2010 and ET2020) which supported peer learning across countries, and the collection of internationally comparable data for the development of a common knowledge base<sup>56</sup>. Among the aims of the EEA are to intensify cooperation by placing a stronger emphasis on learning mobility, including through automatic recognition of learning periods abroad, an extended Erasmus+ programme, and enhanced language learning opportunities (supporting more young people to speak at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue)<sup>57</sup>. Opportunities to strengthen intercultural awareness and other transversal competences are also highlighted in various EEA official documents.

Recommendations and communications with particular relevance for mobility and recognition at general secondary school level mobility include:

- The 26 November 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad<sup>58</sup>.
- The 22 May 2018 Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning. This 2018 recommendation updates and revises the recommendation which was first introduced in 2006<sup>59</sup>.
- The 22 May 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching<sup>60</sup>.
- The 30 September 2020 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025<sup>61</sup>.

Below, elements with particular relevance for mobility and recognition for general secondary school pupils are set out.

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<sup>56</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions "on achieving the European Education Area by 2025", op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 "on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad", op. cit.

<sup>59</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 "on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning", OJ C 189, 4.6.2018.

<sup>60</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 "on Promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching", OJ C 195, 7.6.2018.

<sup>61</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025", op. cit.



## The Council Recommendation on automatic recognition

The Council Recommendation on automatic recognition for the purpose of further learning covers general upper secondary education, vocational education and training and higher education sectors. In regard to general secondary education, Member States are urged to make substantial progress by 2025 so that, as noted above, "...the outcomes from a learning period of up to one year abroad in another Member State during upper secondary education and training are recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieve learning outcomes in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin"<sup>62</sup>.

The recommendation highlights the key role of trust and transparency for automatic mutual recognition of the learning outcomes of study periods abroad and urges Member States to exchange information and support peer learning on quality assurance systems in school education "...while fully respecting different national approaches in quality assurance"<sup>63</sup>.

The recommendation also urges the development of general principles and tools and guidance material and /or training to support recognition processes, as well as the "use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes-based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions"<sup>64</sup>. These may support a more systematic and equitable approach to recognition – thus increasing trust and transparency of processes (see Box 2).

In addition, point 12 of the recommendation highlights the EU role to "to initiate closer cooperation and exchange of practices among Member States at upper secondary education level to achieve the objectives of this recommendation to foster transparency and build mutual trust in school education systems across the Union" (e.g. through the Expert Network brought together by this Preparatory Action), and in improving the evidence base by collecting and disseminating data on the extent and nature of recognition cases for the purpose of this Recommendation". Regular progress reports toward automatic recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad are to be made<sup>65</sup>.

### **Box 2 – Trust and transparency among secondary school systems in Europe for recognising learning periods abroad**

Trust in the quality and level of qualifications of schools and school systems abroad is essential to support automatic recognition of learning outcomes during study abroad. Given the relatively young age of pupils in secondary

<sup>62</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 "on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad", op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 "on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad", op. cit., p. 4.

education, well-being and safety of pupils while abroad will also be a condition upon which trust is based. Pupils (and their parents) need to be confident that the school abroad will take care of the pupil (his/her well-being) and will offer a high-quality curriculum that is recognised by the sending school. Similarly, school staff in the pupil's home country need to trust the quality of teaching abroad to be able to accept the pupil's learning abroad without many additional exams, administrative checks of school attendance, or by requiring the pupil to repeat a grade.

Where there is no trust, these type of 'transaction costs' tend to be high (see Ehren, 2021) and delay a pupil's progression in school, while also creating a high administrative burden for all parties involved. Such costs will likely reduce the willingness of pupils to learn abroad. Preventing such transaction costs thus requires the sending school to recognise the learning abroad; and it will only do so if it has confidence in the quality of the teaching abroad, values the pupil's learning in another country and the outcomes achieved there.

Trust tends to develop over time when two parties have a shared and transparent value framework and act in a competent, benevolent, honest and just manner (Gillespie, 2015, p. 226). Following this logic, the process of automatic recognition will benefit from a shared set of criteria of what constitutes high-quality teaching, learning outcomes and well-being and when there is a quality assurance mechanism in place which indicates that the school abroad is meeting these criteria. Multilateral frameworks which regulate mobility, quality assure the learning abroad and foster cooperation between sending and host schools can support the building of trust in individual pupil mobility programmes. Over time, efforts to build mutual trust support progress toward automatic mutual recognition of learning outcomes.

**Source: Compiled by the authors, Gillespie (2015), Ehren, M. (2021).**

## **The Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, and the learning outcomes approach**

The 2018 Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning which updates and replaces the initial 2006 recommendation, is seen as central to support for mobility and automatic recognition within the EEA. The recommendation is intended to serve as a reference framework for countries to support lifelong learning, and defines key competences "...necessary for employability, personal fulfilment and health, active and responsible citizenship and social inclusion<sup>66</sup>". It also introduces the shared language of competences across countries.

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<sup>66</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 "on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning", op. cit., p. 5.

The recommendation defines competence as "... a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes<sup>67</sup>". The recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning sets out eight key competences (several of which are further defined in constituent frameworks<sup>68</sup>), including:

- Literacy competence
- Multilingual competence
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Digital competence
- Personal, social and learning to learning competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence

The eight key competences are seen as equally important. Halász and Michel observe that the first three competences do not lead to very different interpretations in different Member States<sup>69</sup>. The remaining five are frequently considered as transversal, and indeed may be interpreted very differently<sup>70</sup>. The Council Recommendation on key competences highlights that the eight competences "...can be applied in many different contexts and in a variety of combinations. They overlap and interlock; aspects essential to one domain will support competence in another. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity, and intercultural skills are embedded throughout the key competences"<sup>71</sup>.

Most of the Member States have made progress in integrating competence-based approaches in their curricula. While the Council Recommendation and its reference framework serve as an important guide, countries have adapted and (re-) defined competence-based approaches to their own contexts and their priorities of pupil learning. Thus, while countries are focused on shared principles of the European recommendation, there is a great deal of diversity in how they interpret principles and set standards for pupil learning within national curricula, as well as how they define specific competences (including transversal competences)<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 "on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning", op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Constituent frameworks include: Multilingual (the Common European Framework of References for Languages CEFR), Citizenship (Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture RFCDC), Digital (DigComp), Entrepreneurship (EnterComp) and Personal, social and learning to learn (LifeComp).

<sup>69</sup> G. Halász, and A. Michel, "Key competences in Europe: Interpretation, policy formulation and implementation", *European Journal of Education*, 46/3, 2011, p. 289 [NB: While the 2018 Council recommendation made some changes to competences set out in 2006, the first three competences continue to be primarily defined within subject areas, and interpretations do not differ to a significant extent across countries].

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Council Recommendations of 22 May 2018 "on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning", op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Mapping data collected through the Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education (unpublished).

Within school curricula, aims for pupils' competence development are typically set out as intended learning outcomes<sup>73</sup>. Learning outcomes are defined as "... statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence"<sup>74</sup>. In turn, pupils may demonstrate competence by applying learning outcomes – drawing on knowledge, skills and attitudes – in a specific context (education, work, personal or professional development)<sup>75</sup>. The context of study abroad also offers unique opportunities for pupils to demonstrate competences within the context of another culture.

Descriptions of intended learning outcomes allow for more effective cross referencing of diverse school curricula. In other words, schools that develop learning agreements can more easily identify commonalities and differences in intended learning outcomes within their respective curricula. This approach can potentially support the goal of automatic recognition of study abroad, allowing schools to identify whether the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the school curricula in the country of origin", and where pupils may need to catch up with peers on return to their sending school (without having to repeat a year).

At the same time, several authors have cautioned against narrow interpretations of the learning outcomes and competences<sup>76</sup> which focus on observable, easy-to-measure behaviours. The definition of competence proposed by Hoskins and Deakin Crick<sup>77</sup> takes an explicitly holistic approach:

"Competence is a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world in a particular domain. One's achievement at work, in personal relationships or in civil society are not based simply on the accumulation of knowledge stored as data, but as a combination of this knowledge with skills, values, attitudes, desires and motivation and its application in a particular human setting at a particular point in a trajectory in time. Competence implies a sense of agency, action and value" (p. 122).

This perspective supports the view that the primary aim and value of study abroad is as a transformative experience, where learners may broaden their social identity, values and relationships<sup>78</sup>. It may also support recognition of the added value of learning in a very different culture and context.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms*, 2nd edn., Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 164, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4117>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup> S. Allais, 'Claims vs practicalities: lessons about using learning outcomes', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 25, No 3, 2012, p. 331, S. Allais, *Selling out education: national qualifications frameworks and the neglect of knowledge*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, 2014, G. Campbell, *Understanding and learning outcomes*, 2014, <http://www.gardnercampbell.net/blog1/?p=2239>

<sup>77</sup> B. Hoskins, and R. Deakin Crick, "Competences for learning to learn and active citizenship: different currencies or two sides of the same coin?", *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 45, No 1, Part II, 2010, p. 121.

<sup>78</sup> Cedefop, *The application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe: A comparative perspective*, Publications office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016.

The learning outcomes approach may also be used to demonstrate learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts<sup>79</sup>. This opens up possibilities for recognition of learning experiences beyond the school context during learning periods abroad, as pupils enhance language competence, personal and social competences, intercultural competence and so on through participation in non-formal education activities and through interactions with people in the hosting environment (see 2.1.3).

**Box 3: The European Qualifications Framework and the learning outcomes approach to support transparency and comparability of qualifications**

In the 1990s, several countries had begun to introduce the learning outcomes approach to their national curricula, setting out definitions of what learners should know and be able to do on completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes were intended to improve transparency of learning in individual subjects and for overall qualifications. However, the work across countries was fragmented and comparability was thus limited<sup>80</sup>.

Work toward the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) began in 2004 in response to the requests of Member States, social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference tool. Following a process of stakeholder consultation and expert input, the EQF was formally adopted in 2008.

The EQF sets out eight reference levels based on the learning outcomes approach and covering the entire span of qualifications for all levels of education and training<sup>81</sup>. The EQF and subsequent introduction of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), which are referenced to the EQF have supported a more systematic shift to learning outcomes across the Member State and improved the comparability of learning outcomes<sup>82</sup>.

**The Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching**

The Council Recommendation on promoting common values highlights the importance of mobility and cross-border contacts for pupils to “experience European identity”, and notes that all categories of learners should benefit. The recommendation highlights that “[i]ntroducing a European dimension of teaching should aim to help learners experience European identity in all its diversity and strengthen a European positive and inclusive

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<sup>79</sup> Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms*, 2nd edn., Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 164.

<sup>80</sup> Cedefop, *The application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe: A comparative perspective*, Publications office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> European Commission (2008). “The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)”. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

<sup>82</sup> Cedefop (2016). Op. cit.

sense of belonging complementing their local, regional and national identities and traditions. It is also important for promoting a better understanding of the Union as well as an understanding of its Member States”<sup>83</sup>. Specific programmes, such as the Erasmus+ mobility programmes for school staff exchanges, support these aims.

## The Communication from the Commission on achieving the European Education Area by 2025

The 30 September 2020 Communication on achieving the EEA follows on the Commission’s agreement to a recovery package to counter the impact of COVID-19 and is complementary to the 22 May 2018 Communication launching the European Education Area initiative<sup>84</sup>.

Investments in quality education are seen as a vital part of recovery. The communication reinforces priorities for the EEA, including: the importance for learners to master transversal competences, such as critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity and civic engagement through transdisciplinary, learner-centred and challenge-based approaches, as well as digital skills. The communication also emphasises the importance of learner and teacher mobility and cooperation across countries to enhance education quality.

Barriers to achieving the EEA vision are noted, including: insufficient information and guidance on opportunities for mobility; language and/or accessibility challenges; financial obstacles; and, lack of full recognition of learning outcomes of study abroad.

Importantly, the communication notes the need to identify targets and indicators to guide and monitor progress toward the EEA. The Commission is to work with Member States, stakeholders, experts and other partners to identify appropriate indicators not already covered in international data collection (NB: this includes data on individual pupil mobility.)

## Summary

This chapter has provided a background on the development and growth of individual pupil mobility programmes since they first emerged in the 1940s. The sector is diverse, with an array of non-profit, for-profit and public sector providers.

An early and perennial aim of many pupil mobility programmes has been to nurture mutual understanding of young people from different countries. Scholarship on intercultural learning has also emphasised study abroad as a “transformative experience” for the pupil. Pupil exchanges have been considered as a unique way to trigger **intercultural awareness, social and personal development, as well as**

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<sup>83</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 “on Promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching”, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, op. cit.

**other transversal competences such as critical thinking creativity, civic engagement,** and so on, further emphasising the importance of learning outcomes beyond formal curricula.

The introduction of individual pupil mobility within Comenius and then the Erasmus+ mobility programmes in the early 2000s has helped to anchor **individual pupil mobility as a core approach to support pupils in developing a strong sense of European identity**<sup>85</sup>.

The EEA builds on this tradition and aims to enhance cooperation through automatic recognition of learning periods abroad, an extended Erasmus+ programme, and enhanced language learning opportunities<sup>86</sup>. Opportunities to strengthen intercultural awareness and other transversal competences are also highlighted in various EEA official documents.

The 2018 Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning is a particularly important shared reference for countries. **General secondary school curricula which define intended learning outcomes (including key competences) provide a shared language and may facilitate automatic recognition of learning outcomes that are “broadly in line”**. At the same time, the diversity of curricula and of education cultures are seen as a way to enrich pupil learning. This has implications for how these dimensions of the study abroad experience may be assessed and valued.

EEA recommendations may support recognition processes and are relevant for all providers of individual pupil mobility programmes. However, efforts to support recognition in line with principles of the 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition within and across providers in different sectors will require coherent frameworks. Moreover, pupils, parents and schools need access to good information on how to navigate different programme options.

The next chapter sets out the scope and methodology of the country reports on which this Member States analysis is based. The focus is on those elements that are most essential to recognition processes across all Member States.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions “on achieving the European Education Area by 2025”, op. cit.

## Scope and methodology of the mapping exercise

This chapter describes the scope and methodology for the analysis which is at the heart of this report (section 4). It is based primarily on country reports drafted by the Expert Network made up of 25 experts representing 15 countries, and additional 12 country experts involved in the project. The aim has been to identify gaps between current country approaches to the recognition of the learning outcomes of learning periods abroad for general upper secondary school pupils, and long-term aims of the European Education Area for automatic mutual recognition.

### The questionnaire

A common questionnaire was developed by the core project team in consultation with the Expert Network and approved by the European Commission (see Annex 1).

Identified country experts – within the Network and beyond- gathered information through desk research, interviews with key informants (i.e. Ministries of Education, school principals, representatives of pupil mobility providers), websites of individual pupil mobility providers. The information gathered concerns individual pupil mobility and recognition of learning periods abroad within public schools, for the vast majority. The reference period for data collected is the 2018/2019 school year.

The country experts responded to questions on the following core elements:

- **The structure of the general secondary education system**, including how different secondary school systems organise studies (core requirements, learning pathways, etc.), the age at which pupils begin upper secondary school<sup>87</sup>, and the percentage of pupils in general secondary education, namely pupils potentially interested in individual pupil mobility and its recognition.
- **Procedures for graduation and certification.** School leaving examinations are considered as having ‘high stakes’ (or significant consequences) because they affect pupils’ opportunities to continue in higher education and/or to pursue their desired career path. This element provides insight on potential disincentives for pupils to study abroad in their final year(s) of upper secondary school, during which they are attempting to complete graduation requirements.
- **Individual pupil mobility**, including the point(s) at which pupils are most likely to participate in study abroad during their secondary school education and for how long. The country reports also indicate whether data on individual pupil mobility are collected at the national level (or through a non-governmental system) and provide an estimate of the pupils in individual mobility in the school year 2018/2019<sup>88</sup> based on available data<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> In some countries, 14-year-old pupils participating in study abroad are still in lower secondary school or single structure education.

<sup>88</sup> The reference school year for the data on individual pupil mobility in Germany is 2017/2018.

<sup>89</sup> These data aim to provide a picture of the overall scale of individual pupil mobility in Europe, and therefore of how many pupils every year are involved in processes of recognition of learning periods abroad in general



- **The status of pupils going abroad** as well as the **status of hosted pupil** provide information on whether, in different countries, pupils are officially registered in the host and/or sending school, and whether the school received funding for the pupil. Their status may determine whether:
  - the pupils' learning outcomes during the study period abroad may be recognised (e.g. in some countries, hosted pupils who are not registered will not have their learning recognised in their home country).
  - sending and host schools receive funding for exchange pupils (thus creating incentives or disincentives for hosting pupils or for the sending school to approve the study period abroad).
  - the pupil is guaranteed re-enrolment in their sending school upon return (thus creating a disincentive for pupils to risk losing their place in the school).
  - the host school welcomes pupils for 'study abroad' at any point in the final school year (during which most pupils are preparing for their school leaving examinations). The questionnaires investigated also on whether pupils on mobility can take the end-of-school examination in the host country.
  
- **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**, including any agreements related to expectations for pupils learning during the study abroad period, and steps required for recognition of learning outcomes upon return. In most countries recognition procedures for shorter periods (2-3 months) are different than those applied for a full school year abroad. In addition, different procedures might be applied depending on the type of individual pupil mobility programme (e.g. organised within a school-to-school partnership or by a private organisation). Examination requirements for returning pupils to identify any gaps to be addressed in order to meet school leaving requirements are also noted.

In addition to the above core elements, the country experts were asked to provide information relevant to fulfilment of the 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition, including on:

- **Existing measures for internationalisation of general secondary schools**, which may help to promote the values and aims of the European Education Area for all pupils, including those who do not participate in study periods abroad. Efforts to support internationalisation may include support for multilingual competences/teaching of subjects in a foreign language (Content and Language Integrated Learning, or CLIL)<sup>90</sup>, exposure to diverse cultures through intercultural awareness workshops and other initiatives, including those promoting teacher and school leader mobility (e.g. Erasmus+).

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secondary education. To provide an estimate of the annual number of pupils in individual mobility, the core project team has decided to collect data of only one school year as it sufficient for the purpose of this research. It is not the objective of this analysis to reflect on the evolution of the phenomenon over time and the causes of increase or decrease of mobility. In addition, non-profit pupil mobility providers report that numbers have been quite stable over the last decade (until the school year 2018/2019), apart from Italy where Scuole Internazionali observes an increase of 191 % between 2009 and 2019 and in Germany where there has been a decrease from 21 350 in 2010/2011 to 16 900 in 2018/2019.

<sup>90</sup> CLIL is an approach where pupils learn a subject and a second language at the same time.

- **Progress toward design and implementation of competence-based curricula and assessment of transversal competences for general upper secondary school.** The EU Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning<sup>91</sup> (first introduced in 2006 and updated in 2018) is a major initiative to support the European Education Area. The recommendation serves as a reference framework for countries developing their own competence-based curricula. As such, it also supports countries to work toward broad common aims and may serve as a baseline for comparison of curricula and intended learning outcomes. Country experts provided information on curricular reforms integrating competence-based approaches.
- **Opportunities to earn school credit or recognition for non-formal and informal learning.** These were of interest because study periods abroad offer many opportunities for non-formal and informal learning in daily life and through extra-curricular activities. It is also an opportunity to recognise the specific value added of learning outcomes related to pupils' personal development and maturity and their intercultural competence during study periods abroad<sup>92</sup>.
- **Procedures for recognition of learning periods abroad within initial VET (IVET) in secondary school.** These are more advanced than in general upper secondary education thanks, in part, to the development of the ECVET Framework (first launched in 2009<sup>93</sup> and revised and updated in 2020<sup>94</sup>). Although experience with recognition in IVET learning abroad may be of interest for developing policies for automatic recognition of study periods abroad in general secondary education, the data collected was not included in the country reports<sup>95</sup>.

Between March and May 2020, the core project team pre-populated country questionnaires based on existing references, including the study by EFIL "Recognition of School Study Periods Abroad in Europe: An Overview and Policy Recommendations"<sup>96</sup>, the country profiles developed within the "Pilot Action Comenius Individual Pupil"<sup>97</sup>, as well as existing relevant European-level surveys and studies, including the

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<sup>91</sup> Council Recommendations of 22 May 2018 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, op. cit.

<sup>92</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014.

<sup>93</sup> The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 "on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)", OJ C 155, 8.7.2009.

<sup>94</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 "on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience" OJ C 417, 2.12.2020.

<sup>95</sup> Information on IVET was collected in the first rounds of country mapping. The final abridged country reports do not include these data, however, as it was assessed that the data was not systematically collected and would not provide additional insights for improving policies on recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary education.

<sup>96</sup> E. Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning, EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Pilot Action Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility (2006-2008), Comenius country profiles-legislative framework.

Eurydice/Cedefop IVET mobility scoreboard<sup>98</sup> and related reports, and selected Eurydice comparative reports<sup>99</sup>. Between May and September 2020, country experts checked and completed the country questionnaires with additional up-to-date country-level data. To do this, the country experts contacted relevant organisations and institutions in their country to obtain data and followed up with email communication and phone interviews. The core team furthermore, engaged in dialogue with each of the country experts to ensure correct understanding of the information collected.

The country questionnaires included a glossary of terms used and an explanation of the aims of each question to ensure that all country experts had a shared understanding. The template of the country questionnaire and glossary may be found in Annexes 2 and 3.

The authors of this report, working closely with the country experts, drafted the country reports (see Annex 3) based on the answers received in the questionnaires.

Abridged versions of the country reports (Infopacks) are available on a dedicated section of the School Education Gateway<sup>100</sup>, an online platform for school education in Europe. The aim of the Infopacks is to provide information for different stakeholders, including pupils interested in a study period abroad, their parents, teachers, school principals, and administrators engaged in recognition of study periods abroad.

## Challenges and limitations

The mapping exercise completed for the MSA is the first of its kind to gather this level of detail on individual pupil mobility and recognition in each of the 27 EU Member States. The country reports, which are based on best-available data, may thus serve as a baseline for mapping future developments in secondary pupil mobility and recognition. However, it should also be noted that country experts faced challenges in finding some of the information:

- **Data on the number of participants in individual pupil mobility programmes are incomplete.** Data sharing by public, non-profit and for-profit agencies which run mobility programmes varies (with for-profit – and some non-profit – agencies declining to share these proprietary data). In addition, mobility data within school-to-school partnerships outside the framework of official programmes and self-organised exchanges are not tracked. The conclusions and recommendations of the report are thus based on best-available data, but gaps in information on the scale of individual pupil mobility need to be taken into account.
- **Research and evaluation of effective mobility and recognition processes and tools for secondary school pupils are underdeveloped.** As compared to the

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<sup>98</sup> Cedefop, *Mobility Scoreboard database, Country fiches, Part 3. Recognition of learning outcomes*, 2019, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches>

Eurydice, *Scoreboard Indicators in Initial Vocational Education and Training*, <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/mobility-scoreboard/ivet/scoreboard-indicators>

<sup>99</sup> Eurydice, *National Education Systems* (2021) [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en).

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm>

higher education and VET sectors, academic and policy researchers have paid little attention to “what works” in terms of secondary school mobility and recognition, for whom and under what conditions. Concerns regarding equity of opportunity to participate in mobility have received little attention. Nor have countries invested in evaluations to track implementation of relevant policies and their impact on pupil learning outcomes, systematically documented practitioner knowledge on effective approaches<sup>101</sup> (i.e. the experiences of mobility providers, schools), or tracked the share of pupils who have learning outcomes of study periods abroad recognised.

- **In most of the Member States there is no designated agency** with expertise on secondary school mobility and recognition policies and practices. Country experts thus needed to consult with a variety of sources to gather relevant information requested in the country questionnaire (the AJA in Germany<sup>102</sup> and the Fondazione Intercultura in Italy<sup>103</sup> are two exceptions).
- **Country experts faced some difficulties in obtaining information from Ministries of Education**, which were busy responding to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on schools.

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<sup>101</sup> Specific studies have been conducted by practitioners, e.g. Ruffino, R., *Mobility of Secondary School Pupils and Recognition of Study Periods Spent Abroad – A Survey*, EFIL, 2004; EFIL, *Study on Intra European Programs*, EFIL, 1974, but more regular and systematic approaches are needed.

<sup>102</sup> Arbeitskreis Jugendaustausch -AJA (Working group for non-profit youth exchange), <https://aja-org.de/>

<sup>103</sup> Fondazione Intercultura (Intercultura Foundation), <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org/en/>

## Analysis of individual pupil mobility and its recognition

In this chapter we provide an analysis of the data collected through the country reports and complementary research conducted by the authors. The data collected provide insights on different aspects of individual pupil mobility which influence recognition, and information on how recognition procedures are applied in different countries across Europe.

The first section of the chapter looks at key data on pupil participation in individual mobility: the length of mobility, the age of pupils enrolling in mobility, and how sending and hosting schools support them. Findings based on these data highlight the need to encourage greater take-up of mobility opportunities, to open access and to ensure that recognition is assured.

The second section of the chapter examines approaches to recognition in different EU countries, while also looking at differences on the basis of the length of stay. A key finding is that there is currently a patchwork of approaches across countries. The diversity of approaches and lack of information create challenges for schools, pupils and families navigating mobility and recognition processes. This may also create uncertainty as to whether pupils will be able to have the learning outcomes of their study abroad recognised. Good practices, such as learning agreements which clearly spell out expectations for the pupil's study abroad and for recognition, are highlighted. Support for pupils to ensure they benefit from the exchange and can manage any challenges they encounter is also important.

### Individual pupil mobility today

In this section we provide an overview of:

- Estimates on the number of pupils enrolling in a long-term individual mobility
- Take-up of individual pupil mobility
- Age and grade
- The length of mobility
- The sending and hosting school practices towards exchange pupils

The section concludes with a discussion of implications of the above elements for effective automatic recognition of learning periods abroad.

For more details on the specificities of each country on these aspects, the individual abridged country reports are included in Annex 3.

## Estimates on the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility

In this section, we provide a provisional estimate of the number of pupils participating in a learning period abroad, and the countries where there is greater take-up. The numbers provided are only a partial view of overall individual pupil mobility in the EU as in most countries there is no systematic gathering of these data.

According to the partial data collected through country questionnaires, at least **35 297 pupils from EU countries**<sup>104</sup> have been on a mobility of between 2 months and a full school year to another country in Europe or beyond during general upper secondary education in the 2018/2019 school year.

The data collected for this analysis reflect to some extent the reality of non-profit and governmental programmes<sup>105</sup>. For most countries the data from the for-profit sector and of pupils going abroad through school-to-school partnerships or organising the mobility by themselves are not available. The phenomenon of study abroad is thus much wider than has been captured in the mapping exercise.

Nevertheless, some overall estimates on the actual size of individual pupil mobility can be derived from the data collected from the non-profit and governmental sectors, and data available for the for-profit sector in nine countries.

The two countries which systematically collect data (Germany and Italy) account for 27 100 pupils (16 900 pupils from Germany<sup>106</sup> and 10 200 from Italy<sup>107</sup>) of the 35 297 total. In these two countries, individual pupil mobility is popular, and the percentage of programmes offered by the non-profit and governmental sectors amounts to about 21-24 % of the market share, with the remaining 76-79 % offered by for-profits, school-to-school partnerships beyond set exchange programmes<sup>108</sup>, or pupils organising their stay abroad independently<sup>109</sup>. In other countries where the number of pupils enrolling with for-profits has been made available for this report (although not complete) this

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<sup>105</sup> For the 25 countries out of 27 where there is no systematic gathering of data on individual pupil mobility, the core project team has gathered data from the main non-profit organisations (AFS, YFU) and publicly funded programmes (Erasmus+, Brigitte Sauzay and Voltaire programmes managed by the French-German Youth Office, Ettarsprogrammen in Sweden, the programmes managed by the American Councils for the US Department of State). We also gathered some data from national non-profit organisations in specific countries. One of the main non-profit organisations, Rotary, collects data only from the hosting perspective. In addition, there can be national non-profit exchange organisations which were not mapped or which were contacted and did not provide data.

<sup>106</sup> Weltweiser, 'Weltweiser studie 2020: Schüleraustausch High School Auslandsjahr' (Weltweiser study: Statistics, data & facts on student exchanges), *Weltweiser*, Bonn, upcoming in 2021; Weltweiser is a for-profit organisation providing information on learning abroad programmes in Germany.

<sup>107</sup> Osservatorio Nazionale – Internazionalizzazione delle scuole e mobilità studentesca (National Observatory on Internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility), <https://www.scuoleinternazionali.org/>, run by Fondazione Intercultura in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and IPSOS.

<sup>108</sup> Excluding Erasmus+ and French-German exchanges managed by the French-German Youth Office.

<sup>109</sup> In Italy, the National Observatory on Internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility estimates that 40 % of pupils go abroad of their own initiative.

amounts to an average of 58 %<sup>110</sup>. Taking the average between the 79% share in countries where mobility is most popular, and the 58% share in the other countries, we estimate that 63% of individual pupil mobility programmes are operated by for-profit providers.

Since the country experts mapped the existence of a number of for-profit organisations operating in the sector in all the EU countries where individual pupil mobility programmes are offered, we can project an extra 63% of individual pupil mobilities for all remaining EU countries which are not tracked. If we consider that just over 8 000 pupil mobilities are tracked in the other EU countries, a further 21 621 pupils need to be added to the total of 35 297 mentioned above.

Based on these calculations and assumptions, we may realistically **estimate that at least 56 918 pupils from the EU enrol each year in a long-term individual pupil mobility**. This estimate is close to the one AFS Intercultural Programs made in 2014<sup>111</sup> which counted between 60 000 to 70 000 pupils enrolled in semester or full school year programmes in that year.

The data collected show that of the 35 297 pupils enrolling in an individual pupil mobility, only 7 585 **went to another EU country**, namely **21.4 %**<sup>112</sup>. Overall, the **USA is the most popular destination**<sup>113</sup>, followed by **France, Germany, Italy, Spain**.

From the offer of destinations of for-profit organisations, and the main destinations of non-profit and governmental programmes, it is evident that **language learning is still the main motivation** for enrolling in an individual pupil mobility, therefore English-speaking destinations, in addition to countries where German, French, Spanish and Italian are spoken, are in high demand. Italy appears as the country with the highest number of hosted pupils since there is systematic collection of data (see Tables 3, and 4).

For-profit organisations which involve the largest number of pupils taking part in mobility, tend to offer destinations which are in demand for language learning<sup>114</sup>. Non-

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<sup>110</sup> 49.7 % (Austria), 54.9 % (Belgium FR), 96 % (Ireland), 26.6 % (Lithuania), 93.2 % (Netherlands), 17.9 % (Portugal), 71.8 % (Spain).

<sup>111</sup> Estimated data by AFS Intercultural Programs according to an internal market research study, November 2014.

<sup>112</sup> In Table 2 which presents intra-EU pupil mobility (outgoing), there is no information on whether any of the pupils enrolled with for-profit agencies mapped in Table 1 went on a learning period abroad in another EU country, except for pupils from Germany and Italy.

<sup>113</sup> Individual pupil mobility is still very much linked to the idea of spending a school year in the US, as exchanges between the US and Europe were at the origin of this type of mobility in the 1950s. The US is a popular destination due to scholarship-based programmes funded by the US Department of State. In Italy according to the latest report of the national observatory 'Scuole Internazionali' (2019) 24 % of the pupils chose the USA as a destination (compared to 38 % in 2016). Another 23 % chose English-speaking destinations outside the EU (Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia). In Germany, Weltweiser reports that in 2018/2019, 37 % of exchange pupils went to the USA, while another 37 % chose an English-speaking destination outside the EU. It is reasonable to estimate that 50 % of exchange pupils choose an English-speaking destination outside the EU.

<sup>114</sup> STS has 10 destinations in the EU, out of which German speaking countries (Austria, Germany), Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands: <https://www.sts-education.com/high-school/>,

profit organisations and governmental programmes offer a wider diversity of destinations, including almost all EU countries<sup>115</sup>.

It is worth noting that within the EU, not all combinations of exchanges are yet observed: in fact, not all EU countries have been sending and hosting pupils on the Erasmus+ individual pupil mobility programme<sup>116</sup>, and there is not at this point a specific non-profit pupil exchange provider which offers mobility opportunities in all EU countries<sup>117</sup>.

#### **Box 4 – Data collection**

In **Italy** and **Germany**, private organisations have created national observatories, which serve as information hubs and also monitor individual pupil mobility and internationalisation. The observatories also make efforts to improve awareness and raise interest in this type of experience. They are essential for supporting families, pupils and teachers to navigate the information, and increase transparency of mobility experiences, the quality of individual pupil mobility programmes and the learning outcomes they intend to develop.

In **Italy**, Fondazione Intercultura together with the statistical agency IPSOS, and the support of the ministry of education, created the national observatory “**Scuole Internazionali**” which issues an annual thematic report, and a report on pupil mobility numbers every three years. The numbers showcased are provided by IPSOS and are an estimate based on a sample of interviews and data on visas for individual pupil exchange collected from embassies. These estimates include pupils in general education and IVET.

In **Germany**, **Weltweiser** collects information on actual individual pupil mobility numbers from the non-profit and for-profit sector which offer exchange programmes in public schools abroad. In addition, they calculate an estimate of pupils enrolling in other programmes (i.e. publicly funded programmes, programmes to private schools abroad) or going abroad on their own initiative.

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EF has 4 destinations in the EU for its EF Language Year Abroad: France, Germany, Italy, Spain: <https://www.ef.edu/aya/>

WEP has 8 destinations in the EU: Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden), Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain.

<sup>115</sup> In 2018/2019 AFS Intercultural Programs operated in 20 EU countries, and Youth for Understanding operated in 21 EU countries: combining the EU country coverage of the two main non-profit pupil exchange organisations, only the 3 countries where there are no individual pupil mobility from the sending perspective (Croatia, Luxembourg, Malta) are left out. Rotary also provides great diversity in its destinations, offering hosting in 16 EU countries.

<sup>116</sup> Preliminary data provided by DG-EAC on the overall outreach of the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 on long-term individual pupil mobility (July 2021), shows that 21 countries out of 27 sent at least one pupil on a IPM, and no country sent pupils to the 26 other EU countries: Spain is the country which sent pupils to the widest variety of destinations with the EU, namely 17.

<sup>117</sup> In 7 EU countries there is only YFU, or AFS, therefore neither of the two organisations can offer the full range of EU destinations to pupils.



In some countries **partial data** on the number of pupils enrolling on individual mobility programmes are collected, i.e. in **Belgium (FR) and Portugal** the ministries of education collect data from the main individual pupil mobility providers. In **Poland** the central information system collects the number of all pupils fulfilling school obligation abroad, although this also includes pupils who are out of the country because of temporary emigration.

In **Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain** there are **national or regional entities** coordinating the recognition process, however, this does not always determine a systematic collection of data on individual pupil mobilities.

*Source: Country Reports, interviews with representatives of Fondazione Intercultura and Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch, January-March 2021.*

### *Tables on individual pupil mobility numbers: an explanation of data collected*

Tables 1-4 below present the data collected on the number of pupils enrolled in an individual mobility programme, during the 2018/19 school year.

- Tables 1 and 2 present outbound mobility (sending): Table 1 provides an estimate of the EU pupils going abroad to any destination, Table 2 provides the estimate of EU pupils going to another EU country.
- Tables 3 and 4 present inbound mobility (hosting): Table 3 provides an estimate of the pupils from all over the world hosted in the EU, Table 4 provides the estimate of EU pupils hosted in another EU country.

The different shades of blue mark the duration of the mobility: 2, 3, 6 months and a full school year. The last column shows the most popular destination/country of origin. Data are displayed within four categories: non-profit organisations (incl. foundations), public sector, self-organised or others<sup>118</sup>, for-profit agencies. For the latter, the providers change in each country. For the programmes for which complete data are available there is a separate column: AFS Intercultural Programs, Youth for Understanding under non-profit organisations, Erasmus+ under public sector programmes. In Tables 3 and 4, Rotary is also included as their hosting numbers are available<sup>119</sup>.

It is important to note that the **figures related to Erasmus+ reflect the data provided on 15 April 2021 by the DG EAC School and Multilingualism Unit**. These are only indicative figures which may still be adjusted upwards. The figures represent individual pupil mobility activities between two months and a full school year within Key Action 2 Strategic partnerships in the field of school education that started between September 2018 and June 2019 and have been registered in the online system – Mobility Tool – by 15th April 2021. Project coordinators are not required

<sup>118</sup> This category is present only in the sending side and for the two countries where there is a national observatory on individual pupil mobility (Germany, Italy) which provide an estimate of pupils spending a period abroad on a self-organised mobility, or within a school-to-school partnership beyond Erasmus+.

<sup>119</sup> <https://my.rotary.org/en/document/rotary-youth-exchange-annual-report>.

to register a mobility before the end of their project and as projects can last up to three years (until May 2022), not all mobilities which took place between September 2018 and June 2019 were registered by 15 April 2021.

**Table 1. Mobilities outgoing**

Country	Non-profit organisations												Public sector						Self-organised or others	For-profit agencies	Most Popular Destinations	TOTAL per country		
	AFS			YFU			Other (incl. Foundations)			Erasmus+			Governmental programmes											
Austria		4	9	50				41					4	6								113	USA	227
Belgium FL		92	20	103				21															USA + Argentina	236
Belgium FR		15	10	46				28				2										123	USA, Denmark	224
Bulgaria		2		1				7				10								12			USA Germany, France	32
Croatia			1	3																				4
Cyprus																								0
Czechia		10	8	32				32					2										USA, Germany	84
Denmark		11	9	204				115					3										USA	342
Estonia								62				25								23			USA, Germany	110
Finland			2	109				140					13	4									USA, Germany	268
France		28	1	272				110		5	55	64	34					583	102				Germany	1 254
Germany		30	60	677			38	877			179	1 107	6					473	101		3 912	9 440	USA	16 900
Greece								1												12			USA, Italy	13
Hungary		13	4	83				25					3	3									France, Germany, Italy	131
Ireland		3		1									4									196	France	200
Italy		117	191	1 278				62				752	45								1 900	5 855	USA, Spain, UK,	10 200
Latvia		0	2	28				25												25			USA, France	80
Lithuania								15				15								25		20	USA	75
Luxembourg																								0
Malta																								0
Netherlands		3	1	45				40					1									1 100	USA, Spain	1 190
Poland		4		40				22					4							43			USA, Italy	113
Portugal		11		58									4									16	USA, Spain	89
Romania		1		2				14															USA, Germany	17

Country	Non-profit organisations								Public sector								Self-organised or others	For-profit agencies	Most Popular Destinations	TOTAL per country
	AFS			YFU			Other (incl. Foundations)		Erasmus+				Governmental programmes							
Slovakia		2	5	18				8											USA, Switzerland	33
Slovenia		5		6															Italy, Spain	11
Spain		15	3	205				26				600	70	16	4			2 400	USA, Canada, Italy, Germany	3 339
Sweden				52				44					3						USA, France	125
																				35 297

**Table 2. Intra-EU Mobilities outgoing**

Country	Non-profit organisations											Public sector								TOTAL per country					
	AFS			YFU			Other (incl. Foundations)					Erasmus+				Governmental programmes		Self-organised or others	For-profit agencies		Most popular destination				
Austria		3	2	12					16					4	3									Sweden, France	43
Belgium FL		46	2	21					7															France, Italy	76
Belgium FR		14	6	9					12															Germany, Denmark	41
Bulgaria		2		1					7															Germany, France	10
Croatia			1	3																				Finland, France, Germany	4
Cyprus																									0
Czechia		8	8	8					13					2										Germany, France	39
Denmark		2	5	49					18					3										Italy, France	77
Estonia									30															Germany	30
Finland			2	30					38					13	4									Germany, France	87
France		17		65					22		5	10	13	34				583	102					Germany, Denmark	851
Germany		12	7	108					222			42	101	6				473	101			414	1 000	Ireland, France, Spain	2 486
Greece																									0
Hungary		8	1	34					16					3	3									Germany, France, Italy	65
Ireland		1		1										4										France, Italy	6
Italy		73	47	228					22				263	45								665	2 049	Spain, Ireland, France	3 392
Latvia			1	14					14															France, Italy	29
Lithuania									9															Sweden	9
Luxembourg																									0
Malta																									0
Netherlands		3		7					3					1										Italy, Spain	14

Country	Non-profit organisations								Public sector								TOTAL per country							
	AFS			YFU			Country	Erasmus+			Governmental programmes			Self- organised or others	For- profit agencies	Most popular destination								
Poland		4	26				9					4										Germany, Italy	43	
Portugal		11	18									4										Denmark, Germany	33	
Romania		1	2				13															Germany	16	
Slovakia		2	5	5				5															Sweden, France	17
Slovenia		3	2																			Spain	5	
Spain		14	3	51				17					70	16	2								Germany, Finland	173
Sweden				5				8					3							26			France, Italy	42
																								7 585

**Table 3. Mobilities incoming**

Country	Non-profit organisations												Public sector						TOTAL per country			
	AFS			YFU			Rotary			Others			Erasmus+		Governmental Programmes		For-profit agencies					
Austria	10	8	53			44			120				6	3							244	
Belgium FL	28	1	13			32															194	
Belgium FR	24	2	61			37			212												124	
Bulgaria						4										4				8		
Croatia									11												11	
Cyprus																					0	
Czechia	9	4	43			20			45				1	2							124	
Denmark	24	6	88			54			181				1								354	
Estonia						41						8									49	
Finland	0	27	11			73			108				12	2							338	
France	40	62	25			97			552		42	225	31	12		473	101	13				1 898
Germany	14	20	39		22	486					144	830	5			583	102	6			449	3 051
Greece																					0	
Hungary	3	2	10			22			38				2								174	
Ireland	13	23	78			77							4								195	
Italy	45	0	42			91			253				41	2					681	450	253	4 500
Latvia	4		29			12			1												46	
Lithuania						8			11								2				21	

Country	Non-profit organisations												Public sector						TOTAL per country											
	AFS			YFU			Rotary			Others			Erasmus+			Governmental Programmes				For-profit agencies										
Luxembourg																									0					
Malta																												0		
Netherlands		5	59			50			64				2		6													186		
Poland		3	33			5			53				2															96		
Portugal		12	6	68										6															92	
Romania			1			4			17																			22		
Slovakia		5	2	9			1			38																			55	
Slovenia		4		3																									7	
Spain		26	0	10	2			21			128				79	5	1						7							369
Sweden				56			41			57				4															158	
																													12 316	



**Table 4. Intra-EU Mobilities incoming**

Country	Non-profit organisations/Foundations											Public sector							TOTAL per country						
	AFS			YFU			Other					Erasmus+			Governmental programmes			For-profit agencies							
Austria		9	4	22				16					6	3											60
Belgium FL		21		20				6																	47
Belgium FR		21	1	11				16																	49
Bulgaria								4																	4
Croatia																									0
Cyprus																									0
Czechia			8	11				5					1	2											27
Denmark		23	6	88				34					1												152
Estonia								23				8													31
Finland			19	61				42					12	2							13				149
France		34	30	81				54		42	120		31	12			473	101		6					984
Germany		11	3	78				81		14	70		5				583	102					70		1 017
Greece																									0
Hungary		3		29				9					2												43
Ireland		13	20	68				74					4												179
Italy		26		77				44			106		41	2								286	189	1 063	1 834
Latvia		4		13				12																	29
Lithuania								7																	7
Luxembourg																									0
Malta																									0
Netherlands		5		20				23					2	2											52
Poland		3		15				4					2												24
Portugal		11	4	30									6												51
Romania				1				3																	4
Slovakia		5	2	5				1																	13
Slovenia		4		3																					7
Spain		24		39				17					79	5							7				171
Sweden				27				26					4												57
																									4 991

## **Explanation of data – Tables 1, 2 – Mobilities outgoing**

### **Overall mobility**

#### Non-profit organisations and For-profit agencies

- Austria: the numbers under “For-profit agencies” are from International Experience (48) and STS (65).
- Belgium FR: the numbers under “Other non-profits” are from Centre de langues AISBL. The numbers under “For-profit agencies” is from WEP. Both organisations are Expedis-accredited organisations and these figures have been shared by the Ministry of Education, Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles.
- Bulgaria: the numbers under “Other non-profits” are an estimate of pupils going abroad with the ASSIST and HMC Scholarship programme.
- Estonia: the numbers under “Other non-profits” are from ASSE.
- France: the numbers under “Other non-profits” are from the Centre d’échanges internationaux - CEI (<http://www.cei-europe-tours.com/>), member of Federation EIL.
- Ireland: in September 2020 PPLI made a rough estimate of 200 pupils enrolled in individual mobility in the school year 2018/2019.
- Italy: the national observatory provides an overall estimate of 10 200 pupils who took part in an individual pupil mobility in the school year 2018/2019, both in general and VET secondary education. The breakdown of this number among mobility providers is based on an estimate provided by IPSOS to Fondazione Intercultura. The pupils who themselves organise their stay abroad are represent between 15% and 20% of the total.
- Germany: the number under “Other non-profits” are from the AJA members (AFS, YFU, Aubiko, Experiment, OpenDoor, Partnership International, Rotary). The numbers under “For-profits” are calculated taking the total of pupils enrolled in a mobility programme with a public school (12 408), minus the number of pupils enrolled in a programme with an AJA member (non-profits). The remaining 4 492 pupils have been abroad with different programmes, such as programmes foreseeing hosting in private schools, school-to-school partnerships (including Erasmus+ and French–German exchanges), a self-organised mobility.
- Lithuania: the numbers provided under “Other non-profits” are an estimate of Rotary’s sending numbers. The numbers provided under “For-profit agencies” is an estimate of the sending of several providers (AMES, Momento Education, Ego Perfectus, Kalba.lt)
- Netherlands: the numbers provided under “For-profit agencies” is the sum of data from several providers: STS (70), EF (300), Travel Active (700), INTO (30).
- Portugal: the numbers provided under “For-profit agencies” are from Multiway.
- Spain: the numbers provided under “Other non-profits” are from the Foundation Amacio Ortega. The number provided under “For-profit agencies” are from AECAE members.

### Governmental programmes

When numbers are presented under this category, they belong to the following programmes:

- US Department of State programmes: the numbers correspond to the FLEX and the YES programme and have been provided by the American Councils. The FLEX programme targets pupils from Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia. The YES programme targets pupils from Bulgaria.
- French–German Youth Office (OFAJ/DFJW): the numbers correspond to the figures provided by OFAJ/DFJW for the Brigitte Sauzay programme (3 months) for 2019, and for the Voltaire programme (6 months) for 2018/2019.
- Ettarsprogrammen: this programme foresees sending pupils from Sweden to France, Germany and Spain for a full school year. The data have been provided by the Swedish Council for Higher Education which manages the programme.

### **Intra-EU mobility**

- For countries other than Italy and Germany where the information on numbers from for-profit agencies are available (Austria, Belgium FR, Ireland, Lithuania, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain), there is no possibility of estimating what percentage of exchange pupils spent a period abroad in another EU country.
- Germany: of 12 408 pupils, 10.6 % went to EU countries. This percentage has been applied to the different categories of providers other than AJA members (Non-profit organisations) for which the exact data on intra-EU mobility is available.
- Italy: out of 10 200 pupils, 35 % went to EU countries. This percentage has been applied to the different categories of providers other than AFS and YFU, for which the exact data on intra-EU mobility is available.

### ***Explanation of data –Tables 3 and 4 Mobilities incoming***

#### **Overall mobility**

- Bulgaria: the numbers provided under “Governmental programmes” are from the YES programme (US Department of State)
- Estonia: the numbers provided under “Other Non-profits” are from ASSE
- Lithuania: the numbers provided under governmental programmes are from the EXCEL programme (US Department of State)

#### **Intra-EU mobility**

- For Germany and Italy, the percentage of hosting in the EU presented in the reports of Scuole Internazionali (42 %) and Welweiser (15.7 %) has been applied to the categories for which no exact data on intra-EU mobility are provided. For Italy 42 % has been applied to “Other non- profits, Self-organised or other, For-profit agencies.” For Germany 15.7 % has been applied to the categories “self-organised or other, and for-profit agencies”.

## Take-up of individual pupil mobility across the EU

In **Germany** and **Italy**, participation in long-term individual pupil mobility has grown over the last two decades. In Italy, participation rates have increased steadily<sup>120</sup>. In Germany, participation rates have declined in the last decade, but are still higher relative to 2002<sup>121</sup>. **The popularity of this type of mobility in these two countries has been fostered by policies which support recognition**, the promotion of this experience by public authorities, and the active role played by individual pupil mobility providers since the 1950s in providing information and tools for recognition. In addition, these are the only two countries where data on the number of pupils enrolled in individual pupil mobility programmes are collected, probably due to the significant number of pupils participating in these programmes and the perceived need to monitor the sector<sup>122</sup>.

In **Germany**, youth mobility has been a consistent priority<sup>123</sup>: the Kultus Minister Konferenz<sup>124</sup> has promoted mobility as a tool for individual pupils to develop intercultural competence and has provided federal states with recognition guidelines. Pupil mobility providers cooperate at different levels to provide information to pupils and families on mobility opportunities<sup>125</sup>, and some umbrella organisations of pupil mobility providers have developed a quality label which its members need to comply with<sup>126</sup>.

In **Italy**, AFS Intercultura and Fondazione Intercultura in cooperation with the school principal association and the ministry of education, have each played a key role in supporting individual pupil mobility and supporting schools in recognition. As a consequence, several schools in Italy now include a study period abroad in their school's learning offer.

**France** has the third highest number of mobile pupils – at least 1 272 pupils in the 2018/19 school year<sup>127</sup>. Most exchanges are based on the bilateral agreement between Germany and France. The work of the French–German Youth Office has made studying in Germany a popular choice for pupils and has supported the building of mutual trust between the two countries' school systems, through recognition based on school-to-

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<sup>120</sup> From 3 500 in 2009 to 10 200 in 2018/2019, [www.scuoleinternazionali.it](http://www.scuoleinternazionali.it)

<sup>121</sup> From 13 450 in 2002/03 to 21 350 in 2010/2011 and then to 16 900 in 2018/2019, Weltweiser, 2021 op.cit.

<sup>122</sup> Italy: [scuoleinternazionali.it](http://scuoleinternazionali.it), Germany [weltweiser.de](http://weltweiser.de)

<sup>123</sup> Youth mobility during and post the COVID-19 crisis was among the priorities of the EU German Presidency in 2020.

<sup>124</sup> the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the 16 Bundesländer (Federal states).

<sup>125</sup> In Germany there are about 100 different private agencies providing individual fee-paying pupil mobility programmes. They all cooperate through Weltweiser. The non-profit organisations are gathered within Arbeitskreis Jugendaustausch – AJA (Working group for non-profit youth exchange), <https://aja-org.de/>. Some of the for-profit agencies cooperate within the Deutsche Fachverband High School e.V. - DFH (German Professional High School Association), <https://dfh.org/>

<sup>126</sup> <https://aja-org.de/themen/qualitaet-im-schueleraustausch/>

<sup>127</sup> This number includes the pupils who have been abroad with OFAJ on 3-and 6-month programmes, and pupils who have been abroad with AFS, YFU and Erasmus+. In France there are many other exchange providers members of L'Office de garantie de sejours linguistique (<https://www.loffice.org/organismes-labellises/>). The number of exchanges run by OFAJ are the largest portion of the total, and this number has remained stable over the years .

school partnerships. In addition, as from 2016 a *circulaire* of the ministry of education regulates and promotes pupil mobility within school-to-school partnerships<sup>128</sup>. Finally, L'Office<sup>129</sup> serves as a hub for information about programmes offered by private sector providers which meet the criteria of the quality label<sup>130</sup>.

Available data also show high rates of mobile pupils compared to the overall population in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain.

In **Austria**<sup>131</sup> a national campaign on the benefits of mobility, combined with the automatic recognition of learning periods abroad, has had a positive impact on pupils' decisions to study abroad.

In **Spain** recognition of a full school year abroad is regulated and managed by the ministry of education, and scholarship-based programmes are popular<sup>132</sup>. In addition, there is an organisation uniting private providers of individual pupil mobility to offer information on programmes<sup>133</sup>.

In the **Netherlands, Belgium** and **Denmark**, pupils tend to enrol in exchange programmes after completion of upper secondary school (as a gap year), eliminating the need for recognition. In Belgium (FR) and Denmark the opportunity of taking such a gap year has been promoted by public authorities<sup>134</sup>, including through scholarships<sup>135</sup>. In addition, in Belgium (FR) the Expedis framework is aimed both at promoting and recognising mobility within secondary school<sup>136</sup>.

In Finland, the upper secondary school curriculum is not organised according to grade levels (i.e. with separate first, second or third year curricula). This flexible approach allows returning exchange pupils to have some subjects from their study abroad recognised, and to then take the time needed to complete any additional coursework prior to their school leaving examination. In **Ireland** pupils spend their period abroad

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<sup>128</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Circulaire n. 2016-091, 15 June 2016, Ouverture européenne et internationale des établissements du second degré, Mobilité des élèves de collège et de lycée en Europe et dans le monde (Circular on Internationalisation of upper secondary schools, pupil mobility within Europe and in the world).

<sup>129</sup> L'Office de garantie de séjours linguistique (National Office for the Guarantee of Linguistic and Educational Stays) <https://www.loffice.org/>

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.loffice.org/loffice/les-criteres-qualite/>

<sup>131</sup> Country report Austria.

<sup>132</sup> Foundation Amancio Ortega, Erasmus+ programme.

<sup>133</sup> Educational Association of Academic Courses Abroad (AECAE) <https://www.aseproce.org/en/aecae/>.

<sup>134</sup> Denmark: Grib Verden, (Catch the World), <https://gribverden.dk/>, Belgium (FR): SIEP, *Seconde rhéto et immersion linguistique : organismes et bourses* (Double last school year and linguistic immersion : organisations and scholarships), 2014, <https://blog.siep.be/2014/01/faire-une-deuxieme-rheto-a-letranger/>

<sup>135</sup> Le Forem, *Séjour d'une année ou d'un semestre d'étude à l'étranger, en Flandre ou en Communauté germanophone pour jeunes diplômés des études secondaires supérieures* (One-year or semester study abroad in Flanders or the German-speaking Community for young graduates of upper secondary education), <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/immersion-langues-ecole-secondaire-superieur.html>

In Denmark until 2014 the government provided grants for pupils enrolling in long-term pupil mobility with accredited organisations.

<sup>136</sup> Expedis is the framework under which individual pupil mobility can be undertaken as part of secondary school in Belgium (FR). More information in the Country report Belgium (FR).

Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Circulaire n. 5039 du 24/10/2014 relative à l'organisation des séjours scolaires individuels dans le cadre du programme EXPEDIS (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, Circular n. 5039 on individual school exchange programmes within the framework of EXPEDIS), 2014, pp. 1-25.

during Transition Year and therefore do not need to apply for recognition of their studies abroad. In **Estonia** it is very popular to spend a school year abroad, despite the lack of recognition of learning periods abroad.

Based on the partial data of this mapping and the reports of the country experts, the take-up of individual pupil mobility in other EU countries is minimal – 100 or fewer pupils each year. Based on the country experts' interviews with key informants, the reasons for the lack of popularity may be found in the fact that pupils are minors and therefore parents are concerned about their safety; most of the mobility programmes are fee-paying; and there are uncertainties as to whether the learning period abroad will be recognised and pupils may fear they will fall a year behind their peers. Pupils are also likely to want to ensure that they earn high marks and perform well throughout the school cycle and in their school leaving examinations and, as these determine their chances to enter the university of their choice or pursue other further education and work opportunities. In addition, as a study conducted in Italy found and some country experts report, school staff might discourage pupils from undertaking a mobility experience<sup>137</sup>. Based on all of these factors, enrolling in universities abroad or higher education mobility opportunities offered by Erasmus+ might be preferred (e.g. **Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands**).

**A few countries report that participation of pupils in individual mobility programmes is rare as schools do not usually engage in such initiatives and there are no private mobility providers (Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta).** In these countries there might be pupils that out of their own initiative enrol in a school abroad for a period up to a full school year (as reported for Malta) and there might be sporadic cases of individual pupil mobility through the Erasmus+ programme (Luxembourg). In addition, for Cyprus and Malta, experts report that in these country cultures, minors are considered as being too young to spend longer periods of time away from their families. In Luxembourg, the complex school system and the exposure to three different languages as mother tongues may have contributed to the lack of interest in this kind of experience. All three countries are small and have a limited higher education offers, which means that pupils are more likely go abroad for their university studies<sup>138</sup>.

There are no available data on the socio-economic background of pupils who have taken part in individual pupil mobility programmes. Currently, most country experts report anecdotal evidence that **school staff only allow high-performing pupils to go abroad**. It is believed that high-performing pupils will be able to catch up with the missed content of the national curriculum more easily upon their return, and to pass the end-of-school examinations without needing to repeat the year. In Italy and Portugal, it is made clear in the national guidelines, that only pupils who have a passing

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<sup>137</sup> According to the 2009 report of Scuole Internazionali, the national observatory on individual pupil mobility', 1 in 3 teachers was openly against pupil mobility. In recent years the situation has improved and in 2016 school principals declared that 49 % of teachers were in favour of pupil mobility and were promoting it actively. Additionally, according to the 2019 report, only 9 % of teachers are openly against mobility in general secondary.

<sup>138</sup> Country reports Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg.

mark in all subjects can enrol in an individual pupil mobility; this also means that pupils with average marks are not discouraged from taking part in mobility opportunities.

## Outreach and communication

**Communication on and promotion of individual pupil mobility play a key role in participation**, as most individual pupil mobility programmes target individual pupils, who enrol on their personal initiative: pupils and their family need to be aware of opportunities and have a strong motivation for engaging in such an experience.

**The different players in the individual pupil mobility sector each offer quite distinct programmes and promote them independently.**

**Private organisations develop their own outreach and marketing strategies**, such as presentations in schools and at dedicated fairs<sup>139</sup> and youth festivals. In some countries there are **umbrella organisations of pupil exchange providers which adhere to the criteria of quality labels** (Germany, France, Spain) and which provide information and support to pupils interested in enrolling in a mobility programme.

**Erasmus+** is widely promoted by Erasmus+ national agencies through initiatives targeting schools and the general public. In the case of **other public programmes**, in the few countries where these exist, they are promoted by the governmental agencies which implement them.

Pupils and their parents also seek information on programme quality. Apart from the countries mentioned above (**France, Germany**) where private providers subscribe to the use of quality labels (based on quality criteria as defined and agreed by the pupil exchange organisations), only a few governments have addressed the issue of assuring the quality of pupil exchange programmes with a system of accreditation, and support schools and families in navigating information from the different providers<sup>140</sup> (Belgium (FR)<sup>141</sup>, and Denmark until 2013).

## Age of pupils studying abroad

The age when pupils enrol in mobility depends on the school system in their home country and on how the school leaving examinations are organised, as well as cultural factors.

Most pupils study abroad between the ages of 16 and 17 – during the second last or third last years of upper secondary education. At this age, pupils are considered to be old enough to leave home, and at the same time, to benefit from a placement with a host family which may help them to discover a new country and culture. In addition,

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<sup>139</sup> Weltweiser, 'Messen und Veranstaltungen' (Trade fairs and events), <https://weltweiser.de/weltweiser/messen-veranstaltungen/>

<sup>140</sup> Ruffino, 2012.

<sup>141</sup> The Expeditis framework foresees that pupils can spend a period abroad of longer than 3 months (and up to a full school year) only with accredited pupil exchange organisations.

they can easily be accepted in a host school where they will learn with peers of the same age<sup>142</sup>. Finally, they have one to two additional school years following their return during which they may catch up with any course content they missed while abroad, and better prepare for their school leaving examinations<sup>143</sup>.

In **Belgium (NL), Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary** and **Ireland** pupils study abroad when they are younger, i.e. 15/16 years old. **Pupils tend to study abroad when they are older in Finland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia** (i.e. 17/18 years old) and **Sweden** (i.e. 18/19 years old). Some pupils study abroad during their gap year between completion of secondary school and further studies (Belgium, Netherlands) and therefore are older – see Box 5.

Few pupils study abroad during their final year of upper secondary school. Country experts suggest that this is primarily because exchange pupils cannot be hosted in the final year abroad and/or they wish to prepare for and take their school leaving examinations in their home country due to its importance for university admission. **Portugal** is an exception to this: although there are final exams in grade 12, most pupils decide to spend a learning period abroad at this point in their school career. This is also the case for at least some pupils in the Netherlands and Sweden.

In all countries, hosted pupils are placed in classes on the basis of their age and grade level in their own country. In most countries, pupils are not placed in the final year (or during the last two qualification years, i.e. **Germany**) as most of the programme is focused on preparation for the end-of-school examination, and hosted pupils are usually not allowed to sit the final exam either by law or because their language skills are not sufficient. In addition, in several countries the school year is shorter for pupils in their last year (i.e. **Austria, Estonia, Finland, Netherlands, Poland**. See Table 5).

This has an important impact on opportunities for pupils from countries where youth usually enrol in mobility programmes at 17 or 18 years of age. In fact, in some of the above-mentioned host countries, 17/18 years old is the age corresponding to the last grade, where exchange pupils cannot be placed, so they are placed in a lower grade level than they would have been in their home country. **Being placed in the corresponding grade while abroad is a criterion for recognition in several countries**, therefore in the above-mentioned cases pupils might not have their learning period abroad recognised on return (e.g. Portuguese pupils to Germany).

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<sup>142</sup> In most countries exchange pupils cannot be welcomed in host schools when they are in their last year of upper secondary education, and this is usually when they are 17/18, 18/19 years old depending on the host country and country of origin. See detailed information in Table 5 and 6, and in the country reports.

<sup>143</sup> See detailed information in the country reports.



### **Box 5 – Other arrangements**

In some countries, pupils study abroad between lower- and upper secondary education, or after having completed secondary school. In these cases, the exchange is considered a period in which pupils can explore different topics before choosing their next steps in education.

In **Denmark** and **Ireland** this period is between the lower secondary and upper secondary education cycle. In Ireland it is considered as part of pupils' education path (Transition Year), while in Denmark it is socially accepted that pupils take a 'gap year' between the two school cycles.

In **Belgium (NL and FR)** and the **Netherlands**, this period is between completion of upper secondary education and the start of higher education. In **Belgium (FR)** there are even specific scholarships for pupils who enrol in an individual pupil mobility after completing secondary education<sup>144</sup>. However, in many host countries, pupils who have earned a secondary school diploma are typically 18 years of age and older and are no longer eligible to be hosted within the framework of an exchange programme. In the case of a gap year of this type, recognition is not needed.

**In all the other countries** – except for Austria where the learning periods abroad are recognised based on the equivalence of school attendance abroad<sup>145</sup> – **pupils who do not meet the requirements for recognition, may end up taking a gap year.**

**Source: Country Reports Belgium (FR, NL), Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands.**

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<sup>144</sup> Le Forem, Séjour d'une année ou d'un semestre d'étude à l'étranger, en Flandre ou en Communauté germanophone pour jeunes diplômés des études secondaires supérieures (One-year or semester study abroad in Flanders or the German-speaking Community for young graduates of upper secondary education), <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/immersion-langues-ecole-secondaire-superieur.html>.

<sup>145</sup> See chapter 4.2. Recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

**Table 5 – Age and grade of pupils in long-term individual mobility**

The table below shows the age and grade level at which pupils usually enrol in an individual mobility programme. The age of pupils is expressed as the age pupils have between January and June, considering a school year that runs from September to June. Grade levels are expressed as the number of years prior to the final year of secondary school.

Country	Age	Grade of Upper Secondary School
Austria	16/17	3rd out of 4 years
Belgium NL	15/16	4th or 5th out of 6 years, or after completing upper secondary education (Gap year)
	16/17	
Belgium FR	16/17	5th out of 6 years, or after completing upper secondary education (Gap year)
Bulgaria	16/17	3rd out of 5 years
Croatia	16/17	3rd out of 4 years
Cyprus	15/17	1st or 2nd out of 3 years (in principle, as there is no recent record of individual pupil mobility in Cyprus)
Czechia	16/17	2nd or 3rd out of 4 years
	17/18	
Denmark	15/16	Gap year before entering upper secondary education
Estonia	16/17	1st or 2nd out of 3 years
	17/18	
Finland	17/18	2nd out of 3 years
France	16/17	2nd or 3rd out 3 years
	17/18	
Germany	15/16	1st out of 3 years, age changes based on whether pupils attend G8 or G9 secondary school.
	16/17	
Greece	15/16	1st out of 3 years
Hungary	15/16	2nd out of 4 years
Ireland	15/16	Transition Year (the first grade of upper secondary education)
Italy	16/17	3rd or 4th out of 5 years
	17/18	
Latvia	16/17	1st or 2nd out of 3 years
	17/18	
Lithuania	16/17	last year of lower secondary education (2nd year of 4-year Gymnasium)
	17/18	1st out of 2 years of upper secondary education (3rd year of 4-year Gymnasium)
Luxembourg	15/16	4th or 3rd last year out of 7 years (in principle, as there is no recent record of individual pupil mobility in Luxembourg)
	16/17	
Malta	16/17	1st or 2nd out of 2 years (in principle, as there is no recent record of individual pupil mobility in Malta)
	17/18	

Country	Age	Grade of Upper Secondary School
Netherlands	16/17	5 <sup>th</sup> out of 5 or 6 years (length of the school cycle depends on the school type), or after completing upper secondary education (Gap year)
Poland	16/17 17/18	2nd or 3rd out of 4 years
Portugal	17/18	3rd out of 3 years
Romania	16/17 17/18	2nd or 3rd out of 4 years
Slovakia	16/17 17/18	8-year gymnasium: 7th out of 8 years 4-year gymnasium: 3rd out of 4 years
Slovenia	17/18	3rd out of 4 years
Spain	16/17	1st out of 2 years
Sweden	17/18 18/19	2nd or 3rd out of 3 years

## Length of mobility

Mobility periods usually last 2-3 months, 6 months, or a full school year (10 months). Different recognition procedures are foreseen, depending on the length of the mobility (see section 4.2.6).

The length of stay abroad for pupils from a given country depends on the type of programmes offered by mobility providers, which in turn might take into account the possibilities for recognition and how school leaving examinations are structured.

In the case of periods abroad of less than a full school year, these normally follow the trimester or semester schedule, and pupils usually go abroad for the first trimester or semester (winter). Spending a period abroad during the spring semester is less popular. Exchanges longer than a semester and shorter than a school year abroad are rare, as these do not match the school calendar and are therefore not offered by individual pupil mobility providers.

Most recognition systems foresee that if pupils spend less than a full school year on mobility, they are readmitted and reintegrated in their sending school upon return and complete the school year so that they may move up to the next grade with their classmates. In order to catch up with the content they missed, pupils need at least a couple of months. Therefore, readmission in the sending school any later than in April would be difficult.

In the case of school-to-school partnerships, there is more flexibility on the length of the period abroad and when the exchange starts and ends during the school year, as there is an agreement between the two schools on how to arrange this.

The available data do not allow any final conclusions on which length of individual pupil mobility is most popular in the EU, nor whether there are any considerable differences across countries. However, the data collected from non-profit and for-profit providers do show that the full school year programme abroad is the most popular, while the vast

majority of exchange programmes based on school-to-school partnerships last less than 6 months<sup>146</sup>.

### **Shorter term mobilities (2 to 5-6 months)**

When pupils go abroad for a period of up to three months and return to their sending schools long enough before the end of the school year (usually by April), they are readmitted to the grade corresponding to their age<sup>147</sup>. This has a clear advantage: the risk of having to repeat the year is minimised as pupils are given the opportunity to catch up with content missed and to complete the school year with their peers.

However, as noted above, **exchanges lasting between 2 and 5-6 months<sup>148</sup> are not necessarily the most popular option among pupils**. This is because pupil exchange organisations have historically offered a full school year exchange programme to allow for a long enough period for the immersion experience to trigger the learning processes that develop intercultural competence, and potentially also enhance language learning (see section 2.1.3. A unique learning process).

In addition, when pupils spend a period of 2 to 5-6 months abroad, they might worry about having to keep up with demands of their sending school in order to pass the end-of-the-year exams upon return, and therefore they may be distracted by this while trying to integrate in the host country. Therefore, the desire to have enough time abroad for an "immersion" experience is stronger than the concern that pupils may need to repeat the year on their return.

In some cases, exchange programmes up to 5-6 months are popular. This is the case of the **Brigitte Sauzay, Voltaire and Erasmus+** programmes, as well as some specific country situations such as **Belgium (NL)**. The reasons behind the success of shorter programmes are diverse:

- The Brigitte Sauzay and Voltaire<sup>149</sup> are publicly funded programmes benefiting from French–German cooperation on the recognition of learning periods abroad.
- Within Erasmus+, although full school year mobilities are possible, 2- to 3-month mobilities have been the most common so far<sup>150</sup>. This is probably because they are easier to organise compared to exchanges of a full school year, and the problems related to passing the school year with peers are minimised. In addition, schools may prefer to use funding to support several pupils to enrol in a three-month

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<sup>146</sup> Based on data provided by DG EAC on the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 on 7.07.2021, the data on the Voltaire and Brigitte Sauzay programme from OFAJ, anecdotal evidence from country experts.

<sup>147</sup> This is possible in all EU countries except Greece where pupils can only enrol in mobility programmes for a full school year.

<sup>148</sup> Usually, recognition procedures change between periods up to 6 months abroad (in Austria and Slovakia up to less than 5 months) and a full school year abroad.

<sup>149</sup> L'Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (OFAJ), *Programme d'Échange Brigitte Sauzay, Programme d'Échange Voltaire* (The Franco-German Youth Office, Brigitte Sauzay Exchange Programme, Voltaire Exchange Programme), <https://www.ofaj.org/programmes-formations/programme-d-echange-brigitte-sauzay.html>, <https://www.ofaj.org/programmes-formations/programme-d-echange-voltaire.html>

<sup>150</sup> 79.8 % of Erasmus+ individual pupil mobilities are between 0 and 3 months in the programming period 2014-2020 (based on preliminary statistics provided by DGEAC on 7.07.2021 for the purpose of this analysis).

exchange rather than dedicating the same funding for one pupil to enrol in a full school year mobility.

- In Belgium (NL), pupils are not able to have learning outcomes from a full school year abroad recognised. Pupil exchange organisations therefore offer trimester study abroad so that pupils can be readmitted and avoid having to repeat the year<sup>151</sup>.

## **Sending and hosting schools: different practices for exchange pupils**

Individual pupil mobility involves both sending and host schools, and countries' practices in relation to how pupils are registered in both schools vary enormously and have a range of consequences. Practices also depend on the length of the period abroad and the mobility provider.

**Pupils spending a period of up to six months abroad** and wishing to be readmitted in their sending school class upon return **remain enrolled in their sending school<sup>152</sup> if this is allowed by the legislation.**

**For periods abroad of a full school year, procedures depend on the mobility provider.** In the case of mobility programmes within school-to-school partnerships, exchange pupils are always enrolled in their sending school. If pupils enrol in a mobility programme with a non-profit or for-profit provider or a governmental programme not based on school-to-school partnership, they need to follow different rules, or face the absence of clear regulations.

- Enrolment in the sending school might determine:
  - the possibility of keeping their place in the school while abroad;
  - access to recognition upon return;
  - access of the sending school to funding for the exchange pupil abroad;
- Enrolment in the host school determines:
  - whether exchange pupils can enrol as regular pupils, and the host school can receive funding for them like other regularly enrolled pupils;
  - the placement of exchange pupils in a given grade;
  - whether exchange pupils need to pass admission tests;
  - access to assessment by teachers which is usually required by recognition procedures in the country of origin.

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<sup>151</sup> Information from AFS Intercultural Programs in Belgium (NL).

<sup>152</sup> In France, the school principal informs *IA-Dasen* – the territorial branch of the Ministry of Education – and requests that a place be kept open for the pupil in the next academic year, therefore the pupil remains enrolled in the school system of the sending country and upon return pupils might be able to attend the same sending school, but not the specific track of studies followed before departure.

Approaches vary greatly both across and within countries and recognition of the learning periods is impacted by these, and therefore unpredictable (see Table 6).

### *Enrolment in the sending school*

In most countries, the exchange pupil needs to be enrolled in the school in their home country while they are on mobility.

In a few countries, the pupil is required to officially interrupt their studies (**Czechia, Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain**). In other countries, enrolment in the sending school depends on the decision of the school principal (**Hungary, Ireland, Latvia**). In some of these countries, there is no guarantee that the pupil will be able to enrol in the same school again (i.e. **Lithuania, Portugal, Spain**). In a few cases, pupils can choose whether to enrol or not, based on whether they wish their learning period abroad to be recognised upon return (i.e. **Belgium FR, Bulgaria**).

Thus, in some countries enrolment in the sending school is an obligation and/or a pre-requisite for accessing recognition, in other countries it is a legal provision that foresees that pupils abroad should withdraw from their school, but this does not impact recognition. However, information on these aspects is not always clear to pupils and their families. Nor do schools have guidelines on how to register pupils who are enrolled in school abroad (apart from **Belgium FR, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia**), and whether they should be included in the school count for the total number of pupils which determines the amount of public funding they receive (in most EU countries, schools are funded per capita).

### *Enrolment in the host school*

In most of the countries, school principals decide whether to admit exchange pupils, and in some cases, pupils need to demonstrate a certain level of achievement at their sending school (**Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, and Slovakia**) or apply for equivalence of their prior studies<sup>153</sup> to the ministry of education of the host country (**Belgium FR, Spain**).

**The host school decides the exchange pupil's status within the school; generally there are no national guidelines at national level as to how to enrol exchange pupils. This is why, in** some cases, exchange pupils are treated as migrant pupils who need to be integrated into the school system. For example, in **Sweden**, exchange pupils need to follow the same educational path as migrant pupils, but exceptions are made<sup>154</sup>. In some rare cases, exchange pupils are placed in specific classes with migrants in order to learn the language of instruction (Belgium (NL)<sup>155</sup> and potentially in Cyprus, should exchange programmes take root there, as well<sup>156</sup>).

Exchange pupils are **usually enrolled in the host school with the same status as regular pupils**. However, in some countries they are given a specific status. In **Austria, Belgium (NL, FR), Croatia, Germany, Greece, Slovakia and Sweden** (in

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<sup>153</sup> Obtaining recognition of a learning period in another country longer than a full school year and not constituting a qualification. This type of recognition is done for the purpose of further learning and for accessing the possibility of completing a qualification in the country where recognition is applied for.

<sup>154</sup> Country report Sweden.

<sup>155</sup> Country report Belgium NL.

<sup>156</sup> Country report Cyprus.

some cases also in **Spain** and **Portugal**) exchange pupils are given the **specific status of 'visiting pupils' or 'extra' pupils** ('auditor' in American English) and therefore are not required to take the same tests as their peers in the school<sup>157</sup>. No alternative assessment is usually planned. This means that their learning period abroad might not be recognised on return as they are not able to provide an official transcript of results to the sending school.

In 15 countries (see Table 6) the school receives public funding for the pupils they host; in most cases calculation of the amount is based on the exact number of pupils enrolled as 'regular pupils' on a given date (per capita). In some cases, the funding is linked to the length of the stay (in Finland at least one semester, and in the Netherlands, at least one year). If schools do not receive proper financial support for hosting exchange pupils, this might affect their willingness and readiness to welcome them.

### *Assessment by the host school*

In all countries, hosted pupils receive a certificate of attendance and, according to their capacity and legal requirements, host schools may provide the pupil with any additional documentation requested by the sending school. In fact, hosted pupils coming from countries where the year abroad is recognised could require more support from teachers and school administrators as they need additional documents such as a transcript of grades, and this might discourage schools from hosting them<sup>158</sup>.

In several host countries exchange pupils are not entitled to receive an official transcript of grades, either because they are not enrolled as regular pupils (see Table 6), or because – although they are enrolled – teachers do not have guidelines on how to tailor assessments for exchange pupils, and they do not see the purpose of assessing them to then provide a negative mark because of their lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. At the same time, most of the sending countries require a transcript of grades as a key document to enable recognition of the learning period abroad. This approach raises questions as to whether pupils need to show they have passed subjects followed abroad in order to have their learning recognised, and if so how to assess their learning outside of the typical assessment methods and grading system.

Some exchange organisations<sup>159</sup> have developed assessments that the host schools can use to evaluate the learning of the hosted exchange pupils. They aim to provide a holistic assessment of the pupil, where subject performance is only one part. Rather than providing marks, teachers in different subjects note the development and participation of the pupil in their class. These assessments are considered as valid by the sending school most of the time and may substitute for the official transcript of results needed for recognition of the learning period abroad.

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<sup>157</sup> In Belgium, Germany and Slovakia schools can decide whether to enrol exchange pupils as regular pupils or as having special status.

<sup>158</sup> This applies to all sending countries but Austria which does not require any document other than a certificate of attendance.

<sup>159</sup> AFS Slovakia, AFS Czech Republic, AFS Netherlands, AFS Italy. See a template of learning agreement with hosted exchange pupils at [http://intercultural-learning.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/learning-agreement\\_Intercultura-Onlus.pdf](http://intercultural-learning.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/learning-agreement_Intercultura-Onlus.pdf)

**Table 7 – Sending and host school: enrolment of exchange pupils and funding**

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Austria	yes	yes	as 'extra' pupils (außerordentlicher Schüler), they are not assessed as regular pupils.	no	no, the school year ends in March.
Belgium FL	yes	yes. However, schools receive funding for the following year based on the pupils enrolled and present on 1st February. Exchange pupils on a full school year abroad are not present on that day and if there are checks, the school loses part of its funding.	pupils can choose to enrol as regular pupil or as free pupils/vrije leerling (not assessed as regular pupils).	only if enrolled as regular pupils.	yes
Belgium FR	yes, if on an individual mobility programme within the Expedis framework.	yes, if on a individual mobility programme within the Expedis framework.	pupils can choose to enrol as regular pupil (need to apply for equivalence to the Ministry of Education and provide the school reports of the previous 3 school years) or as élève libre (not assessed as regular pupils)	only if enrolled as regular pupils.	yes



Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Bulgaria	yes, if they want to apply for recognition of learning periods abroad upon return and keep their place in the school. Exchange pupils are considered as fulfilling their studies independently as private pupils.	yes, the school receives the funding upon successful completion of the annual examination by the pupil fulfilling studies independently, namely if the pupil receives recognition of the learning period abroad.	as regular pupils. They need to prove completion of previous school years.	yes, if enrolled as regular pupils.	yes
Croatia	yes	no (the school is not funded per capita).	as 'visiting pupils' (not assessed as regular pupils). The school decides on the documents required for admission.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	yes
Cyprus	yes, if the mobility is up to 6 months. There is no provision at the moment for periods abroad of a full school year.	yes, if the mobility is up to 6 months.	as regular pupil. They need to prove completion of previous school years, take qualifying exams in certain subjects, proof knowledge of Greek language (possibility of attending transitional classes as migrants).	yes	yes
Czechia	no. The pupil must apply for re-enrolment upon return.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	as regular pupil. They need to provide documentation from the sending school.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	rare
Denmark	not needed as pupils take a gap year before entering upper secondary education.	no	as regular pupil. They need to prove that their prior education is equal to that of the Danish elementary school exam.	yes	rare

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Estonia	yes, as 'exchange pupil abroad'.	yes	as regular pupil	yes	yes, but the school year ends in mid-April.
Finland	yes	yes (the number of pupils is reported on 20 September and 20 February).	as regular pupil	yes if the pupil stays for at least one semester.	no, the school year ends in February.
France	no, principals notify the territorial branch of the Ministry of Education (IA -Dasen) to inform that a pupil is on an individual mobility programme. This procedure aims to ensure that the pupil still has a place in the school upon return.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	as regular pupils. They need to notify the territorial branch of the Ministry of Education (IA - Dasen)	no (the school is not funded per capita).	rare, depending on whether there is a place available.
Germany	yes, as 'pupils on leave'.	no	there is no legal framework and school principals decide on how to enrol hosted exchange pupils. They usually enrol them as regular pupils or as 'visiting pupils' (not assessed as regular pupils).	no	no, hosted pupils cannot be placed in the last two grades of upper secondary school.
Greece	no	no	with the specific status of exchange pupils (school principals cannot refuse to enrol them). They need to prove completion of previous school years.	no	no

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Hungary	there are two options 1) the pupil stays enrolled in the school with 'private pupil' status fulfilling studies independently (parents need to ask permission from the educational authority) 2) the pupil disenroll from school.	no	as regular pupil	no	not specified
Ireland	it depends on the school principal's permission, usually exchange pupils stay enrolled in their sending school.	yes, if the pupil is enrolled. The funding is based on the number of pupils present on the 30th of September.	as regular pupil	Yes, if the exchange pupil is registered by 30th September.	rare
Italy	yes	no (the school is not funded per capita).	as regular pupil (specific legislation ensuring that pupils hosted within mobility programmes do not undergo the same procedures for enrolment as other foreign pupils).	no (the school is not funded per capita).	no
Latvia	it depends on school principal's permission. Even if pupils are not enrolled, they do not lose their place in the school.	yes (if the pupil is still enrolled in the school).	as regular pupil	yes if the exchange pupil is enrolled by 1st September.	rare

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Lithuania	no. Readmittance in the same school is not guaranteed.	no	as regular pupil	yes if the exchange pupil is registered within a month after the start of the school year. The procedure is complicated.	not specified
Luxembourg					
Malta					
Netherlands	no	no	as regular pupil. They need to prove completion of previous school years.	yes, if their stay lasts a full school year and they are enrolled before 1st October.	rare, the school years ends in mid-April.
Poland	yes, as 'fulfilling school obligation through study abroad'. However, this entails responsibility of the school while the pupil is abroad.	yes, 60 % of the regular funding.	as regular pupil	yes, if the exchange pupil is present when the school reports on the number of enrolled pupils.	rare, the school years ends the last week of April.
Portugal	no. Readmittance in the same school is not guaranteed.	no	there is no legal framework and school principals decide on how to enrol hosted exchange pupils. They usually enrol them as regular pupils or as 'visiting pupils' (not assessed as regular pupils).	no	yes

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Romania	yes. Pupils spending a period abroad of between a semester and a full school year are registered as 'continuing schooling abroad'.	no (yes if less than a semester).	as regular pupil	yes	yes
Slovakia	yes	yes, 10 % of the regular funding.	pupils can choose to enrol as regular pupils (they need to pass an entrance examination) or be admitted as 'visiting pupils' (not assessed as regular pupils).	no (only if exchange pupils are enrolled as regular pupils, which is rare).	yes, but only for maximum a semester.
Slovenia	yes, to ensure to have a place in the same school upon return. They are considered to fulfil school obligation through a personalised study plan/distance learning.	yes	as regular pupil	yes	yes
Spain	no. Readmittance in the same school is not guaranteed.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	as regular pupil. They need to apply for equivalence to the Ministry of Education and provide the school reports of the previous school years.	no (the school is not funded per capita).	yes

Country	Enrolment of exchange pupils in the sending school	Funding for the sending school	Enrolment of hosted exchange pupils	Funding for the host school	Hosting in the last year
Sweden	no. Pupils have the right to be readmitted to the same school upon return.	no	exchange pupils are accepted by host schools on an exceptional basis as in theory they would have to follow the educational path of newly arrived migrants.	yes	not specified

*Source: Compiled by the authors.*

## Implications for recognition of learning periods abroad

Estimates of the number of pupils participating in long-term individual mobility are indicative of its significance, although with important differences in take-up among countries. The challenges generated by the patchwork of practices related to individual pupil mobility, show the need for closer cooperation among and within Member States to put in place conditions for automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

The analysis presented in this section points to three main aspects which link the further development of individual pupil mobility with efforts towards automatic recognition:

- Broadening participation
- Recognition as an incentive for intra-EU mobility
- Monitoring to support policy development

### *Broadening participation*

Broadening participation has a direct impact on the possibilities for automatic recognition: the more pupils study abroad, the more schools are likely to perceive the need to set up procedures for recognition and to have the opportunity to get to know other school systems, develop trust in the educational quality of the exchange programme, and develop processes for smooth reintegration of pupils upon return from mobility.

For broadening participation in individual pupil mobility and to make 'spending a period abroad the norm'<sup>160</sup> actions are needed in several areas, and most of them are interlinked with potential rules for recognition.

First of all, clear information for pupils, their families and schools about the wide range and quality of mobility opportunities is essential, e.g. through accreditation of pupil mobility providers and cooperation among stakeholders within umbrella organisations which also provide quality labels (see sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). Youth information centres could also play an important role in coordinating the provision of information.

**A shift in mindset regarding who can take part in long-term individual mobility and achieve recognition** may also be needed: it is not only for highly performing pupils. Having passing grades in the school year before the exchange might be a reasonable criterion for providing pupils this opportunity. All pupils could benefit from study abroad as a transformative experience.

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<sup>160</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, COM/2018/268 final, 22.05.2018.

**Pupils should be motivated to participate in long-term mobility and supported for recognition.** In addition, pupils should have sufficient time to catch up with any required curriculum content in their home country. This may be particularly important for pupils who require more time to succeed.

**Access is also determined by the school system in each sending and host country and rules related to enrolment at school.** Countries apply a **patchwork of procedures for enrolling exchange pupils in their sending and host school**, which creates uncertainty for recognition and bureaucratic burden for schools and the pupil's family. This uncertainty may also have an impact on the willingness of pupils to enrol in a mobility programme, and on the readiness of schools to host exchange pupils. **Effective coordination and clear information on administrative elements can ensure that both parents and staff understand expectations for the mobility**, and therefore build trust and confidence and avoid uncertainty on what the pupils' experience will be during the exchange and upon return.

Ideally, pupils would be formally enrolled in both the sending and host school during the mobility under the special status of "exchange pupil", which would also support tracking of individual pupil mobility (see above). In practice, this would allow pupils to have a personalised study plan in the host school and to follow lessons in different grades, with assessment methods and formats tailored to their needs and situation. Sending and hosting schools would also receive appropriate funding for the pupil taking part in the mobility. In fact, sending schools need to invest resources to ensure their exchange pupils are suitably supported while abroad, e.g. assigning them a tutor, reintegrating them upon return. To ensure an effective learning experience, host schools need to offer exchange pupils the same activities as regular pupils, with the additional support of a personalised study plan, and of a teacher assigned to be their main contact.

Most pupils take the opportunity to study abroad when they are **16/17 years old, in their third last or second last year of upper secondary school**. However, for sending countries where mobility is not possible in the final year(s) due to the school leaving requirements, **pupils might be encouraged to participate in mobility at a younger age and ensure recognition of the learning period abroad**. However, from reports of pupil exchange organisations involved in the project, parents are reluctant to send their child abroad at an early age. Therefore, this aspect needs to be considered when promoting mobility of pupils at the age of 14/15. On the other hand, **host countries should always be open to accepting exchange pupils in the second last grade (and in the last grade in special cases)**, in order to ensure that they can be hosted in what is considered to be the "equivalent" grade in their sending country. However, based on the results of the mapping and analysis exercises, the practice of recommending against study abroad in the last year of secondary school is reasonable in most systems.

Finally, although automatic recognition of learning periods abroad within secondary school should be fostered in all EU countries, **in some countries the gap year is a successful practice to be maintained, and it should be given value with recognition of prior learning** during secondary school and higher education, depending on when the gap year takes place (i.e. Denmark).



### *Recognition as an incentive for intra-eu mobility*

The data collected, although incomplete, show that **individual pupil mobility within the EU is a small percentage** of the overall phenomenon, with North America (USA, Canada) as the main destinations.

According to an AFS Intercultural Programs study<sup>161</sup>, for European pupils aged 13-18 years old the **prevalent motivation to study abroad revolves around cultural exploration as opposed to academic advancement**, more so than for their peers from other regions of the world. Considering this research finding and that youth have more and more opportunities to travel within the EU thanks to European integration, it is very likely that when considering a new cultural experience, youth would rather turn to countries outside of the EU.

In addition, according to the above-mentioned study, one of the **main motivators for mobility is language learning, in particular English**. This finding is confirmed by the data on the popularity of host countries collected within this research: North America remains in highest demand. In the EU the main destinations are countries where the language spoken is popular (France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain).

Currently, **recognition of periods abroad in countries where popular languages are spoken is often easier for several reasons**, among which is the possibility for the pupil to perform well in subjects due to greater language proficiency (see recognition of the learning period abroad in the USA in Spain and Portugal). This matching of motivation for language learning and possibility for academic advancement makes these destinations particularly attractive.

While **mobility outside of the EU will remain popular for the above-mentioned reasons, automatic recognition may serve as an incentive for studying abroad within the EU, while at the same time promoting a diversity of host countries and leveraging on “cultural exploration” as an important motivator for mobility**.

Erasmus+, other intra-EU governmental programmes, and non-profit pupil exchange organisations which offer a wide range of EU countries as destinations and focus on intercultural immersion could be the key players for piloting automatic recognition of learning periods abroad within the EU. In fact, thanks to their country coverage they could join forces to apply and monitor how the principle of recognition based on learning outcomes can be applied broadly in all the different exchange combinations, and whether automatic recognition actually increases intra-EU mobility.

### *Monitoring to support policy development*

Currently, **policymaking in the field of individual pupil mobility and recognition is not supported by a systematic collection of data**. In the only two countries where

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<sup>161</sup> Mapping Generation Z- Attitudes Toward International Education Programs. An AFS Global Research Study of over 5 000 high school students ages 13–18, Hristo Banov, Andrea Kammerer, Indre Salciute, February 2017, AFS Intercultural Programs.

mobility numbers are monitored (Germany, Italy) this is done on the initiative of private organisations, and different methods are used. In order to know whether recognition policies work and whether they support mobility, monitoring is essential. It is therefore **necessary to create an effective monitoring system (ideally European wide) and encourage cooperation among public and private mobility providers to better inform policies for the benefit of pupils and internationalisation of schools.**

To set up a system for monitoring long-term individual pupil mobility, a wide set of data would be needed:

- the number of pupils mobile in a given year – by grade level, destination, length of the exchange programme, study orientation, and mobility provider
- the total number of pupils enrolled in each grade in the given year, to allow the overall percentage of mobile pupils to be calculated

Effective monitoring will require easy identification of pupils on mobility. This may be achieved through creation of a specific “exchange pupil” status in both sending and host schools: schools would report the number of pupils enrolled with the special status to their ministry of education. The tracking of mobility would become less dependent on data disclosure by non-profit and for-profit providers. An effective monitoring system also requires cooperation between mobility providers.

## Recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education

This section sets out information yielded through the country mapping of current approaches to recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

**In order to define categories of recognition systems for different countries, both legislation and actual practice have been considered.** The mapping has helped to identify **two general approaches to recognition**: recognition based on **equivalence** and recognition based on **assessment of achieved learning outcomes** (see section 4.2.3 for a full discussion). In addition, **recognition procedures may vary based on the length of the period abroad.**

### What recognition is not

It is important to note that there are some procedures applied to pupils returning from a learning period abroad which do not qualify as recognition and are not dealt with in this analysis.

A very common practice is readmission to the sending school with the requirement that the pupil take tests on all content their peers followed in the previous months. Alternatively, the pupil may be readmitted without being required to take tests on

missed content. In these cases, the pupil is provided time and teacher support to enable them to catch up on missed content (i.e., they are reintegrated with their class), but with no recognition of the outcomes of their study abroad.

The requirement for the returning pupil to take an examination covering the curriculum missed while abroad to be readmitted to their grade to finish the school year (for periods up to six months), or for being admitted to the next grade (for periods of a full school year) does not qualify as a recognition procedure.

In some countries, pupils may participate in an exchange with schools offering the same curriculum as in their home country (e.g. Lycée français, Swedish schools abroad) or within a double diploma curriculum (Abibac, Esabac, Bachibac in France<sup>162</sup>). An individual pupil mobility with a placement in these schools is of course recognised, however, this phenomenon is outside the scope of the current analysis.

Finally, completing upper secondary education in the host country is not encouraged and only occurs on rare occasions. This case would then become a matter of recognition of the qualification in the sending country, and no longer a matter of recognition of learning periods abroad.

## Recognition procedures: documents required

The **documents** which may be required within recognition procedures include:

- school attendance certificate (mandatory in all procedures)
- transcript of grades (optional) (see Chapter 4.1.6 Sending and hosting schools: different practices for exchange pupils)
- learning agreement (optional), between the sending school and the pupil, or between the sending school, the host school and the pupil (see Box 6)

Additional requirements might be the certified translation of documents, sometimes with apostille<sup>163</sup> (**Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Portugal**), and a description of the content of the subjects followed in the host school.

### **Box 6 – Learning agreement: a tool for recognition only depending on its actual content**

Several recognition systems foresee a learning agreement. In some cases it is compulsory as part of the recognition procedure (Belgium FR<sup>164</sup>,

<sup>162</sup> Présentation des sections binationales: Abibac - Bachibac - Esabac (Presentation of binational sections: Abibac - Bachibac - Esabac), <https://eduscol.education.fr/702/presentation-des-sections-binationales-abibac-bachibac-esabac>

<sup>163</sup> An apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

<sup>164</sup> In Belgium FR the learning agreement is mandatory for periods of more than 3 months.

France, Slovenia) or is strongly recommended (Italy). In other countries it is established practice (Belgium NL), or it might be required (Bulgaria). In some countries there is mention of an “agreement with the sending school on a personalised study plan” in the recognition procedure (Czechia, Denmark, Finland). In Germany the “terms for recognition” need to be clearly discussed between the school principal, the pupil and the family before departure. In addition, specific programmes such as those run by OFAJ and Erasmus+ promote this as a key tool for recognising the learning outcomes of the period abroad. Although learning agreements are agreements between the sending school, the pupil, the family (and the host school), they can be substantially different depending on whether they are:

- 1) aimed at defining what content of the national curriculum s/he needs to study and which will be tested upon return. Recognition refers only to school attendance while abroad and does not concern competences developed at the host school. In this case the learning agreement is not a recognition tool, but rather a tool for readmission.
- 2) aimed at defining the learning outcomes foreseen in the national curriculum which are in line with those of the host school curricula, therefore recognising that the pupil has fulfilled learning requirements while abroad. Depending on the approach of each school, the definition of the learning outcomes to be attained while abroad can be expressed either in broad terms or aimed at a “curriculum matching”. The sending school therefore trusts the assessment made by the host school and the pupil will **NOT** be tested by the sending school upon return to verify the achievement of competences already developed and assessed while abroad. Within this type of learning agreement, the sending school still has the right to “check that the requirements set in the learning agreement have been fulfilled”<sup>165</sup>.

Only in the latter case is it possible to affirm that the learning agreement is a tool for recognition. In the former case, it is a tool for agreeing transparently with the pupil on what s/he will need to study independently (in addition to the host school curriculum) in order to keep up with the requirements of the sending school, and what exams s/he will need to take upon return in order to continue in the same grade (periods up to 6 months) or move to the next grade level with their peers (periods of a full school year).

There are learning agreements that are a mix of the above-mentioned approaches, where the sending school partly trusts the assessment of the host school, and partly sets arrangements for its own assessment of pupil’s learning outcomes. In both cases, it is good practice to define with the pupil the essential content they need to catch up with.

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<sup>165</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 “on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad”, op. cit.

The learning agreement is also a useful tool to clarify what documents are needed for applying for recognition, being mindful of not creating an administrative burden for the host school, the pupils and their family. For example, once learning outcomes are defined in the learning agreement, there should be no need for a detailed overview of the content of each subject followed by the pupil while abroad.

In **Belgium (FR)** the Expedis framework<sup>166</sup> which allows recognition for stays abroad of up to a full school year, foresees that the coordinating exchange organisation needs to be included in the learning agreement for periods abroad of more than 3 months. In other countries, there are informal practices for establishing learning agreements involving the pupil exchange organisation (e.g. Italy, Belgium NL).

*Source: Authors, based on Country Reports.*

## Approaches to recognition

As highlighted above, recognition can be based either on the principle of equivalence of the learning period abroad OR on assessment of achieved learning outcomes.

In the case of recognition based on **equivalence**, the period abroad is considered as equivalent to the same period in the home country, regardless of any differences in curricula between the sending and host schools, and the pupil is readmitted to the corresponding grade or admitted to next grade if they have spent a full school year abroad. Equivalence follows defined principles and criteria which are applied equally to all destination countries, assessments of the pupil's learning outcomes are not required on return.

Within this category we find:

- equivalence based on school attendance
- equivalence based on successful completion of the school year abroad

In the case of recognition based on **assessment of achieved learning outcomes** equivalence applies only in relation to school attendance (the absence from school in the home country is accepted). When pupils return from mobility, they still need to prove that they have learned the content foreseen by the national curriculum.

Within this category we find:

- Official procedure based on learning outcomes determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school;
- Official procedure based on curriculum matching, and potential assessment on subjects not followed abroad;

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<sup>166</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Circulaire n. 5039 du 24/10/2014 relative à l'organisation des séjours scolaires individuels dans le cadre du programme EXPEDIS, op. cit.

- Assessment by the sending and host school in the framework of a school-to-school partnership;
- Assessment by the sending school without set guidelines.

It is worthwhile noticing that in general, **recognition procedures are independent of whether pupils are of compulsory school age or not**. The only exception is **Spain**, where learning periods abroad within compulsory schooling until the age of 16 are recognised according to different rules.

Currently the **same legislation on recognition applies, whether the period abroad is in an EU country or outside of the EU**. However, in some countries, **recognition is available (or easier) only for a specific type of mobility programme** (i.e. France allows recognition only for mobility within school-to-school partnerships).

## Automatic recognition

The Council Recommendation highlights that automatic recognition should be provided so long as “the learning outcomes [are] broadly in line with those in the national curricula of the country of origin”. Therefore, schools are encouraged to focus on what they have in common – i.e. the EU Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – to define how their curricula are broadly in line with each other (see section 2.2.2).

### **Automatic recognition is reflected in two categories within “recognition based on assessment of achieved learning outcomes”:**

- Official procedure based on learning outcomes determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school (see Category 3 as set out in section 4.2.3 and described in further detail below, specifically the country specific examples of Italy and Romania).
- Assessment by the sending and host school in the framework of a school-to-school partnership, depending on whether in the learning agreement the two schools formulate broad learning outcomes which their curricula have in common (see Box 6 on the learning agreement) (see Category 6 as set out in section 4.2.3 and described in further detail below).

Another aspect at the centre of the definition of automatic recognition is that the school has the “right to set specific requirements in advance of a period of learning mobility”, or to “**check that those requirements have been fulfilled on return from a period of learning mobility**<sup>167</sup>”. Schools may check whether requirements have been fulfilled in one of two ways:

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<sup>167</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, op. cit., p.6.

- By analysing the documentation in which the host school describes the achieved learning outcomes of the pupil (and therefore trusting the host school's assessment);
- By testing the pupil to verify the achieved learning outcomes.

As countries build mutual trust in the quality of school education systems across the EU, automatic recognition may be based on the principles that:

- recognition of the content that are broadly in line with the national curriculum should be based on analysis of the documentation provided by the host school, including their assessment of the pupil's learning;
- testing should be foreseen only for content that is not broadly in line with the national curriculum, namely subjects that the pupil did not follow abroad and that are an essential part of the national curriculum – and often required for the end-of-school examination.

## Categories of recognition systems

In this section, we provide a detailed categorisation of recognition systems based on the procedures applied in the different EU countries. For a full overview of recognition systems applied in the EU-27 based on the length of the period abroad, see Annex 3.

Within one country, a combination of the different categories of recognition systems can be applied, based on the length of the period abroad and/or the programme's provider (i.e. in most countries, in the case of school-to-school partnership programmes).

### *1) Equivalence based on school attendance abroad*

This system is used in **Austria** where recognition is awarded by the school based on certification of attendance in the host school, for a minimum 5 months and maximum of 1 year<sup>168</sup>.

### *2) Equivalence based on successful completion of the school period abroad*

This system is applied in **Portugal**<sup>169</sup> for periods abroad of a full school year: recognition is based on an official translation of the certificate of attendance and transcript of results<sup>170</sup> which shows that pupils have a satisfactory mark in the subjects attended in the host school and therefore passed the school year. The transcript of results is used to ensure that the pupil has passed the school year rather than to check compliance with the national curriculum. Recognition is awarded by the ministry of education.

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<sup>168</sup> Country report Austria.

<sup>169</sup> Another criterion is that the pupil needs to have attended the equivalent grade abroad.

<sup>170</sup> The documents must be translated by a Greek authority or by a lawyer/notary approved by the Greek Embassy based in that country. There is no data in relation to the number of pupils that receive recognition thanks to this procedure, therefore we cannot comment on its effectiveness.

### 3) *Official procedure based on learning outcomes determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school*

This procedure foresees that recognition of the learning period abroad is based on school attendance abroad and the analysis of the documents issued by the host school, including a list of subjects attended and a transcript of results if available. The school, if deemed necessary, can also administer subject tests.

This procedure is used in Italy and Romania and is based on valuing the experience abroad in all its aspects, acknowledging the diversity of school curricula between the two countries.

- In **Italy**, the class council<sup>171</sup> assesses whether, based on the documents issued by the host school, the pupil can be readmitted to their class or – if they have spent a full school year abroad – admitted directly to the next grade. They can require the pupil to take supplementary tests in order to reach an overall assessment which takes into account the host school's assessment and defines school credit which count toward the pupil's end-of-school examination<sup>172</sup>. The sending school is strongly encouraged to develop a learning agreement<sup>173</sup> noting the essential content areas within the national curriculum necessary to attend the following grade and that the pupil commits to catch up with upon return. The learning agreement also outlines expectations for the development of other competences, including transversal competences<sup>174</sup>.
- In **Romania**, the school inspectorate grants recognition for periods between 6 months and a full school year based on documents issued by the host school. The objective is to admit the pupil to the next grade, despite any differences in curricula between the sending and host schools<sup>175</sup>. In some cases (about 25 %) <sup>176</sup>, schools require pupils to pass some tests for the subjects they have not studied abroad.

In the case of Romania, the transversal competences are not assessed in the recognition process, while in Italy, the class council is encouraged to assess pupils' overall learning, including transversal competences – and intercultural competence specifically. Based on our analysis, **this recognition system reflects most closely the definition of automatic recognition set by the Council Recommendation.**

From a legislative perspective, the difference between Romania and Italy and other countries adopting an official procedure based only on curriculum matching is not readily apparent. The main difference lies in the implementation and on the percentage of subjects for which recognition is granted, which is almost 100 % in both Italy and

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<sup>171</sup> The class council is the group of teachers of a given class – group of pupils.

<sup>172</sup> Country report Italy.

<sup>173</sup> Example: Intercultura, *Learning Agreement: Individual Pupil Mobility*, <http://intercultural-learning.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Annex-Draft-agreement-student-family-school-1.pdf>

<sup>174</sup> Country report Italy.

<sup>175</sup> Country report Romania.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid*



Romania, while it is much lower in the countries using curriculum matching as the official procedure<sup>177</sup>.

#### 4) *Official procedure based on curriculum matching*

In countries using official procedures to match curricula, the authority in charge of recognition receives the exchange pupil's transcript of results and compares it to the national curriculum, with the objective of ensuring there is a match between the subjects studied abroad and those in the sending school curriculum. In some cases, pupils also need to provide a detailed description of the content of the subjects followed while abroad.

This approach is the most common in **Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia** and **Spain**. It is important to note that in **Belgium (FR), Croatia, Germany, Latvia, Slovenia** the school decides on recognition, while in the other four countries (**Bulgaria, Cyprus, Slovakia, Spain**) a regional or national authority is involved depending on the length of the period abroad (**Cyprus** and **Spain** for full year mobility, **Bulgaria** for periods between 6 months and a full school year, **Slovakia** for periods between 5 months and a full school year). In addition, in **Slovakia and Spain** the ministry of education uses a table of equivalences to match subjects and convert marks. Documents from the host school are provided to the authority and in some cases these documents need to be officially translated (Bulgaria, Croatia). Recognition through the regional or national educational authority guarantee equal treatment of pupils against set criteria.

In **Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Slovakia,** and **Slovenia** pupils may receive partial recognition. In other words, only some subjects are recognised, based on the transcript of results. Pupils may need to take exams for the subjects which they were not able to follow abroad. Subjects which will be covered in the school leaving examination are of particular concern (Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia). In **Spain**, in the case of a full school year abroad, there is no possibility to take additional exams, so if the transcript of grades cannot be matched with the table of equivalences, pupils are required to repeat the school year.

In **Belgium (FR),** and **Slovenia,** a learning agreement is compulsory (see Box 6). In cases where some courses are not available in the host school, the pupil is expected to follow an independent study programme with the help of the sending school. Non-academic learning goals, such as intercultural learning and other transversal competences, are not included in the agreement<sup>178</sup>.

In **Latvia,** schools readmit pupils returning from the exchange. Typically, they are not required to take a separate examination on learning outcomes achieved during their study abroad. In the case of a full school year abroad, pupils are admitted to the next

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<sup>177</sup> Although data on the number of pupils who received recognition for their learning period abroad is not collected systematically, from the information collected through the country reports, it can be derived that the percentage of recognition in Italy and Romania for a full school year abroad is higher than in Belgium (FR), Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Spain, – with Slovakia and Latvia being the countries with the highest percentage of recognition within this group of countries.

<sup>178</sup> Country report Belgium (FR), Slovenia.

grade and have full school year to catch up with any core knowledge requirements missed while studying abroad.

In countries where the recognition is based on a transcript of grades, **there might be significant differences in opportunities for recognition based on the hosting country**, given the diversity between the sending school and host school curricula.

### *5) Assessment by the school in the framework of a school-to-school partnership*

Recognition based on school-to-school partnerships is applied in France, and within the Erasmus+ programme in all EU countries. In addition, it might be applied to any other school-to-school partnership programmes. When it is applied within the context of this specific type of programme, recognition needs to first comply with the recognition system applied in the given country, to which the criteria of recognition within a school-to-school partnership are added. The fact that mobility is conducted within a school-to-school partnership can make recognition easier. However, within the same country there are no two separate legislations for recognition of learning periods abroad within school-to-school partnerships or outside this framework.

In **France**, legislation<sup>179</sup> requires that a learning agreement between the sending and host school be drafted<sup>180</sup>. The learning agreement uses the same template as is used by the Erasmus+ programme. It is important to note that this is also the case of France–Germany bilateral exchanges (Voltaire, Brigitte Sauzay) and the recognition of a school year spent by French pupils in Germany in 10th grade, in which case a subject-based learning agreement is foreseen<sup>181</sup>. These programmes have their own learning agreement templates.

The **Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020** encouraged the use of learning agreements within its individual pupil mobility action<sup>182</sup> (though it was not compulsory). The learning agreement<sup>183</sup> sets out intended learning outcomes, mentions class attendance of given subjects, and “should facilitate the recognition of the pupil's learning outcomes and ensure that “double coursework” and extensive catching up after the stay are avoided as far as possible”. It must be noted that learning periods abroad for pupils within Erasmus+ are usually of short duration (2-3 months), and therefore pupils returning from an exchange are readmitted to their sending school without the need for a learning

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<sup>179</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Circulaire n. 2016-091, 15 June 2016, Ouverture européenne et internationale des établissements du second degré, Mobilité des élèves de collège et de lycée en Europe et dans le monde, op. cit.

<sup>180</sup> Mobilité des Éléves de Collège et de Lycée en Europe et dans le Monde, Annexe 4: Exemple De Contrat D'études  
[https://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/24/95/9/ensel925\\_Annexe\\_4\\_exemple\\_de\\_contrat\\_d\\_etudes.\\_5\\_93959.pdf](https://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/24/95/9/ensel925_Annexe_4_exemple_de_contrat_d_etudes._5_93959.pdf)

<sup>181</sup> Voltaire Programme, Assessment of skills acquired during the stay in the partner establishment,  
[http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/echangesMobilitte/08/2/Bewertungsbogen\\_Voltaire\\_2010\\_653082.pdf](http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/echangesMobilitte/08/2/Bewertungsbogen_Voltaire_2010_653082.pdf)

<sup>182</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Comenius: Guide to Long Term Study Mobility of Pupils in Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2), 2014.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, Template Learning agreement and Learning agreement report, pp. 70-77.

agreement, unless foreseen by the law (Belgium FR<sup>184</sup>, France, Slovenia). Within the whole Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programming period, according to preliminary data<sup>185</sup>, at least 14 pupils spent more than 6 months abroad<sup>186</sup>. Of these 14 pupils, 7 were from Spain, the country which has the highest participation in Erasmus+ individual pupil mobility. Consequently, there is currently not enough experience within Erasmus+ to consider whether the learning agreement works as well for recognition of longer periods of mobility throughout the EU.

### *6) Assessment by the school without set guidelines*

In several countries, schools are responsible for deciding on the recognition of learning periods abroad, although without set guidelines or unified practices.

In **Belgium (NL), Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland** and **Sweden** schools lack the know-how to recognise learning periods abroad within their school system and curriculum. There is no established practice or uniform approach to recognition of the learning period abroad and pupils are required to repeat the school year upon return. In the rare cases when recognition is used in these countries, it is based on a transcript of results and passing marks in additional examinations. In all the countries listed above, pupils **may** take an examination on the curriculum of the full school year before they are admitted to the next grade, although this is not a recognition procedure.

In **Sweden**, the school principal can decide to recognise learning outcomes of study periods abroad by giving a passing mark to the pupil. However, pupils do not usually opt for this approach as they are interested in preparing for the end-of-school examination and need to ensure they have the results needed for university admission, even if it means taking additional exams<sup>187</sup>.

In **Denmark, Finland**, and the **Netherlands** it is possible for pupils to have some subjects/study units recognised at the discretion of the school – either via an assessment of prior learning (Denmark), or a transcript of results. However, there is no information on successful cases of recognition of a full school year abroad.

In **Ireland** there is no tradition of mobility during the senior cycle, but if such a case were to arise, the school would be in charge of deciding on whether to recognise the learning period abroad, based on the transcript of results.

### *7) No procedure set for recognition*

In **Luxembourg, Greece** and **Malta** there is no record of a set procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in upper secondary education. While in **Luxembourg** and **Malta** it is most probably the sending school who would assess learning outcomes of the period abroad, in **Greece** the regional office for school education would be the

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<sup>184</sup> For periods of more than 3 months within the Expedis framework.

<sup>185</sup> This preliminary data has been shared by DG EAC on 7.07.2021 for the purpose of this analysis only. The countries sending on IPM longer than 6 months were Spain, Italy, Netherlands, the hosting countries were Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain.

<sup>186</sup> Data provided by DG EAC School and Multilingualism Unit on 15 April 2021.

<sup>187</sup> Country report Sweden.

authority in charge of this process. In fact, currently the regional offices for school education in Greece authorise pupils returning from a full school period abroad to be readmitted in their sending school to repeat the grade.

## Recognition of different lengths of mobility

Among the six different recognition types identified above (see 4.2.5), only one is currently being applied for recognition of a full school year abroad (i.e. recognition based on successful completion of school abroad), all others may be applied for mobility of any length, including a full school year.

Within countries, often different types of recognition systems are applied for different length of mobility, showing how recognition procedures have been changing to address the situations resulting from different lengths of mobility.

Based on the analysis of the country reports, we identified the following main differences in recognition systems applied based on the length of mobility:

- For **periods of less than 3 months**, there is no proper recognition of learning abroad and pupils are readmitted to the sending school and are able to catch up with the content missed quite easily, provided that they return before the end of the school year and have the time to prepare for the final examinations.
- For **periods of between 3 months and 6 months in the winter semester** (finishing by April), most countries do not have a set recognition procedure<sup>188</sup>. Teachers decide which tests pupils need to take and the content they need to catch up on, while at the same time pupils are expected to follow the curriculum with their peers. This can be stressful for the pupil.
- For **periods abroad of less than a full school year and finishing at the end of the school year** (e.g. the spring semester abroad), pupils do not return in time to catch up and be tested by the end of the school year with their peers. This programme format is not common and generally there is no specific recognition procedure. In some countries, pupils can return in time to take the end-of-the year exams in their sending school, or they can arrange to take the exams later in the summer (e.g. in August, as in Belgium NL), although this practice would not necessarily entail recognition of learning outcomes of their period abroad or sufficient time to catch up on core content. In other countries if the period abroad is at least five months or a semester, the recognition procedure for a full school year abroad applies (i.e. Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia). If recognition is based on assessment of learning outcomes by the sending school, recognition can be arranged through a learning agreement (e.g. Belgium FR, Italy) drawn up before departure.
- For **periods of between more than 6 months and less than a full school year**, in most countries there is no specific provision, as pupil mobility providers do not provide this programme format. If recognition is based on assessment of learning

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<sup>188</sup> Exceptions are Belgium (FR), Slovenia, Austria and Slovakia which have a set procedure as from 5 months abroad, Romania and Bulgaria which have a set procedure as from 6 month abroad.

outcomes by the sending school, then recognition could be based on a learning agreement drawn up before departure.

- For **periods of a full school year**, recognition is about enabling the moving up to the following grade. Countries apply both recognition based on equivalence and based on assessment of achieved learning outcomes. In the latter case, most countries organise opportunities for the pupils to take tests on any content they missed while abroad. However, as pupils return over the summer, schools need guidelines on how to manage recognition from an administrative perspective to ensure that the exchange pupil is admitted to the next grade before the beginning of the new school year.

In most of the countries, pupils spending periods of between 2 and 6 months abroad may be readmitted and reintegrated in their class upon return. Only Greece does not allow interruptions of these durations (see 4.1.5.).

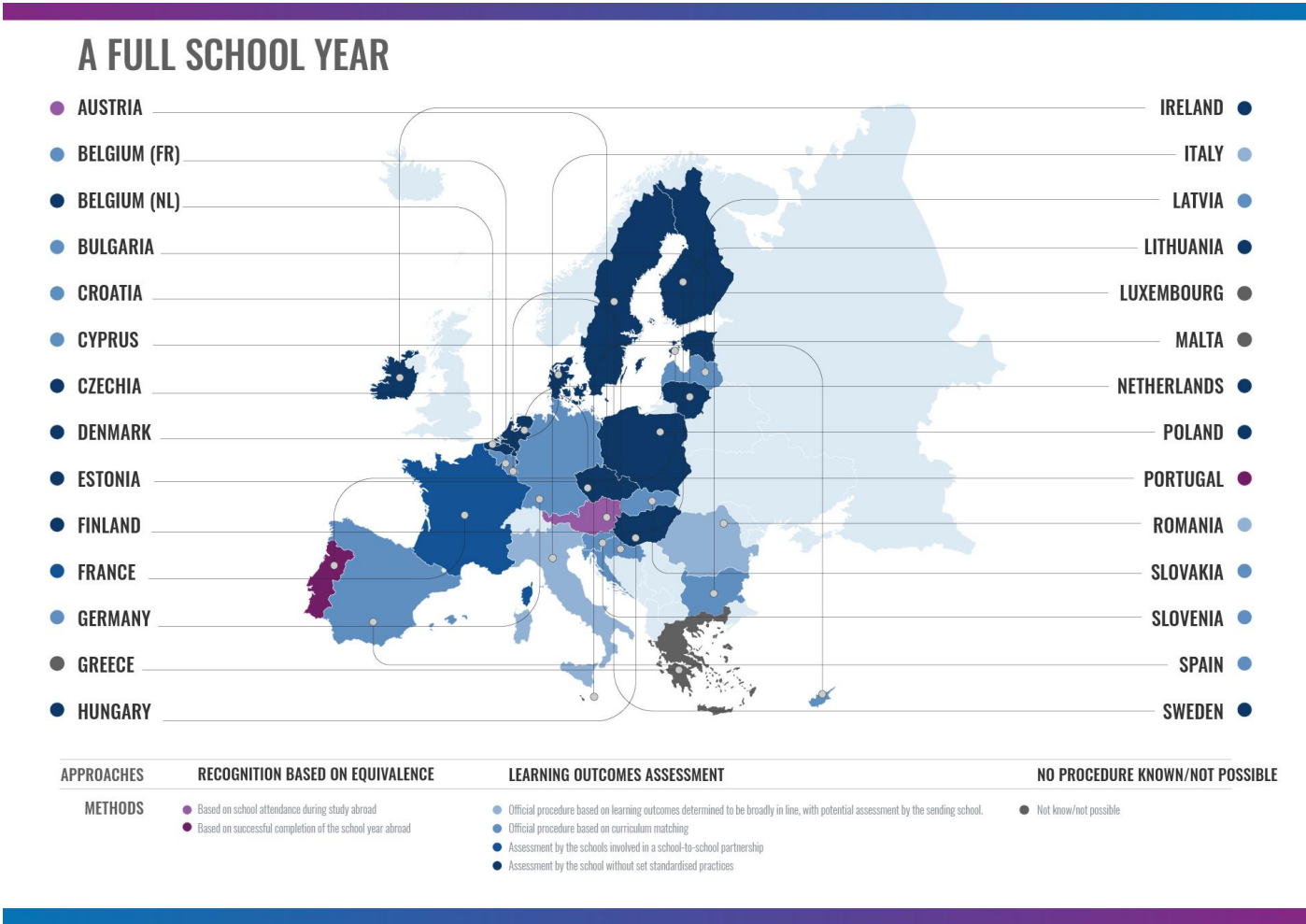
In most countries, the principle of “assessment of achieved learning outcomes” is theoretically applied for periods abroad of **less than a full school year**<sup>189</sup> and the decision on recognition rests with the sending school. However, **a proper process of recognition of learning outcomes is often missing: pupils usually just catch up with content they may have missed**. In some countries, pupils are required to make up examinations missed. Alternatively, they may take semester exams with their peers.

As regards **full school years abroad**, the principle of “assessment of achieved learning outcomes” is still the most common, although there are also countries that apply equivalence and/or a centralised procedure for recognition specifically for study periods of this duration. In fact, a **centralised procedure for recognition is implemented for longer periods only**, namely of between more than 5/6 months (**Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia**) or of a full year (**Cyprus, Portugal, Spain**). Within the range of practices for recognition of a full school year abroad, the practices of equivalence based on school attendance (**Austria**) and those **allowing pupils time to catch up with essential content during the following school year (Italy, Latvia)**, stand out as good practices.

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<sup>189</sup> Exceptions: Austria and Slovakia up to 5 months, Belgium FR up to 3 months.

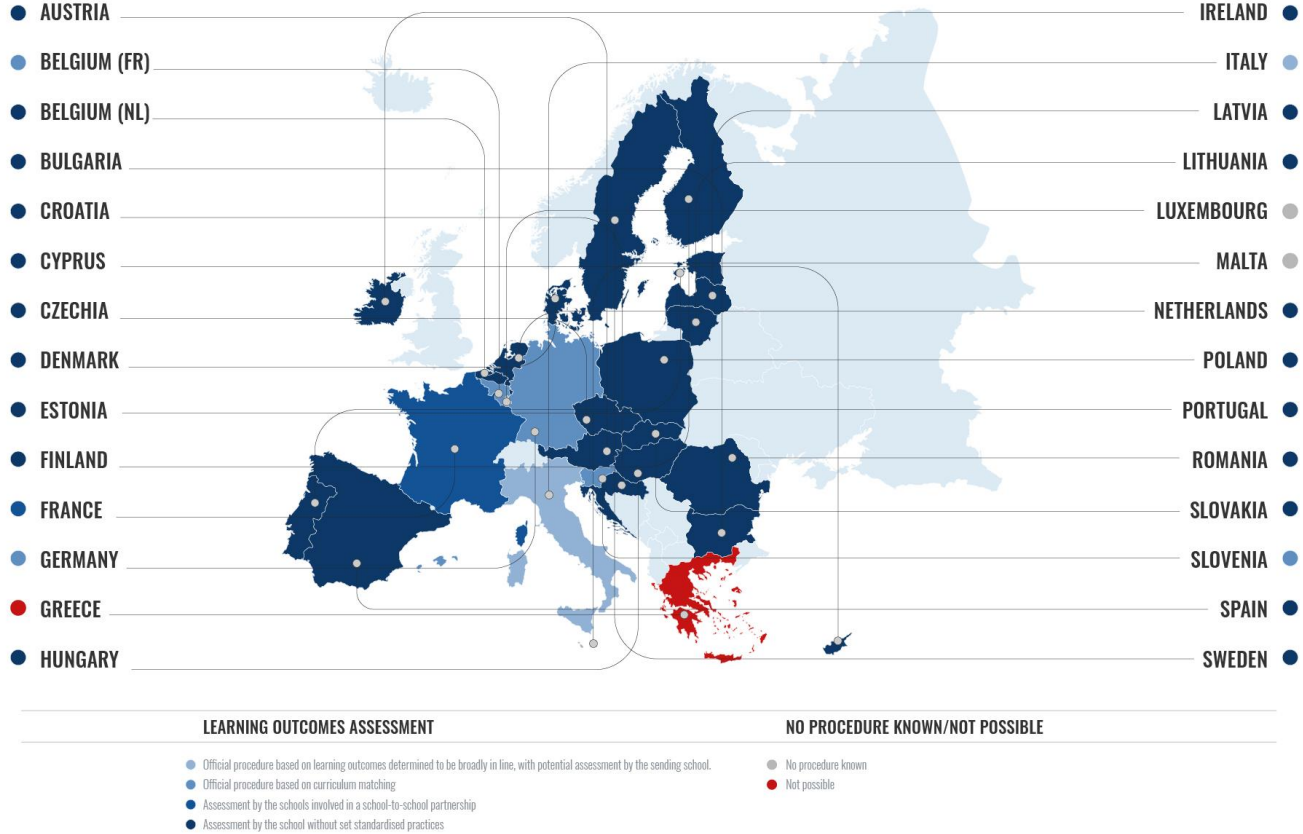
**Figure 1 – Recognition of a full school year – approach and method**



Source: compiled by the authors

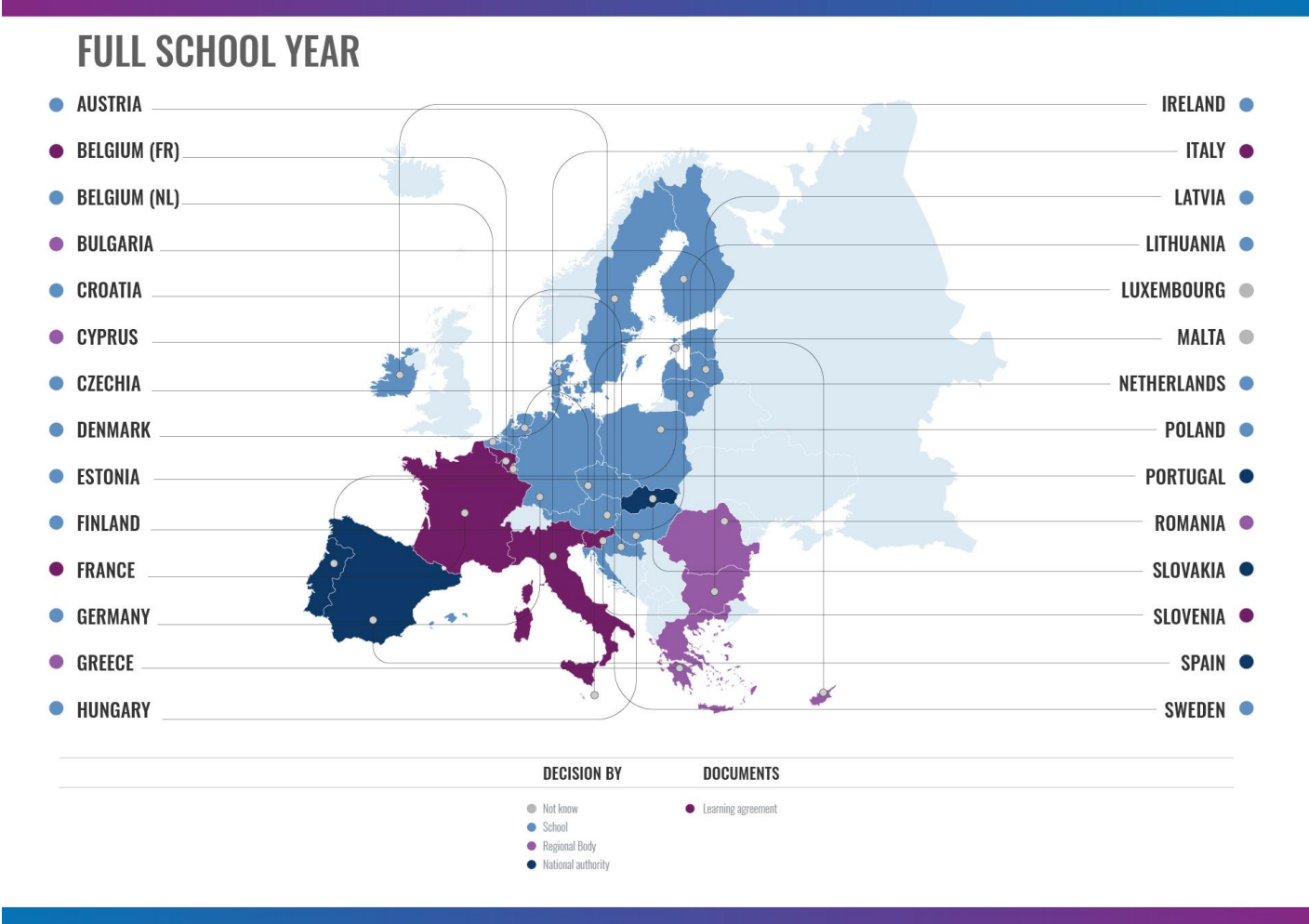
**Figure 2 – Recognition of a full school year – decision-maker & learning agreement**

**BETWEEN 2 AND 6 MONTHS**



Source: compiled by the authors

**Figure 3 – Recognition of periods of between 2 and 6 months (by the school)**



Source: Compiled by the authors



**Table 7. Recognition of learning periods abroad procedures: 2-6 months vs full school year**

Requirements for recognition are established by the law and prevail over a potential learning agreement between sending and host school

Recognition procedures				
Country	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>AUSTRIA</b>	Reintegration in class (less than 5 months abroad)	Possible	Equivalence based on school attendance abroad (for periods between 5 months and a full school year)	No
<b>BELGIUM FR</b>	Official procedure based on curriculum matching, according to requirements of the Expedis framework	Compulsory, it needs to follow the Expedis requirements (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)	Official procedure based on curriculum matching according to the requirements of the Expedis framework are met	Compulsory, it needs to follow the Expedis requirements (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)
<b>BELGIUM FL</b>	Reintegration in class/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Strongly recommended (the LA is at least between the sending school and the pupil)	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams, although very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>BULGARIA</b>	Reintegration in class/ Recognition based on matching of curricula (for periods of less than 6 months abroad)	Possible	Official procedure based on curriculum matching, through the regional management of education	Sometimes requested

Recognition procedures				
Country	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>CROATIA</b>	Reintegration in class/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Official procedure based on curriculum matching	Possible
<b>CYPRUS</b>	Reintegration in class/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Official procedure based on curriculum matching, through District offices of the Ministry of Education	No
<b>CZECHIA</b>	Reintegration in class/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible. Currently pupils agree on a personal study plan with teachers	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams,	Possible
<b>DENMARK</b>	Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible. Currently pupils agree on a personal study plan with teachers	Pupils repeat the school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>ESTONIA</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams, although very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>FINLAND</b>	Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible. Currently pupils agree on a personal study plan with teachers	Pupils catch up with the courses to complete the syllabus of upper secondary school. Usually, they take more than three years to finish.	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition

Country	Recognition procedures			
	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>FRANCE</b>	Recognition based on school-to-school partnership	Compulsory	Recognition based on school-to-school partnership	Compulsory
<b>GERMANY</b>	Official procedure based on matching of curricula	Possible. Currently pupils agree on the terms of recognition with the school principles.	Official procedure based on curriculum matching +additional exams	Possible
<b>GREECE</b>	Not possible	Periods abroad shorter than a full school year are not allowed.	Spending a learning period abroad of a full school year is allowed but there is no procedure for recognition of its learning outcomes	No
<b>HUNGARY</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams, although very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>IRELAND</b>	Reintegration during the Transition Year. There is limited experience with reintegration and recognition based on matching of curricula for mobility during the senior cycle	Possible	Recognition of the Transition Year spent abroad. No experience with recognition based on matching of curricula for mobility during the senior cycle	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition of mobility during the senior cycle

Recognition procedures				
Country	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>ITALY</b>	Official procedure based on curricula determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school	Strongly recommended (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)	Official procedure based on curricula determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school	Strongly recommended (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)
<b>LATVIA</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams	Possible
<b>LITHUANIA</b>	Reintegration/R ecognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Recognition based on curriculum matching + additional exams, although very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b>	No experience			
<b>MALTA</b>	No experience			
<b>NETHERLANDS</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Pupils repeat the school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>POLAND</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Recognition based on curriculum matching+additional exams, although very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Equivalence based on successful completion of the school year abroad, through Ministry of education	No

Recognition procedures				
Country	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>ROMANIA</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula (periods of less than 6 months abroad)	Possible	Official procedure based on curricula determined to be broadly in line, with potential assessment by the sending school, through the school inspectorate (for periods between 6 months and a full school year)	A learning agreement could minimise the additional exams schools might require pupils to take, although they have been granted recognition of the learning period abroad.
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	Reintegration/ Recognition based on matching of curricula (less than 5 months)	Possible	Official procedure based on curriculum matching, through the Ministry of education (for periods between 5 months and a full school year)	A learning agreement could minimise the additional exams schools require pupils to take, although they have been granted recognition of the learning period abroad.
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	Official procedure based on curriculum matching	Compulsory (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)	Official procedure based on curriculum matching	Compulsory (the LA is between sending school, pupil and family)
<b>SPAIN</b>	Reintegration / Recognition based on matching of curricula	Possible	Official procedure based on curriculum matching, through the ministry of education	No

Country	Recognition procedures			
	2-6 months	Use of Learning agreement	Full school year	Use of Learning Agreement
<b>SWEDEN</b>	Recognition based on matching of curricula or on equivalence " with the possibility of the principal to provide a "passing grade "	Strongly recommended (the LA is between sending and host school, and the pupil)	Recognition based on matching of curricula or on "equivalence " with the possibility of the principal to provide a passing grade". However, it is very rare for periods of a full school year	A learning agreement can be the tool to achieve recognition

Source: Compiled by the authors.

## Summary and implications

This chapter has looked at key data on pupil mobility, and at how different countries approach recognition processes (if indeed they do currently recognise learning outcomes of learning periods abroad). **Recognition of learning periods abroad has been developing over time across Europe together with the growth of individual pupil mobility.** It is evident that individual pupil mobility has flourished in countries where: the ministry of education has supported mobility by providing **guidance on recognition processes; with the main objective of promoting a full immersion in the mobility experience (Austria, Germany, Italy); and/or bilateral exchange agreements have been built (France).**

In terms of the type of recognition method applied, **in most EU countries assessment of learning outcomes is the basis for recognising the learning period abroad, both for learning periods of between 2 and 6 months, and of a full school year.** In **half of the EU countries** (13 of 27) there is a **functioning recognition system.** Only in three cases (Belgium FR, France and Slovenia) is the use of a learning agreement mandatory.

**Recognition is the responsibility of the sending school in most countries for both short- and long-term learning periods:** in 25 countries for periods abroad up to 5/6 months, and in 19 countries for periods of a full school year. In the latter case, recognition of full school year mobility is rare (10 of the 19 countries).

In most countries, **recognition is based on successful completion of the school year abroad and/or positive marks for the subjects attended in the host school.** Therefore, being proficient in the language of the host country before departure provides higher chances that the learning period abroad will be recognised upon return. The key role of language proficiency in recognition might also influence the choice of destination for the learning period abroad. In addition, **recognition is not available in the same way for exchange pupils regardless of the provider of individual pupil mobility.** As in most countries curriculum matching is the criteria for recognition, recognition is

only possible or at least it is easier, if the exchange is within a school-to-school partnership.

As a result of this scattershot approach, **school principals and teachers across Europe currently do not share a common approach to the recognition of learning periods abroad.** Host schools are asked to adapt to the diverse requests of hosted pupils in order to comply with a broad variety of recognition procedures, and according to the length of the study abroad period. Procedures vary across countries, and in some cases, may vary for pupils from the same country but from different schools (see 4.2.5). At the same time, sending schools may find it difficult to recognise the pupils' achieved learning outcomes if summative assessments have not been tailored to take their language level. For example, pupils with lower language competences (particularly at the beginning of study abroad), may not perform well on standardised summative assessments. The pupil may be able to demonstrate learning more effectively in alternative assessment formats, such as portfolios. This diversity of approaches and situations might contribute to a lack of trust and feeling of uncertainty, which may hinder mobility.

**Common guidelines on recognition procedures as well as reference tools to help determine whether learning outcomes are “broadly in line” are needed.**

This is particularly the case as a lack of information is a key concern for school staff. In addition, school staff need to be trained on how to assess exchange pupils (both in sending and host schools), information on the documents needed for recognition should be clear, and the administrative burden reduced.

Coherent approaches are important for mobilities of different lengths, as well.

**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.**

Finally, the findings of this chapter also point to the **use of learning agreements as a key tool for clarifying expectations for pupil learning and for streamlining automatic recognition processes within a given country and across the EU.** Learning agreements are most effective when schools have guidance and support as to what should be included, and the steps to be followed in recognition processes. In particular, guidance is needed to ensure that the learning agreement defines learning

outcomes broadly and serves as an actual tool for recognition of learning outcomes (see Box 6). In addition, to the extent that pupils will need to catch up with work missed while on a learning period abroad, a focus on the core knowledge pupils will need to prepare for school leaving examinations, is encouraged.

The next section outlines common barriers and enablers to support progress toward the longer-term goal for automatic mutual recognition of the learning outcomes of periods across European countries by 2025.



## Analysis of barriers and enablers

This section outlines barriers and enablers to automatic recognition. The different barriers highlight the patchwork nature of policies and practices across (and in some cases within) countries; the lack of certainty for pupils as to whether their learning during the study period abroad will be recognised; poorly aligned assessment requirements; limited access to opportunities for mobility and recognition; and more specific disincentives that may discourage pupil mobility and recognition.

The enablers highlighted point to existing policies and good practices that may be adapted in a range of country contexts. Shared frameworks, approaches and tools may provide a common frame of reference for countries and support greater consistency in recognition processes for all pupils. Importantly, opportunities for European-wide networking may build the mutual trust and transparency that are necessary for automatic recognition.

Progress toward automatic recognition of the learning outcomes of study periods abroad for general secondary school pupils will require a step-by-step approach to creating conditions necessary for effective automatic recognition, and to building trust and transparency across countries.

### Barriers

Below, we present barriers identified through the country reports and consultation with the Expert Network. Those barriers which are likely to pose the most significant hurdles to progress toward automatic recognition are presented first.

#### 1) *Lack of easy comparability of school curricula*

The 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition acknowledges heterogeneity of curricula across countries and suggests that "...the outcomes from a learning period of up to one year abroad in another Member State during upper secondary education and training [be] recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieved learning outcomes in the country of origin, *provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin.*" [emphasis added].

Currently, recognition processes vary a great deal across countries and no countries which base recognition on assessment of learning outcomes, have established clear processes to determine whether learning outcomes are broadly in line across two sets of national curricula: the few processes that are in place determine whether the learning outcomes are matching (e.g. Spain for the recognition of a school year abroad)<sup>190</sup>. (Note that countries applying recognition based on equivalence, do not need a process to

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<sup>190</sup> Note that requirements that pupils take examinations on the full curriculum, whether they followed subjects during study abroad or not, are not aligned with recognition as defined in this report, see Chapter 4.2.1. What recognition is not.

compare learning outcomes across national curricula, as the system acknowledges that the curricula are different).

This lack of a systematic approach across countries may account for stakeholder feedback provided in the European Commission's online targeted consultation in February 2018 that the lack of comparability of curricula is a primary challenge for automatic recognition at the secondary school level<sup>191</sup>.

Challenges of comparability may be addressed, to some extent, by the definition of learning outcomes in national curricula and common reference to the EU key competences framework (albeit with each country developing their own approach to defining key competences). However, countries are at different stages in the design and implementation of learning outcomes and competence-based approaches and lack guidelines on how to determine general alignment of learning outcomes in developing learning agreements for study periods abroad. Countries are also at different stages in the development of assessments that fully capture pupils' ability "...to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)" (in line with Cedefop's definition of "competence" as part of the learning outcomes approach<sup>192</sup>). Performance-based assessments, pupil portfolios, and other assessments that allow pupils to demonstrate competence (i.e. their knowledge, skills and attitudes) are gradually being introduced in classroom-based assessments as well as higher-stakes assessments (e.g. for graduation).

## 2) *Uncertainty in recognition processes*

As highlighted throughout section 4.2, there is no common approach to the recognition of learning outcomes of study periods abroad. Approaches vary across, as well as within, European countries – from school to school. This "patchwork" approach creates challenges for host and sending schools with different approaches to recognition, as well as for the providers facilitating pupil exchanges. In countries that do not have established guidelines for recognition or which set very strict rules regarding the need for curriculum matching, pupils face uncertainty as to whether their learning period will be recognised, and consequently whether they will need to repeat the school year, and whether they may re-join their school or class. This may discourage some pupils from participating in longer-term mobility and create inefficiencies throughout the system.

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<sup>191</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Accompanying the Proposal for a Council Recommendation 'on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad', op. cit.

<sup>192</sup> Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms*, 2nd edn., Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 164.

### *3) Assessments that are not fully aligned with mobility and automatic recognition*

Current approaches to pupil assessment may create barriers both to mobility and to automatic recognition of the learning outcomes of study periods abroad:

- Assessments typically do not capture the value added of study abroad, including the transversal competences developed (these may include intercultural competence; social and personal development; the non-formal and informal learning that occurs as learners adapt to a new environment; understanding diverse approaches to learning in different education cultures, and so on.)
- Teachers in host schools may hesitate to assess exchange pupils who do not yet have sufficient language proficiency to succeed in tests. If host schools are not able to tailor assessments (e.g. comment-based reports) the sending school may have difficulty providing automatic recognition if the grade transcript includes low marks.
- The country reports reinforce prior research showing that pupils are frequently required to take examinations in every subject they have missed in their sending school during the year they are abroad<sup>193</sup>. While it is important to identify major gaps in learning and to ensure that pupils are prepared for their school leaving examinations, extensive testing in every subject missed creates a major burden both for the pupil and the school and undermines the spirit of automatic recognition.
- In the sending school country, the timing of examinations during the school year and at its end, may also hinder recognition as these examinations are deemed compulsory for being admitted to the next grade and/or to qualify for the end-of-school examination. While some countries allow pupils to take examinations under supervised conditions at a later date, others do not.
- Several country experts have cited the need for pupils to prepare for their school leaving examinations as a major barrier to mobility at the secondary school level (and in particular, during the final two years of school). Indeed, examination results have significant consequences (i.e. “high stakes”) for pupils, as they affect opportunities to continue in higher education and/or to pursue their desired career path choice. With only a few exceptions, pupils’ opportunities to develop projects during the learning period abroad that may count toward recognition of learning outcomes during study abroad as well as graduation requirements are rare (e.g. a thesis, multi-media or other project that demonstrates learning in the host country).

### *4) Lack of transparency related to school quality assurance processes – potentially weakening trust*

Currently, the insistence in several countries that pupils either repeat the school year or sit extensive examinations upon return from their study period abroad communicate a lack of trust in the content and quality of learning in the host schools. Moreover,

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<sup>193</sup> E. Briga, Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning, EFIL, Brussels, 2018, op. cit.

although the 2006 European Quality Charter for Mobility highlights the importance of mentors in host schools to ensure that exchange pupils have an opportunity to discuss their progress in fulfilling requirements for their learning to be recognised<sup>194</sup>, sending schools are not always aware whether pupils are supported appropriately<sup>195</sup>. Greater transparency and mutual trust will be needed to be fostered over time before countries are ready to support automatic mutual recognition.

### *5) Limited access to mobility opportunities and recognition of its wider benefits*

Only a small number of general secondary school pupils currently participate in mobility opportunities. In many countries, mobility is restricted to top-performing pupils. However, to the extent that individual pupil mobility remains limited, interest and investment in automatic recognition is also likely to remain limited.

Limiting mobility to the highest-performing pupils also means that the wider benefits of study abroad – including opportunities for personal and social development, discovery of new learning interests, language learning in context, and so on – are not fully valued. Recognition of the transversal competences developed during study abroad, including intercultural competence, may help to balance the focus on academic performance present in some recognition systems and communicate its value for all young learners.

### *6) Specific disincentives for pupils, their parents and schools*

The country reports highlighted a number of specific disincentives for pupils, parents and schools considering mobility opportunities which are linked to technical challenges impacting recognition of learning outcomes of periods abroad and reintegration in the sending school. These include:

- few opportunities and insufficient time to catch up with missed content over the following academic year.
- a lack of clear guidelines for both sending and host schools on steps and documents necessary for recognition;
- costs associated with recognition processes (e.g. certified translations);
- the administrative burdens for sending and host schools in relation to procedures for enrolment and assessment of exchange pupils which might determine a:
  - potential loss of a school place for pupils upon return;
  - potential lack of recognition for pupils who are not registered in the host school and therefore not assessed (also related to administrative burden for that school);

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<sup>194</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 'on transnational mobility within the Community for Education and Training Purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility', op. cit.

<sup>195</sup> Only 40 % of sending schools are in touch with the host school during the mobility, in Fondazione Intercultura, *Osservatorio Nazionale sull'Internazionalizzazione delle Scuole e la Mobilità Studentesca, XI Rapporto*, (National observatory on internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility, 9th report), 2019, p. 38.

## Enablers

Enablers of progress toward automatic mutual recognition set out below include existing European frameworks and recommendations, good practices identified in the country reports developed for the analysis, which can inspire change in other countries, and consultation with the Expert Network.

### *1) Shared language and approach to learning outcomes and key competences across national curricula*

As highlighted above, most Member States have by now introduced curricular reforms defining intended learning outcomes, including key competences. The learning outcomes approach and the EU key competence framework (as well as the constituent frameworks supporting different key competences) provide a shared language and approach to curricula. While national curricula continue to reflect the diversity of Member States, the EU key competence framework may serve as common reference and a basis for countries to crosswalk intended learning outcomes – i.e. identify that learning outcomes are broadly in line.

To the extent that schools support the principle that study abroad is an opportunity for enrichment (see Chapter 2.1.3 A unique learning process), and not simply study of the same subjects in a different context, they may also support a more expansive interpretation of learning that is “broadly in line” with national curricula in the country of origin. Indeed, education is an important window on a country’s culture; the diversity of content and pedagogies across countries expose pupils to new ways of thinking.

As noted above, countries are at various stages of introducing new learning outcomes and competence-based curricula. However, countries increasingly share the language of learning outcomes and common references to key competences, and the foundations for progress are being laid.

### *2) Good practice models: Learning Agreements*

The 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition emphasises that mobility and recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad during upper secondary education may be facilitated by “the use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes-based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions”<sup>196</sup>.

While we have highlighted the current patchwork nature of recognition approaches and tools across countries, some countries do encourage or require schools and pupils to develop learning agreements outlining what the pupil may be expected to learn during the study period abroad. Learning agreements between the pupil, the sending school and the host school (the latter, when possible before the mobility, otherwise as from the beginning of the programme) may ensure that expectations for the pupil’s participation in courses and school activities are clear, and that learning will be assessed

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<sup>196</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, op.cit., p.4.

either by the host or sending school (as agreed in advance). They may also highlight transversal competences, such as intercultural competence, which are a clear value added of a learning period abroad. For those countries that do not already have a system for recognition based on equivalence or automatic recognition for periods abroad<sup>197</sup>, a common learning agreement template available to all countries may facilitate progress towards automatic recognition (currently, countries that do use learning agreements may have very different approaches and may not support the identification of learning outcomes broadly in line across the two countries' curricula).

Learning agreements can ensure that expectations for learning during a learning period abroad are clear. They may also provide a way to ensure that the transversal competences – such as intercultural competence, and so on – are made visible and are valued. At the same time, it should be noted that as countries build trust in each other's systems and in the value of mobility as a “transformative experience”, learning agreements may be seen as less essential for the recognition process itself.

Again, greater transparency and access to information on study periods abroad and recognition will be important. To the extent that pupils, parents and schools are aware of the benefits of automatic recognition, they are likely to create demand for every pupil to receive the support of the sending school for recognition, by identifying the content that is broadly in line between the two curricula and encourage more and more mobility providers to facilitate contact between sending and host schools.

### *3) Good practice models: Assessments that value learning outcomes of study abroad more fully*

Automatic recognition does not preclude assessment of pupils on their return to their sending school. Indeed, it is important for schools to identify gaps that pupils may need to address as they prepare for their school leaving examinations and fulfil graduation requirements. Some countries have also developed assessments that value learning that has taken place during a study period abroad, and these may serve as good practice models.

#### ***Fulfilling requirements for school leaving***

In Austria, pupils are required to write a thesis project as part of their school leaving requirements. Pupils who have participated in a learning period abroad may decide to conduct their thesis research in the host country. This has the double benefit of allowing the pupil to reflect upon and enhance their learning while on a study period abroad, and to fulfil a significant graduation requirement upon return.

A further advantage of the thesis requirement in Austria is that it provides an opportunity for all pupils (whether on a study period abroad or not) to demonstrate competences for critical thinking and analysis – which are central to competence-based approaches.

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<sup>197</sup> i.e. All EU Member states except: Italy for any length of period abroad up to a full year, Austria for periods between 5 months a year, Romania for periods between 6 months and a year, Portugal for periods of a full school year only.

Portfolios demonstrating learning in the study abroad context may potentially count toward graduation requirements. Portfolios may also provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on and deepen their learning during the exchange.

### ***Valuing transversal competences***

Key competence-based curricula place a strong emphasis on the development of transversal competences (e.g. personal, social and learning to learn; digital; entrepreneurship; citizenship; and cultural awareness competences). Attention to these transversal competences may further reinforce opportunities for pupil enrichment in the context of study abroad. Country experts have noted that these competences are valued at classroom level (e.g. they may be embedded in assessment of classroom assignments or based on more informal teacher observations)<sup>198</sup>. In Finland, for example, the curriculum sets out seven transversal competences, including: well-being competence, interaction competence, multidisciplinary and creative competence, societal competence ethical and environmental competence, and global and cultural competence. Transversal competences are defined as appropriate for each subject domain, and they are defined in concrete terms in the local curriculum (i.e. at school and classroom level). Teachers typically assess the final work product, so transversal competences are only recognised indirectly (e.g. an overall score for an assignment which requires pupils to use their critical thinking, problem solving competences, etc.)

### ***Valuing non-formal and informal learning***

The learning outcomes approach provides opportunities for pupils' non-formal and informal learning to be valued<sup>199</sup>. Currently, only a few countries have processes to credit learning outside of the classroom<sup>200</sup>. Good practice examples may be found in Denmark and Finland, where pupils may earn credit for prior learning if they request it, and are then granted admission to more advanced courses, optional subjects or a reduced workload. In Poland, pupils have had the option of sitting examinations to assess non-formal and informal learning (e.g. volunteering / traineeship abroad) to earn secondary school credit (provided the outcomes align with curricula).

## ***4) International peer networks that build trust and transparency focused on school quality***

The 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic recognition notes that a "step-by-step" approach will support Member States in putting in place conditions that will make automatic mutual recognition possible" is needed, and that "...a cooperation process

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<sup>198</sup> An outcome of this project will include training on the use of a framework for assessment of pupils' intercultural learning outcomes following pupil mobility based on M. Baiutti, "Developing and Assessing Intercultural Competence during a Mobility Programme for Pupils in Upper Secondary School: The Intercultural Assessment Protocol" *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 33(1), 2021, p. 11. DOI 10.36366/frontiers.v.3.i.1.502.

<sup>199</sup> Council of the European Union, "Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning", OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

<sup>200</sup> Cedefop, Validation non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) Inventory 2018, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

aimed at building the necessary level of trust between Member States' different education and training systems will be launched.”<sup>201</sup>

The approach set out in the recommendation recognises that trust tends to develop over time when parties have a shared value framework and act in a competent, benevolent, honest and just manner<sup>202</sup>. It builds on the ET2020 Working Group Schools (2018-2020), which provided an opportunity for participants to learn about approaches to quality assurance policies to support school improvement in other Member States. The Working Group Schools considered cultures of quality enhancement as essential to building trust and transparency within and among Member States<sup>203</sup>.

The school sector may also benefit from the experience of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). An important aim of EQAVET is to develop a shared culture of quality, to be embedded at European and other levels, and to support quality assurance processes (e.g. through the European Credit System for Vocational education and Training/ ECVET)<sup>204</sup>.

Given the voluntary nature of the European frameworks, implementation can only be enhanced through peer learning between countries.

At the school level, the European Association of School Inspectorates (SICI) may also provide important foundations for the development of the trust and transparency necessary for mobility and automatic recognition. SICI is currently working towards a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality compulsory education, how to measure and monitor school quality and inform parents and the wider public on school outcomes. This broad approach to quality assurance can support trust that pupils will be safe and receive a good level of education while participating in a learning period abroad.

##### *5) Good practice models: Support for greater equality of access to mobility and recognition*

Concerns regarding equality of access to mobility opportunities are indirectly related to the recognition process. As pupils increasingly begin to participate in mobility, schools will have incentives to adopt effective recognition practices, based on a vision of mobility which is not restricted to top-performing pupils. They may also adopt a more expansive view of the aims of mobility, viewing it as an opportunity for pupils' personal and social development.

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<sup>201</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on “promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad”, p.2, op. cit.

<sup>202</sup> N. Gillespie, (2015). ‘Survey measures of trust in organizational contexts: an overview’ in F. Lyon, G. Möllering and M. Saunders (eds.), *Handbook of Research methods on Trust*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham/Northampton, 2015, p. 225.

<sup>203</sup> Education and Training 2020 Working Group Schools, Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance Processes Interim Report, 2019.

<sup>204</sup> European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), <https://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/what-is-ecvet>, European Commission, Study on EU VET instruments (EQAVET and ECVET), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.



Good practice examples may be found in IVET mobility programmes, which provide opportunities for pupils who might otherwise not travel abroad, to complete an internship in another country. The main aims of the Erasmus+ programme for VET learners, for example, are to support the pupil's development of transversal competences (in particular, learning to learn), along with more targeted professional competences<sup>205</sup>. The KEYMOB project (2018-2020) focused on exploring how pupils were able to develop and strengthen transversal competences during international apprenticeship experiences. The project brought together regional authorities, training centres and company representatives to develop a curriculum focused on the development of transversal competences of apprentices in a productive context of transnational mobility, and guidelines for teachers and tutors in training centres on how to support pupils to develop transversal competences during mobility. The guidelines covered support for pupils before and during mobility, and also covered how to assess and value learning (including transversal competences) at the end of the mobility<sup>206</sup>.

The new Erasmus+ programme, which includes a greater focus on individual pupil mobility with the objective of "making learning mobility a realistic possibility for any pupil in school education",<sup>207</sup> is an important step toward improving access in general upper secondary school. Experiences such as the KEYMOB project, which put the development of transversal competences at the centre of the mobility experience, may serve as inspiration for creating learning agreements that follow the principles of automatic recognition.

## 6) *Specific actions to address disincentives*

Specific disincentives related to reintegration of pupils in their sending school may be directly addressed through policy changes, including:

- **Guarantee that pupils have sufficient time to catch up on missed core content.** Both Italy and Latvia allow pupils the full academic year following their return to catch up with any core content they may have missed during their study abroad. This might entail that exceptions are made to the requirements that allow pupils to be admitted to the following semester or school year.
- **Guarantee that the pupil will have a place at their sending school upon return regardless of the length of their mobility.** Both sending and host schools will be more likely to maintain a relationship and to focus support on the exchange pupil if the pupil is going to be readmitted and reintegrated in the sending school. There are good practice models for ensuring pupils keep their place in the sending school in at least 12 countries (see Table 6), although implemented in different ways. In general, enrolling in the sending school while abroad, is the precondition for the

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<sup>205</sup> H. Dębowski, W. Stęchły, A. Tomengova, K. Reegård, J. Valovic, Development and assessment of transversal key competences in the VET sector – model solutions and practices in six European countries, SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, 2021, [http://track-vet.eu/system/files/TRACK-VET\\_Synthesis\\_Report.pdf](http://track-vet.eu/system/files/TRACK-VET_Synthesis_Report.pdf)

<sup>206</sup> European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL), 'KEYMOB: Key Competences for Mobility (2018-2021)', <https://www.earlall.eu/project/keymob/>

<sup>207</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021 (Version 3)*, Mobility for pupils and staff in school education, Objectives of the action, p. 93.

school to keep a place for the pupil until their return. In some cases, even if pupils do not enrol in the sending school, they do not lose their place (e.g. Latvia). In Italy exchange pupils are enrolled in their sending school and a tutor is assigned to keep in contact with them while abroad and to organise their re-entry into their class. In Slovenia and Belgium Flanders, the pupil and their family sign an agreement which includes the commitment of the school to welcome the student back into their class on their return. The agreement can also include a personalised study plan for recognition, but not necessarily.

- **Financial support for both host and sending schools.** Schools need adequate resources to support pupils to benefit fully from the mobility experience, and to maintain contact with their counterparts (in host/sending school). There are good practice models for these approaches in 15 countries for sending and hosting (although some fund only pupils they are sending, and some only those they are hosting, see Table 6). Financial support for exchange pupils in their sending and host school is generally only given if the exchange pupil is enrolled as a “regular” pupil. Furthermore, there are different financial support mechanisms for schools in the various Member States, e.g. whether they are funded per capita or not. Good practices are found in Belgium (FR) and Slovenia where schools (both sending and hosting) receive funding for the exchange pupil, if they are enrolled as a regular pupil. In other countries, funding depends on the length of the period abroad (e.g. Romania), and the presence of pupils on a given date (Belgium NL, Finland, Ireland). In some countries (e.g. Poland and Slovakia, the sending schools receives a percentage of the regular funding – 60 % and 10 % respectively) for each exchange pupil.

## Potential ways forward

This final section identifies potential strategies for countries to make substantial progress by 2025 towards the automatic mutual recognition of learning periods abroad for general upper secondary school pupils in another Member State<sup>208</sup>.

These policy suggestions follow the principles of the EU Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad<sup>122</sup> as highlighted in the introduction to the report – to facilitate mobility and recognition of learning periods abroad during upper secondary and education by:

- supporting upper secondary education and training institutions on general principles and tools for recognition, for example through guidance material or training;
- promoting the use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes-based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions;
- promoting the benefits of mobility among upper secondary education and training institutions and learners and their families.

The suggestions highlight steps that may be taken within and across countries, as well as at European level. They also form the basis for the Expert Network's planned work on a proposal for a European framework to support the recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad (Task 3 of the project).

At national levels:

- **Bring together a broad set of stakeholders** to discuss the overall vision for pupil mobility within the European Education Area, and to develop a strategy appropriate for the country's context. Relevant stakeholder groups include education ministries, inspectorates and evaluators, school networks and local area municipalities, associations for pupils, parents, teachers and school principals, university admission officers, Erasmus+ national agencies and public, private and non-profit sector organisations providing mobility opportunities. VET providers with experience in recognition of learning mobility may also share insights with stakeholders in their experiences. While the overall process may be steered by the national ministry of education, for example, different stakeholder groups may be gathered to share their insights and address concerns at appropriate moments in a consultation process.
- **Create guidelines, tools and training to support schools in the development of effective learning agreements and recognition procedures.** Recognition processes need to be transparent, fair, consistent and applicable to any individual pupil mobility programme. Roles and responsibilities across sending and host schools should be clear, and teachers and school leaders should have access to appropriate training. As recognition of a full school year abroad proves to be the most

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<sup>208</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad', op. cit., p. 3

challenging, guidelines may specify more clearly when to initiate recognition processes following the pupil's return from study abroad to guarantee a decision is taken before the beginning of the following school year, as well as the time pupils will be allowed to catch up on core content missed while abroad.

For pupils' learning abroad to be automatically recognised, trust needs to be built in these arrangements. As countries develop trust over time, learning agreements may continue to be useful in ensuring that expectations for pupils and schools are clear.

Note that this recommendation also includes a European-level dimension. Member States need to use their respective guidelines, subscribe to them, support each other in working towards agreements and to align their systems to any quality criteria agreed upon. Given the voluntary nature of European frameworks and tools, implementation will need to be enhanced through peer learning between countries, combined with stakeholder engagement.

### ***Box 7 Learning agreements as a tool to foster automatic recognition – Country Specific Recommendations***

Learning agreements can ensure transparency in expectations for pupil learning during mobility and recognition processes. Guidelines on how to write learning agreements may be helpful (e.g. defining transversal competences, determining how curricula are broadly in line, documents required for recognition, a clear study plan on how pupils may reintegrate with their class, and so on). In addition, training on the principles of automatic recognition, and assessment of competences developed during the learning period abroad, including intercultural competence, may be important.

As recommended in the 2006 European Quality Charter for Mobility<sup>209</sup>, tutors with specialised knowledge in mobility – in both sending and host schools, and in supporting organisations such as mobility providers – can ensure that pupils are followed throughout the exchange and on return to their sending school.

Learning agreements for different length of mobility may be developed to support recognition in the various country-level scenarios described below.

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<sup>209</sup> The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 'on transnational mobility within the Community for Education and Training Purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility (2006/961/EC)', op. cit.

## **PERIODS ABROAD OF UP TO 6 MONTHS**

For periods abroad of up to 5-6 months<sup>210</sup> learning agreements could be used to ensure recognition of learning outcomes, rather than just readmission of pupils to their grade.

## **PERIODS OF A FULL SCHOOL YEAR ABROAD**

*Member States where current recognition procedures are based on equivalence.*

In these countries (Austria, Portugal), learning agreements are not needed, although a plan on how to reintegrate the pupils upon return is essential.

*Member States where learning agreements are already used as part of the recognition system.*

In these countries (Belgium FR, Slovenia, France) guidelines and training would be useful to ensure that the principles of "curriculum broadly in line" and the assessment of key competences are implemented.

*Member States where current recognition procedures consider the learning agreement as optional.*

In the countries where the use of a learning agreement is already recommended (Italy, Bulgaria, Croatia), its use could be further promoted and established, making sure it is in line with the principles of automatic recognition.

*Member States where current recognition procedures work without a learning agreement.*

In countries where official procedures for recognition of learning periods abroad do not include a learning agreement (Cyprus, Romania, Slovakia, Germany, Latvia, Spain), the introduction of a learning agreement might not be needed. However, a stronger focus on assessment of learning outcomes viewed as broadly in line with the national curriculum could be applied in the sending country upon return, and a learning agreement could be seen as a tool to enhance this process.

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<sup>210</sup> Shorter than 5 months in Austria and Slovakia, shorter than 6 months in Romania.

*Member States where recognition is based on a transcript of grades but applied without set and common practices.*

In these countries (Belgium NL, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden) a learning agreement would strongly contribute to improve recognition by supporting trust building between school systems across Europe and the practice of finding similarities across curricula according to the principle that learning outcomes are “broadly in line”.

*Member States where there are currently no recognition practices.*

In these countries (Luxembourg and Malta), recognition of learning periods abroad could be piloted through the use of learning agreements following the principles of automatic recognition.

**Source: Compiled by the authors.**

- **Further strengthen the learning outcomes approach** in upper secondary school curricula. The definition of intended learning outcomes and key competences improves transparency of curricula and learning, facilitates assessment of achieved learning outcomes, and increases school accountability for pupil learning. Efforts to ensure that the learning outcomes set out in curricula are readily understood across borders may facilitate the development of learning agreements and recognition of learning.
- **Consider flexibility in assessment.** Pupils may demonstrate learning during mobility with thesis papers, or other projects, portfolios including artefacts from the learning period abroad, which may count toward the pupil’s final marks and complement more “traditional” assessments. Innovative assessments may also include credit for non-formal and informal learning. Acceptance of alternative assessment methods will require buy-in of stakeholders and guidelines for assessors to ensure that all pupils meet standards for learning. Pilot programmes may be developed to ensure the quality of innovative, alternative approaches. Flexibility in regard to timing of examinations for pupils returning from mobility is also important.
- **Consider fostering mobility in specific grades.** Recognition of the learning period abroad is easier in given grades, according to the country specific school education system. To foster mobility, timing of participation could be aligned so as not to interfere with critical learning periods and graduation requirements, and therefore promote mobility at a younger age. In the grades when a full school year mobility would impact the fulfilment of final exam requirements, learning periods abroad of 2-3 months, could be promoted, so that pupils may balance mobility and the demands of the final years of secondary school.

### **Box 8 Age for mobility – Country Specific Recommendations**

Promote mobility at a young age, namely 14/15 or 15/16 years old, in Belgium (FR); Belgium (NL), Cyprus, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

In the above-mentioned countries, short mobilities (2-3 months) could be promoted in the final year(s) of upper secondary school, in order not to interfere with graduation requirements. In addition, this recommendation could also apply to Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands, where pupils do not currently have opportunities to study abroad in their last two years of upper secondary school.

**Source: Compiled by the authors.**

- **Improve outreach and communication of the benefits of mobility for upper secondary pupils.** A better understanding of the gains of pupil mobility – in terms of intercultural competence, language, social-emotional competences, and competences related to core subjects learned in another cultural context – may also bolster readiness of stakeholders (including school principals and teachers) to support automatic recognition. This may lead to a virtuous cycle, with effective recognition processes leading to readiness of pupils to participate in mobility, and a critical mass of exchange pupils leading to readiness for automatic mutual recognition.
- **Support implementation.** Concrete steps and a clear timeline toward aims for automatic recognition should be defined. In addition, sufficient resources will need to be allocated to ensure effective implementation of new policies and processes. Administrative solutions such as the creation of the status of exchange pupil for enrolment in the sending and host school would be a recommended measure.

At the European level:

- **Strengthen trust and transparency among countries,** first, as foreseen in the 2018 recommendation on automatic recognition, "...a cooperation process aimed at building the necessary level of trust between Member States' different education and training systems will be launched." The cooperation process may focus on continued peer learning across countries, and also consider whether there is a need for a European Recognition and Quality Assurance system. Such a system could include a set of core competences for secondary education in Member States, common quality criteria and indicative descriptors which underpin the school evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance.

In addition, multilateral frameworks which regulate mobility, assure quality, and foster cooperation between sending and host schools may support the building of trust in individual pupil mobility programmes.

- **Pilot automatic recognition processes, including the use of learning agreements, through the Erasmus+ pupil mobility programme.** The Erasmus+ programme can serve as a vehicle for countries to trial automatic

recognition in their country context, while being supported by a European-level programme. Concretely, a pilot may test the use of a common template for learning agreements and identifying learning outcomes broadly in line in the curricula of the two schools/countries involved<sup>211</sup>. An evaluation would help to identify how well the learning agreements have supported recognition, and any areas for improvement. Erasmus+ national agencies might encourage schools to attach the content of the learning agreements to their project reports through the Mobility Tool, and therefore create a repository of learning agreements that might serve as a resource for teachers planning future individual pupil mobilities.

- **Create a European observatory on pupil mobility and promote the development of similar structures at country level, building on the Expert Network created as part of this project and extending it to a broader set of countries and stakeholders.** Building on the existing German and Italian models, the national and European observatories may serve as clearinghouses for information on pupil mobility, monitor exchanges, and provide up-to-date information on recognition rules, procedures and practices at national levels. In addition, the European observatory could serve as the hub for the overall network of national observatories, and provide support for ongoing peer learning as countries make progress toward automatic recognition of learning periods abroad.
- Further **strengthen international links between associations for school principals, teachers, pupils, school inspectorates and other external school evaluators.** The European Education Area highlights the importance of trust among Member States in the quality of each other's upper secondary education systems, and thus the quality of pupil learning during mobility. International cooperation among different association can reinforce trust among countries.

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<sup>211</sup> This project is developing a template for learning agreements and a report on learning outcomes as an annex to the proposal for a European framework on recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.



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## Annex 1 - Country Questionnaire

### 1. School System Overview

#### 1.1 Please provide a description of the general upper secondary school system in your country (excluding VET)

*The description should include the structure of the school system; age of starting upper secondary school; requirements for accessing the final examination to obtain the upper secondary school diploma.*

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#### 1.2 Please provide information about the number and population of general upper secondary schools, by filling in the table below:

School Year 2018/2019

Number of general upper secondary schools	Number of students enrolled in general upper secondary school	Percentage of pupils in general upper secondary school compared to the overall number of upper secondary pupils

#### 1.3 Please describe approaches to assessment of key competences in the general upper secondary school curricula

*The description should include whether 1) the national curricula for general upper secondary school integrates competence-based learning and/or defined learning outcomes (a curriculum can have learning outcomes defined without these being linked to competences). If yes, please include the reference to the national framework of specific competence areas and defined learning outcomes 2) whether the key competences are aligned with the EU key competences reference frameworks 3) whether assessments are aligned with competence-based curricula. If yes, please describe the approach to assessment - even if it concerns only some of the key competences.*

Please answer by completing the table below:

Question	yes/no	Description
<p><b>National general upper secondary school curricula defines intended learning outcomes.</b> If only for some subjects indicate yes, and then in the description indicate which ones</p>	yes/no	
<p><b>National general upper secondary school curricula integrates competence-based approaches.</b> If only for some subjects, indicate yes, and then in the description indicate which ones</p>	yes/no	Include link to the national framework of competences
<p>The <b>competences defined in the national curricular framework are aligned with some or all of the EU key competences.</b> If only for some key competences, indicate yes, and then mark the checkbox to indicate which ones.</p>	<p>yes/no</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Literacy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Multilingual</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mathematical</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Digital</li> </ul>	Include link to document showing the correspondence between the national key competence framework and the EU key competence framework, if available.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal, Social and Learning to Learn</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cultural awareness and expression</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Assessments have been designed to measure achievement of learning outcomes, including complex competences.</b> If present for only some key competences, indicate yes, and then in the description indicate for which ones.</p>	<p>yes/no</p>	

**1.4 Please describe the current practices for assessment of transversal competences, and intercultural competence specifically, at school and outside (see Glossary for definitions).**

*Here we look at whether there is any practice in your country in relation to assessment of transversal competences - including intercultural competence - for this age group (15–18-year-olds) used by the school or by external actors, whether in the framework of mobility programmes or not.*

*How is this question different from the prior one?*

*The question before refers to assessment of key competences AT SCHOOL:*

- *not all countries include transversal competences in their curricula. In this question we want to understand the approach in your country specifically as to how transversal competences are assessed. Please note if these competences are assessed within the context of core, or key, competences (e.g. intercultural competence is assessed in a language or literature class).*



- *In this question we also want to explore what is done in terms of assessment of transversal competence OUTSIDE of the school setting, namely in the field of non-formal and informal learning.*

**1.5 Please describe the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) for general upper secondary school credits (volunteering/traineeship abroad/transversal competences if they are part of curricula)**

*In case the national curriculum of general upper secondary school allows students to earn credit for volunteering (nationally or abroad) or enrolment in any educational programme for the development of a set of transversal competences, information on the opportunities to earn validation of these competences could be useful for the recognition of learning periods abroad. VNFIL is linked to EQF, and the process of validation can support learners to earn credits for partial or full qualifications. In the case of learning periods abroad, pupils do not aim at obtaining the qualification of “upper secondary school diploma” but being able to be promoted to the next year of general upper secondary school: any existing practice of validation of their learning can be useful to enable this.*

## 2. Individual Pupil Mobility Overview

**2.1 What is the age and school grade in which the majority of students in general upper secondary school participate in a long-term (2-10 months) individual pupil mobility? Please fill in the table below.**

*This question allows to understand which year of general upper secondary school is the most popular for going on an exchange programme, also in relation to the year of the final exam, therefore linking to the answer to question 1.*

Age	Grade of general upper secondary school (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th year)

**2.2 Please provide in the table below an overview of individual pupil mobility programmes and number of participants for the school year 2018-2019 - both for outgoing and incoming exchange pupils, tackling the following aspects. Add row if needed.**

- *What are the institutions and organisations in your country that run long-term individual pupil mobility programmes (2-10 months)?*
- *What is the programme's duration? (2 to 10 months)*
- *How many pupils are mobile within these programmes?*
- *What is the percentage of pupils in this programme that received recognition and were enrolled in the following school grade upon return? (only for outgoing)*
- *For each programme, what are the countries where most of the pupils spend their learning period abroad? If possible, indicate the five most popular countries of destination, and what is the percentage of pupils going to that country, out of the total of sent exchange pupils. (only for outgoing)*
- *For each programme, which countries do most pupils come from? If possible, list the five countries where the majority of hosted pupils are from, and the percentage of pupils coming from that country, out of the total of hosted exchange pupils (e.g. 30 % France, 10 % Italy, 10 % Germany, 5 % Norway, 5 % Russia, 40 % other countries) (only for incoming)*

***N.B. The information for this table will be partially filled in by the end of June 2020 with data already available to the Consortium about AFS, YFU and Erasmus+ individual pupil mobility programmes***

**Sending**

Category	Programme	Length (months)	Number	Recognition (%)	5 Most popular destinations (with %)
<b>Public/governmental programme</b>					
<b>Erasmus+</b>					

<b>non-profit agency</b>					
<b>For-profit agency</b>					

**Hosting**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Length (months)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Most popular sending countries (with %)</b>
<b>Public/governmental programme</b>				
<b>Erasmus+</b>				
<b>non-profit agency</b>				
<b>For-profit agency</b>				

**2.3 Is there a national centralised system to gather data on individual pupil mobility and its recognition? If there is any kind of system, that collects data even partially, please provide more information.**

### 3. Internationalisation and Recognition policies and practice

#### **3.1 Please describe the existing measures for internationalisation of general upper secondary schools (see Glossary for definition)**

*Here we look at any type of policy for internationalisation, of which individual pupil mobility is only one example: there is also school staff mobility, Erasmus+ or other international projects, teaching a subject in a foreign language (CLIL), cooperation with external actors promoting intercultural awareness through workshops or other initiatives. Moreover, there can be a policy for internationalisation that foresees promotion of pupil mobility, without the recognition of the learning period abroad. Please make references to policy documents and practices.*

#### **3.2 Please describe the status of exchange pupils from your country and going abroad**

*Here we look at the status of the exchange student from your country who is going abroad, namely if s/he is registered in the home country's school, whether the school or the student receives funding from the state for their education while s/he is abroad.*

#### **3.2 Please describe the status of exchange pupils hosted in your country**

*Here we look at the status of the exchange pupil hosted in your country: is s/he registered in the school? How? Does the school receive funding from the state for the hosted pupil?*

#### **3.4 Please describe the procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school (sending)**

**3.5 Does your school system offer anything specific for the hosted students that support them for the recognition of learning periods abroad in their sending country?**

### **3.6 Please describe the procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad within the VET system in upper secondary school (hosting and sending)**

*Here we ask about recognition in the VET system is inspiration for how recognition could take place in general upper secondary school.*

### **3.7 Please describe whether and how the learning period abroad affects the process for obtaining the general upper secondary school diploma in the country of origin.**

*Here we look at the portion of pupils who need to repeat the school year after the learning period abroad, or who obtain lower grades at the final exam due to the difficulty of catching up with the subject related knowledge they missed while abroad, or any other consequence that the period abroad has on obtaining the diploma.*

### **3.8 Please describe whether and how after the learning period abroad the pupil can enrol in the general upper secondary school in the host country to obtain the diploma**

*Here we are only looking at whether 1) the hosted student can stay in the host country and continue the general upper secondary school for award of a diploma. Therefore, a country, eg. France, has to say whether they accept this, and the process, namely the rules to be applied 2) how popular this practice is.*

## **4. Recommendations**

### **4.1 How can the main principles of the Council Recommendation - relevant to automatic recognition of study periods abroad for general upper secondary education- be applied in your country? What do you see as the way forward? What actions need to be undertaken to implement the principles? See overview of recommendations below and provide your comments and suggestions.**

*Your insights will support the development of guidelines and the proposed European Framework which are key outcomes of this Project. Please note that your answer to this question will not be included in the published country report.*

*Please note that in the Council Recommendation there are also specific provisions for recognition within VET upper secondary education, but this Project only deals with recognition within general upper secondary education.*

**FROM THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Put in place, by 2025, the steps necessary to  
...
  - b) make substantial progress towards the automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further learning, so that:  
...
    - ii) the outcomes from a learning period of up to one year abroad in another Member State during upper secondary education and training are recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieved learning outcomes in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin.
  
6. Facilitate mobility and recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad during upper secondary education and training by:
  - a) supporting upper secondary education and training institutions on general principles and tools for recognition, for example through guidance material or training; promoting the use of transparent criteria and tools, such as learning outcomes-based learning agreements between the sending and hosting institutions. In vocational education and training, extending the use of the Union tools (1); and
  - b) promoting the benefits of mobility among upper secondary education and training institutions and learners and their families.

**Evidence base**

9. Improve the evidence base by collecting and disseminating data on the extent and nature of recognition cases for the purpose of this Recommendation.

**Reporting and evaluation**

10. Within three years from the adoption of this Recommendation, and regularly thereafter, report through existing frameworks and tools on experiences, good practices, including regional agreements, and progress towards automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad.

## Annex 2 - Glossary

**Apostille:** an official certificate from a government that allows a document issued in one country to be accepted in another, e.g. a school attendance certificate or a transcript of results<sup>212</sup>.

**Automatic mutual recognition:** 'the right to have the learning outcomes from a learning period abroad in one Member State recognised in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with those in the national curriculum of the country of origin. This shall not prejudice the right of an education and training institution to set specific requirements in advance of a period of learning mobility or to check that those requirements have been fulfilled on return from a period of learning mobility<sup>213</sup>'.

**Certified translation:** a translation which fulfils the requirements in the country in question, enabling it to be used in formal procedures, with the translator accepting responsibility for its accuracy, usually with a stamp.

**Certificate of attendance:** a certificate issued by a school, confirming that a pupil has attended a period of study there.

**Class council:** the group of teachers of a given class – group of pupils. It usually takes decisions on whether pupils are admitted to the next grade.

**Competence:** competence is a type of learning outcome, and is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, where: knowledge is composed of the facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established and support the understanding of a certain area or subject; skills are defined as the ability and capacity to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results; attitudes describe the disposition and mind-sets to act or react to ideas, persons or situations<sup>214</sup>. Competences are demonstrated by applying learning outcomes – drawing on knowledge, skills and attitudes – in a specific context (education, work, personal or professional development).  
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**Compulsory education:** Full-time compulsory education/training, as defined in this publication, refers to a period of full-time education/training that is compulsory for all students. This period is regulated by law and often determined by student age<sup>216</sup>.

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<sup>212</sup> Cambridge Dictionary.

<sup>213</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 "on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad", op. cit.

<sup>214</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 'on key competences for Lifelong Learning', op. cit.

<sup>215</sup> Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms*, 2nd edn., Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 164.

<sup>216</sup> Eurydice, *Compulsory Education in Europe 2019-2020*, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/default/files/compulsory\\_education\\_in\\_europe\\_2019\\_20.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/default/files/compulsory_education_in_europe_2019_20.pdf)

**Country-to-country agreements:** individual pupil mobility programmes established through an official agreement between the governments of two countries, e.g. the Brigitte Sauzay and Voltaire programmes between France and Germany, Ettarsprogrammen in Sweden with Germany, France and Spain, the programmes of the U.S. Department of State with several EU countries. These programmes can be reciprocal or unilateral.

**Culture**<sup>217</sup>:

any culture consists of a network of three main aspects:

- the material resources that are used by members of the group (e.g. tools, foods, clothing)
- the socially shared resources of the group (e.g. the language, religion, rules of social conduct)
- the subjective resources that are used by individual group members (e.g. the values, attitudes, beliefs and practices which group members commonly use as a frame of reference for making sense of and relating to the world).

Groups of any size can have their own distinctive cultures. This includes nations, ethnic groups, religious groups, cities, neighbourhoods, work organisations, occupational groups, sexual orientation groups, disability groups, generational groups and families. For this reason, all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different groups and their associated cultures. Cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly changing<sup>218</sup>.

**Curriculum:** inventory of activities implemented to design, organise and plan an education or training action, including definition of learning objectives, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers.

**Note:** the term curriculum refers to the design, organisation and planning of learning activities whereas the term programme refers to the implementation of these activities<sup>219</sup>.

**Elective course/subject:** a course/subject which a pupil can choose to attend (i.e. not obligatory) from among the subjects tested for the end-of-school examination.

**Enrolment of pupils:** the procedure for registering in a school to attend classes. Exchange pupils might register as either a 'regular' pupil or with the specific status of exchange pupil, if the latter is foreseen by enrolment regulations.

**Equivalence:** considering the completion of a learning period abroad as equivalent to school attendance in their home country.

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<sup>217</sup> This definition refers to the terms 'culture' in the context of individual pupil mobility, and not e.g. to "education culture".

<sup>218</sup> Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Volume 1, Context, Concepts and model, Council of Europe publishing, 2018, p. 19.

<sup>219</sup> Cedefop, 2014; Landsheere, 1979.



**Equivalence of prior studies:** this process is set up by Ministries of Education to recognise learning periods abroad of more than a full school year and not constituting a qualification, for the purpose of further learning and therefore accessing the possibility of completing a qualification.

**Equivalence tables:** tables used by the Ministry of Education in some countries (Portugal, Slovakia, Spain) to determine the correspondence between a school grade attended, or result of assessment received, in a given country.

**EU key competences for lifelong learning:** The basic set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment, as described in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning. The set of key competences includes the following: Literacy, Multilingual, Mathematical and competence in science, technology and engineering, Digital, Personal, Social and Learning to Learn, Citizenship, Entrepreneurship, Cultural awareness and expression<sup>220</sup>.

**Europass certification:** refers to the Europass Mobility certificate:  
<https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-mobility-0>

**Host school:** secondary school hosting a pupil within a pupil mobility programme.

**Intercultural dialogue:** intercultural dialogue is construed as an open exchange of views between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other<sup>221</sup>.

**Intercultural situation:** intercultural situations arise due to the perception that there are cultural differences between people<sup>222</sup>.

**Informal learning:** Informal learning refers to the learning in daily life activities, in work, with peers, etc. It is mainly learning by doing, is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; and it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective. In the youth sector, informal learning can take place in youth initiatives, in peer group discussions, through voluntary activities and in a variety of other situations<sup>223</sup>.

**Internationalisation of secondary schools:** intentional and transformative process of including international, intercultural and global dimensions within the whole school in order to enhance the quality of education for all students, teachers and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society<sup>224</sup>.

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<sup>220</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 'on key competences for Lifelong Learning', op. cit.

<sup>221</sup> Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Volume 1, Context, Concepts and model, Council of Europe publishing, 2018, p. 31.

<sup>222</sup> Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Volume 1, Context, Concepts and model, Council of Europe publishing, 2018, p. 31.

<sup>223</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021 (Version 3), Part D Glossary of Terms.

<sup>224</sup> Baiutti, M., *Protocollo di valutazione Interculturale. Comprendere, problematizzare e valutare la mobilità studentesca internazionale*, ETS, Pisa, 2019.

**Intercultural competence:**

“the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff 2006, 247-8)

“the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world” (Spitzberg & Changnon 2009, 7)

“the set of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding that are needed for understanding and respecting people who are perceived to be culturally different from oneself, for interacting and communicating effectively and appropriately with such people, and for establishing positive and constructive relationships with such people” (Barrett 2018, 94)

**Learning agreement:** an agreement between at least three parties involved in mobility – the pupil, his/her family, the sending school – to facilitate the organisation of the learning period and its recognition. The host school is involved in the agreement at least as of the start of the mobility programme. If the mobility programme is organised by a non-school actor (non-profit or for-profit agency), their involvement is also encouraged. All parties signing the Learning Agreement commit to comply with all the agreed arrangements, thereby ensuring that the pupil will have the learning period or learning outcomes recognised without further requirements<sup>225</sup>.

**Learning outcomes:** set of knowledge, skills and/or competences and learning attainments an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal.

OR

statement of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence<sup>226</sup>.

**Learning mobility:** transnational mobility undertaken for a limited period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes or to acquire new competences or knowledge. It covers a wide variety of projects and activities and can be implemented in formal or non-formal settings<sup>227</sup>.

**Long-term individual pupil mobility:** an educational programme for 14–18-year-olds lasting between 2 months and up to a full school year. The programme involves individual pupils (rather than groups of pupils); is organised by any provider (public, non-profit or

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<sup>225</sup> Adapted from Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, op. cit.

<sup>226</sup> Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms*, Second edition, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014

<sup>227</sup> European Platform for Learning Mobility, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/european-platform-on-learning-mobility>

for-profit sector providers); 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 official exchange<sup>228</sup>.

**Lower secondary education:** programmes at this level correspond to ISCED level 2 and are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from ISCED level 1 (Primary education). Students enter ISCED level 2 typically between ages 10 and 13 (age 12 being the most common). It is part of compulsory education in all European education systems, and it might be combined with primary education in countries with single structure education<sup>229</sup>.

**Multilateral agreements:** individual pupil mobility programmes established through an agreement between multiple countries, e.g. Erasmus+, Nordplus. Within these programmes, all countries party to the agreement can be involved as sending and hosting countries.

**Non-formal learning:** Non-formal learning refers to the learning which takes place outside formal educational curriculum. It has a participative and learner-centred approach; it is carried out by learners on a voluntary basis and therefore is closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests. By providing an additional source and new forms of learning, such activities are also important means to improve the attainment in formal education and training as well as to address young NEETs (i.e. young people not in employment, education or training) or young people with fewer opportunities and combat social exclusion<sup>230</sup>.

**Pupil mobility provider/agency/organisation:** a non-school actor organising pupil mobility programmes. These can be public institutions other than schools (e.g. local authorities, a governmental agency), non-profit organisations (including foundations) or for-profit agencies.

**Partial recognition:** this recognition method is usually applied where recognition is based on curriculum matching, namely only the subjects corresponding to the national curriculum are recognised, while pupils need to take additional exams to fulfil the requirements of their sending school curriculum which they could not follow abroad. They must pass these additional exams to be admitted to the next grade.

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<sup>228</sup> definition adapted from UNESCO, *Youth exchange: Meeting of Governmental and Non-Governmental Officials Responsible for Programmes of Youth Exchange*, 1987; M. Baiutti 2019 and 2021; European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme guide 2020 (Version 3)*, p. 110 (Long-term study mobility of pupils: Eligible participants: Pupils aged 14 or older. Duration of activity: 2 to 12 months).

<sup>229</sup> Eurydice, *The structure of European Education systems 2020/2021*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f4784939-1f15-11eb-b57e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

<sup>230</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021 (Version 3)*, Part D Glossary of Terms.

**Pupil mobility:** a set of educational programmes that provide temporary international physical mobility for one or more pupils” (Baiutti, 2019, p. 33,) <sup>231</sup> [author’s translation].

**Readmission:** after the period abroad the pupil is readmitted in the sending school in the class with peers of the same age. Unless there is a process of recognition of learning period abroad in place, the pupil needs to catch up with content missed while abroad and pass tests based on the school curriculum of the given year, to then end the school year successfully and be admitted to the next grade.

**Recognition of learning periods abroad:** recognition of learning periods abroad of up to one school year in general upper secondary education means that “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” <sup>232</sup>.

Recognition of learning periods abroad always entails catching up with missed content, though recognition of learning periods abroad differ from readmission in terms of the amount of catching up required. Recognition of learning periods abroad is aimed at ensuring that pupils have foundation/core knowledge needed to follow the curriculum of the following school year.

**Reintegration:** reintegration is the process which follows readmission or recognition of learning periods abroad. This process includes the support teachers provide to the pupil in catching up with content missed, and the sharing of the learnings from the experience abroad with the whole classroom, and possibly with the school community.

**Regular pupil:** a pupil who is enrolled in a secondary school like all other students and who is: entitled to follow the lessons, to be assessed and receive a transcript of results allowing access to the next school grade.

**School leaving certificate:** the secondary school diploma. In the case of general upper secondary education the diploma usually provides access to higher education.

**Sending school:** the school of origin of a pupil taking part in a pupil mobility programme, namely the school s/he was attending before the stay in the host school, and in most cases- the school s/he will return to after the mobility period.

**Short-term individual pupil mobility:** individual pupil mobility shorter than 2 months.

**Transcript of results:** this can also be called the transcript of grades, transcript of marks, or report card. It refers to a summary of the results of assessment of pupils conducted by

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<sup>231</sup> Baiutti, M., *Protocollo di valutazione Intercultura. Comprendere, problematizzare e valutare la mobilità studentesca internazionale*, ETS, Pisa, 2019.

<sup>232</sup> adapted from the definition on automatic recognition in European Commission, Proposal for a Council recommendation ‘on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad’, COM(2018) 270 final, 22.05.2018.

teachers and is usually provided at the end of the school year, or at the end of each school term.

**Transversal competences:** competences embedded throughout key competences, such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity, and intercultural competence<sup>233</sup>.

**Upper secondary education:** programmes at this level correspond to ISCED level 3 and are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Pupils enter this level typically between the ages of 14 and 16<sup>234</sup>.

**Validation of non-formal and informal learning:** confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases: 1. identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; two. documentation to evidence the individual's experiences; 3. a formal assessment of these experiences; and four. certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification. The objective of validating non-formal and informal learning is to use this learning for career advancement and for further education and training.

**Visiting pupil:** refers to the special status of a hosted exchange pupil in several countries and is different to the status of pupils who are enrolled as 'regular' pupils. Visiting pupils do not have the same obligations as regular pupils in terms of attending lessons and assessment. They have a personalised schedule of lessons and do not take tests and do not receive the same type of transcript of results as regular pupils. This status is called different names in different countries: e.g. vrije leerling in Belgium (NL), außerordentlicher Schüler (Austria and Germany), élève libre or auditeur Belgium (FR).

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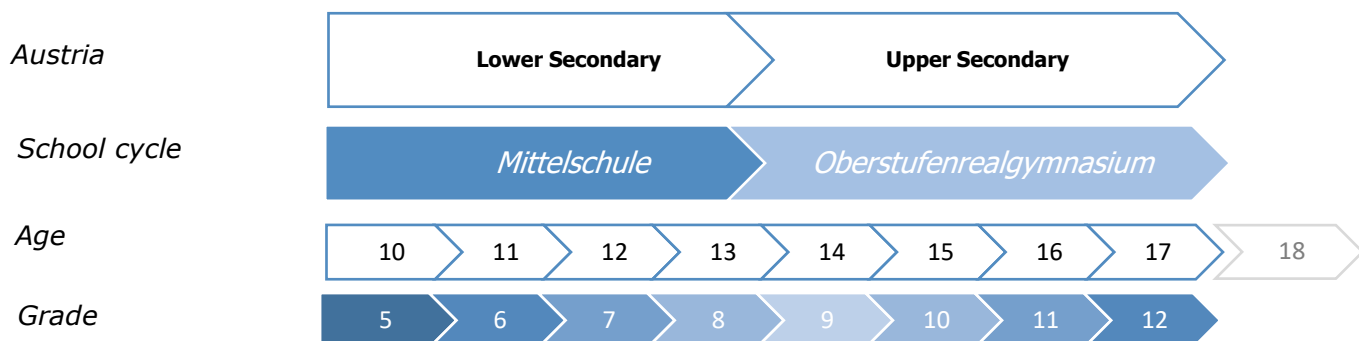
<sup>233</sup> adapted from Council Recommendations of 22 May 2018 'on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning', op.cit.

<sup>234</sup> Eurydice, *The structure of European Education systems 2020/2021*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f4784939-1f15-11eb-b57e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

## Annex 3 - Country reports

### Austria

#### General secondary school system



Upper secondary school is a four-year cycle, and only the first year is compulsory: pupils can leave school after this first year if they have reached 15 years of age. General upper secondary school is attended by only 24 % of pupils in upper secondary education<sup>235</sup>, and is offered both by the *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*, and by the *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* which comprises both lower and upper secondary school.

#### Graduation and certification

The end-of-school examination, which consists of three parts, provides a school leaving certificate (Matura):

- 1) An academic paper whose topic is chosen in grade 11 and needs to be approved by the Ministry of Education. Pupils can choose any topic and a teacher for supervision and support. The paper must be submitted by December in grade 12 and presented publicly before the written exams.
- 2) Written exams in 3 to 4 subjects. The compulsory exams are in Maths, German and a foreign language, and are defined at central level. A fourth subject can be chosen from among the other main subjects, it is designed by the teacher and approved by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>235</sup> Statistik Austria, Schulbesuch (Statistics Austria, Statistics on School Attendance), 2021, [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/menschen\\_und\\_gesellschaft/bildung/schulen/schulbesuch/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung/schulen/schulbesuch/index.html)

- 3) Oral exams in 3 to 4 subjects. These can be chosen by the pupil subject to certain conditions (number of weekly hours taught, compulsory or optional subject, etc.). If pupils choose to take only three written exams, then they need to take 4 oral exams.

The school leaving exam provides entry to higher education. A university entrance exam is only required for certain faculties.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Austrian pupils may spend a school year, one semester or three months abroad between the age of 15 and 18<sup>236</sup>. Typically, pupils go abroad for a full school year in 10th or 11th grade (third or second last year). Pupils do not usually go abroad during the 12th grade because the final exams begin in April.

It is becoming increasingly popular for pupils to go abroad in the second semester of 11th grade, however this might be challenging for some pupils. During this period, they are required to choose a topic for the academic paper to present by the end of the first semester of 12th grade as part of their final exam. Very often pupils talk to their tutors before they leave to make sure they do not miss any deadlines, and they often find an interesting topic for the academic paper during their experience abroad. Most pupils write their paper in the first four months of the 12th grade.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 227 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and for-profit agencies<sup>237</sup>.

Over the years, the law on automatic recognition of learning periods abroad has been actively promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which sends letters to schools underlining the benefits of exchange programmes and recognising how these contribute to

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<sup>236</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, Austria, Mobility in Early Childhood and school education, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-1\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-1_en)

<sup>237</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (10 pupils), the non-profits –AFS organisation (63 pupils) and YFU (41 pupils), and for-profit agencies STS, IE, EF, Into, Travel bee (113 pupils).

international political and democratic education<sup>238</sup>. After 25 years, school principals now attest that the law has contributed to the international orientation and openness of schools. They also appreciate that recognition of learning abroad lowers the administrative burden on schools<sup>239</sup>.

Despite the promotion of individual pupil mobility, parents prefer pupils to go abroad after they pass the final school exam, and before going to university, or to go abroad during their university studies.

### **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility. Regional authorities (*Bildungsdirektionen*) collect data on pupils hosted, although these are not public.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Austria**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Before departure, pupils and parents discuss the options for enrolling in an exchange programme with their teachers. Austrian pupils remain enrolled in their sending school and have the right to return at any time.

### **Funding for the sending school**

The school receives funding for the number of pupils declared before the start of the school year.

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<sup>238</sup> R. Ruffino, "Mobility of Secondary School Pupils and Recognition of Study Periods Spent Abroad-A Survey", EFIL, 2004.

<sup>239</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.



## Status of pupils hosted in Austria

### Registration in the host school

Hosted pupils are enrolled as 'extra' pupils (außerordentlicher Schüler) which means that they are assessed differently compared to regular pupils. They are placed in classes on the basis of their age and the grade they attended in their own country unless they specifically request a different grade for very well-argued reasons.

Hosted pupils cannot be placed in the last year of upper secondary school, namely 12th grade as lessons finish in March, and they do not meet the requirements to take the final exam which lasts from April to June. Therefore, pupils hosted in 12th grade would have no schooling in the second semester and would need to follow the lessons of 11th grade, which is not attractive as they would attend courses they might have attended already, and they have less chance of having the learning period abroad recognised upon return.

### Funding for the host school

Schools do not receive any additional funding for hosted pupils.

### Certification for hosted pupils

Incoming pupils receive a certificate of attendance and all necessary documentation asked for by the school in their home country if needed. Teachers and school leaders are hesitant to accept pupils from some countries (e.g. Italy), because they claim that extra administrative work is required in supporting them to have their studies abroad recognised, and the extra working hours are unpaid.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils cannot obtain the final secondary school diploma (*Matura*) as this is a centralised exam which takes place over two years and includes a paper for which the topic has to be chosen a year before the final examination and handed in at the end of the first trimester of the final year.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 5 months, or between 5 months and a full school year. According to the analysis, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 5 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Austria. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>240</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than 5 months. For periods between 5 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement

### Periods of between two and less than 5 months

For periods abroad of fewer than 5 months, recognition procedures vary across schools; learners might be required to take additional exams after returning to their school. In the case of periods abroad lasting between 4 months and a half and less than 5 months, and ending after the end of the school year in Austria, there is no standard practice in terms of recognition procedure. However, as these are a 'summer semester abroad' and follow the length of the school year in the host country, they could be considered as periods of 5 months.

### Periods of between 5 months and a full school year

Recognition of school study periods abroad is regulated by the 1996 Austrian Law on Education, which states that certified attendance in a foreign school, a minimum of 5 months and a maximum of 1 year, is equivalent to successful school attendance in Austria.

To be reintegrated in their class upon return, pupils are required to provide confirmation of attendance, but no transcript of marks is required; validation of the year abroad means that in the final school report the school year will be noted as 'passed' without any marks noted.

Pupils going abroad between the months of September and February need only to pass the first exams of the second semester once they have returned to their sending school. For those who leave for the summer semester it is "easier" as they officially end their school year abroad and start the new school year in the autumn with their classmates.

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<sup>240</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

There are no official guidelines on how to support pupils while abroad (e.g. assigning a teacher with the role of tutor) and upon return e.g. catch up with subjects after the exchange, value what they learned abroad.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

This section identifies the current country-specific challenges to and enablers of recognition of the outcomes of learning periods abroad and makes recommendations to support country progress toward the European Education Area goal for automatic mutual recognition by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- Periods abroad of between 2 and 5 months do not fall under the legislation which foresees recognition based on equivalence of school attendance abroad. Pupils may enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme and be readmitted to their school upon return but this, together with the terms for recognition of learning outcomes of the study period abroad, needs to be negotiated with the sending school.
- More specifically, schools have no guidelines on the rule to apply in case of periods abroad in the summer semester, as they might last between 4 months and a half and less than 5 months depending on the school calendar and length of the school year in the host country.
- Although recognition based on equivalence works successfully, exchange pupils returning from an individual mobility programme could receive more support for reintegration in their class.

### **Enablers**

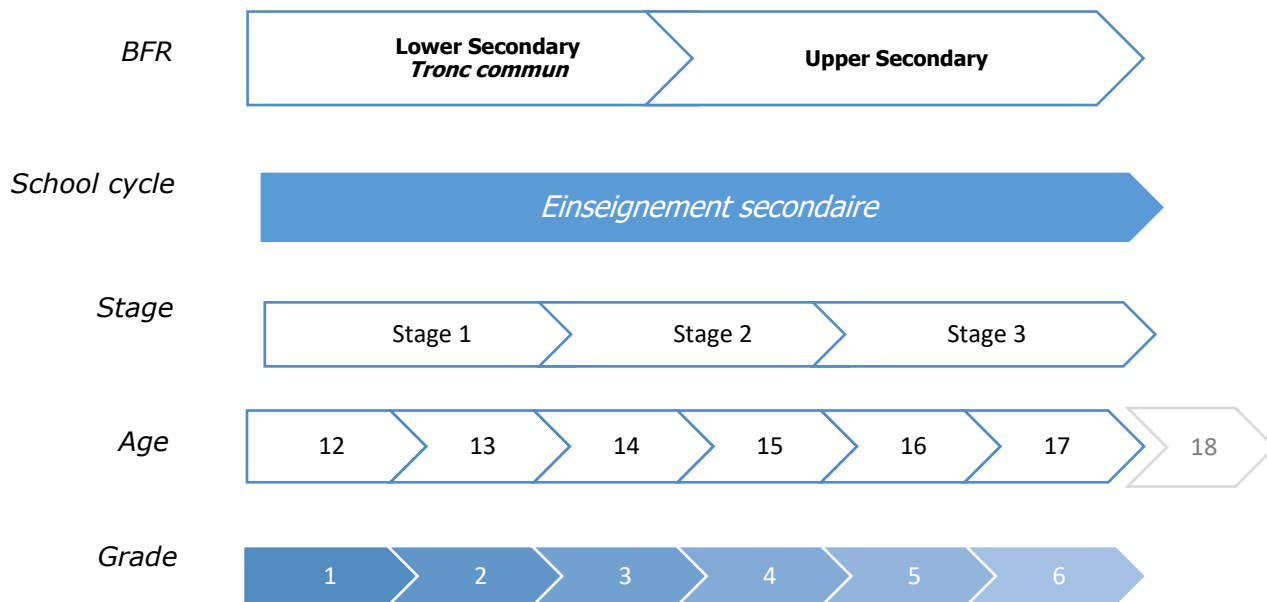
- A culture of valuing mobility and applying recognition based on equivalence has been established over the last 25 years. This has allowed stakeholders to build trust in the quality of secondary education in other countries, and in the capacity of exchange pupils to continue their studies in the next grade following their return.

### **Recommendations**

- Extend recognition based on equivalence of school attendance abroad to shorter periods of between 2 and 5 months, building on the positive experience of recognition for periods of between 5 months and a full school year.
- Consider the period abroad of at least 4 months and two weeks in the summer semester as a full semester abroad, namely equivalent to a 5 months period abroad.
- Promote the practice of assigning a contact teacher to exchange pupils to ensure they are supported during their period abroad and reintegration upon return.
- Provide adequate funding to schools hosting exchange pupils to compensate the extra work required in supporting them to have their studies abroad recognised.

## Belgium (FR)

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. Secondary school is divided into three stages of two years each. The third and last stage can have an additional year (a year of specialisation or preparation for higher education).

Following the reform adopted in 2019<sup>241</sup>, there will be a pedagogical continuum from pre-primary education to the end of compulsory schooling (third year of secondary education). The first three years of secondary education are the so-called *tronc commun*<sup>242</sup>, at the end of which pupils obtain a certificate that marks the end of lower secondary education. In addition, at the end of each stage, pupils receive a certificate (*attest*)<sup>242</sup> and currently, the certificate of the first stage (CE1D) is still issued to pupils at the end of second grade.

From the third year onwards (second and third stages), pupils can choose from among three forms of education (general, technical, artistic) which offer a transition stream, namely general education which prepares pupils for university. Within the form of education chosen, pupils choose a study orientation which is made up of the classes chosen by the

<sup>241</sup> The reform will be gradually implemented and will be fully in place by 2028.

<sup>242</sup> Pupils can receive an A, B, or C attest. With an A attest they are free to choose any study option, with a B attest their options are restricted, with a C attest they need to repeat the year or move to the qualification stream.

pupils, next to the common courses (*la formation commune*)<sup>243</sup>. Altogether 52.6 % of pupils attend a transition stream/general education<sup>244</sup>.

## Graduation and certification

Decisions about pupils' progression to the next grade or stage and the issue of diplomas and certificates are the responsibility of the class council<sup>245</sup>.

An upper secondary education certificate (Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur – CESS) is awarded to pupils who have successfully completed the last two years of study in general secondary education in the same orientation of studies. A common assessment is taken at the end of the 3rd stage for French and History<sup>246</sup>. These are optional for schools and are aimed at providing the mark which feeds into the upper secondary school diploma.

The school leaving certificate, CESS, provides direct access to higher education; however, a few faculties require pupils to take an entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme during the 5th year, when they are 16/17 years old.

The Expedis framework<sup>247</sup> — which foresees recognition of learning periods abroad of between one month and a full school year — is open to pupils in the 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6th

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<sup>243</sup> See §§ 3 and 4, art.5, Arrêté royal du 29/06/1984 relatif à l'organisation de l'enseignement secondaire.

<sup>244</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, "Les Indicateurs de l'Enseignement 2019" (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, Teaching Indicators 2019), 2019, p. 19, diagram 4.3, <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=28273&navi=2264>, accessed 31 March 2021.

<sup>245</sup> The class council is chaired by the school principal and consists of the members of the management and teaching staff responsible for educating a defined group of pupils.

<sup>246</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, "Épreuve Externe Certificative – CESS" (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, External Certification Test – CESS), <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26248>, Accessed 31 March 2021.

<sup>247</sup> Expedis is the framework set by the Ministry of Education of the Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles for providing individual pupil mobility opportunities within the secondary school framework and allow for recognition of the learning period abroad; Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, "Circulaire n. 5039 du 24/10/2014 relative à l'organisation des séjours scolaires individuels dans le cadre du programme EXPEDIS" (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, Circular n. 5039 on individual school exchange programmes within the framework of EXPEDIS), 2014, pp. 1-25, [https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/40099\\_000.pdf](https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/40099_000.pdf), <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26399>, Accessed 31 March 2021.

year. However, during the 6th year, pupils can enrol with Expedis only for a period of maximum three months between 1st September and 30th March.

In addition, it is popular for pupils to go abroad for a "*seconde rhéto*"<sup>248</sup>, namely repeating the last year of school during a gap year.

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 224 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and for-profit agencies<sup>249</sup>.

Several criteria must be met for recognition under the Expedis framework. It is therefore uncommon for pupils to go abroad during the last two stages of secondary school and especially during the 3rd stage, as they prefer to wait until after they have received their secondary school diploma and repeat the last year of school abroad ("*seconde rhéto*").

However, the issue then arises of finding a host school as in many countries pupils who have already finished school obtained a diploma and are more than 18 years old cannot be hosted under an exchange programme.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility. Schools are not obliged to report to the administration about pupils who enrol in a learning period abroad within the framework of Expedis or outside it. The Ministry of Education only collects the number of pupils going abroad with Expedis-accredited organisations.

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<sup>248</sup> SIEP, *Seconde rhéto et immersion linguistique : organismes et bourses (Double last school year and linguistic immersion : organisations and scholarships)*, 2014, <https://blog.siep.be/2014/01/faire-une-deuxieme-rheto-a-letranger/>, accessed 19 Apr. 2021

<sup>249</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (71 pupils) and YFU (28 pupils), and for-profit agency WEP (123 pupils).

## Status of pupils going abroad from Belgium (french-speaking community)

### Registration in the sending school

In the case of the Expedis framework, pupils must be registered in a school in their home country, which must agree to the exchange. Without such an agreement, the exchange cannot take place<sup>250</sup>.

Pupils enrolling in an exchange programme outside the Expedis framework are not registered in their home school.

### Funding for the sending school

For exchanges in the framework of Expedis, the sending school continues to receive funding for the pupil.

### Funding for the exchange pupil

Pupils living in the Walloon Region (most of French-speaking Belgium excluding Brussels), who are 18 years old and have a CESS can apply for funding<sup>251</sup> for their learning period abroad "seconde rhéto".

## Status of pupils hosted in Belgium (french-speaking community)

### Registration in the host school

Hosted pupils can choose whether to attend classes as regularly enrolled pupils or as "visiting" pupils (*élève libre*).

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<sup>250</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, "Circulaire n° 5039 du 24/10/2014 relative à l'organisation des séjours scolaires individuels dans le cadre du programme EXPEDIS", op.cit.

<sup>251</sup> Le Forem, "Séjour d'une année ou d'un semestre d'étude à l'étranger, en Flandre ou en Communauté germanophone pour jeunes diplômés des études secondaires supérieures" (One-year or semester study abroad in Flanders or the German-speaking community for young graduates of upper secondary education), <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/immersion-langues-ecole-secondaire-superieur.html>

Hosted exchange pupils who wish to be enrolled as regular pupils must go through an administrative process called “*equivalence*”<sup>252</sup> which determines the grade the pupil should follow in the host school. If pupils get the equivalence of a 5th grade<sup>253</sup> they can attend the 6th grade as regular pupils. In order to apply for an *equivalence* pupils need to provide a transcript of their marks over the past 3 years and the decisions of the school council of their sending school to the host school. The host school submits the request for *equivalence* to the Ministry of Education which examines the documents and decides how to recognise the previous studies in the home country. The *equivalence* is not based on the pupil's age.

Hosted pupils can also choose to be admitted to the host school as “visiting” (*élève libre*). The Admission Council (*Conseil d'admission*) decides on their placement in classes, and they can also follow classes in the 6th grade. Under this status, pupils have the obligation to attend school and can participate in all activities, but the school does not formally certify any of their learning.

The equivalence process is burdensome for both the pupil and for the host school and most host schools prefer that pupils enrol as “auditors” (*élève libre*). Only pupils with strict requirements of formal certification linked to their home country's recognition system go through the steps to be enrolled as regular pupils.

## Funding for the host school

Host schools receive funding for hosted exchange pupils who are regularly enrolled, but not for those enrolled as *élève libre*.

## Certification for hosted pupils

Hosted exchange pupils who are regularly enrolled receive the same type of certification as their fellow classmates. Hosted pupils who are enrolled as “visiting’ pupil” (*élève libre*) receive a certificate of attendance.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

To obtain the CESS hosted exchange pupils must enrol with an equivalence to a 5th grade and they need to meet three conditions: 1) follow the same study orientation as the one followed in their home country in 5th grade and for which they received equivalence 2) attend classes regularly 3) receive an A-attest at the end of the school year. However, this is unusual.

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<sup>252</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, “Equivalences de Diplômes” (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, Diploma Equivalences), 2020, <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/index.php?id=524>

<sup>253</sup> Equivalence is an A attest, namely a certificate that allows them to choose any study they wish.



## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 3 months, or between more than 3 months and a full school year. In both cases, learning periods abroad within individual long-term pupil mobility programmes are recognised by the class council through the Expedis framework<sup>254</sup>. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). The requirements for recognition within this programme include: an agreement between the pupil, their sending school, and the coordinating organisation before departure, a transcript of marks, and other supporting documents from the host school. It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>255</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the procedure set for the Expedis framework applies, therefore the possible learning agreement between sending and host school needs to be developed accordingly.

At least 4 months before their departure the pupil must ask for permission to study abroad by submitting an official document to the sending school. Sending schools may refuse permission for a learning period abroad if they believe it will be hard for the pupil to successfully follow the curriculum on their return. In addition, schools may limit the number of pupils going abroad because they are afraid of the burden of following up on them on return.

If the request is approved, the pupil, the parents, the coordinating organisation (if applicable), and the sending school sign an learning agreement, which is mandatory for stays of over 3 months, but is recommended for shorter periods as well. The learning agreement includes:

- The academic courses that the pupil has to study abroad. In cases where some courses are not available in the host school, they will study by themselves with the help of the sending school. Non-academic learning goals, such as intercultural learning and other transversal skills, are not included in this agreement.
- How they will be assessed by the sending school after the programme.
- How the sending school plans to support the pupil's reintegration. The school ensures that they may take their examinations on return and provides support before and during the exchange and after the pupil's return.

During their stay abroad, the pupil stays with a host family and/or boarding school and attends full-time courses at a secondary school in the host country, in the equivalent grade. Regular contact is established between the sending school (a contact person is designated) and the host school. The host school proposes a lesson programme which should be as close as possible to that followed in the sending school and draws up a minimum timetable

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<sup>254</sup> Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, "Mobilités Scolaires – Séjours Scolaires Individuels – EXPEDIS – Experience Educative d'Immersion Scolaire", op.cit.

<sup>255</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

of 28 class periods<sup>256</sup>. This is especially important in the third stage because the same lesson programme (orientation) needs to be kept for the two last years, as it is a requirement for obtaining the certificate at the end of upper secondary school (CESS). Therefore, it is more challenging to obtain recognition for a learning period abroad in the last stage.

The approved coordinating body ensures the pupil's integration into their host school. They also ensure that pupils attend classes regularly and that the course schedule and level meet the study orientation that exchange pupils would have followed in their sending school.

When the pupil returns, the sending school needs to verify that the main conditions of the learning agreement were met in order to recognise the period spent abroad. There is also the possibility for partial recognition of credits through exams organised by the school on return, for subjects that could not be followed while on exchange. This must be planned in the contract between the pupil, the parents and the school at the beginning, and the pupil commits to follow the tasks they receive from the home school while abroad and to take the exam on their return.

### **Periods of up to 3 months**

If pupils wish to study abroad for a period of up to 3 months within the Expedis framework, they can choose to organise their stay by themselves or with an Expedis-accredited exchange organisation. In both cases, absence from school can only be justified if exchange pupils follow the procedure set by the Expedis framework. If on return the learning period abroad is not recognised, the class council of the sending school can nevertheless decide to allow the pupil to return to the school to continue the academic year and to take the exams at the end of the school year.

If pupils enrol in an exchange programme of up to three months without the permission of the school and therefore outside the Expedis framework, they need to repeat the year upon return.

### **Periods of between 4 months and a full school year**

For study periods over 3 months, pupils need to enrol in an exchange programme run by an Expedis-accredited coordination organisation and sign a learning agreement with the sending school, if they wish to try and have their period abroad recognised. If the learning period abroad is not recognised on return, the pupil must repeat the academic year or apply for *equivalence*. However, the learning agreement can include a clause which allows pupils

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<sup>256</sup> The hours or lessons are not necessarily 60 minutes, but rather 50, therefore the term "period" is used.

who have returned to Belgium before the final year exams to take them together with their classmates<sup>257</sup>.

Where pupils go abroad for a full year outside the Expedis framework, they need to apply for *equivalence*, if they wish to be admitted to the next grade.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Currently, the Expedis framework is used primarily for trimester exchanges. However, it is challenging for pupils to meet the requirements for recognition of a full school year abroad through this framework. This is particularly the case if they are on mobility during the last two years of secondary school (3rd stage).
- The “visiting” hosted pupil status might be an issue for hosted pupils who wish to have their studies abroad recognised once back in their home country. In fact, this status does not allow hosted pupils to have their learning outcomes assessed or to have a transcript of grades issued. Both are required to obtain recognition of a learning period abroad in most countries.

### Enablers

- There is already a framework (Expedis) for recognition, based on a learning agreement.
- Pupil exchange organisations are considered partners of schools within the exchange and recognition processes.

### Recommendations

- Promote individual pupil mobility programmes in grades 3 and 4 as it is easier to meet the conditions of Expedis during the 2nd rather than the 3rd stage, at which

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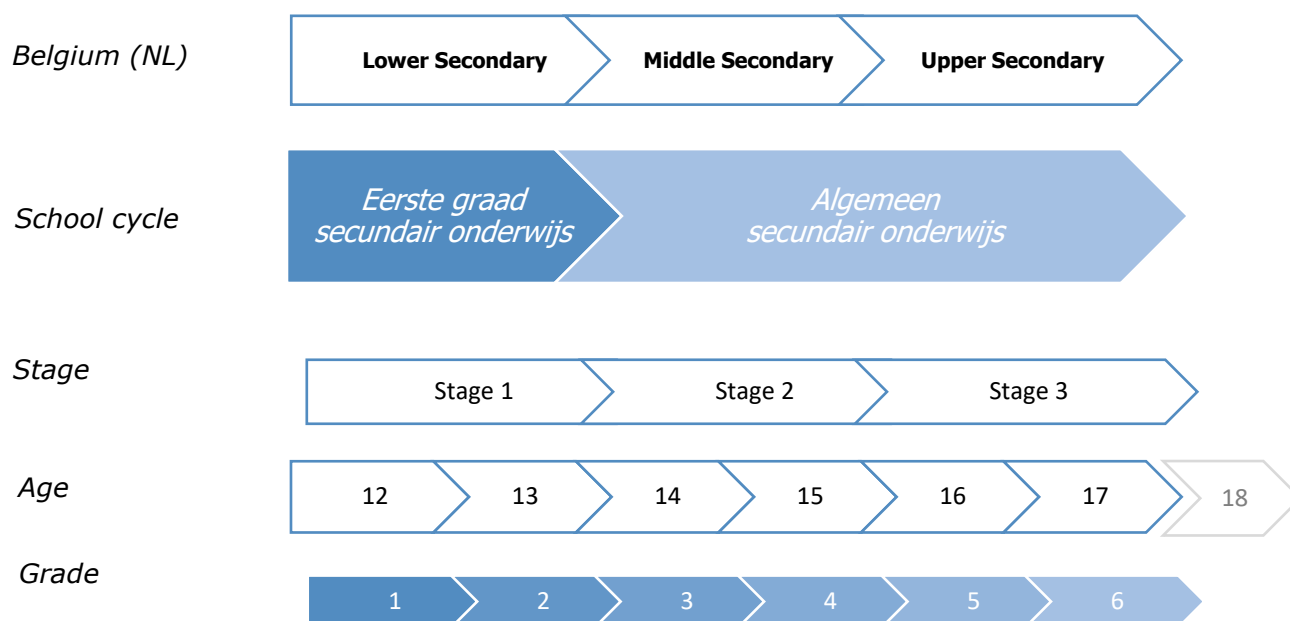
<sup>257</sup> E. Briga, “Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning”, EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

point pupils need to stay within the same study orientation during the two last years of school.

- Strengthen the use of the Expedis framework by allowing more flexibility in the study plan to be followed in the host school, focusing on the development of transversal competences, and identifying how the learning outcomes foreseen in the sending and host school curricula are broadly in line. As the Expedis framework already foresees cooperation with pupil exchange organisations, this relationship can also be reinforced in order to support recognition based on the principles of automatic recognition.
- Update the conditions of the “visiting” pupil status to ensure that hosted pupils are regularly enrolled. This may help to ensure that the host schools receive adequate funding for their support role and to organise a personalised timetable of courses and differentiated assessments of learning outcomes according to pupil needs.

## Belgium (NL)

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. Secondary school is a six-year cycle divided into three stages (*graad*) of two years each. General Secondary Education (gse) is offered in the 2nd and 3rd stage and is attended by 42.24 % of pupils of upper secondary school age<sup>258</sup>.

Within gse, there are different study options in each stage<sup>259</sup>. All options share the same basic courses (e.g. Dutch mother tongue, history), with the same number of lessons per week. In addition to these basic courses, each option has specific subjects (e.g. more sciences and economics in the option Economics–Sciences or more Modern Languages and Latin in the option Latin–Modern Languages).

<sup>258</sup> In 2018-2019, in the second stage of secondary education (years 3 and 4) there were a total of 137 413 pupils of which 65 458 took general education. In the 3rd stage of secondary education (years 5 and 6) there were a total of 141 086 pupils of which 52 187 took general education. Therefore out of 278 499 pupils, there were 117 645 who were in gse. From: <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/download-file/32392>

<sup>259</sup> See the list of options in Dutch: Onderwijskiezer, "SO: 3e graad Algemeen secundair onderwijs (ASO)" (Education Selector, SO: 3rd degree General Secondary Education (ASO)), [https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/secundair/sec\\_3graad\\_aso.php](https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/secundair/sec_3graad_aso.php)

At the end of each stage (*graad*), so after the 2nd, 4th and 6th grade, the school provides a certificate (*attest*) on the basis of the decision of the class council (*klassenraad*)<sup>260</sup>, which states the possibilities for the following grade, namely whether the pupil can continue with the same subjects, change their study orientation or not pass the year<sup>261</sup>.

At the end of the 3rd stage it is also possible for gse pupils to follow a 3rd year of school: universities offer a preparatory year for certain studies such as mathematics and arts (optional for pupils).

## Graduation and certification

An upper secondary education certificate (Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur – CESS) is awarded to pupils who have successfully completed the last two years of study (3rd stage) in the same study orientation<sup>262</sup>.

The upper secondary education certificate (CESS) provides access to higher education, although for some studies there is an entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Legally, it is possible for pupils to go abroad in the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year of upper secondary school. However, as the learning period abroad is generally not recognised, traditionally, pupils have gone abroad on a full school year exchange programme after their secondary education, taking a gap year before enrolling in university or entering the labour market.

The general trend now is for pupils in the 4th or 5th year of secondary school to go abroad for a trimester, or a semester, as this allows enough time to catch up and be able to pass the yearly exams in June.

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<sup>260</sup> The class council is chaired by the school principal and consists of the members of the management and teaching staff responsible for educating a defined group of pupils.

<sup>261</sup> A-attest means that pupils can continue in the same option or that they can choose another option for the next grade (the *klassenraad* might give advice, but this is not binding), B-attest means the options are limited and it is binding. C-attest means that pupils have to repeat the year. The *klassenraad* can advise to repeat the year following the same study orientation or to change to a different one.

<sup>262</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, "Belgium Flemish Community, Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-3\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-3_en)

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 236 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisation<sup>263</sup>.

Young people are encouraged to finish their 6 years of secondary education quickly and it is difficult for pupils to combine the learning period abroad with the catching up with subjects in the sending home schools and take exams upon return. Therefore, going on an exchange in the middle of the studies might not be viewed positively and it is still an exception. As a result, pupils still prefer to enrol in a full year exchange after completion of secondary school. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find host schools that accept exchange pupils who have already completed secondary school. In addition, in many countries it is not possible to be hosted with peers at the age of 18, as schools do not accept exchange pupils in the final year of school.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Belgium (flemish community)

### Registration in the sending school

Exchange pupils need to be enrolled in their sending school as this is required for the financial allowance parents receive from the government for the education of their children. In addition, pupils going on exchange need to have the permission of their sending school to go abroad if they want to enrol in the same school on their return.

The *klassenraad* and/or the school principal decide whether a pupil can go abroad, based on school performance and their knowledge of the pupil. Schools have discretion to set their own rules regarding the possibility for pupils to enrol in a long-term exchange and for which duration<sup>264</sup>. Some schools only allow trimester exchanges. In some schools, pupils cannot go on exchange during the first year of a stage (so in 3rd or 5th year) since they have chosen a new study option. Other schools might argue that they do not want pupils to go away in 4th or 6th year since those are crucial years in which certificates (*attests*) are awarded.

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<sup>263</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (215 pupils) and YFU (21 pupils).

<sup>264</sup> Network Experts, [Personal communication], 2021.

## Funding for the sending school

Every school receives funding for the following year on the basis of the number of pupils present on 1 February. Therefore, since the pupils on an exchange are often not present in the sending school on that date, the school might lose its funding if there are checks<sup>265</sup>.

## Status of pupils hosted in Belgium (flemish community)

### Registration in the host school

Hosted pupils are usually put in a class with pupils of the same age; the interests of the pupil are also considered, such as in certain subjects or specific skills. Formally, they need to be allowed in a certain year by a *toelatingsklassenraad* (admittance class council) since they do not have a certificate from a Flemish school (required for admittance). Hosted pupils can also be placed in the final year of secondary education (6th grade).

Hosting schools have two options for enrolling exchange pupils:

- enrol the pupil as a “visiting” pupil (*vrije leerling*<sup>266</sup>), this allows for curriculum adaptation on the basis of the pupil’s needs, and the hosted pupil is not required to take exams.
- enrol the pupil as a “regular” pupil. This means the pupil is added to the total number of pupils in the school. The pupil must follow all courses, take all the exams (twice a year) and no special curriculum is foreseen. This can be a burden for teachers if there are language difficulties. In some cases, exchange pupils need to be enrolled as a “regular” pupils to meet the requirements set for recognition of the learning period abroad in their home country.

In the past, enrolment as “visiting” pupils was the most common practice, however now the trend is changing, more and more schools opt for the second possibility because of the funding that comes with the enrolment of pupils.

Some hosting schools have put exchange pupils in classes dedicated to non-Dutch-speaking newcomers<sup>267</sup>, which are usually meant for asylum seekers. However, this is generally not recommended because exchange pupils are not aiming to integrate into the Flemish

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<sup>265</sup> E. Briga, “Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning”, EFIL, Brussels, 2018, [https://d22dvi4pfop3.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/81/2018/09/11112524/EFIL-Study-Recognition-of-school-study-periods-abroad-in-Europe\\_Oct-2018.pdf](https://d22dvi4pfop3.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/81/2018/09/11112524/EFIL-Study-Recognition-of-school-study-periods-abroad-in-Europe_Oct-2018.pdf), accessed 14 Apr. 2021

<sup>266</sup> Legal basis: omzendbrief SO 64 van 25/06/1999 (vlaanderen.be) art 3.11

<sup>267</sup> Secondary education also comprises a reception year for non-Dutch-speaking newcomers (OnthaalKlas voor Anderstalige nieuwkomers – OKAN). This year focuses primarily on the acquisition of the Dutch language to prepare non-Dutch speakers who arrive in Belgium (NL) before moving on to regular education.



education system to obtain a certificate, and therefore the purpose of their stay is completely different.

### **Funding for the host school**

The school receives funding based on the number of “regular” pupils enrolled. Funding for the host school comes with the enrolment of regular pupils. Therefore, the school does not receive any funding for “free” hosted pupils. However, while, if the hosted pupils are enrolled as “regular” pupils on 1st February of the ongoing school year, they are counted and subsidised.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Where a hosted pupil is enrolled as a “visiting” pupil they can receive a document listing the subjects they took and the corresponding marks, but it is not a certificate and therefore has no legal value for continuing education in Flanders.

Where a hosted pupil is enrolled as a “regular” pupil they must take all exams even if they only need credits for a few subjects. The host school then provides a summary of the results, including an overview of the content of the subjects studied (preferably in English, and if not in English, the pupil is responsible for having it translated by a certified translator if required by the home country). At the end of the school year the hosted pupil will most probably receive a C-attest, however this does not determine that the pupil cannot continue in the next grade in their sending school, as recognition of the learning period abroad depends on the documents required in the home country.

In both cases, hosted pupils can be given a letter proving school attendance and some general comments on behaviour and attitude at school.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Hosted exchange pupils who wish to continue their studies in Belgium (NL) must have been enrolled as a “regular” pupil during their exchange and receive an A-attest at the end of the year. Furthermore, in the rare cases where a hosted pupil is enrolled in the 6th year during their exchange, they can take the final exams and receive the final certificate, however this is unusual.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available

on recognition procedures accessible for pupils spending a period abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>268</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition for periods abroad of any duration, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

In Belgium (NL) there is no official procedure for recognition of school study periods abroad<sup>269</sup> and the class council decides the conditions under which pupils will be readmitted pupils upon return.

There are significant differences between schools: some schools recognise what pupils have learned abroad, while others might ask the pupil to take some (or all) of the exams that were foreseen in the sending school. Some schools require that pupils commit to following (remotely) additional courses/tasks provided by their sending school and offer to access an online learning platform while on mobility, where teachers upload class materials and information. Some schools integrate the exchange into a subject (e.g. foreign language) and pupils have to make a presentation to their school and fellow classmates. However, this only replaces one of the many exams/evaluations during the year in the given subject.

In order for the school to be able to assure that the attainment targets are met by the pupil, a binding written agreement can be drafted before departure between the pupil, parents and school<sup>270</sup>. Some pupil exchange organisations make it a condition that such an agreement is signed. The contract is concluded at the end of the previous school year for exchanges starting in September and includes information on how the attainment targets will be achieved, how these will be assessed and how the reintegration will be organised with regards to the content of the different courses: what exams the pupil will need to take, what content the pupil will need to catch up on, what help the pupil will get from teachers. As pupils need to take exams in December and June and the procedure for recognition of credits varies from school to school, the contract is essential for exchanges of any duration.

## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Pupils going abroad for a trimester or a semester are readmitted to their class upon return since they were enrolled in the sending school as regular pupils before departure. The class council has the right to make this decision<sup>271</sup>. The class council might ask for a school

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<sup>268</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>269</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>270</sup> This is the practice of AFS Belgium Flanders.

<sup>271</sup> Legal competences of director and Klassenraad  
Legal basis: articles 8 and 9 of this circular note

attendance certificate from the host school. Pupils then need to pass the final exams in June to be admitted to the next grade. If a pupil fails the third stage after having spent a trimester or a semester abroad, the school might consider allowing them to repeat the exams in August.

## A full school year

For pupils going on exchange for a full school year, they can agree in the school contract that upon return they will take exams in June or August, or fulfil assignments provided by the school which allow them to enter the next school year. An additional class council meeting (*toelatingsklassenraad*: admittance class council) takes place in August or the beginning of September and decides if the pupil can move to the next grade.

## Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year.

If pupils go abroad for a full school year during the last grade and they have not signed a contract with the school before departure, they might decide to take their final exams at the Exam Committee<sup>272</sup> instead of repeating a year. These exams are based on the content of the whole 2nd or 3rd stage depending on when the pupil has been abroad, which means that even if they have passed the 3rd or 5th grade, they will still have to do exams about this content as well.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

## Challenges

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omzendbrief SO 64 van 25/06/1999 (vlaanderen.be)  
which is based on 2 decisions of the Flemish government with themselves list the decree (legal) basis:  
wet: Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering houdende de codificatie betreffende het secundair onderwijs  
[citeeropschrift: "Codex Secundair Onderwijs"] (vlaanderen.be)  
wet: Besluit van de Vlaamse regering betreffende de organisatie van het voltijds secundair onderwijs.  
(vlaanderen.be)

<sup>272</sup> The Exam Committee allows secondary school certificate to be obtained by studying independently and without attending school: Vlaanderen, "Examencommissie Secundair Onderwijs" (Government of Flanders, Exam Committee on the Secondary School Certificate), NA, <https://examencommissiesecundaironderwijs.be/>

- As there is a tradition of participating in individual pupil mobility during a gap year after secondary education, there is no perceived need to adopt a procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad.
- Each school has its own approach for allowing pupils to enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme and for recognition.
- Currently class councils do not have a culture of recognising learning periods abroad.
- The division of the school system into stages of two years and the importance of exams at the end of each stage for admittance to the next stage is perceived as an obstacle for recognition of the learning period abroad.
- The “visiting” hosted pupil status might be an issue for hosted pupils who wish to have their studies abroad recognised once back in their home country. The current status of “regular pupil”, ensures that host schools receive funding to support the exchange pupil. However, this means that the exchange pupil is to be treated the same as other pupils and does not provide for a personalised study plan or tailored assessment.

### **Enablers**

- A culture in some schools of drafting learning agreements for exchange pupils – although there is room to improve these so that they are more clearly focused on recognition, – rather than at ensuring that the pupil studies the sending school curriculum while abroad and practical arrangements are made to take exams upon return.

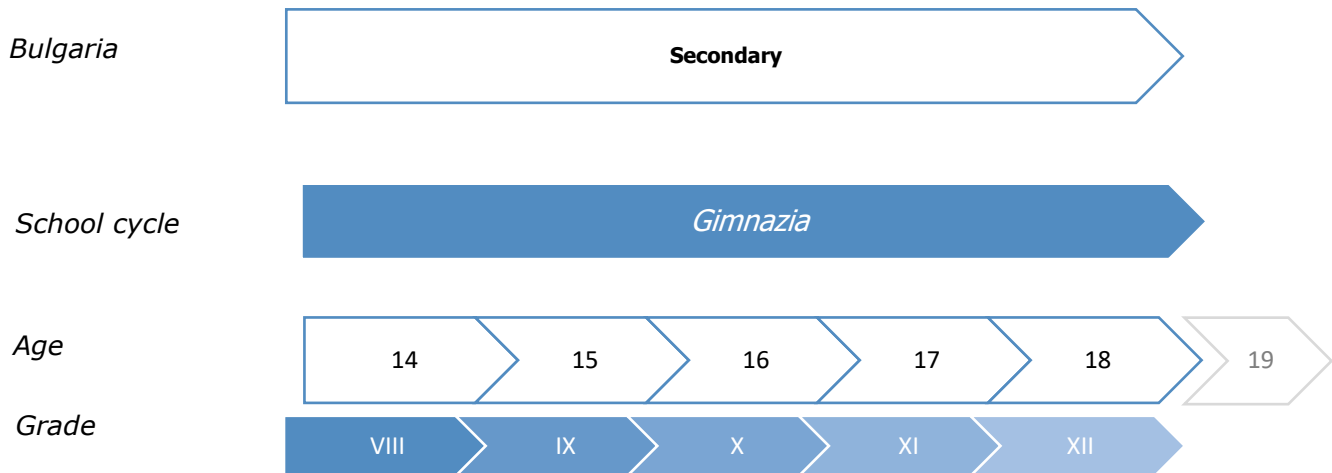
### **Recommendations**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to individual pupil mobility in terms of grades when it is allowed, and how recognition of learning is to be carried out. Based on the findings of the country report, the suggested approach is the following:
  - Allow pupils to enrol in exchanges of up to a full school year in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade. In 6th grade trimester exchanges are allowed.
  - Base recognition of the pupil’s study period abroad on a learning agreement which identifies how the 16 attainment targets are broadly in line with learning outcomes in the host school curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

- For periods abroad of up to a semester, returning pupils do not need to take exams but follow a personal study plan to catch up on content and pass the end-of-year exam.
- For periods of a full school year abroad a procedure is put in place to provide an A or B certificate to the pupil upon return, depending on the grade completed abroad. For example, in the 4th grade, pupils may be provided a certificate that allows them to pass from one stage to the other.
- Update the conditions of the “visiting” pupil status to ensure that hosted pupils are regularly enrolled. This may help to ensure that the host schools receive adequate funding for their support role and to organise a personalised timetable of courses and differentiated assessments of learning outcomes according to pupil needs.

## Bulgaria

### General secondary education system



General secondary education is a five-year cycle divided in two stages. It is provided by general and profile/specialised secondary schools (*Gimnazia* or *Profilirana gimnazia*)<sup>273</sup> and attended by about 49 % of the upper secondary school population<sup>274</sup>.

School education is compulsory until the end of the first stage, at the age of 16 (grade X): pupils who have successfully graduated from grade X receive a certificate for having completed the first and compulsory stage of secondary education, which enables them to continue their studies in the upper stage (grades XI and XII) as well as to pursue additional training to acquire a professional qualification.

### Graduation and certification

A national assessment is conducted at the end of the first stage of secondary education (grade X). It consists of a test in Bulgarian language and mathematics. In addition, each pupil can take an exam in a foreign language or IT technologies.

<sup>273</sup> Law on Pre-School and School Education from 13 October 2015, <https://www.mon.bg/bg/57> Закон да предучилищно и училищно образование

<sup>274</sup> 2017 statistics [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number\\_of\\_secondary\\_and\\_post-secondary\\_non-tertiary\\_education\\_pupils%2C\\_2017\\_%28thousands%29\\_ET19.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number_of_secondary_and_post-secondary_non-tertiary_education_pupils%2C_2017_%28thousands%29_ET19.png)

Having completed XII grade and passed two State matriculation exams in subjects studied throughout the second stage (upper secondary), namely Bulgarian language and literature and a second subject chosen by the pupil<sup>275</sup>, pupils are awarded the secondary education diploma.

The diploma provides access to higher education but some universities have entrance exams for certain faculties.

## **Individual pupil mobility**

### **Age and grade**

Pupils usually go on exchange when they are in X grade (16/17 years old)

### **Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility**

In the school year 2018/2019, around 32 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and governmental programmes<sup>276</sup>. There are also several for-profit agencies and private language schools offering exchange, especially to the UK, Ireland, Germany and France.

### **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Bulgaria**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Schools have the autonomy to permit pupils to interrupt a school year to go on a mobility abroad. Before departure, the school principal outlines to the pupil the conditions for retaining their place in the school. If pupils wish to have their period abroad recognised, they must continue to be enrolled in the school and agree with the school principal on opportunities for self-paced study, distance learning, general support and additional

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<sup>275</sup> Foreign language, mathematics, IT, physics and astronomy, biology and health education, chemistry and environmental protection, history and civilisations, geography and economics, philosophy.

<sup>276</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (3 pupils), YFU (7 pupils), the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study – YES governmental programme (12 pupils), and an estimate of pupils going abroad with ASSIST and HMC Scholarship programme (10 pupils).

consultations on school subjects in order to ensure successful completion of the school year on return.

### **Funding for the sending school**

Exchange pupils are considered to be fulfilling their studies individually / through independent forms of education (e.g. home-schooling). Funding is therefore provided to schools after completion of the annual examinations, which are held to assess the subjects of the school curriculum<sup>277</sup>.

### **Status of pupils hosted in Bulgaria**

#### **Registration in the host school**

Hosted exchange pupils are enrolled as regular pupils in the school based on a document attesting to the completion of previous school years in their home country and on the type of exchange programme. Hosted pupils can be placed in the last grade (XII).

#### **Funding for the host school**

Schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled, so if the exchange pupils that are hosted in the school are enrolled, the school receives funding accordingly.

#### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils receive a certificate of attendance and might also be assessed, depending on the length of their stay.

#### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

If hosted pupils wish to continue and complete their secondary education in Bulgaria, they must present documents attesting to their schooling in previous years, and reference to the subjects studied with the number of classes and the marks obtained. In addition, they must take exams in Bulgarian language and literature, History and civilisation, Geography and economy of Bulgaria. After passing these exams, they are awarded a school leaving certificate.

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<sup>277</sup> ORDINANCE for financing institutions in the pre-school and school education system from 2017.



Upon successful passing of State matriculation exams, the school also issues a secondary education diploma. However, this is unusual.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting less than 6 months, or between 6 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 6 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Bulgaria. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing this timing are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>278</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods of less than 6 months. For periods of between 6 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement.

Recognition of learning periods abroad within secondary school is regulated by national legislation issued in 2016<sup>279</sup>. The general principle is that on their return pupils must provide evidence that they have fulfilled the requirements of the national curriculum, either by passing the required subjects while abroad, or through exams on return from the mobility.

### **Periods of between 2 and 6 months**

Pupils who go abroad for periods of shorter than six months can be readmitted to school and finish the school year with their peers. In this case, pupils need to take exams to ensure that they have learned the content of the subjects they missed while abroad.

### **Periods of between 6 months and a full school year**

On return from an exchange, pupils must submit a transcript of marks from the host school to the competent authority in the region where the pupil resides. The Regional Management of Education body is responsible for deciding on the recognition of the study period abroad and decides whether the pupil needs to pass equivalence exams within the school year. If the school year finishes less than three months after the return of the exchange pupil, then

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<sup>278</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>279</sup> Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of Education and Science, "НАРЕДБА № 11 от 1.09.2016 г. за оценяване на резултатите от обучението на ученицит" (Ordinance n.11 of September 1, 2016 for evaluation of the learning outcomes of students), 2016, <https://www.mon.bg/bg/59>, accessed 31 March 2021

the Regional Management of Education body can allow them to pass the equivalence exams before the end of the next school year<sup>280</sup>.

Additional documents which can be requested are a learning agreement (drafted before or during the mobility experience), an official translation of the transcript of marks with apostille<sup>281</sup> from the host country, an overview of the curriculum of studies in the host country including a detailed description of each subject.

In order for pupils to be admitted to the next grade, two conditions need to be fulfilled:

- The learning period abroad is recognised
- The pupil passes an equivalence examination which needs to be taken in accordance with the Bulgarian curriculum.

In general, Bulgarian pupils who go through the recognition procedure need to pass at least two equivalence exams (Bulgarian language and literature, History and civilisation, Geography and economy of Bulgaria). Equivalent exams are also taken in the general education subjects which have not been studied in the host school.

If pupils do not take or fail the equivalence exams, they need to repeat the school year they attended abroad.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- The current system for recognition aims to ensure that the pupil fulfils the requirements of the national curriculum while abroad. As a result, pupils follow two different school curricula during their mobility, and on their return they are required

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<sup>280</sup> Article 111 paragraph 3 of the Ordinance n.11 of September 1, 2016 for evaluation of the learning outcomes of students, <https://www.mon.bg/bg/59>

<sup>281</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

to take several exams for the subjects of the national curriculum which were not offered in the host school.

- There are no rules or guidelines on the number of documents that the pupil may be asked to provide to support the recognition process. Some pupils may be asked to provide a large number of detailed documents (e.g. official translations of the transcript of marks with apostille from the host country, an overview of the curriculum in the host country including a detailed description of each subject).

### **Enablers**

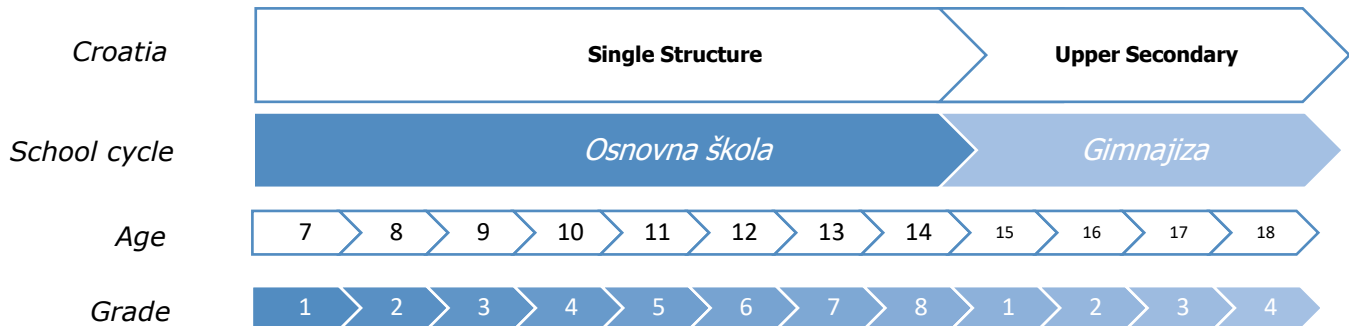
- There is a recognition system in place, managed by a regional authority.

### **Recommendations**

- Follow a common approach to recognition both for periods shorter than 6 months and between 6 months and a year, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula. This approach would not require that pupils meet the exact requirements of the national curriculum nor that they take several subjects exams upon return. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach.
- Provide guidelines to all schools on the use of the learning agreement, which should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.
- Ensure consistent implementation of the principle of “learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula” for recognition of periods of between 6 months and a full school year as administered by the Regional Management of Education.
- Provide clarity as to which documents are required for recognition.

## Croatia

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 15 years of age. Secondary education is a four-year cycle which follows on from the completion of primary education<sup>282</sup> and it is not compulsory. General secondary education<sup>283</sup> (grammar schools – *gimnazije*) address 31.9 % of secondary school pupils<sup>284</sup>. There are five types of grammar school education programmes:

1. General education grammar school programme
2. Language grammar school programme
3. Classical grammar school programme
4. Natural sciences and mathematics grammar school programme
5. Natural sciences grammar school programme.

### Graduation and certification

The State school leaving exam (State Graduation Exams)<sup>285</sup> marks the end of general secondary education and is organised and carried out by the National Centre for External

<sup>282</sup> Single structure education in Croatia is compulsory and lasts for eight years, it is compulsory for all children aged, as a rule, from 7 to 15, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/single-structure-education-integrated-primary-and-lower-secondary-education-1\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/single-structure-education-integrated-primary-and-lower-secondary-education-1_en); Eurydice, National Education systems, Croatia, Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/upper-secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-1\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/upper-secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-1_en)

<sup>283</sup> Under the conditions laid down in the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (OG No. 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90 / 11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 94/13, 136/14 - RUSRH, 152/14, 7/17, 68/18 and 98/19).

<sup>284</sup> Ministarstvo Znanosti i Obrazovanja (Ministry of Science and Education), Databases, <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiZWZ3YTE4OWQ0TjMNC000TjMlWE2MjktYTQ5MWJINDNlZDQ0IiwidCI6I6IjJjMTFjYmNjLWl3NjEtNDVkyi1hOWY1LTRhYzY3ZTtk0ZTFkNCIsImMiOiJh9>, accessed on 31 July 2020.

<sup>285</sup> Ordinance on the State Graduation Exams (OG 01/13 and 41/19).

Evaluation of Education (NCEEE) so that all pupils take the same exam at the same time. It consists of three compulsory exams (Croatian language and literature, Math and a Foreign Language), and exams in elective courses chosen by the pupil; a maximum of six elective exams can be chosen<sup>286</sup>.

The compulsory subjects (Croatian language and literature, Math and a foreign language) can be taken at two levels: the higher level (A) and the basic level (B). Pupils decide which level to take depending on the enrolment requirements of the particular university programme they wish to follow<sup>287</sup>. Elective courses are only examined at one level.

Pupils who have successfully passed the State school leaving exam receive a Certificate of Completion (*Svjedodžba o položenoj državnoj maturi*) which notes the marks obtained in each subject<sup>288</sup>.

Enrolment in universities is based on the State school leaving exam marks and school marks. Some faculties require pupils to take a separate entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go on exchange during the 3rd grade of upper secondary school (second last grade) when they are 16/17 years old, and they return for the final grade<sup>289</sup>.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, at least four pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations<sup>290</sup>. It is not common for pupils to go abroad for a year during secondary school. While considered good practice, the effort

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<sup>286</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, Croatia, Key features of the educational system, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/croatia\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/croatia_en) and Assessment in General upper secondary education, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-10\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-10_en)

<sup>287</sup> Nacionalni Centar za Vanjsko Vrednovanje Obrazovanja, "Pravilnik o Polaganju Državne Mature" (National Centre for External Evaluation of Education, Rulebook on Taking the State Matura), <https://www.ncvvo.hr/kategorija/drzavna-matura/pravilnik-o-polaganju-drzavne-mature/>, accessed 31 March 2021.

<sup>288</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, Croatia, "Assessment in General upper secondary education" [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-10\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-10_en)

<sup>289</sup> Briga, E., "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>290</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisation AFS (4 pupils).

demanding of pupils on their return, e. g. taking extra exams – is a factor which most likely discourages them from enrolling in such programmes.

In addition, families and teachers prefer them to finish their studies in Croatia and often believe pupils are not yet ready for such an experience during secondary school<sup>291</sup>.

There is also little awareness of pupil exchange opportunities. Croatia only began participating in Erasmus+ in 2011 and there is no record of individual pupil mobility within this programme so far.

### **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Croatia**

### **Registration in the sending school**

The Ministry of Education allows for up to one academic year to be spent abroad and it is then up to schools to decide autonomously on whether to grant this permission; it is usually granted. Pupils are registered in the sending school while abroad.

### **Funding for the sending school**

There is no specific State funding for the sending school for a pupil who is registered as being abroad: schools are funded on the basis of the global number of all pupils and classes at the beginning of a school year.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Croatia**

### **Registration in the host school**

The school decides autonomously on the admission of exchange pupils and the documents that are required<sup>292</sup>. Usually, they need to bring all documents related to the mobility (parent's approval, school approval and exchange organisation's approval). Hosted pupils

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<sup>291</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>292</sup> Agency for Science and Higher Education, "Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications in Croatia" NA, <https://www.azvo.hr/en/enic-naric-office/recognition-of-foreign-education-qualifications-in-croatia>, accessed 31 March 2021.

are not enrolled as regular pupils and can choose which subjects to follow. They are placed in class based on their age and can also be hosted in the last grade of upper secondary school.

### **Funding for the host school**

There is no funding for the host school.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils receive a confirmation of attendance including the subjects and number of hours. However, their competences are not assessed and they do not receive a certificate with grades.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the mobility**

Hosted pupils can attend the final grade but cannot finish their secondary education as they cannot take the State school leaving exam.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Croatia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>293</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

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<sup>293</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

Recognition of a learning period abroad is decided by the sending school<sup>294</sup>, namely the school council and the teachers' board. Generally, no learning agreement is required, however when the pupil goes abroad, they should attend a similar type of school<sup>295</sup>.

## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Pupils going abroad for periods of between two and six months are reintegrated back in their class and need to pass the exams at the end of the semester or at the end of the school year<sup>296</sup>. They need to bring confirmation of attendance from the host school and the teacher's board decides what subjects they need to be tested on.

## A full school year

Recognition is based on the correspondence of subjects between the sending and host school curricula. Upon return, the pupil needs to provide their school with a certificate of attendance from the host school as well as a transcript of grades from the sending school translated into Croatian by an official translator and, in case of a mobility with a country outside the EU, with an apostille<sup>297</sup>. The school might require additional documents such as a learning agreement (drafted before or during the mobility experience), an overview of the curriculum of subjects studied in the host country including a detailed description of each subject.

The school council and the teachers' board evaluate these documents and decide which additional exams the pupil needs to take to move to the next grade. Usually, they need to take exams for the subjects they were not able to study abroad, for example Croatian language. A large number of subjects (15-17) is taken in upper secondary school which means that pupils have to take a number of additional exams to have their learning period abroad validated, which is quite challenging<sup>298</sup>.

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<sup>294</sup> Agency for Science and Higher Education, "Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications in Croatia", NA, <https://www.azvo.hr/en/enic-naric-office/recognition-of-foreign-education-qualifications-in-croatia>, accessed 31 March 2021.

<sup>295</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>296</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>297</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

<sup>298</sup> All pupils who went abroad with AFS Croatia until 2019 received recognition of their study period abroad.



## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- Neither school principals nor teachers' boards have clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad. As a result, they usually test pupils on all the subjects of the national curriculum which they did not follow in the host school.

### **Enablers**

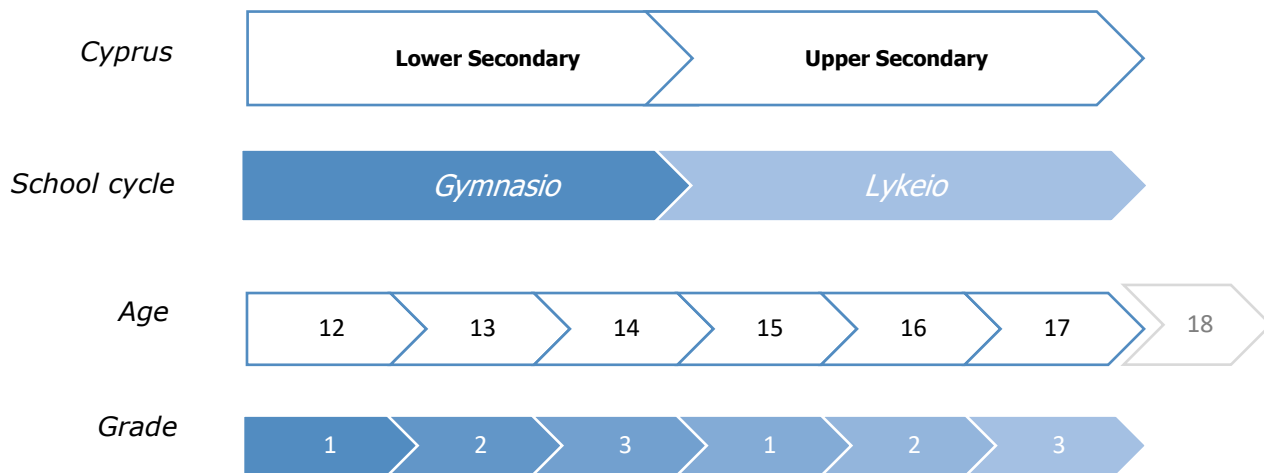
- Some schools do recognise learning periods abroad and can share their experience.

### **Recommendation**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Cyprus

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 15 years of age. Altogether 62% of pupils in upper secondary education (*Lykeio*) attend public general upper secondary schools<sup>299</sup>.

In the first year, pupils take 16 common core subjects and two subjects from one of the following four orientations: Ancient Greek and History; Mathematics and Physics; Mathematics and Economics; or Economics and English.

In the second year of *Lykeio*, pupils start to specialise and take eight common core subjects and choose four advanced-level subjects from one of six specialisation subject groups (Classical studies and humanities; Foreign languages and European studies; Natural sciences/biosciences/ Computer science/technology; Economic sciences; Commerce and services; Arts). The choice of specialisation subject groups is determined by the orientation followed in the first year, however the Arts specialisation is open to everyone. Pupils may choose to follow a different study orientation to the one they followed in first year provided they pass the necessary examinations.

In the third year, pupils take seven common core subjects and continue their second-year specialisation, consisting of four subjects<sup>300</sup>.

<sup>299</sup> This data refers to public *Lykeio*; 20 % of pupils at secondary school level attend private schools, which can have English, French, Russian or Arabic as languages of instruction.

<sup>300</sup> Ministry of Education, "New Timetable Program", <http://nop.moec.gov.cy/>

## Graduation and certification

From 2022, pupils in the third year of *Lykeio* will have to pass the two semester examinations in order to be awarded the school leaving certificate (*Apolyterion*). The examinations are standardised and organised centrally by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth while the certificate is issued by the *Lykeio*.

In order to enrol in a public university, pupils who have been awarded the school leaving certificate (*Apolyterion*) need to take the Pancyprian examinations. These exams are organised at State level by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and test competences related to the curriculum of the final grade of *Lykeio*. It should be noted that pupils who pass the Pancyprian examinations can compete for a place at Greek universities, as long as they have attended at least two grades of *Lykeio* in Cyprus.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils may go on a mobility during the first or second grade of *Lykeio*, when they are 15–17 years old, but not during the final grade.

It is recommended that pupils enrol in a mobility programme during the first grade for several reasons linked to access to higher education:

- Curricula in the last two grades are interlinked and performing well in the third grade would be difficult if pupils miss second grade.
- During the last two grades of upper secondary general schools, pupils prepare for their entrance to higher education institutions, which is highly competitive.
- They would not meet the prerequisite for entrance to Greek universities, namely having attended the last two grades of *Lykeio* in Cyprus.

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

There is no data on participation of Cypriot pupils in long-term individual pupil exchange programmes in the school year 2018/2019<sup>301</sup>.

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Eurydice, National Education Systems, Cyprus, "Assessment in General Upper Secondary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-11\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-11_en)

<sup>301</sup> There is no pupil exchange organisation in the country's territory. However, 4 Cypriot pupils have been selected for a scholarship programme offered by AFS Greece for the school year 2021/2022.

Cypriot pupils used to participate in long-term programmes – such as those offered by the non-profit pupil exchange organisation AFS during the 1980s – which gave them the chance to spend a whole year in a different country and was seen as an opportunity for their future career. However, since then circumstances and needs have changed so that these exchange programmes are no longer offered. Finally, attending schools abroad for a long period during the last two grades of upper secondary general education is considered not to be in the pupil's best interest, since it disrupts the pupil's learning pathway and it is not encouraged by their families either. In addition, 'a significant proportion of upper secondary school leavers chose to continue their studies to higher education institutions abroad'<sup>302</sup>.

### **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Cyprus**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Exchange pupils must be enrolled in the sending school if they go abroad for less than a full school year. There is no regulation in place regarding the enrolment of pupils spending a full school year abroad.

### **Funding for the sending school**

If pupils decide to study abroad for less than a full school year and return for the first or second semester exams, funding is provided to the school accordingly.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Cyprus**

### **Registration in the host school**

It is not common practice to host exchange pupils for 2 months–full school year in public or private schools. Specifically, in public schools there is no legislative framework that applies to the periodic attendance of pupils on mobility. To enrol in a public school, pupils from another country need to provide proof of completing the previous grade in the sending

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<sup>302</sup> Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance, Statistical service, Statistics of Education 2018/2019, [https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/204AA86C4060D499C22577E4002CA3E3/\\$file/EDUCATION-2018\\_2019-EN-310321.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/204AA86C4060D499C22577E4002CA3E3/$file/EDUCATION-2018_2019-EN-310321.pdf?OpenElement)

school and must take qualifying exams in certain subjects specified by Secondary Education Regulations<sup>303</sup> and in any other courses decided by the Directorate of Secondary Education. Hosted pupils can also be placed in the 3rd grade of *Lykeio*.

At the same time depending on their knowledge of the Greek language, an effort is made to place pupils in a grade with classmates of the same age. Pupils who do not speak Greek are enrolled in special Greek language learning programmes<sup>304</sup>, organised by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (e.g. transitional reception classes), in order to integrate smoothly into the education system.

Pupils transferring from public secondary schools in Greece or schools of secondary education recognised by the Hellenic Republic, which operate in other countries and have Greek as their main language of instruction, are enrolled under the same status as Cypriot students. They do not need to take a qualifying written examination unless they wish to choose a specialisation subject which requires that they have followed a given stream previously<sup>305</sup>.

## Funding for the host school

Public Schools receive funding for all pupils attending classes.

## Certification for hosted pupils

Depending on the length of the exchange in public schools in Cyprus, the school system will provide the hosted pupil with a certificate of attendance (for short periods) or certificate for completing a school year if the pupil passes the semester class exams. In both cases the documents will attest the subjects studied and the marks obtained<sup>306</sup>.

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<sup>303</sup> Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας, “Διεύθυνση Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης: Κανονισμοί Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης” Articles 14 and 15 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Directorate of Secondary General Education: Secondary Education Regulations,)

<sup>304</sup> These transitional reception classes are offered to pupils who wish to enrol in a public school but are not proficient in Greek (usually migrant pupils). In these classes Greek is taught as a second language and is offered only for the first year of *Lykeio*. Therefore if a pupil who would normally be placed in 2nd year of *Lykeio* is not proficient in Greek s/he will be placed in the 1st year of *Lykeio*. At the end of the school year these pupils take exams in Greek Language and Mathematics and they can take placement exams in order to be enrolled as regular students in the next class.

<sup>305</sup> See section on General secondary school system.

<sup>306</sup> Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας, “Διεύθυνση Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης: Κανονισμοί Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Directorate of Secondary General Education: Secondary Education Regulations), [http://www.moec.gov.cy/dme/kan\\_6\\_engrafes\\_metengrafes.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/dme/kan_6_engrafes_metengrafes.html)

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils who successfully complete a school year in Cyprus by taking the end of semester exams in the second grade of the *Lykeio* can register to attend the third and final grade of *Lykeio* and take the semester exams in order to be awarded the general upper secondary school leaving certificate. With the school leaving certificate (*Apolyterion*) the hosted pupil will be entitled to take the Pancyprian examinations and may compete for a place at the public universities of Cyprus. This also applies to pupils hosted in the third grade, provided they can prove their proficiency in the Greek language. However, this is unusual.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting less than a school year, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Cyprus. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU), apart from stays abroad in Greek schools which are automatically recognised<sup>307</sup>. It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>308</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than a full school year. In the case of a full school year abroad, the procedure described below applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement.

## Periods of between 2 months and less than a full school year

On their return from an exchange of 2-6 months, pupils are readmitted to their school by providing a school attendance certificate. If they have missed the first semester exams, they must take the second semester exams which cover the curriculum of the full school year. First grade pupils take exams in Greek language and advanced-level or common core Mathematics and two more subjects, depending on the study orientation they have chosen. Second and third grade pupils take exams in Greek language and the four advanced-level subjects depending on the specialisation subject group they have chosen.

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<sup>307</sup> Learning periods abroad (2 months-full school year) in a school following the Greek curriculum in any country are automatically recognised due to an existing bilateral agreement between Cyprus and Greece.

<sup>308</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

## A full school year

Recognition of a full school year mobility in general upper secondary education is regulated by the District offices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and their decision depends on the certificate of attendance, school report with subjects and marks, and comments from the host school. Based on these documents, they decide on the subjects that the pupil may need to be tested on in September, in order to re-enter the school system and be promoted to the next class level.

The exams concern Greek language and any other study orientation or advanced-level specialisation subjects deemed necessary by the ministry, that will allow them to follow the two final grades or the final grade and enable them to sit the semester exams in order to be awarded the school leaving certificate.

It is the pupil's responsibility to catch up with the subject-related knowledge they missed while on the exchange.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Individual pupil mobility is not a common practice.
- Pupils must meet admissions requirements for the last two years of secondary school during which they are focused on a specialisation, and then for admission to universities in Cyprus and Greece. These constitute a barrier to mobility and its recognition.

### Recommendation

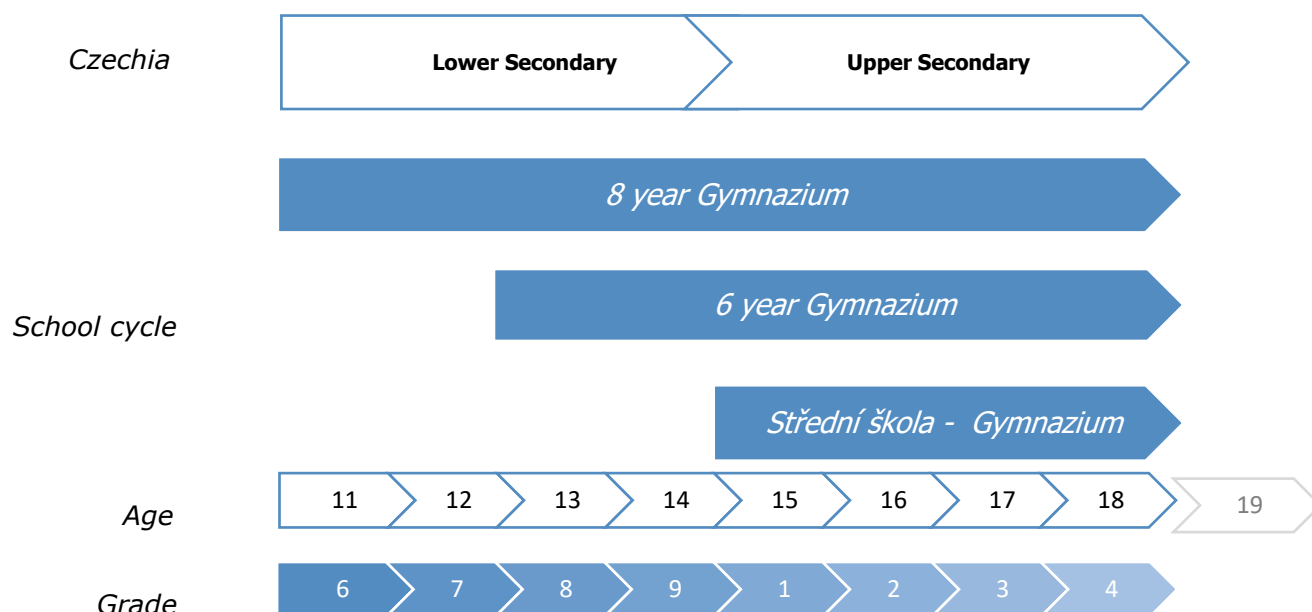
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum.
- The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

- Promote individual pupil mobility in 1st grade (15/16 years old) as pupils have not started yet their specialisation and automatic recognition of their learning period abroad might be easier. Ideally, a change in legislation could allow pupils spending their 1st grade abroad to be admitted to the next grade (i.e. to enter the two years of specialisation) without taking additional exams, provided they have fulfilled all the requirements for passing the 1st grade.
- Explore how pupils in 2nd and 3rd grade (specialisation years) can go on an exchange for a trimester or a semester, without hindering their chances to enter the university of their choice.



## Czechia

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 15 years of age. Upper secondary education (*střední školy*) is a four-year cycle starting after 9th grade and is not compulsory. General secondary education (*Gymnazia*) is attended by only 28 % of the pupils of upper secondary school age<sup>309</sup>. It is offered either as a four-year educational programme corresponding to upper secondary education, or as the last four years of the six-year or eight-year Gymnazium starting during compulsory schooling.

### Graduation and certification

Pupils receive a school leaving certificate if they pass the end-of-school examination (*maturitní zkouška, or Maturita*). The *Maturita* examination consists of exams in 4-5 subjects. The examinations in two subjects (Czech language and world literature, and either mathematics or a foreign language) are standardised and set by the Center for the

<sup>309</sup> Český statistický úřad, (2019). "Školy a školská zařízení - školní rok 2018/2019" (Czech Republic Statistical Office, Schools and School Facilities - School Year 2018/2019), Czech Republic Statistical Office, 2019, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/skoly-a-skolska-zarizeni-skolni-rok-20182019>

Evaluation of Educational Outcomes (CERMAT). The exams in the other two or three subjects are decided and tested by the school<sup>310</sup>.

The *Maturita* entitles graduates to enter higher education. The entrance requirements of some faculties are based on the results obtained in the *Maturita*.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils go on a learning period abroad in the 2nd and 3rd year of Gymnazium (third and second last year of upper secondary school<sup>311</sup>), when they are 16-18.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 84 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and the Erasmus+ programme<sup>312</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Czech Republic

### Registration in the sending school

If pupils take part in a mobility programme outside of a school-to-school partnership, school principals have the discretion to permit them to interrupt their studies for up to a full school

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<sup>310</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic, "The Education System in the Czech Republic", The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic, Prague, pp. 1-35, 2011, <http://www.msmt.cz/file/21631/download/>

Centrum pro zjišťování výsledků vzdělávání, "Maturitní zkouška 2021" (Center for the Evaluation of Educational Outcomes of the Czech Republic, Matura exam 2021), <https://cermat.cz>

<sup>311</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018,

<sup>312</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (2 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (50 pupils) and YFU (32 pupils).

year. In this case, the exchange pupil is not enrolled in the school and must apply for re-enrolment upon return, as foreseen by the law<sup>313</sup>.

## Funding for the sending school

Since 1 January 2020, schools are financed based on the actual number of hours of direct pedagogical activity carried out by schools<sup>314</sup> in accordance with § 118 of the Education Act<sup>315</sup>. Therefore, the school does not receive financial support based on the number of pupils enrolled<sup>316</sup>.

## Status of pupils hosted in Czech Republic

### Registration in the host school

Exchange pupils are enrolled in school based on information/certificates from the sending school. The school principal of the host school can decide whether to require an entrance test. Based on this assessment, the school decides on their placement in class: they are usually placed in 2nd or 3rd grade; the pupil's age is also taken into account<sup>317</sup>. Hosted pupils are generally not placed in the 1st grade as they would need to pass the entrance exam from lower to upper secondary school, although there is an exception to this rule in the 6- and 8-year *gymnazia*. Exchange pupils can be placed in the final grade but it is very rare.

### Funding for the host school

The school does not receive State funding for the hosted pupil specifically, as the funding is not based on the number of pupils enrolled.

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<sup>313</sup> According to § 66 par. 5 of Act no. No. 561/2004 Coll.

<sup>314</sup> Answer from the Department of Methodology and Financing of Schools and School Facilities of the Ministry of Education, 21 August 2020.

<sup>315</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, "Principles of the breakdown of the budget of direct expenditures of regional education of territorial self-governing units for the year" 2020, <https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/ekonomika-skolstvi/principy-rozpisu-rozpoctu-primych-vydaju-regionalniho>

<sup>316</sup> Answer from the Department of Methodology and Financing of Schools and School Facilities of the Ministry of Education, 21 August 2020.

<sup>317</sup> Answer from the Department of General Education of the Czech Ministry of the Czech Republic, 6 November 2020.

## Certification for hosted pupils

Hosted pupils can receive an official transcript of grades since they are enrolled as regular pupils. However, since their marks are often not positive, it is not considered useful to share this with them. Some exchange organisations provide the school with a specific assessment form to fill in for the hosted pupils, which takes into account the overall development of the pupil, beyond subject learning.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils can be admitted to complete upper secondary education in Czechia and receive a school leaving certificate<sup>318</sup>, although this is very rare.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Czechia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>319</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

When pupils spend between 2 and 6 months abroad, they agree with their teachers on an individual study plan to fulfil during the exchange programme or upon return. On their return they are reintegrated in their class and take some exams on the subjects they did not follow abroad, at the discretion of the teachers<sup>320</sup>.

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<sup>318</sup> Answer from the Department of General Education of the Czech Ministry of the Czech Republic, 19 August 2020.

<sup>319</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>320</sup> Briga, 2018.

## A full school year

According to the regulation applying to pupils who interrupt their studies<sup>321</sup>, the school principal decides whether a pupil who has returned from a learning period abroad can continue in the following grade, provided they demonstrate adequate knowledge<sup>322</sup>. According to the same law<sup>323</sup>, the school principal also decides whether to recognise only some subjects<sup>324</sup>. Often there is no recognition and the knowledge on the overall curriculum of the given grade is assessed by means of an exam.

## Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

Before leaving for the learning period abroad, pupils need to decide whether to take the exam on their return<sup>325</sup>. It is the pupil's responsibility to arrange an individual study plan based on the curriculum of their grade and agree on what homework they will need to do and which exams to take online or after returning from the sending school. However, this is not an official learning agreement but only an informal contract.

School principals are extremely influential in this process as they decide whether the pupil can take the exam or not and therefore repeat the school year. Most school principals are open to holding the exam, although the procedure for taking the exam can change every year and no guidelines are provided by the Ministry of Education<sup>326</sup>.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

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<sup>321</sup> § 66 para. 5 of Act no. No. 561/2004 Coll.

<sup>322</sup> Educational Law c. 561/2004 Sb., about pre/school, primary, secondary, higher specialised and other education.

<sup>323</sup> § 70 of the Education Act.

<sup>324</sup> Answer from the Department of General Education of the Czech Ministry of the Czech Republic, 31 July 2020.

<sup>325</sup> According to AFS Czech Republic, 50 % of pupils enrolling in an individual mobility programme choose this option.

<sup>326</sup> Briga, 2018.

### **Challenges**

- School principals have no clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad, therefore they usually test pupils on all the subjects of the national curriculum which they did not follow while abroad.

### **Enablers**

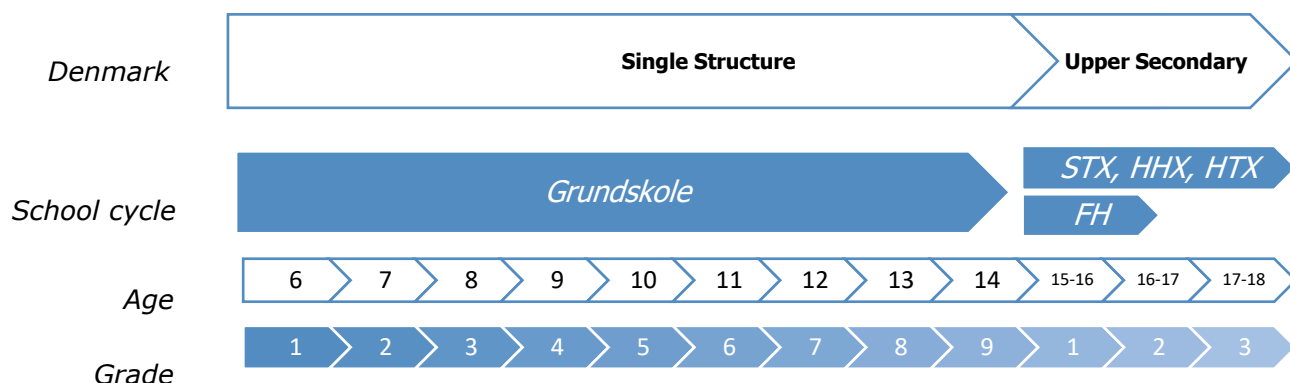
- Some schools grant partial recognition for subjects based on the transcript of results and can share their experience.

### **Recommendation**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Denmark

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper secondary education is not compulsory. General upper secondary education programmes are:

- The STX Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination (*Almen studentereksamen*) and HF Higher Preparatory Examination (*Højere forberedelseksamen*) programmes offer a broad range of subjects in the fields of the humanities, natural science and social science. STX is offered at Gymnasiums. HF is offered at other institutions and lasts only two years.
- The HHX Higher Commercial Examination Programme (*Merkantil studentereksamen*) focuses on business and socio-economic disciplines in combination with foreign languages and other general subjects and is offered at business colleges.
- The HTX Higher Technical Examination Programme (*Teknisk studentereksamen*) focuses on technological and scientific subjects in combination with general subjects and is offered at technical colleges.

Of the pupils continuing in upper secondary education after finishing compulsory education in 2020, 72 % chose general upper secondary education and 20 % chose vocational education. Among the general upper secondary educations, STX is the most preferred (58.9 %).

## Graduation and certification

At the end of secondary school pupils take a written examination in Danish and in other subjects at Advanced level (A-level), together with a number of oral examinations in accordance with the number of subjects chosen at A-level<sup>327</sup>. The exams are set centrally by the Ministry of Education, while the exams are held at the school.

Pupils must achieve a minimum mark in a weighted average of the final term's marks and the exam marks in order to be awarded a school leaving certificate.

The examination average included in the school leaving certificate forms part of the basis for admission to higher education.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Generally, pupils go on a learning period abroad by taking a gap year after they have completed their compulsory education (*Grundskole*) and before entering the 1st year of upper secondary school, which is normally at age 15/16. If pupils go on a mobility during their upper secondary school education, this is usually for a semester.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 342 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and the Erasmus+ programme<sup>328</sup>.

It is normal and culturally accepted not to go directly into upper secondary, but instead to go on mobility, or go to boarding school for a year where pupils can follow subjects related to their specific interests, or take a gap year before entering the 1st year of upper secondary education.

However, the reform of the pupil grant system in 2014, which determined how much time university pupils can spend on their studies and still receive financial support from the government, indirectly affected the mentality of pupils in upper secondary schools and pupils of lower secondary schools. With this reform, the government is encouraging pupils to get through their education faster, which means that young people are more reluctant

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<sup>327</sup> Eurydice, National education systems, "Denmark, Assessment in General Upper Secondary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-12\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-12_en)

<sup>328</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (3 pupils) and the non-profits AFS organisation (224 pupils), and YFU organisation (115 pupils).



to take a gap year between lower and upper secondary, or between upper secondary and higher education<sup>329</sup>.

The website Catch the World<sup>330</sup> run by the Ministry for Higher Education and Science and co-funded by the European Commission provides information on mobility programmes for young people, both on exchange programmes run by schools directly and the list of non-profit and for-profit organisations offering pupil mobility programmes.

### **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Denmark**

### **Registration in the sending school**

As many pupils take a gap year before starting in upper secondary school, there is no need to be registered in a Danish school while abroad. If pupils are already attending upper secondary education, schools have the discretion to permit them to interrupt a school year for a learning period abroad. This means they are still registered in the school and can return to the school on return from the mobility. However, it should be noted that if pupils are already 18 years of age, they are not eligible to receive their State education grant while they are abroad.

### **Funding for the sending school**

The State funding that schools receive is based on the yearly number of pupils actually in the school, therefore the sending school does not receive any funding for pupils who are on a mobility abroad.

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<sup>329</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018 and Information provided by key informant, 23 September 2020.

<sup>330</sup> Grib Verden, "Grundskole og gymnasial uddannelse" (Catch the World, Primary and secondary education), <https://gribverden.dk/din-vej/Grundskole-gymnasial-uddannelse>, accessed 2 Apr. 2021.

## Status of pupils hosted in Denmark

### Registration in the host school

There is no specific legislative provision regarding incoming pupils: the admission of exchange pupils is at the discretion of the school principal. The only requirement for enrolment is that the pupil's prior education must be equivalent to that of the Danish elementary school exam. Should there be any doubt as to whether the pupil fulfils the entry requirements the school principal can ask the pupil to take an exam. On admission, pupils are placed in classes based on their age, knowledge and prior education. It is possible for pupils to be placed in final year classes of upper secondary education, even though it does not happen often, but if age and prior learning matches, it can happen.

### Funding for the host school

The school receives the same amount of State funding as it receives for its own pupils.

### Certification for hosted pupils

The school principal decides whether and how to certify the studies undertaken in Denmark, based on school attendance and performance in the different subjects.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

If hosted pupils are officially enrolled in a Danish school, they may also take the final year exams, even though this mainly applies to English courses. If pupils learn Danish through their exchange, it is possible to take exams in Danish courses as well. However, this is a rare occurrence.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad within the framework of a gap year or during upper secondary education. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>331</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning

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<sup>331</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

## **Gap year between lower secondary and upper secondary education**

Pupils going abroad for a gap year before the 1st year of upper secondary school can apply to have their prior learning and qualifications assessed<sup>332</sup> when entering upper secondary school. If the pupil already meets the learning outcomes of a specific course or exam, credit can be given. It should also be noted that teachers recognise and appreciate the transversal skills that pupils develop during the mobility experience<sup>333</sup>.

## **Periods abroad during upper secondary education**

The learning periods abroad are normally for a trimester or semester. Recognition of learning periods abroad is a decision of the school, and pupils can make an agreement with their school before going on the exchange programme and define which subjects and exams the pupil will have recognised. Usually, pupils can return to their class and follow the courses that were not recognised. However, teachers advise against this as pupils find it difficult to return and study the lessons they have missed while abroad, while at the same time trying to follow the current programme. Therefore, the longer the period spent abroad and the lower the number of subjects recognised upon return, the higher the chances that the pupil will have to repeat the year.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- Recognition of learning periods abroad is limited to recognition of credits for subjects, and no recognition of a full school year abroad is currently possible.

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<sup>332</sup> Process of recognition of informal and non-formal learning throughout the entire education system, see Danish 2004 policy Recognition of prior learning in the education system.

<sup>333</sup> Briga, 2018.

### **Enablers**

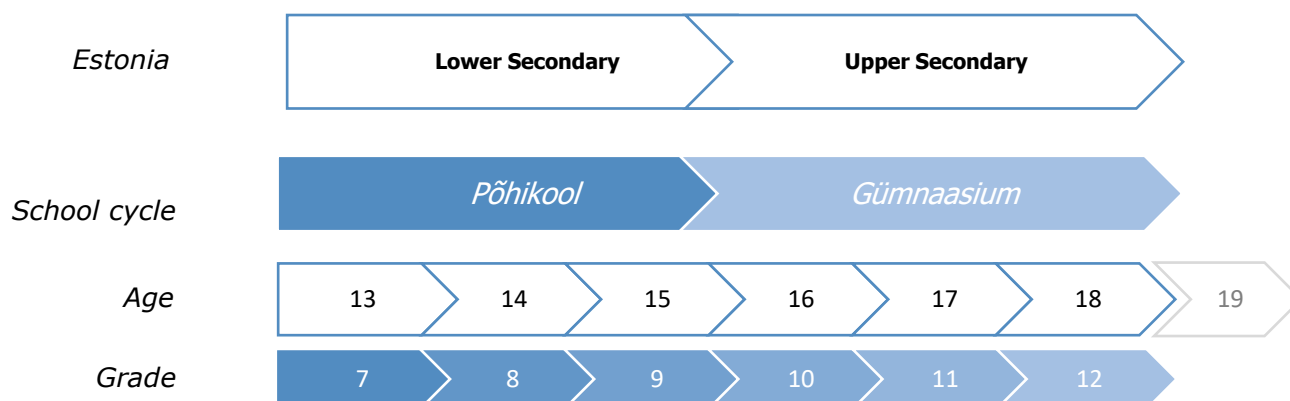
- There is a culture of individual pupil mobility among young people who take advantage of it in their gap year, and there is awareness of the benefits of individual pupil mobility in society.
- Youth are encouraged to complete their education faster, and therefore avoid taking a gap year This may serve as an incentive to promote pupil mobility for pupils while they are still enrolled in school.

### **Recommendations**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which currently recognise credits for subjects followed abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Estonia

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper secondary school is not compulsory, and about 75 % of pupils attend the general strand<sup>334</sup>.

Schools determine their curriculum from compulsory and elective subjects based on the requirements of the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools<sup>335</sup>. The curriculum is based on credits: one [unit] of credit is the equivalent of 35 hours work by pupils; pupils need 96 credits (courses) in order to finish school.

### Graduation and certification

At the end of upper secondary education pupils take end-of-school examinations which consist of three elements: an examination given by the school, the submission and presentation of a study or practical work, and the State examinations organised at national level. The latter includes three compulsory exams (Estonian language, Maths and a Foreign language). Those who are successful in the exams are awarded the State Examination

<sup>334</sup> Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, "Õppurid" (Ministry of Education and Research, Students - Statistics)", 2020, <https://www.haridussilm.ee/ee/tasemeharidus/koondvaade/oppurid>

<sup>335</sup> Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, "National Curricula 2014" (Ministry of Education and Research, National Curricula 2014), 2014, <https://www.hm.ee/en/national-curricula-2014>, The curricula are developed mainly by the Foundation Innove, an education competence centre created by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Certificate, and afterwards receive the Upper Secondary School Leaving Certificate from their school, following a decision of the teachers' council<sup>336</sup>.

Together, both official papers – the School Leaving Certificate and the State Examination Certificate – provide access to higher education. However, universities often organise separate entrance exams.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils can enrol in a long-term exchange programme between the ages of 14 and 19. However, most of them go on an exchange when they are 16-18 years old (Grades 10 and 11). Pupils can also go abroad during the final year (12th grade).

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 110 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and governmental programmes<sup>337</sup>. Estonian pupils are very interested in mobility and more pupils would go abroad if there were a procedure in place for recognition. For example, over a period of 2 years (February 2019-February 2021), 60 % of those who applied through the non-profit exchange organisation YFU withdrew their applications before signing the contracts. For nearly 22 % of them the reason for withdrawal was the fact they there was no guarantee that their studies would be recognised on their return<sup>338</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

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<sup>336</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, Estonia, "Assessment in upper secondary education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-14\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-14_en)

<sup>337</sup> Based on the data collected from the governmental programme Future Leaders Exchange - FLEX (23 pupils) and the non-profit organisations YFU (62 pupils) and ASSE International Student Exchange (25 pupils).

<sup>338</sup> Information from YFU Estonia, 16 April 2021.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Estonia**

### **Registration in the sending school**

The school administration has the discretion to permit a pupil to interrupt school attendance to enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme. The general approach is to keep the pupil registered in the sending school: they are marked as “exchange pupil abroad” in the national education information system – EHIS.

### **Funding for the sending school**

As the exchange pupil remains registered in the sending school, the school will continue to receive funding from the State for that pupil.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Estonia**

### **Registration in the host school**

Hosted exchange pupils receive an identification number which allows them to be registered in the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) and enrolled in the school like other Estonian pupils. They are usually placed in classes based on their age. If a pupil wishes to have their studies recognised then they will be placed in a class based on their academic level. Technically pupils can be hosted in 12th grade, but this is unusual as 12th graders start their exams in mid/end April, therefore exchange pupils would have a shorter school year.

### **Funding for the host school**

The school receives funding for the hosted exchange pupils as they are enrolled like other Estonian pupils.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

There is no legislative framework for certification of hosted pupils, and schools decide autonomously how to certify their studies. However, if pupils need to be evaluated and receive marks to have their learning period abroad recognised in the country of origin, class and subject teachers are informed and they support hosted pupils in this process.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils wishing to complete their upper secondary education studies in Estonia need to take all the necessary courses (96) to be able to take the School Leaving Certificate and the State examination. Therefore, this practice is very unusual.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Estonia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>339</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

### Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Pupils on mobility for periods of between two and six months are reintegrated in their class upon return and finish the school year with their peers. They do not need to bring any document from the host school. As none of the learning period abroad is recognised pupils need to take all the courses they missed while on mobility, but this does depend on the school. Currently some schools are considering whether to include the option of spending a period of between 2 and 6 months abroad in the school curriculum and are working on guidelines which would then help to recognise some credits and help the pupils continue without retaking the courses they already attended abroad.

### A full school year

Pupils studying abroad for a full school year need to fulfil the requirements of the school curriculum. The school principal has discretion to decide on how they recognise the outcomes of the learning period abroad, however, as there are no guidelines on this, most of the time there is no recognition. If the school principal accepts the courses taken abroad, this is done through matching the courses taken with the courses foreseen by the school

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<sup>339</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.



because there is a required set of courses each student must pass in order to receive the school leaving certificate. Pupils who go on exchange in 12th grade (3rd and last year of upper secondary education) have no option but to repeat the year and then take the end-of-school examination.

### **Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year**

There is always the possibility for exchange pupils to take the end-of-the-year exam in the summer on their return and be admitted to the next grade. However, this is not a recognition procedure and it is very challenging for pupils to study abroad and simultaneously take subjects in their sending school. Only very few pupils per year – the best performing ones – decide to go through this procedure in order not to repeat the year<sup>340</sup>.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- School principals have no clear or common guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad. As a result, a school principal may require the returning pupil to take tests on the subjects they did not follow during their study period abroad, or to take tests on all subjects in the curriculum. The latter approach, which is fairly typical, leads to exchange pupils repeating the school year as taking the exam on the whole curriculum is very difficult.

### **Enablers**

- Some schools do recognise learning periods abroad and can share their experience.

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<sup>340</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

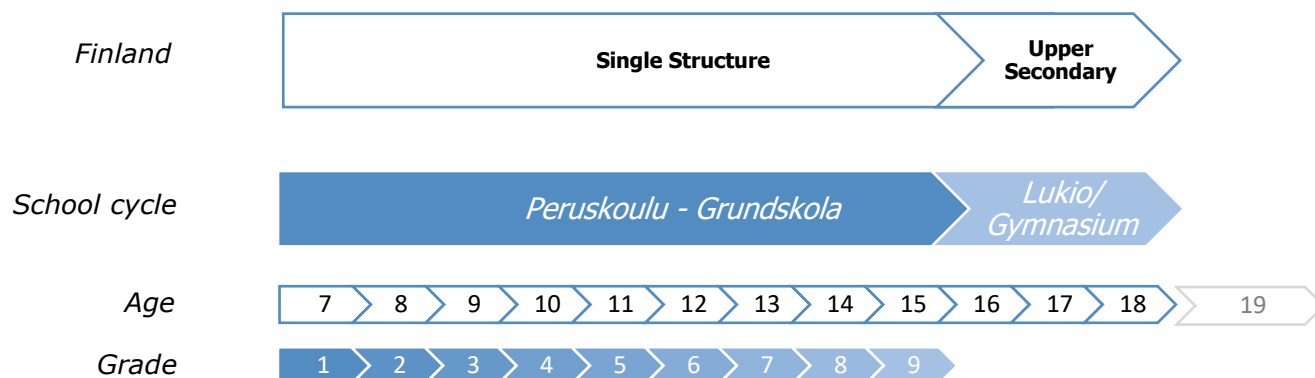


## **Recommendation**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Finland

### General secondary education system



Upper secondary education is a compulsory three-year cycle with pupils generally completing the cycle by the time they are 18 years old<sup>341</sup>. In the school year 2018/2019 about 48%<sup>342</sup> of pupils opted for general upper secondary school.

The upper secondary education curriculum is not divided by grades: subjects are structured as a set number of study points to be completed during the three-year cycle. This means that pupils draft their own study plan and set the pace for their studies to accumulate the number of study points required to complete the curriculum. Teaching periods are 5-to-6-weeks long during which pupils choose 5–6 study units on different subjects at the end of which they are assessed.

### Graduation and certification

The general upper secondary school leaving certificate is awarded to pupils who complete the entire curriculum. In addition, pupils take a separate end-of-school examination to obtain the Matriculation Examination Certificate. The examination includes at least four subjects<sup>343</sup>, sometimes 8 or 9.

<sup>341</sup> Finlex, "Oppivelvollisuuslaki" (Compulsory Education Act), Ministry of Education, Helsinki, 2020, <https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2020/20201214?search%5Ball%5D=matkakustannusten&search%5Bkohdista%5D=koko&search%5Btype%5D=tekstihaku>

<sup>342</sup> Vipunen, "Education Statistics Finland" <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/> It is the education administration's reporting portal. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education are jointly responsible for its content.

<sup>343</sup> Five subjects as from 2022.

If pupils change schools, they are given a certificate for all the study units completed in different subjects. The school certificates include a section “further information” which notes any additional proof of learning.

There are two types of higher education institutions, Universities of Applied Science and Universities. The general upper secondary school leaving certificate can be used to enter universities of applied science. University enrolment is either based on the results of the Matriculation Examination Certificate or alternatively pupils can sit an entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils who go on a learning period abroad do so at the age of 17/18 years old, during the second year of the cycle. They do not usually go abroad during the third year as the end-of-school examination starts in February and the university entrance exams are held in May/June<sup>344</sup>.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 268 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and the Erasmus+ programme<sup>345</sup>.

Generally, pupils prefer to spend longer learning periods abroad when they are in higher education and can have their studies recognised as part of the Erasmus programme.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

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<sup>344</sup> E. Briga, “Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning”, EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>345</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (17 pupils), and the non-profit organisations AFS (111 pupils) and YFU (140 pupils).

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Finland**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Exchange pupils are enrolled in their sending school while they are abroad and are thus covered by basic insurance during the exchange period.

### **Funding for the sending school**

General upper secondary schools report their pupil numbers twice a year in order to obtain State funding (the dates are 20 September and 20 January). If the pupil going on exchange is registered in the school on or between these dates, the school is eligible for State funding for that pupil.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Finland**

### **Registration in the host school**

School principals decide on the admission of exchange pupils. Since general upper secondary school in Finland is not based on year levels, hosted pupils attend classes in different subjects that correspond to their prior knowledge. The number of years in upper secondary education in their home country can be used as an initial reference point for placing hosted pupils in a given year. The collection of study points per subject is often cumulative which means that if hosted pupils have studied the subject before there is no need to take the modules of the first parts of the syllabus. Hosted pupils cannot be placed in the 3rd grade as the school year ends in February to allow pupils to prepare for the end-of-school examination.

### **Funding for the host school**

If the hosted pupil's exchange period covers a whole term (August to December or January to May) the school is eligible for State funding for that pupil.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils receive an overview of the courses they have completed. If they have taken an exam at the end of the course, these grades are also included.

## **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

If the host school agrees, hosted pupils may study for the general upper secondary school certificate and take the Matriculation examination. However, completing general upper secondary education with an end-of-school examination normally requires a good knowledge of either the Finnish or Swedish language. There have been some rare cases of this occurring, however this is not a common occurrence.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad of any duration. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of the country in which the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>346</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition. However, since upper secondary school is not based on year levels but on study points, pupils can get recognition for those parts of the syllabus that correspond to their studies abroad and gain study points for these. Otherwise exchange pupils continue their studies from where they left off. the exchange period, pupils are encouraged by the school team (study counsellor, subject teachers, school principal) to draft a learning agreement defining studies to be completed abroad and how they will be recognised upon return.

Decisions on the recognition of subjects / study points is based on a statement or a transcript of marks from the host school and depends on the content of the subjects studied and objectives achieved during the learning period abroad. The school team is the key player in the recognition process and they may use different methods to verify learning such as documentation (e.g. certificates, project work, proof of attendance, learning diaries, portfolios), discussion and tests upon their return. Pupils are aware that they will need to catch up with their studies on their return, and that they might take longer to complete their general upper secondary studies than their peers.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for

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<sup>346</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

## Challenges

- The general upper secondary school system is completely different from those of other EU countries as it is not structured by grade. Therefore, recognition is focused on study units rather than the full school year abroad,
- Legislation grants a high level of autonomy to the local level. There is no tradition – or possibility from the legal point of view – to regulate practices such as recognition of learning periods abroad at a national level.
- Recognition of learning outcomes based on learning agreements, including the types of verification required upon return, varies by school

## Enablers

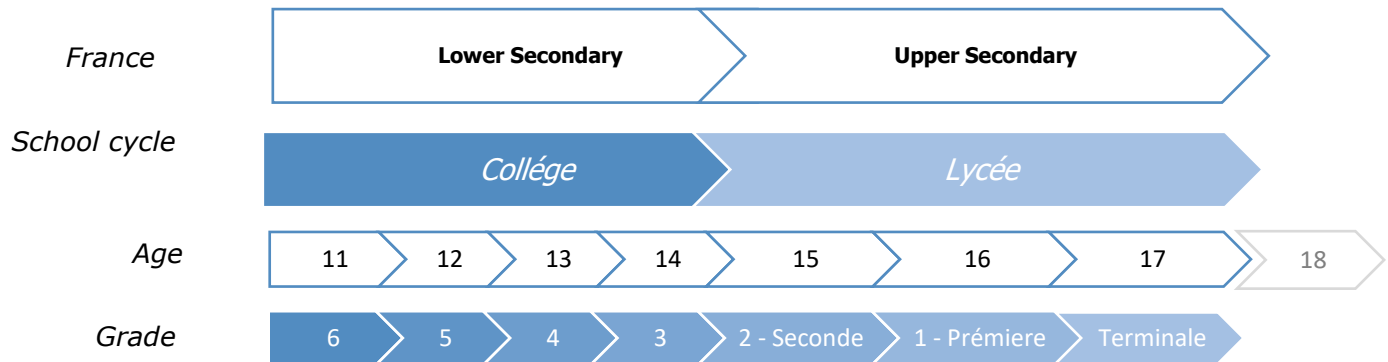
- Although there is no common approach to recognition, school teams do have experience with recognising learning outcomes from a period abroad through learning agreements and different types of verification of achieved learning outcomes upon return.
- There is a culture of recognition of prior learning and of building personalised study plans with pupils

## Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin. As schools are highly autonomous, a peer learning process would be needed for developing a shared approach to recognition. The current experience of schools in drafting learning agreements and recognising study points should be taken into account, while at the same time developing a flexible approach to what can be recognised as study points for subjects. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study period abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## France

### General secondary education system



After *collège* pupils continue their schooling in a *lycée* which provides a three-year school cycle, compulsory until the age of 16 (*Seconde*). General and technological lycées offer general upper secondary education and are attended by 71.4 % of pupils in upper secondary education<sup>347</sup>.

### Graduation and certification

The certificate awarded at the end of upper secondary schooling is the *baccalauréat*. It is based on successful examination results (including both written and oral examinations) and teacher-graded assessments, which are administered throughout the final two grades of *lycée*. Based on recent reforms, the examinations taking place at the end of each of the final two school grades count for 60 % of the final grade, while teacher-graded assessments during the final two school grades count for 40 % of the final grade.

The *baccalauréat* signals successful completion of secondary studies and provides access to higher education studies.

<sup>347</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports, « Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche 2019 » (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Benchmarks and Statistical References on Teaching, Training and Research 2019), 2019, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/reperes-et-references-statistiques-sur-les-enseignements-la-formation-et-la-recherche-2019-3806>



## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually enrol in a long-term individual exchange programme during the *première or terminale* (16-18 years old). However, these are also the grades when pupils need to sit exams in preparation for the *baccalauréat* and when continuous teacher-based assessment counts for the final grade. The requirements of the *baccalauréat* makes it therefore difficult, if not impossible, to enrol on an exchange even for a shorter stay abroad.

It would be easier for pupils to go on exchange during the first year (*seconde*), as there is no exam in preparation for the *baccalauréat*, however at this stage they are considered too young, and they usually only take part in trimester exchange programmes.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 1 254 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and governmental programmes<sup>348</sup>.

Information on mobility programmes offered by private organisations is coordinated by the *Office de garantie des séjours linguistiques et éducatifs*<sup>349</sup> which also provides a quality label for exchange programmes. One of the main long-term individual pupil mobility programmes is the bilateral exchange programmes with Germany, partly administered by the *Office Franco Allemand pour la Jeunesse – OFAJ* (French-German Youth Office): the Brigitte Sauzay programme (2-3 months)<sup>350</sup> and Voltaire programme (6 months).

As much as the exchange with Germany is popular because it has an established history and can be recognised within school-to-school partnerships, all in all, it is not common for French pupils to go on a study period abroad during secondary school because of the lack of recognition of learning periods abroad outside this partnership framework. Pupils prefer to enjoy this experience when they are at university since the academic period abroad is recognised. In fact, repeating a class might also be considered a weakness, for example if the pupil wants to enter a highly competitive programme such as the “*classes préparatoires*” for the engineering or management schools.

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<sup>348</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (301 pupils), YFU (110 pupils), CEI (124), Erasmus+ programme (34 pupils) and the governmental programmes Brigitte Sauzay and Voltaire (685).

<sup>349</sup> L’Office de garantie de séjours linguistique National Office for the Guarantee of Linguistic and Educational Stays, <https://www.loffice.org/>

<sup>350</sup> Pupils can enrol in this programme also without notifying OFAJ.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility. Schools notify *Inspecteurs d'académie-directeurs académiques des services de l'éducation nationale – IA-Dasen* – the territorial branch of the Ministry of Education – if their pupils are absent because they are enrolled in a pupil exchange programme. In addition the *Délégation Académique aux Relations Européennes, Internationales et à la Coopération – DAREIC*, which depends on *IA-Dasen*, oversees and promotes governmental exchange programmes. However, *IA-Dasen* and *DAREIC* do not publish the number of pupils enrolled in mobility programmes. *L'Office* also does not conduct a systematic collection of data on individual pupil mobility by private mobility providers.

## Status of pupils going abroad from France

### Registration in the sending school

Pupils planning to study abroad are required to notify the principal of their school. The school principal then informs *IA-Dasen* and requests that a place be kept open for the pupil in the next academic year. However, it is not always possible to keep a place for them if they follow specific programmes with few places available, therefore upon return, exchange pupils might have to enrol in a normal study orientation.

For study periods abroad organised by the school, *IA-Dasen* may fund some or all of the programme.

### Funding for the sending school

The Regional authority funds schools based on the number of pupils for a number of years, taking into account the population statistics etc. Therefore, the school budget remains the same irrespective of the number of pupils.

## Status of pupils hosted in France

### Registration in the host school

The departmental services of *IA-Dasen* decides on the enrolment of exchange pupils in secondary education in France. If a school is willing to host an exchange pupil – either as

part of a school-to-school partnership programme<sup>351</sup> or through a private pupil exchange organisation-, they inform the IA-Dasen, which authorises the enrolment.

In case a private pupil exchange organisation has not identified a host school willing to introduce the request to the IA-Dasen for hosting the exchange pupil, the host family or the hosting exchange organisation itself contacts IA-Dasen and asks to assign a public host school to the exchange pupil, based on the residence of the host family. However, this process might take some weeks.

In the host school, pupils are usually placed in a class with peers of the same age where they can study subjects they are already familiar with, but placement depends on whether there is a place available.

### **Funding for the host school**

Regions fund schools based on pluriannual statistics related to the school population, therefore, the school budget remains the same irrespective of the number of hosted pupils.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils receive transcripts of grade at the end of each trimester, like regular pupils.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country after the exchange**

Pupils hosted in the final grade (*terminale*) used to be able to obtain the French *baccalauréat*, although this is unusual.<sup>352</sup> With the introduction of the new *baccalauréat* in 2020/21 and the additional specifications adopted in July 2021, it will be more difficult, as the average grade obtained in the subjects during the last two school grades counts for 40% of the final grade of the *baccalauréat*. Pupils hosted in *terminale* would therefore need to sit exams on each of the subjects of the *première* (5 to 7), in addition to the final *baccalauréat* exam in June, as well as the final subject exams of the *terminale*.

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<sup>351</sup> In the case of the French–German cooperation programmes and the France–Sweden programme Programme franco-suédois ‘Éducation européenne – Une année en France’, or Erasmus+ it is the host school which directly engages with the exchange programme and wishes to host an exchange pupil.

<sup>352</sup> The experience of the non-profit pupil exchange organisation AFS Vivre Sans Frontière is that every school year, 5 to 10 of their hosted pupils who obtain the *baccalauréat*, and with good grades.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad of any duration within school-to-school partnerships<sup>353</sup> and within programmes offered by private organisations lasting either up to 3 months, or between 3 months and a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). Recognition of learning periods abroad is possible only in the framework of a school-to-school partnership. For pupils participating in exchange programmes which take place outside of this kind of partnership, there is no possibility for recognition of the learning period abroad. However, all pupils who spend a school period abroad can receive a “certificate of international experience” (*Attestation d’expérience internationale*) issued by the school or by the pupil exchange organisation, even if there is no partnership agreement between the sending and host schools. This certificate is often added to the school report issued by the sending school, and pupils may also include it with their university applications.

### School-to-school partnerships

Recognition of learning periods abroad is regulated by a June 2016 circular<sup>354</sup> and is managed by the school. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

The regulation requires that the sending and the host school develop a special partnership agreement including a learning agreement for the pupil during the stay abroad, which allows pupils to enrol in the next school year if:

- 1) they have respected the school agreement.
- 2) they provide a transcript of results and an overall evaluation from the school abroad.

The exchanges within school-to-school partnerships last 2-3 months in most cases.

It should also be noted that individual pupil mobility within Erasmus and the French–German individual pupil mobility programmes belong to the school-to-school partnership framework. In the case of the French–German trimester and semester exchange

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<sup>353</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>354</sup> Circular n° 2016-091, 15 June 2016; Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports, “Le Bulletin Officiel de l’Éducation Nationale : Mobilité des élèves de Collège et de Lycée en Europe et dans le Monde” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, The Official Bulletin of National Education, Youth and Sports: Mobility of Middle and High School Students in Europe and Around the World), 2016, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/16/Hebdo24/MENE1615925C.htm>

programmes<sup>355</sup>, the two schools sign a specific learning agreement. In the case of a full school year “any pupil registered in a French school and spending a year in a German school in grades 10 or 11 may have their year validated in France, if it is also validated by the German school”<sup>356</sup>: there is a specific partnership agreement<sup>357</sup> between the two schools to be signed for this purpose and this is a well-established practice.

## Pupil mobility programmes organised by private organisations

Pupils enrolling in an individual pupil mobility programme with a private organisation (non-profit or for-profit), do not have their learning period abroad recognised, although, depending on the length of their period abroad, they may be reintegrated at their sending school.

## Periods of between 2 and 3 months

For short stays abroad, there are possibilities for reintegration in the school year, depending on the school rules and class council decisions. There is usually no problem for reintegration in the *seconde*, while adaptations are needed in the two last grades since the *baccalauréat* exams take place in January, April and June in *première*, and February, March, April, May and June in *terminale*.

## Periods of between 3 months and a full school year

There is no recognition of learning periods abroad and neither is it possible to have a partial validation of the competences acquired<sup>358</sup>. There are exceptional cases of school principals who allow pupils to enrol in the next grade on return from an exchange, however this is the case only for strong-performing pupils<sup>359</sup>.

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<sup>355</sup> Brigitte Sauzay, Voltaire.

<sup>356</sup> Recognition of the 1st year of upper secondary school (*seconde*) spent in Germany: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale Enseignement Supérieur Recherche – Bulletin Officiel, “Enseignements élémentaire et secondaire – Coopération Franco-Allemande” (Ministry of National Education Higher Education Research - Official Bulletin, Elementary and Secondary Education - Franco-German Cooperation), 2006, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2006/44/MENC0602799N.htm>

<sup>357</sup> School-to-school agreement on the recognition of the 1st year of upper secondary school (*seconde*) in Germany: Enseignements Élémentaire et Secondaire, “Annexe – Convention relative à la validation de l'année de 2nde passée dans un établissement Allemand”, B.O N. 44, 30 November 2006, [http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/echangesMobilite/10/2/validation\\_annee\\_seconde\\_allemande\\_653102.pdf](http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/echangesMobilite/10/2/validation_annee_seconde_allemande_653102.pdf)

<sup>358</sup> E. Briga, “Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning”, EFIL, Brussels.

<sup>359</sup> In the experience of AFS Vivre sans Frontiere, this happens every year to 5-10 pupils who have been on a AFS programme for a full school year abroad.

## Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

There is the possibility to take an exam in the sending school upon return, in order to be admitted to the next grade. The content of the exam is agreed by the school and IA-Dasen according to the circular of 2016<sup>360</sup>. However, much depends on the willingness of the school principal to organise this exam, as they must administer the exam and validate the results. Many families and pupils are unaware of this possibility<sup>361</sup>, which has been available since 1981.

There are alternate training systems that may enable the pupil to complete a year abroad jointly with the year in a foreign school (such as the National Centre for Distance Education – *Centre National d'Éducation à Distance*, which is a certified body recognised by the national education system). Pupils may follow the programme and take relevant tests during study abroad, but this is very difficult as they need to focus both on following the home country curriculum and integrating in the host country: this is usually not recommended as it interferes with the integration in the host country.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Recognition is usually only possible within the framework of a school-to-school partnership. Cases in which recognition is granted outside of this framework are exceptional and are based on the school principal's decision.
- The school-to-school partnership learning agreements are subject- and knowledge-based, and focus on the matching of curricula
- Pupils typically go abroad during the last two years of upper secondary school during which they need to take exams that qualify them for the *baccalauréat*.

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<sup>360</sup> Circular n° 2016-091, 15 June 2016; Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports, "Le Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale: Mobilité des élèves de Collège et de Lycée en Europe et dans le Monde" (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, The Official Bulletin of National Education, Youth and Sports: Mobility of Middle and High School Students in Europe and Around the World), <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/16/Hebdo24/MENE1615925C.htm>

<sup>361</sup> 4 out of 1 200 pupils who have been on exchange with AFS France in the period 2015-2017 used this opportunity.

## Enablers

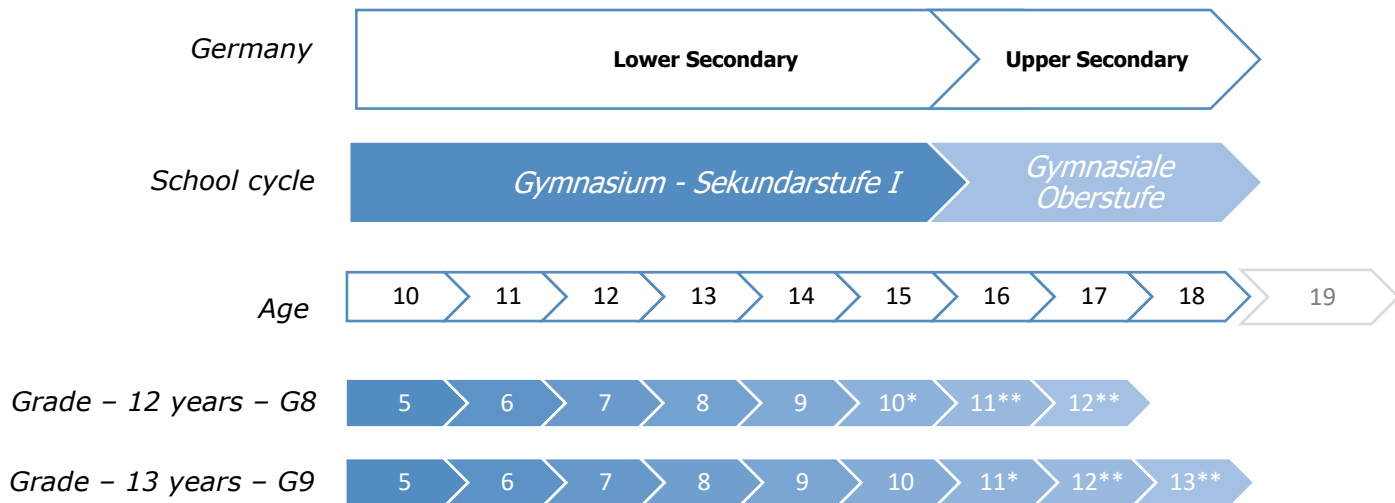
- A culture of international cooperation within schools (all schools in France have partnerships with schools abroad)

## Recommendations

- Promote individual pupil mobility programmes in *seconde* (1st year of upper secondary education) so pupils do not miss preparation for the exams that qualify them for the *baccalauréat*.
- Consider how pupils might go abroad during the last two years and still meet the prerequisites for the *baccalauréat* (e.g. extra exams are organised for exchange pupils upon return).
- Support recognition based on learning agreements beyond school-to-school partnership programmes. In the case of programmes run by private organisations, learning agreements might be drafted by the sending school, the pupil and the private organisation. The sending school should be in touch with the host school during the exchange.
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Germany

### General secondary education system



Germany has 16 different school systems<sup>362</sup>. Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. Upper secondary school is compulsory and its common principles are laid down by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (*Die Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - KMK*). In general, the differences relate to school types and implementation of the common principles/curriculum, and on whether they adopt a 12- or 13-year education system.

General upper secondary education is the *gymnasiale Oberstufe*, attended by 77.1 % of upper secondary school pupils<sup>363</sup>. There are several options for enrolling:

- Pupils enrol after 9th or 10th grade (depending on the length of the education system);
- Pupils have already been enrolled in a gymnasium from grade 5 or from grade 7, after 6 years in primary school;

<sup>362</sup> Kultusminister Konferenz - KMK, "Basic Structure of the Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany", 2017, [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Dokumentation/en\\_2017.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Dokumentation/en_2017.pdf)

<sup>363</sup> Data of 2018: Kultusminister Konferenz - KMK, "Compact Data on Education" (Conference of Ministers of Education, Compact Data on Education), Department IV C – Statistics, Berlin, 2019, [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Statistik/KMK\\_Statistik\\_Folder\\_2019\\_en\\_RZ\\_web.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Statistik/KMK_Statistik_Folder_2019_en_RZ_web.pdf)



- Pupils enrol in a special type of gymnasium into which Hauptschule and Realschule<sup>364</sup> pupils can transfer following grade 6 or 7;
- Pupils attend special courses for particularly clever Realschule and vocational school leavers.
- Pupils who have completed Realschule (grade 10<sup>th</sup>) can enrol in the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* and obtain a general upper secondary school diploma.

## Graduation and certification

The school leaving certificate (Zeugnis der Allgemeinen Hochschulreife – General higher education entrance qualification) is obtained following the end-of-school examination (*Abitur*) at the end of *gymnasiale Oberstufe*. The marks from the qualification period count towards the *Abitur*<sup>365</sup>. The *Abitur* allows pupils to commence university or a course of vocational education and training. Some universities require an entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils go abroad before the qualification period, therefore the grade/age depends on the school system of their federal state:

- 10th grade, 15/16 years old in the case of G8 (12 years' education)
- 11th grade, 16/17 years old in the case of G9 (13 years' education)

Going on exchange during the qualification period is not allowed because the marks collected in these years count for the final exam (*Abitur*). A very small number of pupils goes abroad in the previous grade (9th or 10th grade depending on the system).

Pupils who have completed the 10th grade at Realschule and therefore obtained a secondary school diploma, can enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme only if they enrol in the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* upon return: they have to apply (and be accepted) at a general upper secondary school before starting the exchange programme.

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<sup>364</sup> Both Hauptschule and Realschule are lower secondary education providing basic general education which upon completion allow choosing between vocational education or general upper secondary education. Realschule provides more extensive general education.

<sup>365</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, "Germany, Organisation of General Upper Secondary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-general-upper-secondary-education-21\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-general-upper-secondary-education-21_en)

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 16 900 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme, for-profit agencies<sup>366</sup>, or went on a self-organised learning period abroad<sup>367</sup>.

In Germany, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) invites federal states to promote the period of studies abroad during upper secondary school, and individual pupil mobility is quite popular. There are more than 100 private agencies in Germany offering individual pupil mobility programmes, which cooperate within the framework of Weltweiser, a for-profit organisation supporting mobility providers with several services<sup>368</sup>. There are also umbrella organisations for some of the private agencies thus providing a quality label for exchange programmes: Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch – AJA<sup>369</sup> (non-profit pupil exchange organisations), Deutsche Fachverband High School e.V. – DFH<sup>370</sup> (some for-profit pupil exchange organisations). In addition, there are a number of governmental programmes<sup>371</sup>, notably the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) with the USA, and the bilateral exchange programmes such as the ones run by the French–German Youth Office (*Deutsches-Französisches Jugendwerk- DFJW*)<sup>372</sup>.

Most schools believe individual pupil mobility is a personal initiative of the pupils and their family, and therefore do not actively promote this experience. A few schools do promote it and have guidelines and procedures to support the exchange pupil. Pupils feel under pressure to finish school and enter university and then enter the labour market, and therefore might prefer to spend a period abroad during their higher education rather than risking having to repeat a year during upper secondary school, as recognition of the learning period abroad is not guaranteed<sup>373</sup>.

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<sup>366</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (6 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (767 pupils) and YFU (915 pupils), other non-profit organisations (1 286), governmental programmes (574), several for-profit agencies (9 440 pupils) and own initiative – or other programmes (3 912).

<sup>367</sup> Weltweiser estimates approximately 3 918 pupils organise their stay abroad without the support of a mobility provider, or through other mobility programmes not mapped.

<sup>368</sup> [www.weltweiser.de](http://www.weltweiser.de)

<sup>369</sup> Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch GmbH - AJA (Working group for non-profit youth exchange GmbH – AJA), <https://aja-org.de/>

<sup>370</sup> Deutsche Fachverband High School e.V (German Professional High School Association), <https://dfh.org/>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

<sup>371</sup> Weltweiser, “Austauschorganisationen Schüleraustausch” (School Exchange organisations), <https://weltweiser.de/austauschorganisationen/austauschorganisationen-schueleraustausch/>

<sup>372</sup> Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO), <https://www.fgyo.org/>

<sup>373</sup> E. Briga, “Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning”, EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

The data on individual pupil mobility programmes run by pupil mobility organisations is collected by Weltweiser<sup>374</sup>, a private agency offering services to pupil mobility organisations.

Recently the International Youth Service of the Republic of Germany (IJAB) has been looking at including individual pupil mobility programmes run by the government in their regular report<sup>375</sup> which provides data on publicly funded youth mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Germany

### Registration in the sending school

The exchange pupil must get permission from their school principal to enrol in the exchange programme and be registered in the sending school when they are abroad.

### Funding for the sending school

The funding system of schools is based on the number of pupils present in the school. Therefore, if pupils are abroad for a pupil exchange programme they are officially on leave and they are not counted towards funding.

### Funding for the exchange pupil

The pupil can apply for Auslands-BAFÖG, the German funding system for pupils going abroad.

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<sup>374</sup> Weltweiser, the independent educational advisory service & publisher, <https://weltweiser.de/>

<sup>375</sup> Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V. – IJAB, "Aktuelle Beiträge zum Datenreport Internationale Jugendarbeit" (Office for International Youth Work of the Federal Republic of Germany, Current Contributions to the Data Report International Youth Work), <https://ijab.de/projekte/datenreport-internationale-jugendarbeit/aktuelle-beitraege-zum-datenreport-internationale-jugendarbeit>

## Status of pupils hosted in Germany

### Registration in the host school

There is no legal framework that regulates the status of an exchange pupil. The school principal assesses each individual case and decides whether the host pupil can attend as a “regular” pupil – taking exams and getting a certificate including marks – or attends as a “visiting” pupil without any specific tasks.

Hosted pupils normally attend the 10th or 11th grade, the year before entering the qualification phase, depending on their age. They cannot be placed in the last two grades of upper secondary school.

### Funding for the host school

Schools usually do not receive any funding for the exchange pupils they host as most of the time they are not enrolled as regular pupils.

### Certification for hosted pupils

At the end of the exchange, host pupils receive a certificate confirming that they attended school; the type of certificate varies from school to school.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Exchange pupils cannot be hosted in Germany in the qualification period. In addition, in order to take the *Abitur* examination they need to have attended the full qualification period in Germany. For these reasons it is not possible for exchange pupils to graduate in Germany during their exchange.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility

within a school-to-school partnership<sup>376</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) provides recommendations to federal states on the procedure for recognition of a learning period abroad. Recognition is therefore possible, but regulated differently, in each state. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

The “terms for recognition” have to be clearly defined between the school principal, the pupil and the parents before starting the exchange programme, and each school prescribes which subjects have to be taken in the host country during the exchange. Upon return, exchange pupils need to show that they attended the school abroad for the full period abroad and can be readmitted to their sending school based on the correspondence of subjects between the sending and host school curricula, which is evaluated by a competent authority, generally this is a teacher or the school principal. The main document used for this procedure is the list of subjects which were taken during the period abroad, and a transcript of the marks<sup>377</sup>. Pupils then need to demonstrate that they can keep up with the schoolwork. No learning agreement between the sending and host school is required.

The recognition procedure is very well structured, but also complicated and dependent on the willingness of the school principals. More than half of the pupils going abroad decide to apply for recognition and receive it. The other half opts to repeat the school year and use the year abroad as a gap year before the qualification period starts.

For more information on the legislation of each federal state, AJA provides an overview<sup>378</sup>.

## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

The KMK recommends that pupils who go on exchange for periods of between 2 and 6 months should be allowed to re-enter their school in Germany to finish the grade. This type of exchange is recognised easily according to the procedure outlined above, but pupils can only do it before the qualification period.

## A full school year

The KMK recommends that the school year abroad is recognised when done in the last year of the “introductory period” of upper secondary school. In some federal states, next to the

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<sup>376</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>377</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>378</sup> Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustausch GmbH – AJA, “Anerkennung von Auslandsschuljahren. Die Richtlinien der Bundesländer” (Working group for non-profit youth exchange GmbH - AJA, Recognition of the year abroad. The guidelines of the federal states), <https://aja-org.de/anerkennungsflyer/>

procedure mentioned above, schools require pupils to pass an exam for the subjects that are assessed in the *Abitur*<sup>379</sup>, and each school decides independently on how to organise this. Some federal states allow exams to be taken via email or online, while the pupils are abroad (e.g. Berlin), but it depends on each school.

In general, when pupils spend a full school year abroad, it is particularly important that they catch up with the missed content when they are admitted to the next grade.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Pupils can only go abroad during the first and introductory grade of secondary education.
- The school system in Germany does not allow for individual pupil mobility during the two last specialisation years.
- Pupils attending Realschule and transitioning to general upper secondary education (Gymnasium) are often excluded from opportunities to spend a period abroad.
- Recognition is based on the transcript of marks and matching of curricula; only slightly more than half of the pupils who have studied abroad apply for recognition and receive it.

### Enablers

- There is a strong culture of individual pupil mobility, and this is promoted by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education.

### Recommendations

- At the national level, (the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education) encourage federal states to implement a recognition system based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch

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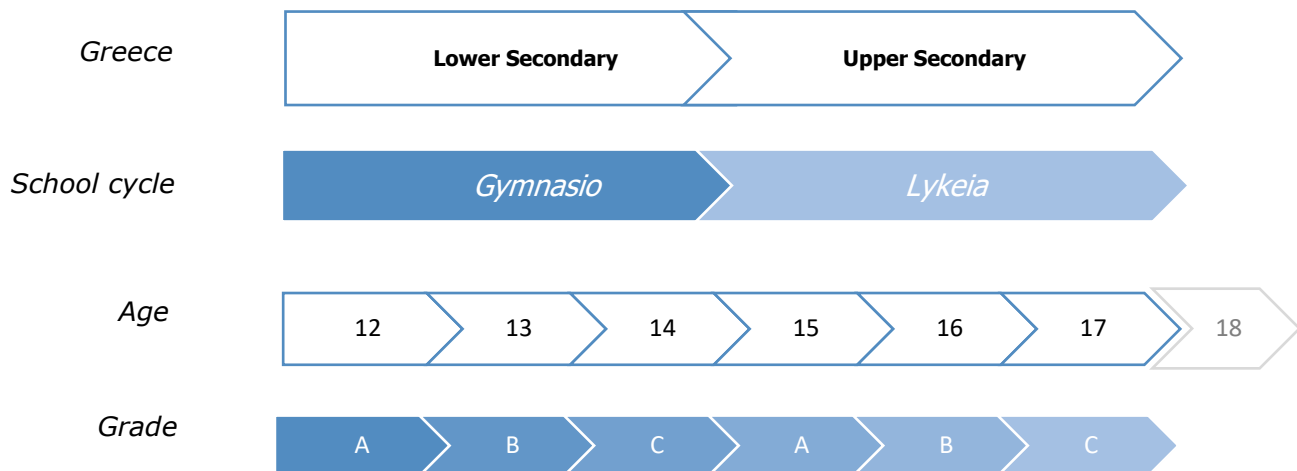
<sup>379</sup> Briga, 2018.

up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

- Apply this principle to mobility of any duration during the introductory grade of upper secondary education.
- Pilot this recognition system in some federal states for study abroad periods up to 6 months in the first specialisation year. The latter is a very ambitious goal as the qualification period is very important and managed differently by each federal state.
- Smooth the transition for pupils passing from Realschule to Gymnasium by providing them with the funding from Auslands-BAFÖG - the German funding system for pupils going abroad- which at the moment is only accessible to pupils attending already the *gymnasiale Oberstufe*.

## Greece

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 15 years of age. General upper secondary education (*Imerisia genika Lykeia*) is attended by 71.6 % of pupils in upper secondary education<sup>380</sup>.

In the second year, pupils must choose between two study orientations (*Ομάδες Προσανατολισμού*) namely Humanities or Sciences, and in the third year, pupils choose one out of three study orientations: Human studies, Sciences and Health studies, Economic and Computer studies. Once the pupil has selected a study orientation they need to follow a sequence of subjects to complete it. If they wish, graduating pupils are eligible to take Pan-Hellenic examinations in four subjects of their chosen third-year study orientation.

In addition to attending public school, most pupils attend extracurricular classes or one-to-one tuition at private centres called *frontistiria*. These centres are essential to prepare pupils for the Pan-Hellenic examinations and therefore their entrance to higher education.

<sup>380</sup> Ελληνική Στατιστική Αρχή, "Γενικά Λύκεια (σχ. πληθυσμός, μονάδες, προσωπικό) (Έναρξη-Λήξη) / 2018" (Hellenic Statistical Authority – ELSTAT, ). General Lyceums (population, units, staff) (Start-End) / 2018), 2018, <https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SED23/>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.



## Graduation and certification

The *Lykeio* graduation certificate is awarded to pupils who pass the Pan-Hellenic examinations, which are based on questions drafted at central level<sup>381</sup>. The examination is based on the study orientations requiring an advanced level in four different subjects, depending on the orientation.

Holders of the upper secondary school certificate can apply to university based on their study orientation and performance at the Pan-Hellenic exams<sup>382</sup>. In fact, the choice of study orientation influences and limits the type of universities pupils can apply to. According to the recently announced reform<sup>383</sup>, the pupil's final result in upper secondary education is a combination of the marks received in each of the three years. This is to ensure that the final exam takes into account all the knowledge acquired in upper secondary education, otherwise pupils would be able to apply only for universities focused on the subjects of their study orientation.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils enrol in individual pupil mobility programmes at the age of 15/16, in the first year of *Lykeio*.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 13 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and governmental programmes<sup>384</sup>. Individual exchange programmes are not popular in Greece as Greek families prefer their children to study abroad during the university period.

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<sup>381</sup> The questions are listed in the Classified Difficulty Exams Bank (Τράπεζα Θεμάτων) which is a bank of exam questions per course.

<sup>382</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, "Greece, Organisation of General Upper Secondary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-general-upper-secondary-education-23\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-general-upper-secondary-education-23_en)

<sup>383</sup> Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religions, "Education Reforms", 2020 <https://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/45796-15-07-20-ksekinontas-apo-ti-vasi-tis-ekpaideftikis-pyramidas-metarrythmiseis-se-10-vimata-2>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

<sup>384</sup> Based on the data collected from the governmental programme Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) programme (12 pupils) and the non-profit organisation YFU (1 pupil). AFS only re-opened in Greece in 2019.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

It is likely that there is a centralised system for gathering data on pupil mobility in the Ministry of Education, however the data are not public.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Greece

### Registration in the sending school

Interruptions of schooling are only allowed for a full school year, and during the period abroad pupils are not enrolled in their home school. In fact, school registration takes place in September and all pupils present on that date are expected to fulfil their school year in their school. A pupil wishing to interrupt their education must therefore apply for permission before September. This also means that pupils cannot take part in semester or trimester exchange programmes.

Permission to carry out mobility in the context of school-to-school partnerships – including those within the Erasmus+ programme-, is issued by the respective elected Regional Director of Primary and Secondary Education<sup>385</sup>. Private organisations that organise individual pupil exchanges do not need such permits, but they need permission from the Ministry of Education for their operations.

### Funding for the sending school

As pupils are not enrolled during their exchange abroad, they are not counted towards funding for the school.

## Status of pupils hosted in Greece

### Registration in the host school

The law foresees that exchange pupils are enrolled with the specific status of exchange pupil and school principals are obliged to accept them in their school. In order to be enrolled hosted pupils need to provide proof of the last grade completed in the sending school. Pupils are placed in grades depending on the courses they have been taught in their sending

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<sup>385</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, “Greece, Mobility in Early Childhood and School Education”, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-27\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-27_en)

school and their correspondence to the curriculum in Greece, and not based on their age. Hosted pupils cannot be placed in the last year of upper secondary school.

### **Funding for the host school**

The school does not receive funding from the State for a hosted pupil.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

There is no applicable legislation for certifying the studies of hosted exchange pupils, and there is not enough practice of hosting exchange pupils to provide information.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Hosted pupils are not allowed to receive a Greek upper secondary school certificate with only one year of studies in Greece.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than a full school year or a full school year. It should be noted that in the case of a school-to-school partnership<sup>386</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the procedure described below for being readmitted to school after a period abroad of a full school year applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement between sending and host school for the purpose of recognition of learning outcomes.

### **Periods shorter than a full school year**

Long-term mobility programmes shorter than a full school year are not allowed and not recognised, therefore this type of programme is not offered, even in the context of school-to-school partnerships.

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<sup>386</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

## A full school year

In Greece there is no recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in secondary education outside of governmental level bilateral agreements<sup>387</sup>.

However, upon return exchange pupils need to follow a procedure to be readmitted in their sending school, according to the Law 155/78 (article 11, par. 2. )<sup>388</sup>. Pupils need to submit to the Secondary school regional office the following documents: a certificate of attendance and a transcript of their results signed and stamped by the school with apostille<sup>389</sup>, together with an official translation of both documents by a Greek authority or a lawyer/notary approved by the Greek Embassy based in that country. Based on the evaluation of these documents, the Secondary school regional office allows pupils to be re-admitted in their sending school and repeat the school year. There is no possibility for partial recognition.

University admission through the Pan-Hellenic exams in June may be difficult for someone who has spent the last year of secondary school abroad. However, there is no requirement stating that pupils must have attended the last 2 years of upper secondary school in Greece in order to be allowed to sit the Pan-Hellenic exams. Pupils can decide to sit the exams or take them the following year.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Pupils studying abroad within an individual mobility programme are not enrolled in school in Greece.
- Only full school year periods abroad are allowed, therefore pupils cannot go abroad for shorter periods.

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<sup>387</sup> In 2021 the Greek government decided to recognise the outcomes of a full school year abroad for pupils who enrol in the exchange programme FLEX to the US, managed by the US Embassy.

<sup>388</sup> Εφημερίς Της Κυβερνησεως, Της Ελληνικης Δημοκρατίας, "Προεδρικό Διαταγμα Υπ" Αριθμ. 155" (Government Gazette, of the Hellenic Republic, Presidential Decree No. 155), 1978, [http://dide.flo.sch.gr/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DIDEFloFinas\\_PD\\_155\\_78\\_Me\\_Oles\\_Tis\\_Allages.pdf](http://dide.flo.sch.gr/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DIDEFloFinas_PD_155_78_Me_Oles_Tis_Allages.pdf)

<sup>155</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

- There is no general procedure for recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary education.

### **Enablers**

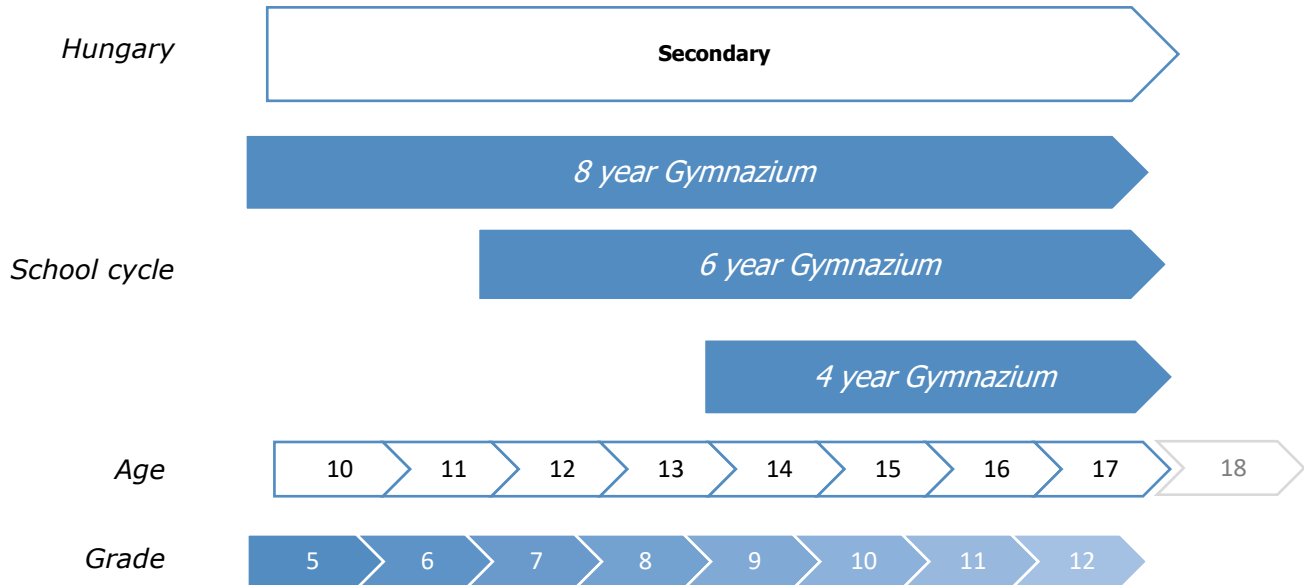
- The Greek government recognises the outcomes of a full school year abroad in the framework of a governmental exchange programme with the US.

### **Recommendations**

- Individual pupil mobility programmes of any duration up to a full school year should be made possible and a procedure for automatic recognition of learning outcomes should be foreseen.
- Ensure that pupils going abroad for a mobility up to a full school year are also enrolled in the school in Greece.
- Provide all schools with guidelines for a common approach to recognition based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study abroad and provide enough time to do so.
- Empower the Secondary school regional offices to analyse the learning agreements between the sending and host schools, and take decisions on automatic recognition accordingly.

## Hungary

### General secondary education system



Upper secondary education is compulsory until the age of 16. General upper secondary education (*Gymnazium*) is a four-year cycle, however since 1991, longer secondary school programmes have been available: an 8-year programme starting at grade 5 and a 6-year programme starting at grade 7. If education is provided in two languages – in Hungarian and in a foreign language or in the language of a Hungarian minority – the programme lasts an additional year and finishes in grade 13<sup>390</sup>.

General upper secondary school is attended by 41.6 %<sup>391</sup>, of these, 27 % began the school cycle in grade 5 or 7.

### Graduation and certification

The end-of-school examination to receive the upper secondary school leaving certificate is based on requirements defined in the National Core Curriculum, and it is mostly focused on academic knowledge and skills. There are mandatory (Hungarian, History, Math, Foreign

<sup>390</sup> Eurydice, National Education System, "Hungarian education system", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/hungary\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/hungary_en)

<sup>391</sup> Tables (STADAT) - annual data - Education, the data refers to the percentage of pupils aged 14/15-year-old enrolled in general upper secondary education in the school year 2018/2019.

language) and optional subjects, and these can be taken at intermediate or advanced level<sup>392</sup>.

The Educational Office collects the results of the end-of-school examination and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade final results of all pupils in a central digital system and generates a ranking list. Universities set the lowest final results for students to be admitted to a specific programme. Then the Educational Office divides the ranking lists of students based on their results, and sends this data to the universities, who assess the student applications.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go abroad in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of upper secondary school (10<sup>th</sup> grade), when they are 15/16 years old<sup>393</sup>. They do not usually go abroad in the last 2 years of upper secondary school (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 131 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and the Erasmus+ programme<sup>394</sup>.

Individual pupil mobility is not common among pupils. Since there is no recognition of the learning period abroad, families take it for granted that the year abroad is a gap year and worry about the consequences that losing a year of school will have for their children. Schools are not familiar with long-term pupil mobility and might discourage it and suggest instead to enrol in the Erasmus programme while at university<sup>395</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

Data on schools are collected in the Public Education Information System but there is no targeted data collection on individual pupil mobility<sup>396</sup>.

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<sup>392</sup> Nemzeti Jogszabálytár, "100/1997. (VI. 13.) Korm. Rendelet: az érettségi vizsga vizsgaszabályzatának kiadásáról" (Hungarian National Legislation, Regulation: on the issuance of the examination regulations for the matriculation examination), 1997, <https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/1997-100-20-22>

<sup>393</sup> Interview with Programme coordinator, AFS Hungary, 22 September 2020.

<sup>394</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (6 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (100 pupils) and YFU (25 pupils).

<sup>395</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>396</sup> Interview with Head of Public Education Registration Department, Education Office, 22 August 2020.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Hungary

### Registration in the sending school

During learning periods abroad, pupils have two options<sup>397</sup>:

- The legal relationship with the school is suspended for periods abroad of between two months and a full school year. In this case, parents must notify the school principal that the pupil is going abroad and the school must register the information and remove the pupil from the school register, thus the pupil is not considered a pupil of a Hungarian school during the learning period abroad. It is most likely that the pupil will be readmitted to their previous school on return.
- The legal relationship with the school is not suspended and parents ask permission from the educational authority<sup>398</sup> for the *Egyéni Tanrend* (Individual Study Schedule), – private pupil status<sup>399</sup>. This status allows pupils to take the end-of-the-year exam on return but does not provide for recognition of the learning period abroad. Usually, pupils choose this option if they study abroad for a full school year, although it is possible to have the *Egyéni Tanrend* also for shorter periods.

### Funding for the sending school

The budget of the school is based on a “head quota” which does not foresee the exact counting of pupils present in a school at a given time. Therefore, whether the relationship between the pupil and school is suspended or not, this has no influence on the funding of the school<sup>400</sup>.

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<sup>397</sup> 2011. CXC. Public Education Act 91. § (3).

<sup>398</sup> Hungarian Centre for Recognition and Information on Foreign Qualifications - Educational Authority, [https://www.oktatas.hu/kepesitesek\\_elismertetese/english/contact\\_information?printMode=true](https://www.oktatas.hu/kepesitesek_elismertetese/english/contact_information?printMode=true).

<sup>399</sup> Statutory decree 1 September 2019: Oktatási Hivatal, “Egyéni tanulói munkarend” (Office of Education, Individual student work schedule), 4 December 2020, [https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/egyeni\\_tanuloi\\_munkarend](https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/egyeni_tanuloi_munkarend)

<sup>400</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, “Hungary, Mobility in Early Childhood and School Education”, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding-35\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding-35_en)



## Status of pupils hosted in Hungary

### Registration in the host school

The school principal and head teachers decide whether to accept exchange pupils and how to enrol them. Hosted pupils are placed in classes based on their age group and the school grade in their home country.

### Funding for the host school

The budget of a school is based on the State “head quota”, therefore there is no additional support from the State for schools that host pupils from abroad.

### Certification for hosted pupils

Another pupil from the school is usually assigned to be a mentor to a hosted pupil and this can be considered part of their compulsory voluntary work<sup>401</sup>. The biggest obstacle facing hosted pupils is the Hungarian language of instruction, as this makes it difficult for them to progress in certain subjects. On leaving the Hungarian school, the school principal usually provides a certificate in English for the hosted pupil, which notes the subjects completed and the marks obtained<sup>402</sup>.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils can complete upper secondary education in Hungary and take the end-of-school examination. In this case, pupils usually choose the graduation option in bilingual schools which foresee a mandatory exam in a foreign language (the language of teaching, Hungarian), and on two or more subjects in a foreign language –which is not Hungarian<sup>403</sup>. However, this is unusual.

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<sup>401</sup> Interview with Head of Szilády Áron Református Gimnázium (24 August 2020).

<sup>402</sup> Interview with Head of Szilády Áron Református Gimnázium (24 August 2020).

<sup>403</sup> Hungarian as a foreign language matriculation exam, [https://dload-oktatas.educatio.hu/erettsegi/nyilvanos\\_anyagok\\_2019tavasz/magyar\\_mint\\_idegen\\_nyelv\\_tajekoztato\\_2019maj.pdf](https://dload-oktatas.educatio.hu/erettsegi/nyilvanos_anyagok_2019tavasz/magyar_mint_idegen_nyelv_tajekoztato_2019maj.pdf)

Study in Hungary, <http://www.studyinhungary.hu/>

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to 3 months, 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 3 months and less than 6 months, and for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>404</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that this will be successful in recognising a full school year abroad.

The school principal has discretion to decide whether to recognise the studies abroad<sup>405</sup>. Usually, s/he compares the host school's curriculum with the national curriculum and then either recognises the studies abroad, or the pupil has to take an exam in each subject not recognised to show that they can fulfil the requirements of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NCC). In practice very few subjects are recognised and pupils are usually required to take an end of semester exam, or an end-of-year exam for all subjects missed, in accordance with the requirements set out in the NCC.

### Periods of between 2 and 3 months

When pupils go abroad for a trimester, they are reintegrated in their class. Trimester exchange pupils return just before the Christmas break and then discuss with their teacher what extra exams they need to take. In fact, for each subject the pupil needs to have three different marks in each semester, therefore before the month of January for the winter semester. The decision on what exams to take very much depends on individual cases and differs from school to school.

### Periods of 6 months

When pupils go abroad for a semester it is usually the spring semester (January-June). In this case they take an exam either before or after the period abroad: they can either 1)

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<sup>405</sup> Act C of 2001 on the Recognition of Foreign Certificates, section 62,

Derényi, András – Milotay, Nóra – Tót, Éva – Török, Balázs (2007): A nem formális és informális tanulás elismerése Magyarországon. [Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Hungary]. Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium.

A. Imre, "Validáció és közoktatás" (Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in Hungary), p. 1-32, 2012, [https://www.oktatas.hu/pub\\_bin/dload/unios\\_projektek/tamop318/validacio\\_es\\_kozoktatás.pdf](https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/unios_projektek/tamop318/validacio_es_kozoktatás.pdf)

study the content of the spring semester while attending the winter semester in Hungary and take an exam on both before departure, 2) or take an exam on the content of the spring semester on their return. If they are away for the winter semester, they take an exam on the subjects they missed when they return at the end of January<sup>406</sup>.

## A full school year

If the pupil has been granted *Egyéni Tanrend* (Individual Study Schedule), they must take the end-of-year exams organised by the school to obtain their final marks. In this case there is no recognition of the learning period abroad: pupils can study over the summer and take the exams before the start of the next school year and if successful can move up to the next grade.

If pupils have suspended their relationship with their sending school, they can discuss with their school principal about recognition of their learning period abroad. If they are not granted the possibility of having their learning period abroad recognised, they can still take the end-of-year exam with their peers upon return with the agreement of the school principal.

Pupils going abroad in the 11th and 12th grade of upper secondary school often choose not to take the exams upon return and instead repeat the school year<sup>407</sup>, as there is too little time to prepare for the exams. The results of the exams from the final 2 years of upper secondary education count towards university entrance, and pupils do not want to risk getting a low mark.

Pupils can choose to sit the final language exam, which is part of the end-of-school examination, from 10th grade, i.e. 2 years before<sup>408</sup>. Usually, pupils who have just returned from an exchange take this exam right away as their foreign language knowledge is advanced. In addition, the language examination certificate can grant exemption from further class attendance, although some schools make it compulsory to attend a language course to 'keep up' the language after a successful language exam.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for

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<sup>406</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>407</sup> Approximately only 30 % of the exchange pupils enrolled in AFS programmes take the end of the year exam upon return (Interview with Programme coordinator, AFS Hungary, 22 September 2020),

<sup>408</sup> 100/1997. (VI. 13.) Government Decree 45. §.

making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- School principals do not have clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad, therefore they usually test pupils on all the subjects of the national curriculum they did not follow while abroad.

### **Enablers**

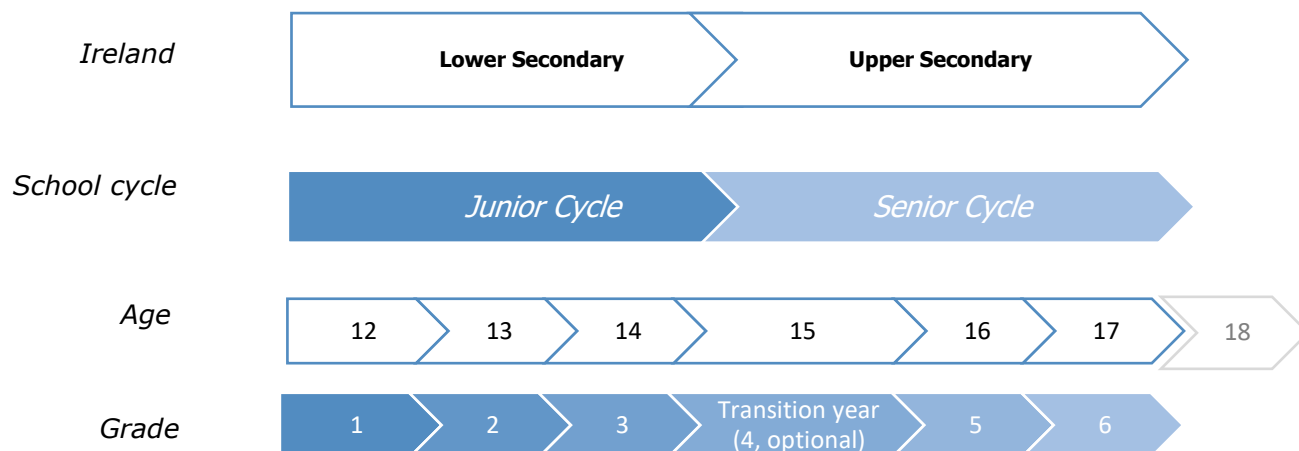
- Some schools do recognise learning periods abroad and can share their experience.

### **Recommendations**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year

## Ireland

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Secondary school is a 6-year cycle divided into the Junior and Senior Cycle. The Transition Year (TY) is part of the Senior cycle and is designed to act as a bridge. TY provides an opportunity for pupils to experience a wide range of educational inputs and work experiences over the course of a year that is free from formal examinations. Currently some 550 out of 723 schools offer the programme, and TY may be optional or mandatory for pupils depending on the school's policy.

During the final two years of Senior cycle pupils participate in programmes offering a mix of academic and vocational subjects under the national curriculum leading to the end-of-school examinations, the Leaving Certificate. There are three programmes leading to the Leaving Certificate<sup>409</sup>, and all of them are considered general upper secondary education. The programme called Leaving Certificate Established<sup>410</sup> is followed by 70% of pupils in upper secondary education.

<sup>409</sup> Established Leaving Certificate (ELC), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), more information at: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, "Senior Cycle: Programmes and Key Skills", <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/programmes-and-key-skills/>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

<sup>410</sup> National Council for Curriculum Assessment, "Leaving Certificate established", <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/programmes-and-key-skills/leaving-certificate-established>

## Graduation and certification

At the end of the Senior cycle pupils are required to take examinations in at least five subjects if they wish to meet matriculation requirements for higher education. However, most pupils usually take examinations in seven subjects and it is the six best that count towards university entrance. Each school decides which subjects they offer, out of the 36 available. There are three core subjects – English, Irish and Maths – although a small number of pupils have an exemption from Irish. In addition, there are Leaving Certificate examinations in 18 non-curricular languages on offer to pupils whose mother tongue is an EU language which is neither English nor Irish. The Leaving Certificate examination leads to State-recognised certification (Leaving Certificate) and is managed and administered by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

The Leaving Certificate is used as a means of assessing pupils for entry into further and higher education<sup>411</sup>. Pupils apply for university through a centralised system called CAO – Central Applications Office. The universities decide on the number of points required for each course, which can vary from year to year depending on the number of applicants. The CAO then offers students the course they applied for if they meet the points requirements. Depending on the uptake of a course, students with fewer points might be offered a place in their first-choice course in a second or third round.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Transition Year (TY), when pupils are 15-16 years old, is the year most usually chosen by pupils to study abroad. Each secondary school may decide their own policy on pupil study abroad during TY, namely duration, required subjects, school reports, examinations, etc<sup>412</sup>. Pupils can spend a period abroad, a trimester or a semester, during the 5th year of secondary school, although it is not common. Pupils cannot spend a period abroad during 6th year as the Leaving Certificate exams are held in June with the oral exams being held earlier. Pupils focus completely on the end-of-school examination for the whole year.

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<sup>411</sup> Eurydice, National Education Systems, "Ireland, Organisation of General Upper Secondary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-upper-secondary-education-5\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-upper-secondary-education-5_en)

<sup>412</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

## **Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility**

Based on a rough estimate, about 200 pupils enrol in a long-term pupil mobility programme every year<sup>413</sup>. In the school year 2018/2019, 4 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by the only non-profit exchange organisation<sup>414</sup>.

In Ireland mobility providers and schools are specialised in hosting pupils from abroad for English language learning, while enrolling in a long-term pupil mobility programme for Irish students is not common.

## **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Ireland**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Schools decide autonomously to support pupils' applications to study abroad based on their own school policy, and generally they are supportive. Ideally exchange pupils remain registered at the school during TY so that they are guaranteed a place in the 5th year class.

### **Funding for the sending school**

The funding from the Department of Education is based on the number of pupils present on the 30th of September, so starting the period abroad after 30th September would be preferable.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Ireland**

### **Registration in the host school**

Schools decide autonomously on admitting exchange pupils for a term or a school year, involving also the sending school or the non-profit and commercial agency organising the

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<sup>413</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisation AFS (4 pupils), the Erasmus+ programme (4 pupils) and the estimate done by PPLI in September 2020, which counts about 200 pupils taking part in individual pupil mobility during Transition Year. This corresponds to less than 0.5 % of all Transition Year pupils.

<sup>414</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisation AFS (4 pupils).

exchange programme. Depending on class size and language ability, hosted pupils are generally put in a grade that corresponds with their age. The host school determines the parameters of study programmes for hosted pupils.

Transition Year is a good year for exchange pupils to be hosted in Ireland as they get to try different subjects, and there are no official exams: each school has its own policy in relation to assessment during this optional year.

It would be extremely unusual for exchange pupils to be hosted during the final year of the Senior cycle as they would be unlikely to have covered the curricula of the various subjects for the Leaving Certificate, and both teachers and pupils are very exam focused in this year.

### **Funding for the host school**

As the funding from the Department of Education is for the number of pupils present on the 30th of September, a lot of schools insist that exchange pupils must be there on that day. They can then leave any time after that date. Schools might also receive commission from the for-profit agencies who bring exchange pupils to Ireland.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

There is no rule in terms of certification for hosted pupils. Exchange pupils receive the same school reports as other pupils only if they stay long enough. Quite often the school they attend in their country of origin sends a form that teachers in the host school fill in for each subject. The school may be willing to write a letter to state that the pupil has completed the grade, and the private exchange agency would issue a certificate which states that the pupil has completed a term or a year in an Irish school.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

It is very uncommon for pupils to graduate in Ireland during their exchange. Some boarding schools welcome pupils from abroad to complete their entire secondary education in Ireland, including sitting their Leaving Certificate, however that is completely different to a learning period abroad.

### **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

There is no information on whether a learning agreement between sending and host school has ever been used as a tool for recognition: mobility mostly happens during Transition



Year where recognition of learning outcomes is not needed, and there is no record of recognition of mobility during the Senior Cycle.

There are no clear Department of Education guidelines or any policy on studying abroad and its recognition at secondary school level. Schools decide autonomously whether to offer the possibility of spending a period abroad during TY, and whether and how to readmit a pupil who goes abroad for a trimester or a semester during the 1st or 2nd year of the Senior cycle.

The Department of Education has a 2017-2026 strategy for Foreign Languages in Education<sup>415</sup> which encourages more Senior cycle, especially TY pupils, to avail of language exchange opportunities.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- Long-term individual pupil mobility is not popular.

### **Enablers**

- There is the Transition Year between junior and senior secondary school cycles which allows pupils to explore different topics. This is an ideal time to spend a trimester, semester or full school year abroad.

### **Recommendations**

- Foster long-term exchange programmes in Transition Year and provide visibility to the competences developed while abroad.

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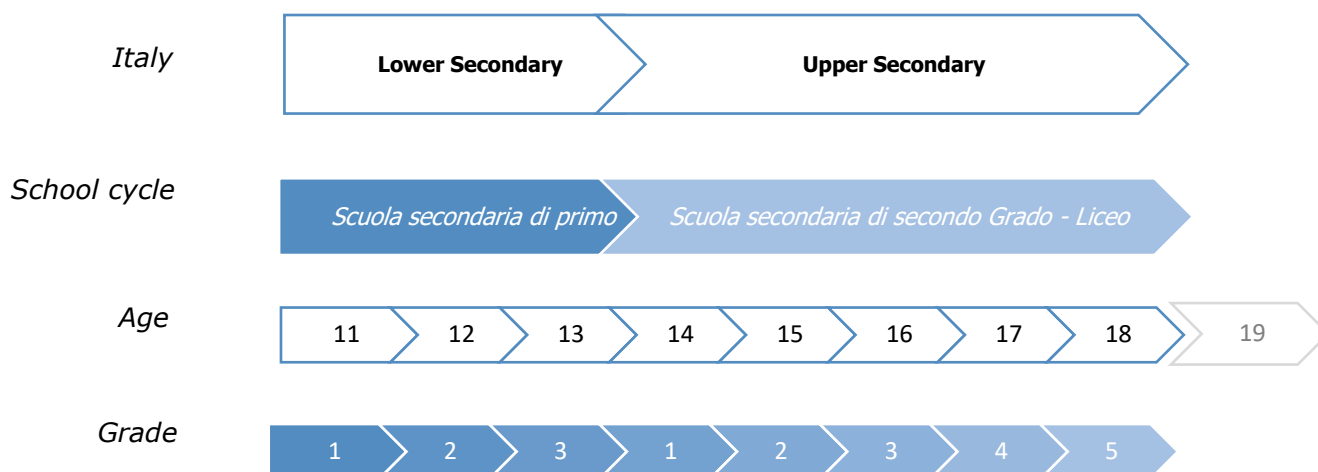
<sup>415</sup> Strategy for Foreign Languages in education: Department of Education and Skills, "Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education", Department of Education and Skills, Dublin, p. 1-40, 2017, [https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls\\_languages\\_connect\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_strategy.pdf)  
Implementation Plan of Strategy: Mobility Opportunities: 1.D.1. [https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls\\_languages\\_connect\\_implementation\\_plan.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_implementation_plan.pdf)



- Consider offering the option of going abroad for a trimester or a semester in the 1st year of senior cycle, and provide schools guidelines for a common approach to recognition of learning periods abroad. Recognition could be based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study abroad and provide enough time to do so.
- Award bonus points for a term/year abroad would be a significant incentive, following the model of bonus points for accessing university for pupils studying higher level maths or their full Leaving Certificate in Irish.

## Italy

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. General upper secondary education is offered by *Licei*<sup>416</sup> and it is followed by 49 % of the upper secondary education population.

*Licei* offer specialisation in six different areas or pathways:

1. Arts (*Liceo artistico*)
2. Classical studies (*Liceo classico*)
3. Science (*Liceo scientifico*)
4. Languages (*Liceo linguistico*)
5. Music and dance (*Liceo musicale e coreutico*)
6. Human sciences (*Liceo delle scienze umane*)

Each pathway has a specific educational, cultural and professional profile defined (PECUP).

The overall annual teaching timetable and the timetables for each subject vary according to the type of *liceo* and the grade. The national curriculum prescribes the compulsory

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<sup>416</sup> Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Decreto ministeriale n. 89, 15 March 2010, organizzazione degli istituti secondari superiori generali, (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministerial Decree on organisation of general upper secondary institutes), p. 1-14.

subjects, but schools have autonomy to introduce new subjects or increase the time of the subjects of the curriculum while respecting the limits given by national regulations.

## Graduation and certification

By the end of their studies pupils are expected to have fully reached the specific learning objectives related to the pathway chosen as defined in the PECUP<sup>417</sup>.

In the last three grades of upper secondary school pupils receive the "school credit"<sup>418</sup>, which is based on their final mark average and counts for the final exam.

At the end of the 5th year of *liceo*, pupils take a State examination if they have obtained a mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject and behaviour. The final mark on the upper secondary school diploma is the sum of the "school credit" and the final mark of the exam<sup>419</sup>. The certificate includes a "pupil's curriculum" which describes the expected profile of the pathway attended, gives information about extracurricular and transversal competences as well as information about learning mobility<sup>420</sup>.

The final certificate gives access to higher education, although some specific faculties require pupils to take an entrance exam.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go abroad in the 3rd or 4th year of upper secondary school when they are 16/17 or 17/18 years old. Pupils prefer not to go on an exchange in their last school year as this is discouraged by the Ministry of Education<sup>421</sup>. If they were to go abroad during the

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<sup>417</sup> Educational, cultural and professional profile (Profilo educativo, culturale e professionale). Annex A, Decreto Ministeriale n.89, 15 March 2010, op.cit.

<sup>418</sup> Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica n. 62, art 15, 3 April 2017, valutazione e certificazione delle competenze nel primo ciclo ed esami di Stato (Presidential Decree, assessment and the recognition of competences in the first cycle, and final State exams).

<sup>419</sup> ibid

<sup>420</sup> Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Decreto Ministeriale n. 774, 4 September 2019 (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministerial Decree, Guidelines for the development of transversal competences and guidance).

Ministero dell'Istruzione, Decreto Ministeriale n.88, 6 August 2020, adozione dei modelli di diploma e curriculum dello studente (Ministry of Education, Ministerial Decree, adopting the models of the pupil's diploma and curriculum).

Curriculum dello studente (Pupil's curriculum), <https://curriculumstudente.istruzione.it/cose.html>

<sup>421</sup> Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Note 10 April 2013, Linee di indirizzo sulla mobilità studentesca internazionale individuale (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Guidelines on individual international pupil mobility)

last year, they would need to withdraw from their home school by 15th March and then take the final exam as external candidates<sup>422</sup>.

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 10 200 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and for-profit agencies<sup>423</sup>, or went on a self-organised learning period abroad<sup>424</sup>. Individual pupil mobility has continuously increased: 191 % more than in 2009<sup>425</sup>.

The fact that there is a successful practice of recognition of learning periods abroad encourages pupils and their families to consider this opportunity. The Ministry of Education provides effective guidelines for recognition of the learning period abroad, resulting in almost all pupils being admitted to the following school year after the exchange. The regulation<sup>426</sup> also encourages schools to organise remedial exams in the summer for pupils who do not pass some subjects at the end of the school year, in order to allow them to start their exchange experience. This shows a willingness to provide weaker pupils with the opportunity to participate in an exchange programme.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

A National Observatory on School Internationalisation and Pupil Mobility was established in 2009 by the Intercultura Foundation, with the recognition of the Ministry of Education and the National Association of School Principals. This is a website maintained and updated by the Intercultura Foundation and divided into the following sections:

- National and European legislation on pupil mobility;
- Schools' self-assessment on their internationalisation level;
- Good practices in internationalisation and pupil mobility;
- Training sessions for teachers on internationalisation matters;

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<sup>422</sup> Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica n.62, art 13-14, 3 April 2017, op.cit.

<sup>423</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (45 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (1 586 pupils) and YFU (62 pupils), other non-profit organisations (752 pupils), for-profit agencies (5 855 pupils) and through own initiative (1 900).

<sup>424</sup> An estimate of 1900 pupils organise their stay abroad without the support of a mobility provider.

<sup>425</sup> Osservatorio Nazionale, "XI rapporto, Osservatorio nazionale sull'internazionalizzazione delle scuole e la mobilità studentesca" (11th report of the National observatory on internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility), 2019.

<sup>426</sup> Note 10 April 2013, n. 843, op. cit.

The observatory, in cooperation with IPSOS<sup>427</sup>, conducts annual research on different aspects of internationalisation and mobility in secondary schools and presents them to the ministry and to the press at the opening of every school year. As part of this process, data on pupil mobility are collected biennially, including estimates of numbers, programmes and destinations.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Italy**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Pupils continue to be enrolled in their school during their exchange abroad and are considered to be “on leave” authorised by the school, and registered accordingly. They are encouraged to sign a learning agreement which calls on pupils and teachers to remain in contact during the experience abroad. The class council chooses one of the teachers to be a tutor for the pupil going on exchange; the school principal then officially appoints the teacher (tutor) to this role. The tutor encourages exchange pupils to remain in contact with their sending school and teachers and makes contact with the pupil’s host school.

### **Funding for the sending school**

Schools are funded according to several parameters, one of them being the total number of pupils enrolled. However, the fact that an exchange pupil is enrolled as being abroad does not have any impact on the funding the school receives.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Italy**

### **Registration in the host school**

Exchange pupils are welcome to attend schools in Italy<sup>428</sup> and there are specific provisions for their enrolment, as they do not have to undergo an assessment of their competences other foreign pupils are required to undergo. The host school only requires documentation from the sending school in relation to their study plan and specific learning needs.

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<sup>427</sup> Institut de Publique Sondage d’Opinion Secteur, <https://www.ipsos.com/en>

<sup>428</sup> Note 10 April 2013, n. 843, op. cit.

Hosted pupils are placed in classes with pupils of their own age (17 or 18 years old) and not younger<sup>429</sup>, and they never attend the final year of school. Hosted pupils are included in the class register and a tutor is appointed by the school principal to support the integration of the pupil in the host school.

Pupils can attend both the lessons provided for their class and, sometimes, those of other classes. This depends on the individual pupil's level of competence in a subject; in this way, a pupil can improve their knowledge in a specific subject or topic (e.g. Philosophy or German, if a pupil has never studied these subjects in their home country) with pupils of another school year. This arrangement is agreed between the tutor and the class council.

Hosted pupils often attend additional Italian language classes in the afternoons at *Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti – CPIA* (public adult education centres). These centres are open to young people and adults, including foreigners, who must fulfil compulsory education.

### **Funding for the host school**

Schools do not receive any funding for hosting pupils, but they can decide to allocate monetary compensation to teachers who take on the role of tutors.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Host schools provide exchange pupils with a report on the subjects they followed and an assessment of their results, based on the requirements of the sending school. However, in principle, exchange pupils do not have the same obligations as the other pupils enrolled in the same school, apart from attending lessons and following the learning agreement agreed with their tutor.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

As hosted pupils cannot attend the final year, they never take the final State examination.

Pupils hosted in Italy during the 4th grade may extend their stay after the exchange programme and attend the 5th and final year of upper secondary school only if they pass an entry exam that allows them to enrol in the Italian school. However, this is unusual.

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<sup>429</sup> Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Decreto Legislativo n. 297, 16 April 1994, Testo Unico delle disposizioni legislative in materia di istruzione, art 192, comma 3 (Ministry of Education, University and Research, General regulations on education).

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>430</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

Recognition of learning periods abroad has been regulated in Italy since 1925<sup>431</sup>. The current legislation<sup>432</sup> foresees that the learning experience abroad is recognised provided it is coherent with the learning objectives contained in the National Guidelines for *Licei*<sup>433</sup>.

In addition, as the recent school reform in Italy foresees transversal competences and guidance activities (PCTO) during upper secondary school, the Ministry of Education, in order to keep promoting pupil mobility and recognising the transversal skills developed through such exchange programmes, has issued a document explaining that the learning period abroad counts as transversal competences and guidance activities<sup>434</sup>.

Before the pupil departs, teachers are invited to define together with the pupil an appropriate learning plan which focuses on the pupil and therefore consider the development of knowledge related to subjects, but above all the development of new competences, transversal skills and new attitudes<sup>435</sup>. With regard to the subject knowledge, the agreement focuses on essential content useful for attending the following school year. This learning plan should ensure that the pupil is able to easily reintegrate on their return while also allowing the pupil to fully benefit from the experience in the school abroad.

The recognition of the learning period abroad is decided by the class council, based on documents issued by the hosting school stating that the exchange pupil completed the school year abroad. If a transcript of grades is available, this should be provided. The class

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<sup>430</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>431</sup> According to a law created for children of Italian citizens who worked in the Italian colonies.

<sup>432</sup> Note 10 April 2013, n. 843, op. cit.

<sup>433</sup> Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Decreto Interministeriale n.211, 7 October 2010, indicazioni nazionali riguardanti gli obiettivi specifici di apprendimento concernenti le attività e gli insegnamenti compresi nei piani degli studi previsti per i percorsi liceali (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Interministerial Decree, national guidelines on learning objectives for general upper secondary schools).

<sup>434</sup> Decreto Ministeriale n. 774, 4 September 2019 op.cit.

<sup>435</sup> Note 10 April 2013, n. 843, op. cit.



council can also interview the pupil for a “global assessment” of the competences gained while abroad, valuing their learning strengths.

## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Pupils going abroad for periods of between several weeks and 6 months, are reintegrated in their class and follow the curriculum with their peers. A remedial plan for subjects or topics not covered while abroad may be prepared.

## A full school year

Upon return from a full school year abroad, the pupils have the first period of the following school year to focus on the essential parts of the Italian school curriculum that had been defined in the learning plan before departure. Some teachers ask for the curriculum of the subjects studied abroad, and some schools still ask pupils to pass exams for some specific subjects, although this is not required by the legislation.

Some schools do not hold an assessment on return or offer a readjustment phase, and this can be stressful for pupils who find themselves in the position of catching up without any educational plan.

Generally, all pupils are admitted to the next year and manage to follow the curriculum together with their peers<sup>436</sup>. The very few pupils whose period abroad is not recognised, repeat the year.

Usually, exchange pupils manage to pass the final exam to obtain the upper secondary school certificate with a good mark<sup>437</sup>, and this evidences that they have not in fact missed out on the development of key competences while abroad. They are stimulated to achieve competences in different contexts that go beyond the specific subject.

Fondazione Intercultura provides tools that support schools in implementing the legislation on recognition of learning periods abroad, therefore ensuring a common approach to this matter. More specifically, they provide a guide to support school principals<sup>438</sup>, a model learning agreement for sending schools<sup>439</sup>, the “Intercultura assessment protocol

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<sup>436</sup> For example, among the 1 000 pupils sent by Intercultura (AFS Italy) every year on long-term exchanges, only 2 or 3 may have issues with their study abroad being recognised.

<sup>437</sup> For example, 65 % of pupils who have been on an exchange with Intercultura (AFS Italy) received excellent marks in their final exam, as per survey 2020 conducted by the school dept. of Intercultura.

<sup>438</sup> Intercultura, “Guida Operativa per il Dirigente Scolastico” (Guidelines for school principals), 2020, <https://www.intercultura.it/download/id:10280/>

<sup>439</sup> Intercultura and Associazione Nazionale Presidi, “Programmi di studio all’estero, Esempio di contratto formativo e accordo di corresponsabilità La proposta di Intercultura” (Individual pupil mobility programmes, Example of learning agreement by Intercultura), 2021, <https://www.intercultura.it/download/id:6352>

project<sup>440</sup>” to support teachers in assessing intercultural competence, and a monthly newsletter to tutors that have been assigned to supervise the exchange pupils sent abroad.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Although the recognition system functions well and responds to the principles of the Council recommendation, there is still room to more fully implement the current ministerial guidelines for recognition in terms of strengthening sending school support to exchange pupils and fostering international cooperation among schools. Currently not all schools appoint a tutor for incoming and outgoing exchange pupils and the exchange is not always taken as an opportunity of dialogue between sending and host school.

### Enablers

- A culture where individual pupil mobility is recognised and valued.
- Close cooperation with the ministry of education and with the national school principals association.
- A National Observatory on Internationalisation of schools and pupil mobility which provides a very accurate estimate of the phenomenon of individual pupil mobility thanks to partnership with a statistical agency, such as IPSOS.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen the practice of appointing a tutor for the exchange pupil to support exchange pupils and to enable more cooperation between sending and hosting school.
- Increase research and training courses and workshops on the competences pupils develop within individual mobility programmes for teachers and school principals,

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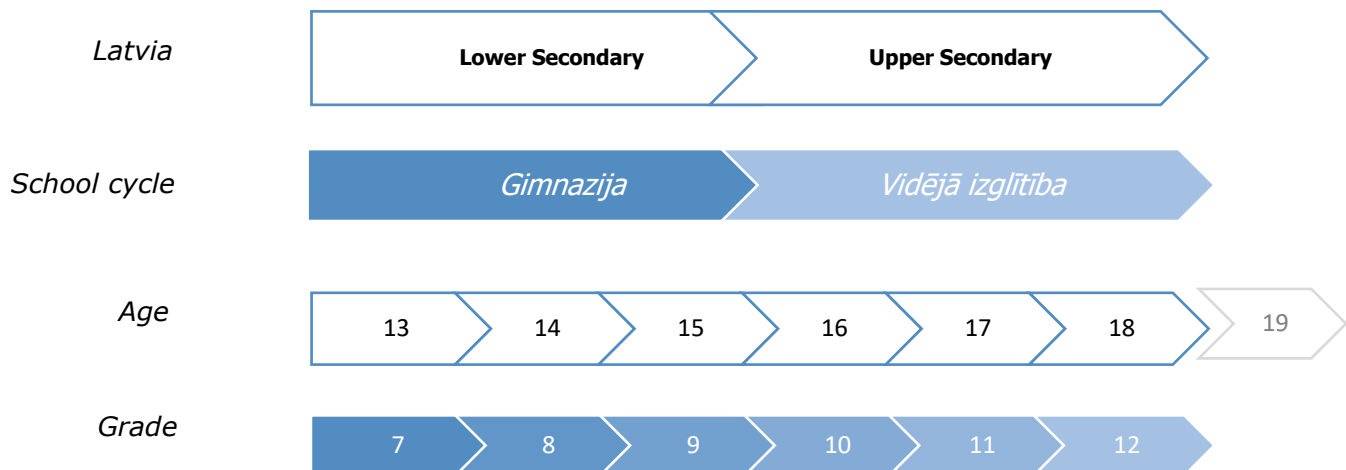
<sup>440</sup> Intercultura, “Intercultura Assessment Protocol”, <http://www.fondazioneintercultura.org/en/Studies-and-research/Intercultura-Assessment-Protocol/>

based on the extensive experience with automatic recognition and the studies already conducted by the national observatory.

- Investigate how to monitor the number of exchange pupils by processing how many pupils are enrolled with the specific 'pupil exchange status', already in place both for outgoing and incoming pupils.

## Latvia

### General secondary education system



Upper secondary education is not compulsory. General upper secondary education (*vispārējā vidējā izglītība*) is attended by 61.3%<sup>441</sup> of pupils in upper secondary, and is provided by:

- vidusskola – general upper secondary school
- ģimnāzija/Valsts ģimnāzija – Gymnasium or Grammar School which may also provide the lower secondary education programme, namely the last grades of basic education (grades 7-9).

Different study orientations are offered: General, Humanities and Social Science, Mathematics, Natural Science and Technical. All study orientations include at least 12 subjects, of which 5 (Latvian language and Literature, Mathematics, Foreign language, History, Physical education) are compulsory and no less than seven are elective<sup>442</sup> (30 % of the curriculum). Subjects are structured in three educational levels (basic, optimal and higher) and each level offers two courses (basic and

<sup>441</sup> Eurostat, Number of secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education pupils, 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number\\_of\\_secondary\\_and\\_post-secondary\\_non-tertiary\\_education\\_pupils%2C\\_2017\\_%28thousands%29\\_ET19.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number_of_secondary_and_post-secondary_non-tertiary_education_pupils%2C_2017_%28thousands%29_ET19.png)

<sup>442</sup> The elective subjects are chosen from the following: physics, chemistry, biology, computer science and information technology, economic geography, basics of business, technical drawing, visual arts, handicraft, second and third foreign language; nature and society; music, history of culture, history of religion, drama; or other subjects proposed by the school (depending on the available school curricula) and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

advanced).

## Graduation and certification

The school leaving certificate (*atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) is awarded upon completion of an assessment in all courses prescribed by the chosen programme, and successful passing of the final centralised examinations<sup>443</sup>. Pupils must take at least four exams which can be written or combined: three are mandatory (Latvian language and literature, a foreign language and mathematics), while the fourth is chosen by the pupil. One examination out of the four must be on an advanced level subject<sup>444</sup>.

The certificate with the results of exams is accompanied by the general secondary education Memorandum of marks and the secondary school certificate.

The school leaving certificate provides access to higher education programmes<sup>445</sup>. Some universities select students on the basis of their average mark and the results of the end-of-school examination, and some hold entrance exams.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go on exchange in the first or second year of upper secondary school when they are 16/17 or 17/18 years old. During the third year of upper secondary school pupils usually prepare for the final exams and are advised against going on exchange.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 80 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations and governmental programmes<sup>446</sup>.

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<sup>443</sup> The content and procedure of exams is defined by the Cabinet of Ministers, and the materials are developed by the National Centre for Education.

<sup>444</sup> Akadēmiskās Informācijas Centrs, "Education system of Latvia" (Academic Information Center, Education system of Latvia), [http://www.aic.lv/ENIC/ds/Latvian\\_syst.htm](http://www.aic.lv/ENIC/ds/Latvian_syst.htm)

<sup>445</sup> Izglītības un Zinātnes Ministrija, "Vispārējā vidējā izglītība" (Ministry of Education and Science, General Secondary Education), 2020, <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/vispareja-videja-izglitiba>

<sup>446</sup> Based on the data collected from the governmental programme Future Leaders Exchange Program – FLEX (25 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (30 pupils) and YFU (25 pupils).

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Latvia

### Registration in the sending school

Before going on an exchange programme, pupils / their parents submit a request to the school in which they indicate that the pupil is leaving on a mobility programme, and indicate its duration, which shall not be longer than a school year<sup>447</sup>. The submission of this official request allows pupils to keep their place in the school, although the school is free to decide and can still disenroll pupils.

### Funding for the sending school

As the government funding for the school “follows” the pupil, the school continues to receive funding for any pupil enrolled in the school during the period abroad.

## Status of pupils hosted in Latvia

### Registration in the host school

Exchange pupils are enrolled in schools with the same rights as regular pupils and they receive a personal code that gives them the possibility to use e-klase, which is the united electronic school management system.

Exchange pupils are mainly placed in classes according to their age group. If during the year it is clear that the level of knowledge does not correspond with the grade, a pupil can be moved to a different class (lower or higher). It is very rare that exchange pupils are hosted in the last grade as very few pupils enrol in a mobility programme at the age of 18/19 and the lessons are focused on preparation for the final exams.

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<sup>447</sup> LIKUMI, “Procedures for Enrolling Students in and Discharging from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-school Educational Groups, and also for Moving Them up into the Next Grade”, 2015, <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

## Funding for the host school

The school receives the same amount of funding for the hosted pupil as for a regular pupil. It is important to register the hosted pupils in schools before the official beginning of the school year, which is 1st September if the school is to receive this funding.

## Certification for hosted pupils

Upon request hosted pupils can obtain certification confirming participation in the exchange programme and mentioning the subjects studied and marks obtained.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted exchange pupils can receive a certificate of secondary education and a certificate of the centralised exams if at the end of the 12th grade they receive a positive assessment in all the subjects included in the chosen profile, and pass the national examinations. However, it is rare for hosted pupils to take and pass the national examinations.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU) and the length of the mobility. It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>448</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

According to the law<sup>449</sup>, before departure, a pupil wishing to spend a learning period abroad needs to ask for permission to continue their studies at the school upon return. On their return the pupils / their parents must submit documents from the host school that certify the learning content acquired in another country and the achievements of the pupil. The school evaluates the documents and invites the pupil and the parents to a meeting. The school principal then enrolls the pupils in a grade appropriate to their age and needs, taking

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<sup>448</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>449</sup> LIKUMI, "Procedures for Enrolling Students in and Discharging from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-school Educational Groups, and also for Moving Them up into the Next Grade", 2015, <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

into account the continuity of the previously acquired education<sup>450</sup>. Usually, schools allow pupils a year to complete / catch up on all subjects that are included in the Latvian curriculum and that they did not follow while abroad.

As the law allows for interpretation, school principals have the right to act individually and some require additional exams upon return, although this practice is becoming increasingly rare. In this case, the decision of which subjects pupils should be examined on are based on the documentation from the host school<sup>451</sup>. These exams are either done upon return so as to count the pupil as tested for the school year that they spent on the exchange, or during the year following the exchange. This happens mostly for subjects such as Latvian language and literature, or for given specific courses that the school curriculum foresees. In a few cases schools ask pupils to repeat the school year.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- School principals do not have clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad, therefore there is uncertainty for pupils as to how their studies abroad will be recognised.

### Enablers

- Most school principals recognise learning periods abroad and allow pupils to catch up on the content of the curriculum over the next academic year.

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<sup>450</sup> LIKUMI, "Transferring of a Student from One Educational Institution to Another Educational Institution", <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

<sup>451</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

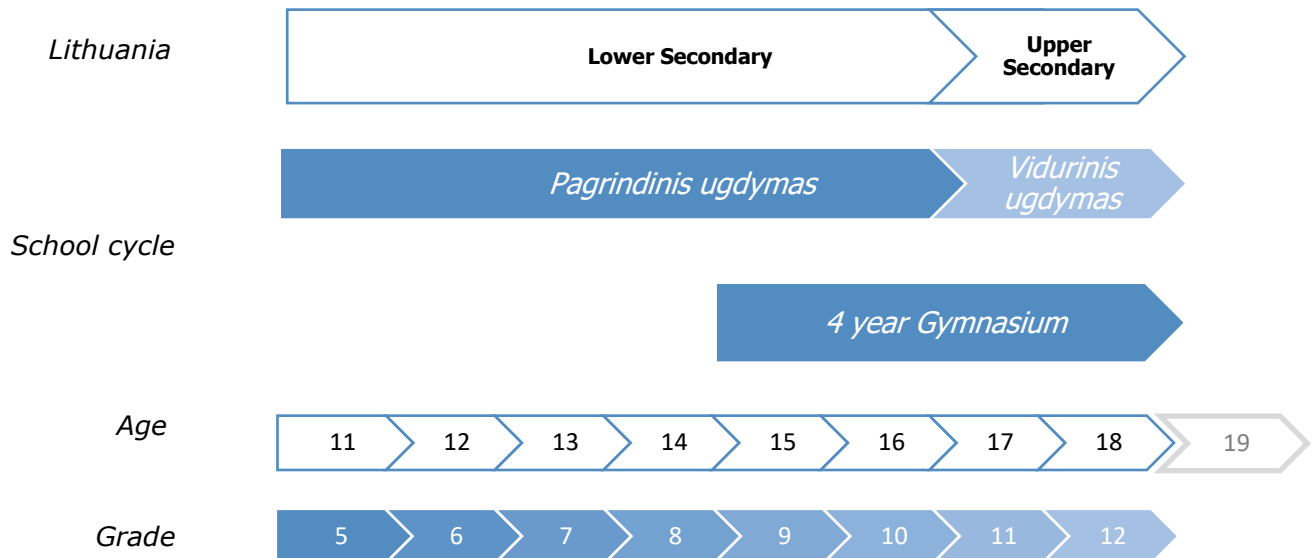


## Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Lithuania

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper secondary education is not compulsory, but 89.9 %<sup>452</sup> of pupils move into upper secondary school following basic education, and 82.8 %<sup>453</sup> of them chose general upper secondary education.

### Graduation and certification

At the end of secondary education, pupils who pass both a State-level and school-level examination are awarded *Brandos atestatas* (Matura Certificate). School-level examinations are set and assessed by the school, while State-level examinations are set and assessed by National Examination Centres.

The Matura certificate gives access to higher education.

<sup>452</sup> 63 000 pupils out of 76 000, <http://www.nmva.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Svietimo-bukles-apzvalga-2019-web.pdf>

<sup>453</sup> Eurostat, Number of secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education pupils, 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number\\_of\\_secondary\\_and\\_post-secondary\\_non-tertiary\\_education\\_pupils%2C\\_2017\\_%28thousands%29\\_ET19.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number_of_secondary_and_post-secondary_non-tertiary_education_pupils%2C_2017_%28thousands%29_ET19.png)

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually enrol in a pupil exchange programme in 2nd or 3rd grade of the Gymnasium (age 16/17 or 17/18 years old).

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil exchange programmes

In the school year 2018/2019, around 75 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, governmental programmes and for-profit agencies<sup>454</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Lithuania

### Registration in the sending school

When pupils go on an individual mobility programme, they are not enrolled in their sending school. Readmittance to the same school is not guaranteed when a pupil returns from their study period abroad.

### Funding for the sending school

Schools only receive State funding for pupils actually registered in their school, thus, they do not receive funding when the pupil is abroad.

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<sup>454</sup> Based on the data collected from the governmental programme Future Leaders Exchange Program - FLEX (25 pupils), the non-profit organisations YFU (15 pupils) and Rotary (15 pupils), and the for-profit agencies AMES, Momento Education, Ego Perfectus and Kalba.it (20 pupils).

## **Status of pupils hosted in Lithuania**

### **Registration in the host school**

Hosted exchange pupils are registered in the host school and included in the register of pupils.

### **Funding for the host school**

Schools can get funding for the hosted pupil since they are regularly enrolled, however it is complicated due to time frames and bureaucratic procedures, which is also related to the issuing of a residence permit for the pupil. Schools include exchange pupils in their register and submit it to the Ministry of Education at the beginning of the school year. If they do it on time, namely within a month of the start of the school year, the school will get funding. If a pupil mobility programme starts later in the school year, the school will not be able to apply for funding for this pupil. Therefore, schools often decide not to apply for State funding or to not host pupils in the framework of an exchange programme, due to the complicated procedure for obtaining the funding.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Schools usually provide a document stating what subjects the hosted pupil followed and what marks (if any) were obtained.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Exchange pupils may take the upper secondary education exams only if they have provided the necessary documents proving they have a lower secondary education certificate. However, there is very little chance that they would pass the final exam as it requires a high level of proficiency in Lithuanian language. Therefore, this is unusual.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU) and the length of the mobility. It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>455</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement

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<sup>455</sup>

between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

It is up to school to decide whether and how to recognise the learning period abroad. The procedure is not defined. In cases where a pupil is motivated and is a high performer, the school may recognise the period abroad and give credit for the different subjects and place the pupil in the same grade they were in before going on the mobility. In other cases, exchange pupils may have to take an exam either when they are abroad or on their return to Lithuania during the summer holiday. Nevertheless, in most cases the exchange period is not recognised and most pupils have to repeat the school year in order to fulfil educational programme requirements and to be better prepared for national exams.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- School principals do not have clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad, therefore they usually test pupils on all the subjects of the national curriculum which they did not follow while abroad.

### **Enablers**

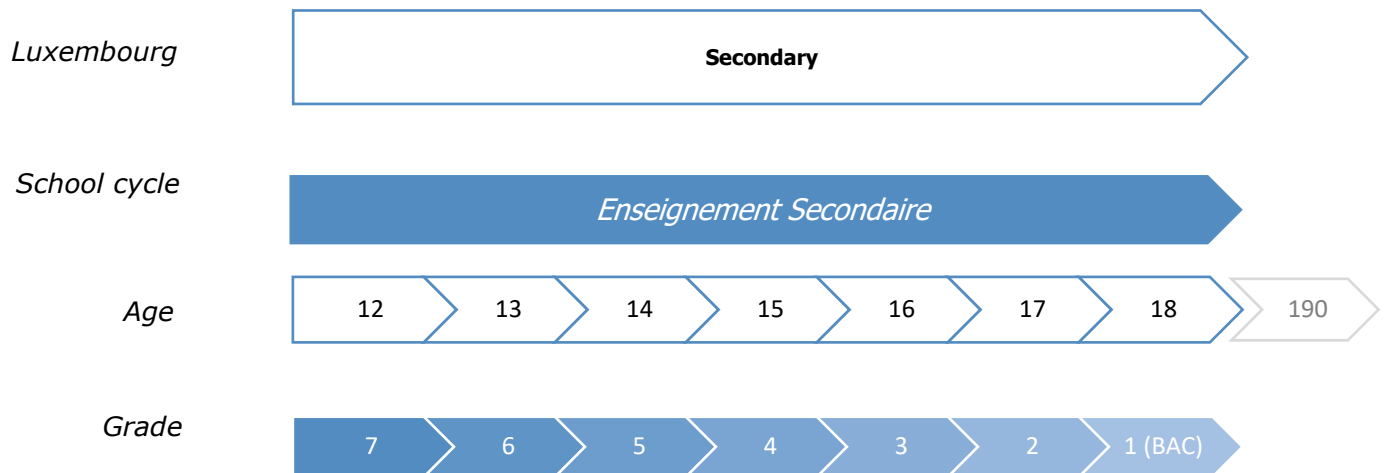
- Some schools do recognise learning periods abroad and can share their experience.

### **Recommendations**

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year

## Luxembourg

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. General secondary school is attended by 87.8 % of pupils in secondary school<sup>456</sup>, and is divided into two options<sup>457</sup>:

- Classic: *filière académique* (Enseignement Secondaire Classique – ESC)
  - classical school with a strong level of language teaching of German and French.
- General: *filière technique* (Enseignement Secondaire Général – ESG)
  - 1st Division, usual courses with teaching of German and French
  - 2nd Division: professional studies/VET (DT, DAP & CCP<sup>458</sup>)

<sup>456</sup> Official statistics consider ESG as a whole entity and do not provide the number of pupils enrolled in the professional division (DT, DAP, CCP). However, the data of pupils redirected to VET filiere professionnelle shows that 12.2 % are redirected and therefore the number of pupils in general secondary school can be calculated accordingly, although without considering the VET pupils in ESG.

Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, « Statistiques globales et analyse des résultats scolaires: enseignement secondaire général 2018-2019 » (Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, Global statistics and analysis of school results: general secondary education 2018-2019), 2020, <https://men.public.lu/fr/publications/statistiques-etudes/secondaire/2010-esg-statistiques-globales-18-19.html>

<sup>457</sup> Réforme du lycée pour l'enseignement secondaire classique (ESC), 29 August 2017, art. 39.

<sup>458</sup> DT: Technician diploma, DAP: Professional Aptitude Diploma, CCP: Certificate of Professional Capacity.

In 5th grade, at the end of the school year, depending on their results, pupils are divided into three categories: advanced (*avancés*), satisfactory (*satisfaisants*), vocational (*professionnels*). Based on these categories, they are directed towards specific studies. The pupils falling in the advanced category are directed to studies focused on scientific subjects. The pupils meeting the satisfactory criteria are directed to studies focused more on humanities than scientific subjects. Pupils falling under the vocational category are directed to vocational training (DT, DAP, CCP). From the 4th grade on, pupils are assessed every year and can be redirected to another category of studies, although the choice of studies made at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade is almost definitive.

## Graduation and certification

All pupils who pass the 2nd grade of secondary school (second last grade), are automatically entitled to take the examination which leads to the awarding of a secondary school diploma.

The end-of-school examination is organised by the school and includes exams in six subjects. The final mark for each exam discipline is made up of one third of the average marks from the last grade (BAC) and two thirds of the final exam mark. Disciplines not presented for the exam are assessed with an annual average: they are still taken into account in the decision to award the final certificate and mentioned on the diploma.

The diploma provides access to university, although some faculties might require pupils to take entrance exams.

## Individual pupil mobility

For the school year 2018/2019, there is no record of individual long-term pupil mobility programmes either from the sending or hosting perspective. Within the Erasmus+ programme, three pupils from Luxembourg enrolled in an individual mobility of up to three months during the period 2014-2020.

## Age and grade

The 4th and 3rd grade would be the most recommended period for pupils to enrol in an individual pupil mobility. In fact, as they are assessed at the end of 5th grade to determine their further study pathway, it is considered particularly important to perform well in this specific school year and a period abroad might not be a good idea. In the 2nd grade, pupils are beginning to focus on their final school exam and entry to higher education and thus might be reluctant to spend a period abroad.

Potentially, pupils could enrol in individual exchange programmes in the 1st grade / BAC to explore a country where they might go to university later in the year. In addition, this year of school only has a few courses which have to be followed and is mainly aimed at preparing for the final exam. However, in several countries, (e.g. Germany, France) schools do not accept exchange pupils older than 17, as they would need to be placed in the last year of secondary school where most often the school's own pupils are preparing for the final school exams.

### **Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility**

Luxembourg's policy for internationalisation of schools has focused on opening international schools rather than promoting European exchanges. In fact, out of the pupils attending secondary education, 22.6 % attend private schools, and 60.8 % of the private schools offer an international programme.

The lack of promotion of pupil mobility can be explained by the fact that after secondary school, 80 % of pupils enrol in universities abroad, as Luxembourg has a limited higher education offer.

### **Status of pupils going abroad from and pupils hosted in Luxembourg**

N/A

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Although there is no practice of hosting exchange pupils, they could be hosted in the last grade "BAC" and obtain a secondary school diploma: in order to be admitted to the exams they need to prove they passed the 2nd grade in secondary school (the second last year) in their home country.

### **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

As there is no consistent history of running pupil mobility programmes, there is no recognition system in place.

There is no information on whether a learning agreement between sending and host school has ever been used as a tool for recognition.



## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- There is no tradition of participation in individual mobility programmes among young people and it is not promoted by schools.

### Enablers

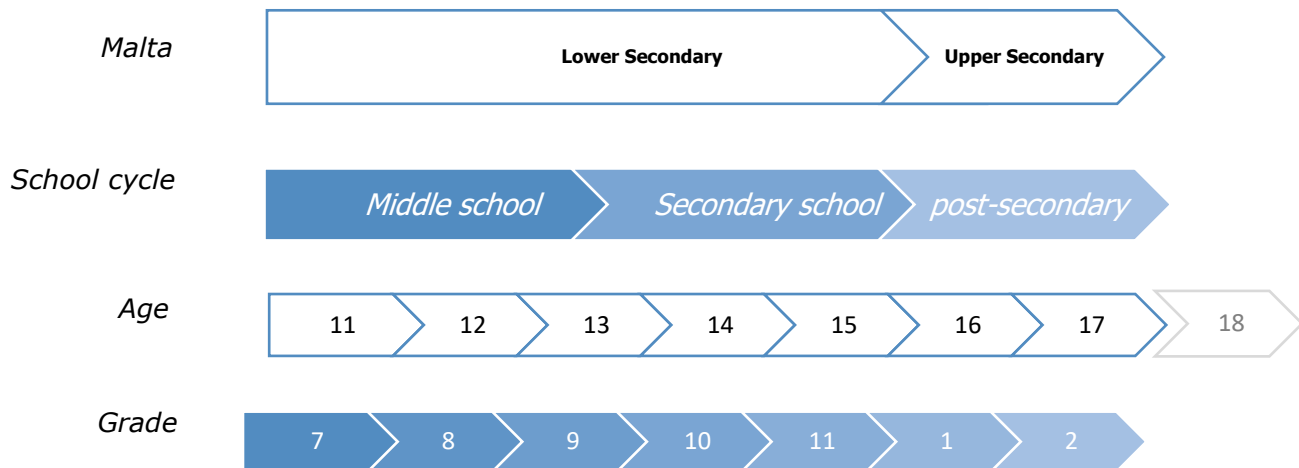
- There is already an institution in charge of informing and supporting students for study abroad during higher education (CEDIES). This institution could be involved in the support of individual pupil mobility and its recognition in Luxembourg, as well.

### Recommendations

- Promote individual pupil mobility in schools in the 4th, 3rd, and 1st grades.
- Bring together a range of stakeholders to discuss how to manage recognition of learning periods abroad (public institutions already working with the ministry of education on learning mobility, such as CEDIES, directors of regional areas for schools, and school principals).
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year
- Organise training for school principals and teachers to present the opportunities of individual pupil mobility, its benefits, and how to recognise it.

## Malta

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory<sup>459</sup> up to 16 years of age and is followed by a two-year non-compulsory programme of upper secondary education. Pupils attending upper secondary school receive a maintenance grant. General upper secondary education is chosen by 72.5%<sup>460</sup> of the upper secondary school population.

The institutions providing general upper secondary courses are<sup>461</sup>:

- Two State institutions falling within the remit of the Education Directorates (G. Curmi Higher Secondary School and Sir M.A. Refalo Sixth Form).
- The Junior College, which falls under the remit of the University of Malta and is specifically designed for prospective University of Malta entrants. Pupils are prepared to sit for the Matriculation Certificate which conforms with the prevailing university admission requirements.
- A number of non-State upper secondary schools (Sixth Forms).

<sup>459</sup> Compulsory Education is regulated by the Education Act of 1998 and subsequent amendments and is provided by the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) and is regulated by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE).

<sup>460</sup> Eurostat, Number of secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education pupils, 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number\\_of\\_secondary\\_and\\_post-secondary\\_non-tertiary\\_education\\_pupils%2C\\_2017\\_%28thousands%29\\_ET19.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8a/Number_of_secondary_and_post-secondary_non-tertiary_education_pupils%2C_2017_%28thousands%29_ET19.png)

<sup>461</sup> Eurydice, National Education Systems, "Malta, Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-33\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-33_en)

- The GEM 16+ school, under the Directorate of Education, where pupils who do not have high enough marks to enrol in one of the above upper secondary schools follows a one-year, second-chance course to achieve the required marks.

Within these institutions, pupils can choose any subject combination. When selecting the subjects, pupils consider the specific course requirements for admission to higher education. For example, at Junior College pupils study two subjects at advanced level to qualify for the university entrance exams, three at intermediate level and Systems of Knowledge (SOK)<sup>462</sup>.

## Graduation and certification

At the end of upper secondary education pupils take the matriculation exams which are administered by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Board of the University of Malta. Successful pupils receive the Secondary School Certificate and Profile, together with a single overall score which may be A, B or C in descending order of merit<sup>463</sup>.

The SOK project accounts for 40 % of the final MATSEC examination mark. It is based on an experience chosen by the pupil, ranging from voluntary work to creating a piece of music: the experience is recorded in journals and is accompanied by research and evidence. Each pupil is guided by a tutor who monitors their progress, corrects the work and gives regular feedback.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

There are some cases of pupils studying abroad during upper secondary school between 16 and 18 years old, but they are very sporadic and happen as an initiative of the pupils / families themselves.

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<sup>462</sup> Systems of Knowledge (SOK) is meant to provide pupils with skills and knowledge that are required in the 21st century. It is an interdisciplinary programme which links separate fields of knowledge. The course of study is divided into four modules: Democratic values and Responsible and Active Citizenship, Culture, Art and Aesthetic Values in Western Civilisation, The Environment and Sustainable Development, Scientific Values and Technology.

<sup>463</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, "Malta, Assessment in general upper secondary education"  
[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-34\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-upper-secondary-education-34_en)

## **Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility**

There are no organisations offering long-term pupil mobility programmes, and this type of experience is not encouraged by the school.

The National Youth Policy Towards 2020 encourages youth mobility but upper secondary schools do not have the capacity to facilitate school mobility as they are focused on their syllabus and Secondary Advanced-level exams. Outside school, young people between the ages of 16 and 18 engage in youth exchanges through youth organisations for short periods (8-10 days), however such projects are voluntary and are not recognised by formal education.

## **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

As the few pupils who go abroad do it as a private initiative, these experiences are not recorded.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Malta**

Interruptions of the school year to go on a learning period abroad are allowed under certain conditions at the discretion of the school principal. Usually, pupils go on mobility for one or two years and are not enrolled in a Maltese upper secondary school.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Malta**

The phenomenon of hosting exchange pupils in post-secondary institutions in Malta is almost non-existent. Some English language schools such as NSTS offer programmes for exchange pupils coming to Malta<sup>464</sup>.

## **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

English language schools offer programmes for exchange pupils coming to Malta with the option of studying in Malta for the 2 years of upper secondary education and taking the final exam to enter university. However, this is unusual.

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<sup>464</sup> NSTS - English Language Institute, "A high school Exchange in Malta...", <https://www.nstsmalta.org/high-school-programme/>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

There is no legislation regulating the mobility of pupils. For the few pupils who go abroad on their own initiative, it is up to them to ensure that they can catch up with the local instructions and pass the annual exams. There is no information on whether a learning agreement between sending and host school has ever been used as a tool for recognition.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

### **Challenges**

- There is no tradition of participation in individual mobility programmes among young people, and it is not promoted by schools.

### **Enablers**

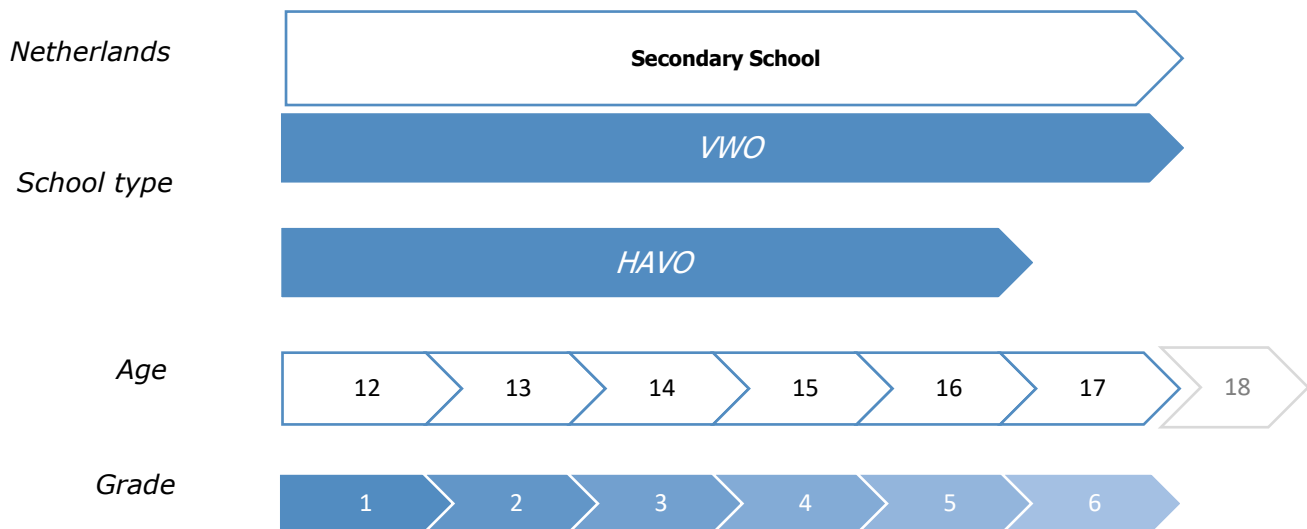
- School principals are in charge of recognition and allow individual pupil mobility programmes under certain conditions.

### **Recommendations**

- Foster individual pupil mobility both in the last years of lower secondary and in the two years of upper secondary education.
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year
- Organise training for school principals and teachers to present the opportunities of individual pupil mobility, its benefits, and how to recognise it.

## Netherlands

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. In the Netherlands there are two types of general secondary schools:

- HAVO (*Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs*) prepares pupils to enter higher professional education. After completing a core curriculum in the three lower years, pupils enter the second two-year stage where they choose one of four subject combinations.
- VWO (*Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*) is pre-university education and prepares pupils to enter university.

Pupils can transfer from HAVO to VWO.

In 2018/2019 48 % of the secondary school population attended HAVO or VWO<sup>465</sup>.

<sup>465</sup> StatLine, "Vo; pupils, type of education in detail, grade", 2021, <https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/80040ned/table?fromstatweb>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

## Graduation and certification

The secondary school certificate is awarded following the final exam, which consist of two parts of equal importance: preliminary school exams that are assessed internally and a national exam that is externally assessed. The content of the examination for both parts is approved by the Minister for Education, Culture and Science<sup>466</sup>.

The school exam usually consists of two or more exams per subject which may be oral, practical or written, and practical assignments for which no marks are given. Every secondary school in the Netherlands has made the choice to organise school exams as continuous assessments and exams in grades 4-5 (HAVO) or 4-5-6 (VWO). Moreover, schools have the discretion to change the content and assessment of their exams annually.

The national exam in May of the final school year consists of tests with open or multiple-choice questions and in some cases, a practical component<sup>467</sup>.

In general, the end-of-school certificate allows pupils free access to universities and universities of applied science.

Higher education institutions select students on the basis of a fixed maximum number and they are free to decide on the selection procedure which can consist of exam results, entrance exams, letter of motivation or interviews.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

In the Netherlands pupils enrol in an individual long-term pupil mobility programme:

- at the age of 16/17, after having completed 4th grade of HAVO or VWO
- at the age of 17/18 after having completed secondary school (gap year before starting university)

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<sup>466</sup> Every year, schools are required to submit their preliminary school exam syllabus to the inspectorate and decide the number of exams for the school exam. To help schools, the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) publishes school exam guidelines for every subject and level of education; SLO, "International" 2020, <https://www.slo.nl/international/>

<sup>467</sup> Eurydice, National Education Systems, "Netherlands, Assessment in General Secondary Education (HAVO, VWO)" [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-lower-secondary-education-25\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-lower-secondary-education-25_en)

## Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 1 190 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and for-profit agencies<sup>468</sup>.

With the Dutch system of a 2-year programme of school exams (grade 4 + 5 HAVO) or a 3-year programme of school exams (grade 4-5-6 VWO) most young people do not choose to interrupt this period for a long-term-stay abroad. Pupils prefer to finish secondary school as soon as possible and to start their exchange programme after their final exams. In addition, since the Erasmus programme has been established, the number of pupils enrolling on a long-term exchange has been decreasing, as pupils prefer to go abroad during universities with an EU-funded mobility opportunity.

## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from The Netherlands

### Registration in the sending school

Pupils who participate in a full school year exchange programme are not enrolled in their sending school. In case of a shorter mobility (semester or trimester) they remain enrolled in their sending school.

### Funding for the sending school

There is no funding for the sending school when a pupil is abroad for a full school year exchange.

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<sup>468</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (1 pupil), the non-profit organisations AFS o (49 pupils) and YFU (40 pupils), and the for-profit agencies EF, INTO, STS, and Travel Active (1100 pupils).



## Status of pupils hosted in The Netherlands

### Registration in the host school

Schools decide autonomously on whether to admit exchange pupils. In order to enrol, pupils need to provide school reports and grades from their sending school, and they are generally assessed to establish the subject and school level they can follow. It is common practice to place exchange pupils with their same age group, namely with 16/17-year-old peers, in the regular pre-exam year of secondary school (4th grade in HAVO, 4th or 5th grade in VWO).

Some schools develop a tailor-made timetable for the school year in order to meet the expectations, requirements and level of the exchange pupil.

Placement in the final year is not common because the school year is shorter (until mid-April instead of July) and the focus is on final exams.

### Funding for the host school

Hosted pupils are officially registered and funded by the Dutch government if the exchange is for a full school year and pupils enrol before 1st October.

### Certification for hosted pupils

There is no procedure for certification of studies undertaken by exchange pupils. However, at the end of the stay, schools can choose whether to write a final report of assessments, skills and competences by subject taken, and/or a letter of recommendation for university entrance.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils may receive a secondary school certificate if they pass the same exams as their peers, but they would need the results of continuous assessment for grades 4 and 5 (or 4,5, 6 in the case of VWO), and they are very seldomly placed in grades where they could obtain a proper certificate. Therefore, this is unusual.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 3 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available

on recognition procedures for periods abroad of up to 3 months finishing after the end of the school year in the Netherlands. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>469</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

### **Periods of up to 3 months**

Pupils who go on exchange for a trimester are enrolled back in their class and follow the curriculum with their peers<sup>470</sup>.

### **Periods of between more than 3 months and a full school year**

Pupils on learning periods abroad of more than three months usually repeat the academic year and there is no partial recognition of any subjects they have taken abroad<sup>471</sup>, although there is some experience with long-term mobility of more than 6 months within Erasmus+.

Pupil exchange organisations do provide participants with a certificate, although it has no value for being admitted to the next grade upon return.

The organisation of continuous assessment in the Dutch school curricula is not practically compatible with an interruption of more than three months. The structure and practice of school exams is too detailed and rigid to allow alternative learning routes for pupils when they return to school to compensate their stay abroad<sup>472</sup>.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

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<sup>469</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>470</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>471</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>472</sup> Feedback received by pupil exchange organisations (AFS, STS, Travel active) October 2020.

## Challenges

- Individual pupil mobility takes place primarily through trimester exchanges (a limited number of cases) during upper secondary school and as a full year abroad (gap year) (the majority of cases) during upper secondary school or just after graduation.
- Schools are responsible for recognition but there is no common practice of recognition of learning periods abroad during upper secondary school.
- Pupils cannot spend a learning period abroad during the last 2 years of upper secondary school (15-17 years old) as they are supposed to take two or more summative examinations per subject during the school year, which count toward the end-of-school certificate.

## Enablers

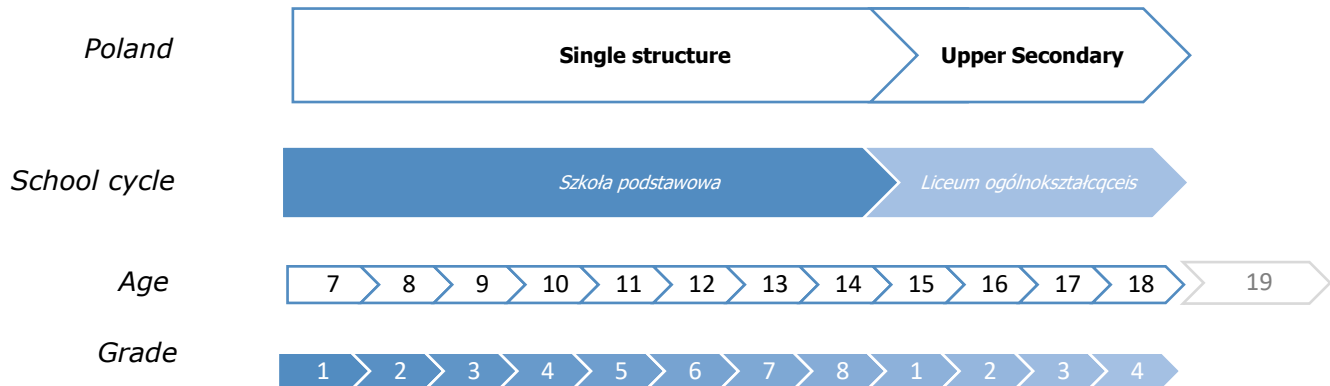
- There is a culture of individual pupil mobility among young people who usually take a gap year after graduation.
- There is some experience with individual pupil mobility and its recognition within Erasmus+.

## Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year. More concretely, it is suggested to:
  - recognise periods abroad from 2-3 months to a full school year in the 3rd grade (14-15 years old) and semester exchanges during the last 2 years of secondary school through a learning agreement.
  - adapt the planning of exams for continuous evaluation during the last 2 years of upper secondary school so to allow pupils to enrol in a full school year mobility and receive recognition through a learning agreement.

## Poland

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. General upper secondary school<sup>473</sup> (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) lasts four years and is attended by 48.6 % of pupils in upper secondary education<sup>474</sup>. Pupils may move between the general, technical and vocational education tracks.

At the end of upper secondary education, and having successfully passed all subjects, schools award pupils a school leaving certificate. The certificate allows pupils to take the final Matura exam, which consists of both written and oral parts.

The written part of the Matura exam is organised by the Central Examination Board at national level and covers three compulsory subjects at basic level (i.e., Polish language, Mathematics, and one Modern foreign language). Additionally, pupils choose from 1 to 5 additional subjects to be examined in at extended level (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography)<sup>475</sup>.

The oral part of the Matura exam is assessed by schoolteachers and covers the two compulsory oral exam subjects (i.e., Polish language and one Modern foreign language)

<sup>473</sup> The current structure was introduced in 2017 to replace the three year upper secondary school cycle, and will be fully in place in the 2022/2023 school year. General upper secondary education does not include technical upper secondary schools, even though pupils enrolled in this type of school take the Matura examination.

<sup>474</sup> Data on general upper secondary school of the National Statistical Office, page 37. 2018/2019.

<sup>475</sup> Biology; Chemistry; Philosophy; Physics; Geography; History; History of music; History of art; Computer science / Information technology; Latin and ancient culture; Minority language (ethnic or national); Modern foreign language; Polish language; Regional language; Mathematics; Civic education.

and one additional subject (i.e. another foreign or regional language, including those spoken by Poland's minority ethnicities).

Pupils who pass the Matura exam receive a certificate issued by their Regional Examination Board, detailing the results of their final written and oral examinations, and guaranteeing their access to higher education. Furthermore, these results are used to determine prospective students' access to particular institutions and faculties.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils who go on a learning period abroad do so at the age of usually at the age of 15/17 years old. This age group corresponds to the 2nd or 3rd grade in the current school system.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 113 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and governmental programmes<sup>476</sup>.

As entrance to Polish universities is based on the results of the Matura exam exclusively, pupils' performance during upper secondary school is particularly important. Therefore, pupils often prefer to take a gap year and then have an additional year of school upon return from their exchange period in order to fully prepare for this high-stakes examination. Parents, however, generally do not want their children to take a gap year, preferring them to graduate as soon as possible. Therefore, looking to the future, the current school system should facilitate individual pupil mobility and recognition of the outcomes of the learning period abroad as going abroad in the 2nd year would allow sufficient time for exchange pupils to prepare for the final exam in the 4th and final year.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

The school information system (*System Informacji Oświatowej*) managed by the Ministry of Education collects information on pupils who are studying abroad for longer than one month. In 2019 there were 34 115 learners between the ages of 16 and 18 studying abroad. The collected data do not distinguish between reasons for learning abroad (e.g. pupil exchange programme or emigration due to parents working abroad), however, it is clear

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<sup>476</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (4 pupils), the non-profit organisations AFS (44 pupils) and YFU (22 pupils), the governmental programme Future Leaders Exchange - FLEX (43 pupils).

that the large majority of these learners are children of emigrants, the latter of which it is estimated there are about 2 million.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Poland**

### **Registration in the sending school**

Pupils are required to be both enrolled in the sending school and to have the permission of their school principal to go abroad, in order to ensure that they will be readmitted to the same school on their return. Each school principal must then indicate in the school information system where the pupil is fulfilling their school obligation abroad. As long as the pupil is enrolled in formal education – which is obligatory until 18 years old – the school in Poland is legally accountable for any issues that arise while the pupil is abroad.

If pupils want to study abroad in their first year of general upper secondary school, they must make arrangements before they start their education at this level. In these cases, it is recommended that pupils obtain a signed agreement from the principal, in order to ensure that they are enrolled upon their return, then either repeat first year or be admitted to second year.

### **Funding for the sending school**

If exchange pupils are registered as fulfilling their compulsory education abroad, the sending school receives funding for them corresponding to 60% of the amount they would receive for a pupil fulfilling their school obligation in Poland.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Poland**

### **Registration in the host school**

Decisions on the admission of exchange pupils are made by the school principal and no documents are required from the sending school. Once admitted, exchange pupils have the same status as regular pupils, and the school principal must report them in the school information system within 7 days of their arrival at school.

Age is the main criterion taken into consideration when assigning hosted pupils to a class, together with their subject interests. Exchange pupils can be hosted in the last grade, however this final school year ends in the last week of April (in order to give pupils study leave ahead of their final exams) and they would therefore have a shorter learning period abroad.

## Funding for the host school

Municipalities, which finance schools, receive the same amount of State subsidies for exchange pupils as for regular pupils. These funds are based on the number of learners at the particular time when the reporting is carried out (between 30th September and 31st January) - therefore, if a hosted pupil has already finished their mobility at that time, they are not counted.

## Certification for hosted pupils

The schools can provide a list of courses attended by the hosted pupil and marks might be given by the schoolteachers.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Technically, hosted pupils can acquire a school leaving certificate and, therefore, have access to the Matura exam. This is rare however, as hosted pupils do not have the sufficient knowledge of the Polish language required to perform well in all subjects and therefore obtain the certificate.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year Poland. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures should apply, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>477</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

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<sup>477</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

Readmission of pupils upon return from a learning period abroad is regulated by a Ministry of Education Decree<sup>478</sup>, applicable to any exchange programme.

According to the law, recognition of learning periods abroad is the responsibility of the school principal who must ensure that learning outcomes from the general core curriculum have been taught and acquired by the pupil while abroad. However, since the law does not provide further guidelines, different school principals and their external evaluators (*kurator oświaty*) have different interpretations of how the recognition process should work. As a result, school principals usually fulfil this provision by testing pupils on all subjects through formal exams, rather than through recognition of learning acquired abroad. In addition, for school principals and teachers it is difficult to keep with the ongoing school reforms and to adapt the recognition process accordingly.

### Periods of between 2 and 6 months

For mobility periods of between 2 and 6 months, the school principal decides to readmit pupils to their class in most cases. The teachers of the pupil in the sending school have the responsibility to decide how to prove that the pupil has achieved all the necessary learning outcomes. In this process, teachers can also use any documentation from the host school that the pupil is able to provide – although it is not obligatory for pupils to provide specific documents upon their return. Very often teachers assess competences through an exam, but they might also ask for some presentations, portfolios, or outcomes, etc. from the exchange project, depending on the nature of the period abroad and the taught subject. Teachers have until the end of the school year to organise this assessment, and if pupils are unable to fulfil the requirements of the core curriculum by then, they must repeat the grade. Approaches vary from school to school: if a three-month mobility takes place between September and November, the learner might be exempted from taking exams to be readmitted to school in their class, or they may need to pass the exams their classmates took during the period they were abroad<sup>479</sup>.

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<sup>478</sup> Minister Edukacji Narodowej, "Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej w sprawie kształcenia osób niebędących obywatelami polskimi oraz osób będących obywatelami polskimi, które pobierały naukę w szkołach funkcjonujących w systemach oświaty innych państw" (Minister of National Education, Regulation of the Minister of National Education on the education of non-Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens, who were educated in schools operating in the education systems of other countries), Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, Warszawa, 2020,  
<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20200001283/O/D20201283.pdf>

<sup>479</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.



## A full school year

Upon return from a year-long mobility, pupils must present adequate documentation to their school: a certificate of attendance with an apostille<sup>480</sup> from the host country, any other certificates, a transcript of results, a list of subjects studied, etc. The school principal then assesses the documentation and decides whether to apply partial recognition and test pupils only on the subjects they did not follow while abroad. However, most of the time, the school principal decides that the pupils need to take exams on all subjects.

### **Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year.**

The school principal can decide whether to organise an internal examination (*egzaminy klasyfikacyjne*) to confirm that the pupil has acquired the knowledge specified in the core curriculum for a given school year.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- The legislation on recognition is not clear and school principals do not have the practical tools for recognising learning periods abroad. As a result, they organise tests to verify the learning outcomes of pupils upon return based on the requirements of the national curriculum. The uncertainty of the recognition procedure places an extra burden on pupils.
- The number of pupils fulfilling school obligations abroad does not reflect the phenomenon of individual pupil mobility, but rather the one of emigration), therefore currently it is not useful for monitoring purposes.

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<sup>480</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

## Enablers

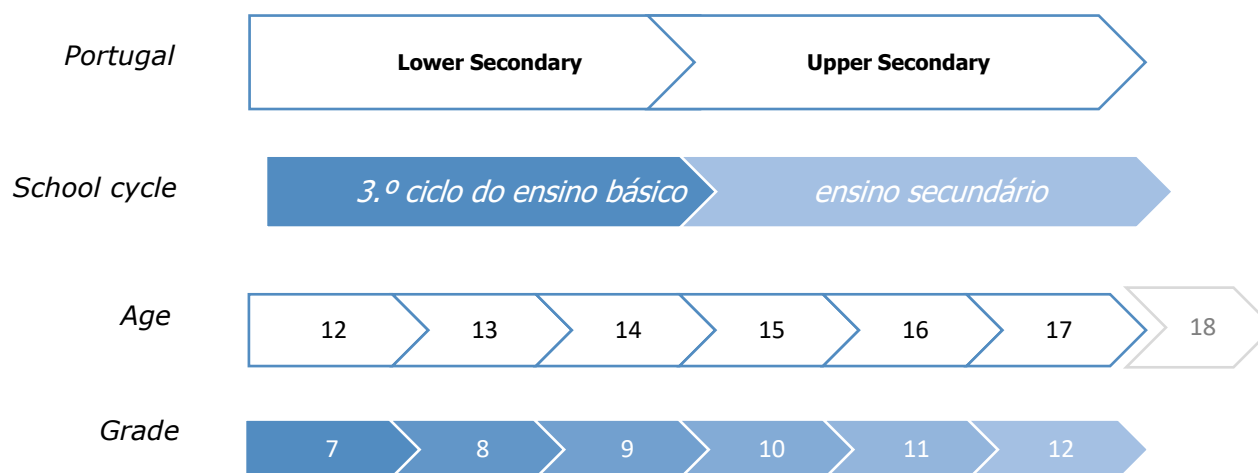
- There is already legislation regulating recognition of learning periods in secondary education, and this can be improved and thus provide clearer guidelines to school principals.
- There is already a monitoring system for pupils fulfilling their school obligation abroad, and this could be used to monitor the actual phenomenon of individual pupil mobility and recognition of learning periods abroad.

## Recommendations

- Promote individual pupil mobility for pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary school (i.e. 15/16 years old). Going on an exchange at this stage in their school experience would allow enough time for pupils to catch up with the curriculum on their return and perform well in the end-of-school examination.
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year (or even until the end of the upper secondary school cycle).
- Once the recognition of learning periods abroad is made much clearer, the current school information system could then be updated to monitor individual pupil mobility, by providing the specific option 'pupils fulfilling their school obligation abroad on an exchange programme', in order to distinguish them from those studying abroad because they migrated for economic reasons. In addition, the same system may be used to record how many of the pupils enrolled in individual mobility programmes received formal recognition of their learning abroad period.

## Portugal

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age or until the conclusion of upper secondary education (*ensino secundário*). General upper secondary school is attended by 63 % of pupils<sup>481</sup> and it comprises four scientific-humanistic courses (*cursos científico-humanísticos*): Sciences and Technologies, Socio-Economic Sciences, Languages and Humanities, Visual Arts. Û

### Graduation and certification

Pupils complete general upper secondary education if they have passed every subject of their study programme. Pupils' grades count for 70 % of the final grade (internal assessment); the remaining 30 % is based on the four mandatory national examinations (external assessment). There are two national final exams in grade 11 (two specific biennial subjects based on the scientific-humanistic course chosen) and two national final exams in grade 12 (Portuguese and a specific triennial subject based on their course).

School completion is certified via the award of both a diploma and a certificate, which are digital: the diploma indicates completion of upper secondary education, the scientific-humanistic course studied, the final mark and the level of qualification; the certificate identifies the elements previously referred to, the subjects taken, final marks and examination results for each subject, as well as the pupil's participation in different projects,

<sup>481</sup> DGEEC, school year 2018/2019.

namely CLIL and Citizenship and Development. The award of these diplomas and certificates is the responsibility of the schools, in accordance with the model and procedures indicated by the Directorate-General for Education (DGE)<sup>482</sup>.

The diploma and certificate provide access to higher education. The results of national exams are used by universities as entrance exams. Therefore, if pupils wish to apply to a given faculty or polytechnic institution, they need to make sure they have passed the national exams on the required subjects.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils tend to go on mobility during grades 10, 11, 12, namely the first, second or third year of general upper secondary education, at the age of 15/16 or 16/17 or 17/18. Although there are final exams in grade 12, most pupils enrol in an exchange in this grade<sup>483</sup>.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 89 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and for-profit agencies<sup>484</sup>.

In Portugal, it is not common for upper secondary pupils to spend a learning period abroad, although public schools generally tend to promote it, as do private organisations. The practice of taking a gap year is now becoming more popular, but it is not yet common. Financial difficulties, strong family ties and a growing preference for the Erasmus+ programme during higher education could be the main reasons for pupils' lack of interest or for dropping out after applying.

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<sup>482</sup> Direção-Geral da Educação - DGE, "Currículo / Legislação Geral / Portaria n.º 194/2021, de 17 de setembro" (Portuguese Directorate-General for Education, Curriculum / General Legislation / Order no. 194/2021, of 17th September), <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/171516470>, accessed 3 Nov. 2021.

<sup>483</sup> In the school year 2018/2019, 60 pupils out of 72 who participated in long-term mobility programmes, were in grade 12. Only 37 have applied for recognition of the learning period abroad. Data provided by the Directorate-General for Education on 4 December 2020.

<sup>484</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (4 pupils), the non-profit AFS organisation (69 pupils) and the for-profit agency Multiway (16 pupils).

## **Collection of data on individual pupil mobility**

There is no centralised official system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility. However, the Ministry of Education collects data from two private organisations running pupil mobility programmes, although that data is not public.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Portugal**

### **Registration with the sending school**

Parents must inform the school principal about the learning period abroad. Pupils are not enrolled in their home school while on exchange and readmission to the same school on return cannot be guaranteed.

### **Funding for the sending school**

The sending school does not receive any funding for the pupil during their stay abroad.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Portugal**

### **Registration in the host school**

The way exchange pupils are enrolled may vary from school to school as there is no legal framework that regulates the hosting of exchange pupils. It might happen that hosted pupils are not enrolled in a complete study plan. In general, the host school takes into account the grade of the previous school year and places the pupil in a class according to the grade in which they would be enrolled in the home country. They can be hosted in the last year of upper secondary school.

Hosted pupils usually have access to Portuguese as a Second or Foreign Language which is taught at school.

### **Funding for the host school**

The host school does not receive any funding for the pupil during their stay in Portugal.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Usually, the school delivers a certificate of attendance and/or a transcript of results with the subjects followed and the marks obtained. It is up to the host school, and even to each

teacher, to decide which type of assessment will be used: qualitative or quantitative. In the case of pupils who are not enrolled in a complete study plan, qualitative assessment is favoured.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

If the exchange pupils are hosted in grade 12, they can decide during the hosting period whether they wish to take the examinations, and therefore apply for recognition of their previous studies in their home country. Then they need to pass every subject of their study plan and take the two national exams foreseen for grade 12 at the end of the school year to be awarded the diploma.

### **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). In the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>485</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than a full school year. In case of a full school year the procedure described below applies.

#### **Periods of between 2 and 6 months**

There is no law regulating the recognition of learning periods abroad shorter than a full school year, and which are usually up to 6 months. The decision on how to readmit the exchange pupils is made by schools. In these cases, pupils can interrupt their studies during the first or second trimester (usually the first) and be assessed at the end of the school year. These absences would have to be justified and the pupil would have to complete the year successfully to be admitted to the next grade.

Upon readmission in the sending school, exchange pupils provide a certificate of attendance issued by the host school. In the future recognition will be carried out by integrating the

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<sup>485</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

marks received in the host school into the compulsory subjects of the sending school. Some of the schools also organise Europass certification<sup>486</sup>.

## A full school year

The recognition of a complete school year abroad is regulated by law<sup>487</sup> and is the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Education (DGE). To be eligible for the recognition procedure, the pupil must be enrolled in the equivalent grade abroad and bring back an official certificate (with apostille<sup>488</sup> or diplomatic or consular legalisation) issued by the host school with reference to the grade of general upper secondary school attended, the subjects studied, and a transcript of their results. The documents must be translated into Portuguese by a certified translator and both the certified copy of the original and the translation must be submitted. No learning agreement is drafted with the sending school.

The pupil or intermediaries, namely pupil exchange organisations (e.g., Intercultura-AFS Portugal or Multiway) present the documents to the DGE. If the documents fulfil all the necessary requirements established by law, namely that the pupils have successfully attended a school grade abroad equivalent to the same grade in Portugal, the DGE converts the grades according to a standard table for the conversion of the different grading systems. The DGE recognises and certifies the equivalence of the year abroad by attributing an average mark, based on the transcript of results received. The recognition system is not based on the matching of home and host country school subjects and acknowledges that school curricula are different across countries.

The DGE has 30 days to reply, but by law pupils can enrol in the next school year while the papers are being examined. Pupils who spend grade 12 abroad need an answer from the DGE about recognition of the year abroad and completion of upper secondary school by mid/end July, as the deadline for applying to higher education is at that time. For this reason, their requests for recognition are given priority by the DGE.

If recognition is obtained, pupils who spend grades 11 or 12 abroad do not need to sit the two national final exams of their grade to qualify for the upper secondary school diploma. They might, however, have to take the national exams if they had failed certain subjects before leaving for the learning period abroad, or if they need to pass the national exam in a given subject to apply to university later. Private universities might also look at the subjects taken abroad during the exchange.

In general, it is not recommended to go on exchange if the marks in given subjects are not satisfactory, as this means that on their return pupils will have to take additional exams to

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<sup>486</sup> Information provided by the Erasmus+ National Agency in Portugal on 23 July 2020 and 22 September 2021.

<sup>487</sup> Decree-Law no. 227/2005, issued on 28 December 2005.

<sup>488</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

successfully conclude those subjects. Pupils must pass every subject in order to be awarded both the diploma and school leaving certificate.

Given the requirements of the law on the recognition of a school year abroad, it is better for pupils to enrol in a host school which allows them to be placed in the same grade as in the sending school and which has a more flexible curriculum, like in the USA. In most European countries, pupils cannot be hosted in the last year of upper secondary school, they need to follow a set study plan with compulsory subjects and they may not understand nor speak the language of the host country, which makes it harder for them to succeed in all subjects by the end of the school year. Nevertheless, almost half choose a European destination for the exchange.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### **Challenges**

- Portuguese pupils usually go abroad during grade 12, that is, the final grade, and need to be placed in the equivalent grade in the host school to get recognition of the learning period abroad. However, several EU countries do not welcome exchange pupils in the last grade of upper secondary school.
- There is no legal framework for enrolling exchange pupils from Portugal going abroad, and hosted in Portugal.

### **Enablers**

- There is a law and a central system for recognition, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, and there is a culture of recognition of long-term learning periods abroad.
- There is no matching of subjects between sending and host school curricula. Recognition is based on completion of the equivalent grade abroad. This approach simplifies the process of recognition.
- The equivalence of the school year completed abroad is awarded an overall mark based on the transcript of results issued by the host school. This mark is taken into account in the calculation of the final mark of the upper secondary course.

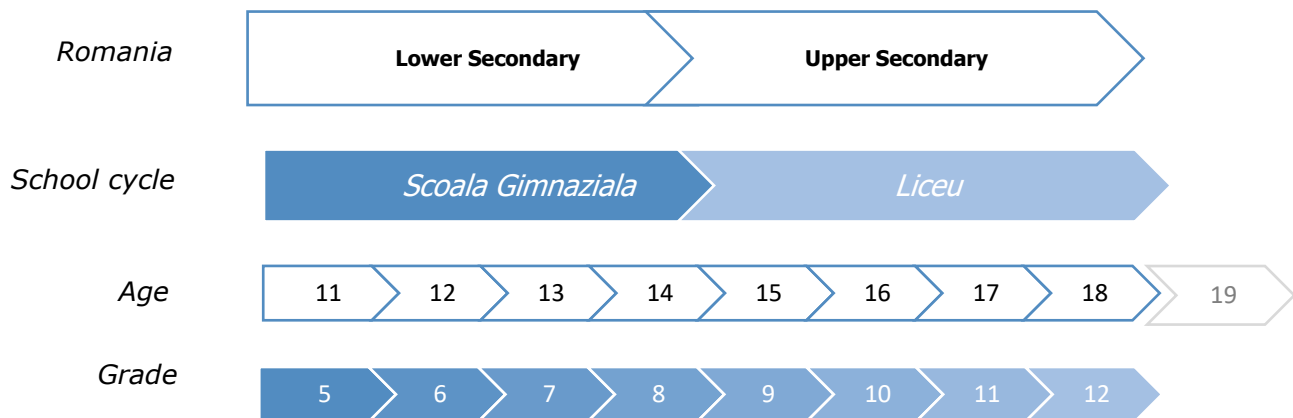


## Recommendations

- Promote individual long-term pupil mobility programmes in grades 10 and 11, as it is more probable that host schools will be able to place them in an equivalent grade. Currently, promotion is carried out by the Erasmus+ National Agency and by pupil exchange organisations.
- Provide guidelines to all upper secondary schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition of learning periods abroad shorter than a full school year, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin.
- Encourage sending schools to play a more active role during pupils' learning period abroad.
- Recommend that hosted exchange pupils be enrolled with the specific status of "exchange pupil", which would provide flexibility to teachers on how to conduct assessment.

## Romania

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. General secondary education is divided into two levels: lower secondary (*Gimnaziu*) and upper secondary (*Liceu*), which is a four-year cycle, whose first two years are compulsory. *Liceu* is attended by 76 % of pupils<sup>489</sup> in upper secondary education and is offered in three different forms: Theoretical, Technological, Vocational/aptitude-based.

### Graduation and certification

Pupils must pass the end-of-school examination *Baccalaureate* to earn the school leaving certificate. This includes six exams, three exams to verify linguistic and digital competences and three written exams in Romanian language, Mathematics or History and a chosen subject.

The school leaving certificate is necessary to apply for university. The *Baccalaureate* final mark counts toward a certain percentage of the university entrance requirement, in addition, some faculties require pupils to take an entrance exam.

<sup>489</sup> Romanian National Statistics Institute, "Statistics related to the school year 2019/2020", <https://insse.ro/cms/en>

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually enrol in an individual pupil mobility programme during the second or third year of upper secondary school, at the age of 16-17 years old. Generally, pupils do not participate in individual exchange programmes during their fourth and final year of upper secondary school, although there is no rule against this. This is because it takes a certain amount of time to obtain official recognition of the learning period abroad, to make up for any subject-specific knowledge missed during the period spent abroad, and to prepare for the end-of-school examination.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 17 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations<sup>490</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility. School inspectorates do keep the data of applications received for recognition of learning periods abroad, however these are not public.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Romania

### Registration in the sending school

Pupils who participate in an individual mobility programme are registered in their sending school. Pupils who spend between a semester and a full school year abroad are counted as “continuing schooling abroad” and their absence is documented officially. Pupils on exchange for less than a semester are counted as following school in Romania and are registered in the database of the national education system (SIIIR: Integrated Informatics System of Education in Romania).

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<sup>490</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (3 pupils) and YFU (14 pupils).

## **Funding for the sending school**

The government provides funding to the school only for pupils who are enrolled and attending lessons.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Romania**

### **Registration in the host school**

Hosted pupils are registered as regular pupils in the school, even if they will not finish the school year in this host institution. They are requested to provide an official letter or a confirmation from the sending school or organisation. They are placed in a grade corresponding to their age and, more important, based on the grade they would follow in their home country. Because of the language barrier hosted pupils are only allowed to participate in some classes. Pupils can be hosted in the final year.

### **Funding for the host school**

The school receives funding for the hosted pupils as they are enrolled as regular pupils and attend lessons.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

At the end of the schooling period, they receive an official document to certify the period and the subjects which they studied. Optional subjects studied and extracurricular activities are also included in this certification. The school system may offer special support for hosted pupils if needed – such as help with administrative issues, in integrating with the school community, or in learning the Romanian language.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Pupils hosted in the last grade can take the end-of-school examination *Baccalaureate* and obtain the upper secondary school leaving certificate, if they successfully complete all compulsory subjects. However, this is not common practice.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than 6 months, or between 6 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition for periods abroad of any duration shorter than 6 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Romania. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>491</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods of less than 6 months. For periods between 6 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, on the top of a possible learning agreement.

### Periods of between two and less than 6 months

When pupils return after less than six months abroad, they continue their studies in the same class in which they were registered before leaving. According to the school education regulation, it is the right of pupils to be readmitted at school at the same level. Upon return they should present official documents issued by the host school to the sending school which certify that they attended school abroad.

### Periods of between 6 months and a full school year

According to the law<sup>492</sup>, recognition of learning periods abroad of at least one semester is provided for the appropriate year level in order to ensure continuity of studies. Almost all learning periods abroad are recognised.

School inspectorates are entitled to manage the recognition procedure and require minimal documentation, which consists mainly of an official study document from the host school, which includes the list of school subjects learned abroad (with or without marks).

The central principle is to achieve recognition of study periods and not recognition of the subjects or content based on the assessment received on these from the school abroad. This approach is based on an acknowledgement that there are differences among national curricula. In some cases (about 25 %), schools require pupils to pass some exams for the subjects they have not studied abroad.

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<sup>491</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>492</sup> Ministry ordinance no. 3217/2018.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- School inspectorates deal with recognition of periods abroad between six months and a full school year. However, schools may decide whether pupils need to take additional exams upon return, even in cases where the pupil has been granted recognition for the learning period abroad by the school inspectorate.

### Enablers

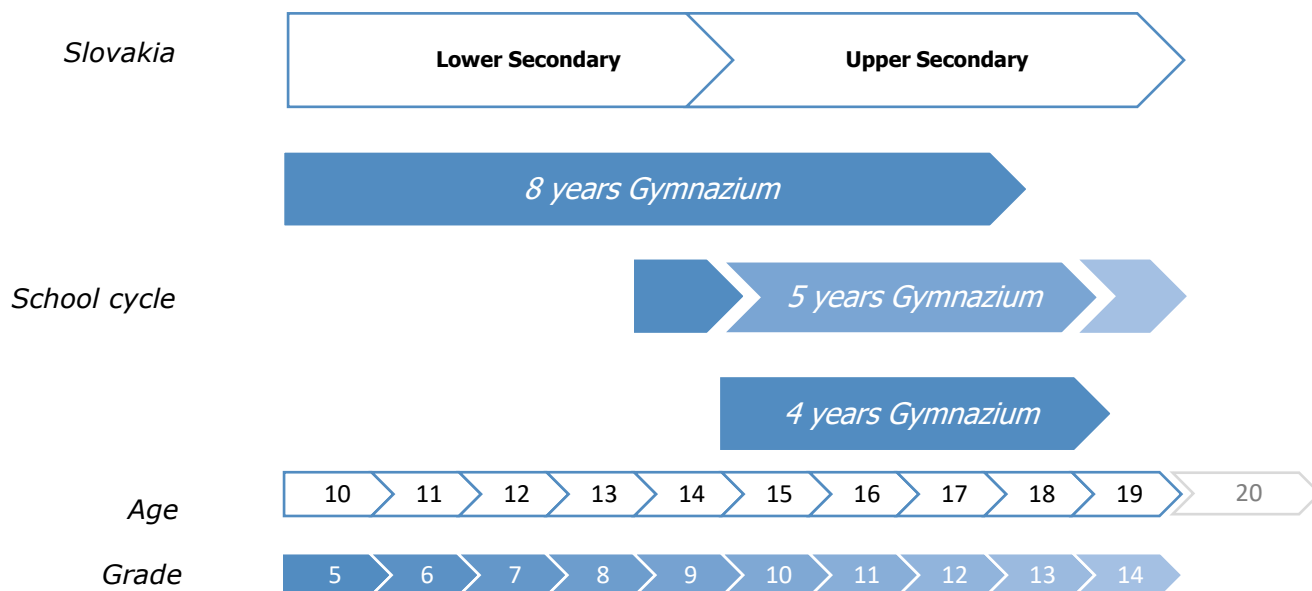
- School inspectorates aim at recognising the learning period abroad, despite the differences between the sending and host school curriculum.

### Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools for study periods abroad of less than six months, setting out a common approach to recognition based on a learning agreement identifying learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during their study abroad and provide enough time to do so.
- Develop guidelines for study periods abroad of between six months and a full school year, complementary to the current recognition procedure put in place by the school inspectorates:
  - Identify how the learning outcomes included in the national curriculum are broadly in line with the ones of the host school to minimise the number of additional exams to be taken by the pupil after recognition has been granted by the school inspectorate.
  - Pilot the use of learning agreements in schools.
  - Allow pupils to catch up with the content of the national curriculum over the first months of their next school year, rather than requesting them to take additional exams on return.

## Slovakia

### General secondary education system



In Slovakia, school is compulsory until 16 years of age (end of 10th grade, the first year of upper secondary education). About 36 % of pupils are enrolled in general secondary schools<sup>493</sup> (*Gymnaziums*) which provide three types of educational programmes:

- four-year cycle, starting after completing primary education in 9th grade (for bilingual gymnasiums and conservatories)
- five-year cycle, usually bilingual, starting as from 9th or 10th grade. If pupils start in 10th grade, they study for a further year.
- eight-year cycle, starting in 5th grade of primary education. In this case pupils study one year less overall

<sup>493</sup> Centrum Vedecko-Technických Informácií Sr, "Štatistická ročenka - súhrnné tabuľky" (Centre for Scientific and Technical Information, Statistical Yearbook - Summary Tables), 2021, [https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-suhrnne-tabulky.html?page\\_id=9603](https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-suhrnne-tabulky.html?page_id=9603), accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

## Graduation and certification

The school leaving certificate is awarded to pupils who pass the final examination (*Maturita*). Pupils can be tested on any content of the four-year school cycle, and the National Institute for Education is responsible for setting the target requirements for each subject tested.

*Maturita* has two parts: written (March) and oral (end of May). Obligatory subjects are Slovak language and a foreign language and then at least two other subjects, for a maximum of five. Only Slovak, foreign languages and Mathematics are assessed in the written exams, and the other 2-3 subjects are tested orally. Pupils receive their result as a percentile so they can compare their performance with pupils from the whole country.

The school leaving certificate also shows the average grades from the previous year, however these marks do not count towards the *Maturita*. The school leaving certificate provides access to higher education, and universities usually hold entrance examinations. The *Maturita* grade counts for university entrance, and depending on the admission rules and the studies chosen, marks from the 4 years of upper secondary school, and marks in specific subjects might also be considered.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils go abroad when they are in 10th, 11th or 12th grade<sup>494</sup>. Most pupils go abroad during the second last year of school, when they are 17/18 years old.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 33 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations<sup>495</sup>. In the period 2008-2011 the Ministry of Education ran an individual pupil mobility programme worth around EUR 9 million to allow pupils from low-income families or socially disadvantaged families to go on a full school year mobility to European countries with a full scholarship.

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<sup>494</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>495</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit organisations AFS (25 pupils) and YFU (8 pupils).



## Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

Although the Ministry of Education is involved in the recognition of learning periods abroad by converting marks to the Slovak classification scale, they do not record the number of applications for recognition, and do not make a distinction between pupils requiring recognition of learning periods abroad within an individual pupil mobility programme, and people who apply for recognition of their foreign certificate to access university in Slovakia<sup>496</sup>.

## Status of pupils going abroad from slovakia

### Registration in the sending school

According to the Education law<sup>497</sup>, before going abroad on a study programme, pupils must obtain permission from the school principal. They continue to be enrolled in their school in Slovakia while they are abroad.

### Funding for the sending school

Schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled on the 15th of September each year. For pupils enrolled as studying abroad schools receive 10 % of the funds they would receive were a pupil studying in the school full time<sup>498</sup>.

## Status of pupils hosted in slovakia

### Registration in the host school

Most exchange pupils are not enrolled as regular pupils of the school. If an exchange pupil wishes to be enrolled as a regular pupil they must pass an entrance examination for the secondary school, which is then issued with a unique registration number for them.

School principals decide on the placement of exchange pupils based on information from the sending school about subjects attended and marks obtained in the previous years. Some pupils are placed with peers of the same age, but this is not always possible due to the limited number of pupils in each class. Only exchange pupils hosted for a trimester or

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<sup>496</sup> Information received from the Ministry of Education (MŠVVaŠ SR) on 3 March 2021.

<sup>497</sup> Law n. 245/2008, art 147,

[https://www.vedatechnika.sk/SK/VedaATechnikaVSR/Legislatva/245\\_2008\\_skolsky\\_zakon.pdf](https://www.vedatechnika.sk/SK/VedaATechnikaVSR/Legislatva/245_2008_skolsky_zakon.pdf)

<sup>498</sup> Information received from the Ministry of Education (MŠVVaŠ SR) on 3 March 2021.

semester exchange can be hosted in the 4th and final grade, since the lessons offered during the second semester of the 4th grade are aimed specifically at preparing pupils for the end-of-school examination.

### **Funding for the host school**

As exchange pupils are rarely enrolled as regular pupils, schools do not normally receive funding for them<sup>499</sup>.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

If exchange pupils are not enrolled as regular pupils, they are not entitled to receive the official transcript of marks in January and June (*Vysvedčenie*). However, some schools do issue this document for hosted pupils anyway, although teachers claim pupils cannot really be assessed on knowledge given the lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. Therefore, if exchange pupils do receive a transcript of marks, it is not really a full reflection of their results. Exchange pupils do, however, receive a written evaluation where teachers describe their development in terms of transversal competences and knowledge of the local culture and language, and the subjects they studied. Some exchange organisations also provide a template for this kind of assessment, and most sending schools accept this document for recognition purposes<sup>500</sup>.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

An exchange pupil may complete upper secondary education in Slovakia at the discretion of the school principal who files a request for permission at regional level. However, this is unusual.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than 5 months, or between 5 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 5 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Slovakia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school

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<sup>499</sup> Information received from hosting coordinator of AFS Slovakia on 4 March 2021.

<sup>500</sup> Information received from hosting coordinator of AFS Slovakia on 4 March 2021.

partnership<sup>501</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than 5 months. For periods of between 5 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement.

## Periods of between 2 and less than 5 months

If the period abroad is shorter than 5 months, exchange pupils are enrolled back in their sending school and do not need to provide any transcript of results from the host school. Upon return, pupils must pass the exams of the first semester and are usually allowed an additional month to take them.

## Periods of between 5 months and a full school year

Recognition of learning periods abroad of between 5 months and a full school year is regulated by a law issued in 2008 and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the sending school<sup>502</sup>. Recognition is based on a transcript of marks; therefore, pupils must decide what subjects to study in the host school with the aim of matching them to the national curriculum in Slovakia<sup>503</sup>.

Once they return, pupils contact their school principal and provide information on the subjects taken abroad and agree on the additional exams to take. They also send to the Ministry of Education the certificate of school attendance and the transcript of marks issued by the host school. In addition, a detailed description of the subjects studied abroad might be requested<sup>504</sup>.

If the documents are in order, the office of the Ministry of Education converts the marks to the Slovak classification scale and issues a converted transcript of results, which the exchange pupil in turn presents to the school principal who organises the additional exams the pupil needs to take (e.g. Slovak language).

This recognition procedure works quite well as most students going on an exchange with non-profit agencies have the year abroad recognised<sup>505</sup>. As the school cycle is already long enough (e.g. pupils can be 20 years old by the time they finish bilingual *Gimnazium*), attending an additional year of school is not an acceptable option for pupils and parents, therefore recognition of the study period abroad is essential<sup>506</sup>.

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<sup>501</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>502</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>503</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>504</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>505</sup> 95% according to AFS Slovakia.

<sup>506</sup> Briga, 2018.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- The recognition procedure for periods between five months and a full school year is a two-step process, involving the Ministry of Education which bases recognition on a table of correspondence which is used to convert the transcript of results, and the school which organises additional exams. The fact of having two authorities deciding on recognition makes the procedure cumbersome for exchange pupils, especially because subsequent to formal partial recognition from the central authority, pupils are then asked to take exams on subjects of the national curriculum they did not follow abroad.
- The marks of the 4 years of upper secondary education might count for the university entrance exam, therefore receiving high marks during the learning period abroad is a priority for exchange pupils who aim to have their learning recognised.

### Enablers

- Schools are used to following recognition processes with pupils returning from study abroad.

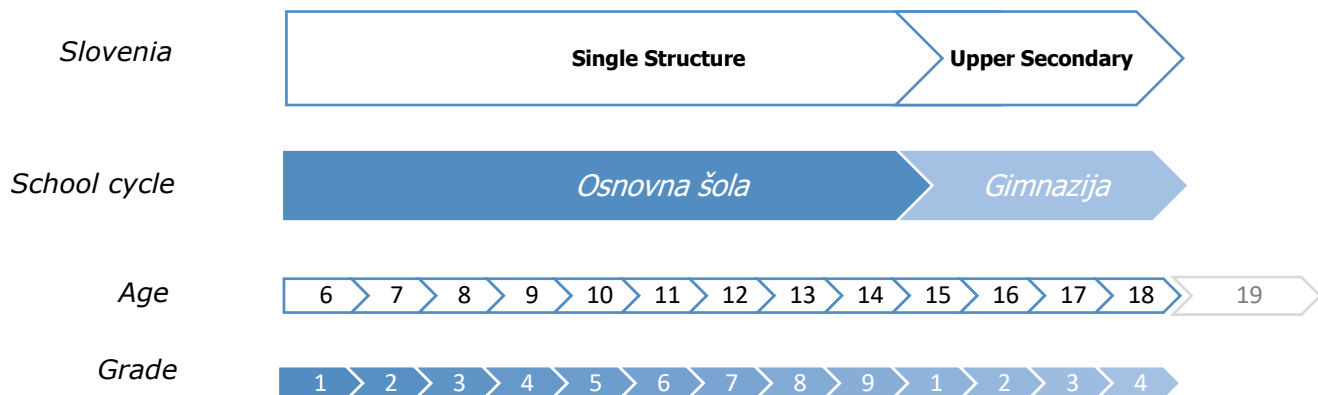
### Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. Concretely, it is suggested that:
  - For periods up to 5 months abroad, this learning agreement serves as the only recognition tool.
  - For periods between 5 months and a full school year, a learning agreement be drafted to support recognition to accompany the partial recognition granted by the ministry on education based on the table of correspondence. The learning agreement could ensure that, after partial recognition has been

granted by the ministry of education, any catch-up for -few- complementary exams may take place over several months in the next school year.

## Slovenia

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 15 years of age. General education (*gimnazija*) and technical education are four-year upper secondary school cycles which provide access to higher education and are attended by 38.4 % of upper secondary school pupils<sup>507</sup>.

The national curriculum<sup>508</sup> is decided at the level of the Ministry of Education, and schools and teachers are autonomous in defining elective learning content and in choosing teaching methods and learning materials.

### Graduation and certification

At the end of general or technical education, pupils take the *Matura* examination.

The *Matura* is a national examination and is administered in the spring and autumn terms. Pupils sit exams in five subjects:

- three mandatory subjects (Slovenian, or Italian and Hungarian in ethnically mixed areas in Slovenian Istria and Prekmurje, Mathematics and a Foreign language);

<sup>507</sup> In the school year 2019/20 there were a total of 72 738 enrolled upper secondary pupils and 27 949 pupils of these were enrolled in general upper secondary schools.

<sup>508</sup> Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost, in šport, "Srednješolski Izobraževalni Programi" (Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport, Secondary Education Programmes), NA, <http://eportal.mss.edus.si/msswww/programi2020/programi/index.htm>

- two subject areas chosen by the pupil from the list of *Matura* subjects<sup>509</sup>.

The *Matura* scores count for 80 % of the total grade in each subject. The school internal assessment (oral presentation, work performed – if this is part of the subject, seminar paper or exam presentation) count for the remaining 20 %. Some subjects may be examined at two different levels of difficulty.

The *Matura* certificate gives pupils the right to apply for university study programmes and all other higher education programmes.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go on exchange when they are 17/18 years old, during the third year of upper secondary school (second last year), and they return for the final year of school. Pupils can go abroad during the last year, but it is an exception.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil exchange programmes

In the school year 2018/2019, around 11 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations<sup>510</sup>.

Going on a long-term pupil exchange is not popular in Slovenia as the system of recognition based on correspondence, between the curricula of host and sending school, is an obstacle for most pupils who would like to enrol in an exchange<sup>511</sup>. In addition, the recognition procedure is felt as a burden by the sending school, as they need to assess the transcript of records and organise additional exams for the pupil<sup>512</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

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<sup>509</sup> The list of subjects is defined by the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for general education on the recommendation of the National Matura committee and in agreement with universities and independent higher education institutions, [https://www.ric.si/splosna\\_matura/predmeti/](https://www.ric.si/splosna_matura/predmeti/)

<sup>510</sup> Based on the data collected from the non-profit AFS organisation (11 pupils).

<sup>511</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning" EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>512</sup> Briga, 2018.

## **Status of pupils going abroad from Slovenia**

### **Registration in the sending school**

If a pupil intends to continue their education after returning, they remain enrolled in the school and continue their studies by distance learning so as not to lose a year.

### **Funding for the sending school**

Provided the pupil remains enrolled, the school receives the same funding as it would if the pupil had attended classes.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Slovenia**

### **Registration in the host school**

Exchange pupils are enrolled as regular pupils. Schools decide autonomously on admitting them and in which grade to place them, based on their age, the last grade they have completed in their home country, their level of knowledge. Hosted pupils can also be placed in the fourth and last grade. The host school and the exchange pupil may agree on a personal education plan which foresees adjustments to the obligations that regularly enrolled pupils have in terms of e.g. lesson attendance.

### **Funding for the host school**

The school receives funding for hosted pupils as they are enrolled as regular pupils.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils receive a certificate of attendance with a transcript of marks and any other documentation requested by their sending school.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Hosted pupils can take the *Matura* after successfully completing the fourth year of general upper secondary school. However, this is unusual.



## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Slovenia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>513</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.

Recognition of learning periods abroad is the responsibility of the sending school, namely the school council and the teachers' board.

The recognition procedure requires that before departure the school, the pupil and the parents agree on a personal education plan which includes the possibility of adjusting the plan should it be required. Parents apply in writing to acquire the right to adjust the performance of any part of the plan, and the school principal should take a decision within 15 days, after consultation with the teaching staff and the advisory service. Parents are informed within 8 days of the decision<sup>514</sup>.

### Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Pupils who go abroad for three or six months agree on a personal education plan before departure and are reintegrated back into their class on their return. They must pass the exams at the end of the school year together with their peers<sup>515</sup>. Upon return they need to submit a certificate of assessment and a description of the subjects studied abroad. Based on these documents, teachers recognise the content that are in line with the curriculum of individual subjects. Teachers and pupils discuss together how to catch up with the subjects they did not study abroad, and pass the upcoming tests.

### A full school year

When pupils decide to spend a full school year abroad, they decide whether to take a gap year or try and have the study period abroad recognised through a personal education plan.

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<sup>513</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>514</sup> Pravno-Informacijski Sistem PIS, "Pravilnik o prilagoditvah šolskih obveznosti dijaku v srednji šoli" (Legal Information System PIS, Regulation on adjustments to the school obligations of a student in secondary school), Ljubljana, 2018, <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV13430#>

<sup>515</sup> On the basis of the Law on Evaluation and Recognition of Education.

In both cases, the school makes a contract with them which is legally binding and allows the pupil to be readmitted to the school upon return.

Upon return, exchange pupils provide the school council and teachers' board with the host school curriculum, the specific content of the subjects followed abroad and a transcript of results. If these documents are in German, French, Italian, or English no legal translation into Slovenian is required. These documents are evaluated and a decision on which additional exams the pupil needs to take is made. In fact, unless the curriculum of the host school aligns perfectly with the content of the five subjects for the end-of-school examination (*Matura*), the pupil needs to take a separate exam at least in these subjects over the summer<sup>516</sup>.

Pupils who have been abroad during the last year of upper secondary school can make an agreement with their school and perform their fourth-year learning remotely in parallel with their education abroad and thus meet the conditions for admission to the *Matura*.

Usually, if pupils complete one year in a secondary school in an EU country, all subjects except Slovene are recognised. They must therefore sit an exam in Slovene when they return or remotely while they are still abroad. If pupils spend a full school year in the US, the level of education is not comparable, and the pupil must repeat the school year<sup>517</sup>. From the experience of one pupil exchange organisation, it can be said that few pupils get their period abroad recognised<sup>518</sup>.

### **Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year**

In the case of a gap year, pupils can either repeat the grade, or take an exam on the whole curriculum of the school year and be admitted to the next grade.

## **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

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<sup>516</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>517</sup> U. Červek, "Mladi v tujino že v srednji šoli" (Young people go abroad already in high school), Večer. 2019, <https://www.vecer.com/slovenija/mladi-v-tujino-ze-v-srednji-soli-6660948>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

<sup>518</sup> According to the experience of AFS Slovenia, only one third of pupils get their study period abroad recognised (January 2018).

## Challenges

- School principals and teachers' boards do not have clear guidelines on how to recognise learning periods abroad, therefore they usually examine pupils on all the subjects of the national curriculum they did not follow while abroad.

## Enablers

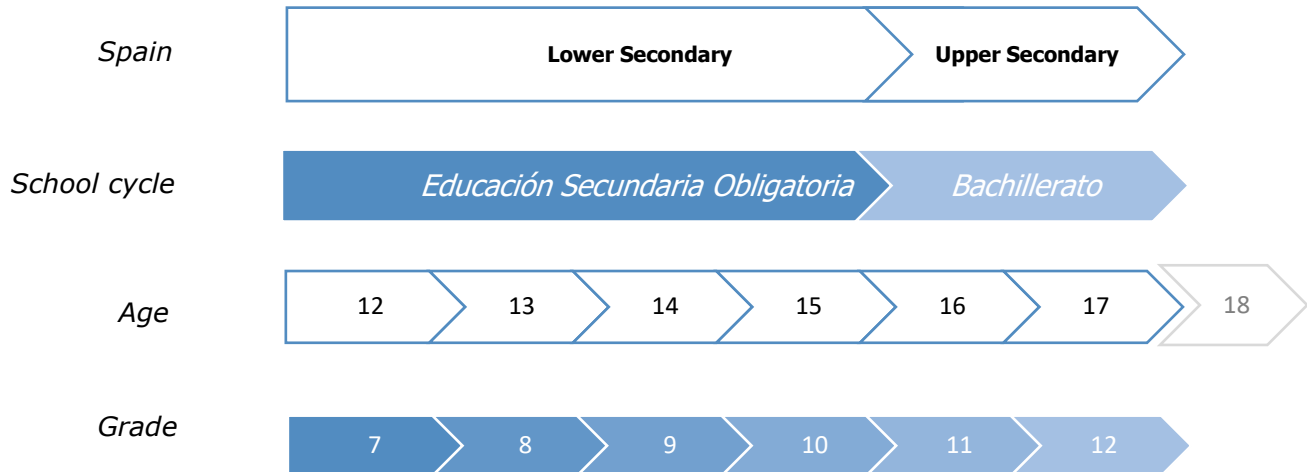
- Some schools do recognise learning periods abroad and can share their experience.
- Learning agreement are mandatory for recognition of learning periods abroad.

## Recommendations

- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year

## Spain

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper Secondary School (*Bachillerato*) is not compulsory and it is chosen by 64.62 % of pupils<sup>519</sup>. There are three branches<sup>520</sup> – Science and Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences (divided into two tracks), Arts – and the first two are the ones most commonly offered.

### Graduation and certification

Pupils who pass all the subjects of the *Bachillerato* are awarded the *Bachillerato* certificate.

The certificates are issued by the relevant education authority in the Autonomous Community where the school is located<sup>521</sup>. Certificates include the following information:

- The specific branch or branches studied that have been passed in the final assessment by teachers at the end of the 2nd year of *Bachillerato* (12th grade).

<sup>519</sup> Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, "Nota: Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Datos avance 2019-2020" (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training), Non-university education statistics. Advance data 2019-2020, 2020, <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:b9a8ace4-c9b9-4fd3-8ce9-f3c77371711a/notres1920.pdf>

<sup>520</sup> This is valid until the school year 2021/2022. As from 2022/2023 there will be four branches: Sciences and Technology; Humanities and Social Sciences; Arts; General.

<sup>521</sup> Only for Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish schools abroad and CIDEAD (national online school) certificates are issued directly by the Minister for Education and Vocational Training.

- The final mark for the *Bachillerato*, which is based on the average of the grades obtained in the different subjects in the two last school years.

The *Bachillerato* certificate provides access to higher education studies, although pupils may have to pass specific entrance examinations: A-levels (EBAU).

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Most pupils participate in mobility in grade 11 (age 16/17), although some may go in grade 10<sup>522</sup>. Pupils do not generally participate in mobility in grade 12 because they need to take the entrance exams for university.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 3 339 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by for-profit agencies, non-profit organisations and the Erasmus+ programme. In addition, there are for-profit agencies offering this type of exchange opportunity<sup>523</sup>. However, no information is available on the number of pupils enrolled with these organisations.

It is not common for Spanish pupils to go on a year abroad, mainly due to the uncertainty of being able to meet the criteria for recognition and also being able to catch up with the *Bachillerato* programme after their period abroad. They might need to repeat the year and this is not culturally acceptable, therefore they prefer to enrol in Erasmus during their university studies.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

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<sup>522</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>523</sup> Based on the data estimated by AECAE the umbrella of for-profit pupil mobility provides (2 400 pupils), the Erasmus+ programme (90 pupils), the non-profits organisations AFS (223 pupils), YFU (26 pupils) and the Fundación Amancio Ortega (600 pupils).

## Status of pupils going abroad from Spain

### Registration in the sending school

If pupils take part in a mobility programme outside of a school-to-school partnership, they are not enrolled in school, and their school cannot guarantee that they will be readmitted, although most schools would be able to accept the pupils upon their return. If there is no place available in the school of origin, pupils need to apply for a place through the Education Inspection office (*Inspeccion educativa*), a public institution which ensures that the education law is respected, including the fact that all pupils in compulsory education age attend school, i.e. until grade 10. If pupils go on exchange during the 11th or 12th grade, grades which are not part of compulsory education, the government will not be able to help them in finding a place in an upper secondary school on their return.

### Funding for the sending school

Public schools do not lose funding for individual pupils while they study abroad, as public funding is based on a given range pupils enrolled in the school.

## Status of pupils hosted in Spain

### Registration in the host school

Hosted pupils are enrolled as regular pupils. In the case of exchanges outside the school-to-school partnerships, pupils need to apply to the Ministry of Education for equivalence of their prior studies, providing documentation such as marks and a certificate of completion of the previous school years. If exchange pupils are hosted for a trimester, they would rather be admitted as “visiting pupils”, to avoid applying for equivalence of their prior studies.

Hosted pupils are usually placed in classes according to their age. Sometimes, if there are subjects, they study at their sending school which are not offered at the same grade in the host country, they may attend those subjects in a lower or higher grade. Individualised schedules are therefore drawn up which do not necessarily align with a given grade: hosted pupils may attend some lessons from grade 11 and some from grade 10 or 12<sup>524</sup>. They can also attend the 12th grade.

Hosted pupils can be enrolled in the so-called *Aulas de enlace* (Bridge classes) which are mainly designed to help migrant pupils with the languages (Basque, Catalan, Galician,

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<sup>524</sup> This is possible because usually compulsory Secondary (ESO) and General Upper Secondary (Bachillerato) are in the same school building.

Spanish) or with some specific subjects they may be weaker at.

### **Funding for the host school**

The funding of the school is not impacted by the presence of an exchange pupil.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Hosted pupils, obtain a certificate with their marks and subjects at the end of the school year.

### **Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange**

Hosted pupils can obtain a *Bachillerato* certificate only if they have obtained recognition of their previous studies (corresponding to grade 11) from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) and have passed all the subjects of 12th grade in Spain. However, this is unusual.

## **Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general upper secondary school**

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than a school year, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Spain. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>525</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than a full school year. In the case of a full school year abroad the procedure described below applies, in addition to a possible learning agreement.

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<sup>525</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

## Periods abroad until grade 9

There is no need for official recognition if the exchange pupil is in the first three years of compulsory secondary education (grade 7-9). In these cases, the school decides on pupil admission based on applicable national regulations (e.g. age, academic level, course done abroad, etc.) and therefore pupils are reintegrated in their class upon return after the period spent abroad which is usually less than a school year.

## Periods abroad in 10-12 grade

### Periods of between 2 months and less than a full school year

Pupils enrolling in a mobility for periods of between 2 and 6 months can be reintegrated in their class upon return, although for longer periods abroad, a catch-up plan may be needed, and the reintegration process might be difficult.

### A full school year

Official recognition of studies for grades 10-12, is managed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) or Regional Authorities<sup>526</sup> and is applicable only to periods of at least one full school year abroad<sup>527</sup>. Pupils need to meet the requirements set out in the Tables of Equivalence approved by the Ministry of Education according to bilateral agreements and treaties with the other countries<sup>528</sup>. These tables set out the specific criteria for each country in the EU and outside the EU (e.g. subjects to take, minimum number of credits, level of enrolment, examinations, etc.). Therefore, recognition of a learning period abroad is based on harmonising the sending and host school curricula and the transcript of marks, and depends on the bilateral agreement with the host country.

The few pupils who spend their last year of upper secondary school abroad may still access the recognition procedure. However, if they wish to enrol in university and need to take an

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<sup>526</sup> The Ministry is ultimately the authority which validates the recognition of learning periods abroad. However, in three specific provinces -Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid – recognition can be managed through the Subdelegación de Gobierno (which is the institution that represents the central government at the province level).

<sup>527</sup> Law issued originally in 1988 and addressed in the Law of Education of 2006 100.

<sup>528</sup> Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, "Normativa de Sistemas Educativos con Regulación Específica" (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Regulations for Education Systems with Specific Regulation), NA, <http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:e3542474-9d1d-4f61-88ca-cb194ff8da05/norm-paises.pdf>



entrance exam, they can do so in June or September<sup>529</sup>. If pupils have not returned to Spain by the time the entrance exams are due to take place, they can take the exam through the UNED (Universidad a distancia)<sup>530</sup>. This timing of the university entrance exam can be an obstacle for pupils going on exchange in their last year of general schooling.

The criteria set by the table of equivalence might not be easy to meet. It is easier for pupils to achieve recognition of study periods abroad if they spend a full school year either in a host county where schools offer a multitude of subjects (e.g. US) or in a country with a similar distribution of subjects (e.g. some Länder in Germany): this allows them to build their study plan to match the requirements. In addition, if the language barrier is less critical for pupils it will be easier for them to pass the subjects.

For pupils going abroad to countries other than the US within programmes organised by private agencies, the chances of having their learning period recognised are low: only about 30 % of pupils going on exchange to a European country have their studies recognised.

## Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

### Challenges

- Recognition of a full school year within the EU is difficult as pupils cannot meet the requirements on which the table of equivalence is based (e.g. pupils are not able to follow the same subjects while abroad)
- There is no shared framework for enrolling exchange pupils going abroad, and exchange pupils hosted in Spain, outside of school-to-school partnerships.
- It is not easy to go abroad for a full school year in 10th grade which is the last grade of compulsory education, at the end of which successful pupils receive their compulsory school leaving certificate.

### Enablers

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<sup>529</sup> The second convocation is in September in all Autonomous communities except for Navarre, Basque Countries and Asturias which hold it at the end of July.

<sup>530</sup> Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes y Memoria Democrática, "Legislación Consolidada BOE-A-2020-3950" (Ministry of the Presidency, Relations with Parliament and Democratic Memory, Consolidated Legislation BOE-A-2020-3950), BOE, N. 78, 2020, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2020-3950>

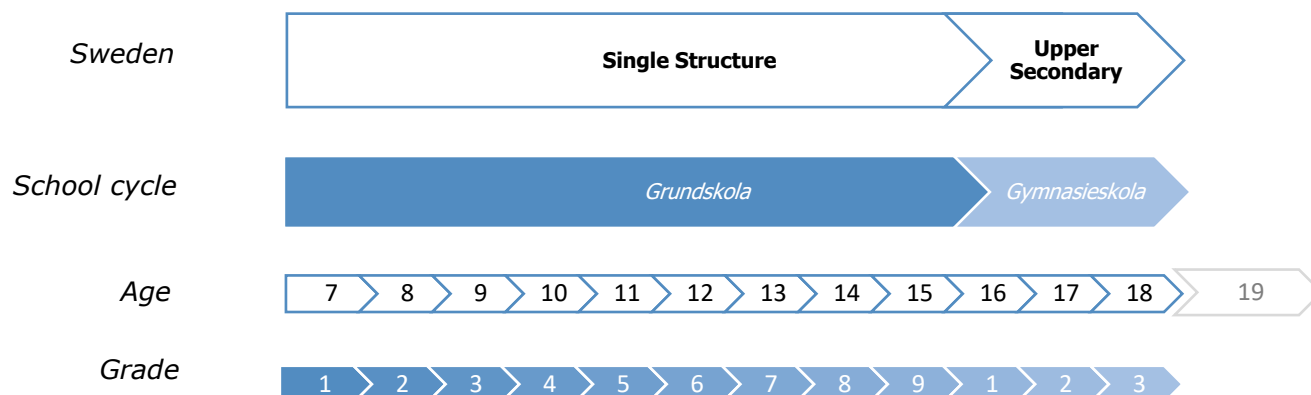
- There legislation and a centrally administered system for recognition, and an established culture of recognition of learning periods abroad
- There is a practice of administering individual pupil mobility and using learning agreements within Erasmus+ in the 11th grade (the objective is to match subjects between host and sending school curricula).

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage individual pupil mobility in grades 9 and 10, as recognition is easier due to the focus on assessment of key competences in compulsory schooling, aligned with the EU Key Competence framework.
- Readmit pupils to their class following mobility for periods abroad of less than a full school year.
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so.
- Provide the possibility for an alternative recognition system for full school years abroad within the EU, based on a learning agreement, and allow pupils to catch up with content over several months in the next school year.
- Maintain the table of equivalence used for periods of a full school year abroad outside the EU, as it has been functioning well for several years.

## Sweden

### General secondary education system



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper Secondary education is a three-year cycle which is not compulsory. It consists of 18 national programmes, out of which 6 are considered general secondary education, namely they are preparatory programmes for higher education (GE-programmes). Each programme includes foundation subjects which are the same for all pupils in upper secondary education, subjects specific to a given programme, track, programme specialisation<sup>531</sup>, and a final project, namely a project intended to be an examination of the total learning from the programme. Municipalities have a large degree of autonomy in organising and delivering education within the framework set up by the State.

In 2018/19, 57 % of pupils were in a GE-programme, 28 % in VET and 15 % in an introductory programme – for pupils who need to pass several courses or pupils who have recently moved to Sweden.

### Graduation and certification

There is no final examination to mark the end of upper secondary school education. Each pupil receives a *Gymnasieexamen* (upper secondary school certificate) from their school, consisting of a summary of the courses studied and the marks received over the three

<sup>531</sup> More information on the structure of the national programmes can be found in Skolverket, "Upper Secondary School 2011", 2012, p. 36 <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/styrdokument/2012/upper-secondary-school-2011?id=2801>, accessed 1 Apr. 2021.

years, including the final project. If pupils have taken more courses than their programme requires, these can also be included<sup>532</sup>.

The upper secondary school certificate provides access to higher education, and the marks received count towards the entry requirements for university.

## Individual pupil mobility

### Age and grade

Pupils go on mobility from the age of 16, and most often in the second or third year of upper secondary school (second last or last year) when they are 17/18 or 18/19 years old<sup>533</sup>.

### Opportunities for and attractiveness of individual pupil mobility

In the school year 2018/2019, around 125 pupils enrolled in an individual pupil mobility programme offered by non-profit exchange organisations, the Erasmus+ programme and governmental programmes<sup>534</sup>.

### Collection of data on individual pupil mobility

There is no centralised system for gathering data on individual pupil mobility.

## Status of pupils going abroad from Sweden

### Registration in the sending school

If pupils make their own arrangements and enrol in an exchange programme with a private agency or with *Ettarsprogrammen*, they are considered to be on a leave of absence from school during the exchange programme and they stop receiving funding for their education

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<sup>532</sup> Eurydice, National Education Systems, "Sweden, Overview", [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/sweden\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/sweden_en)

<sup>533</sup> E. Briga, "Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning", EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>534</sup> Based on the data collected from the Erasmus+ programme (3 pupils), the non-profits AFS organisation (52 pupils), YFU organisation (44 pupils), and the governmental programme Ettarspogrammen (26 pupils).

from the government. Schools cannot prevent a pupil from taking leave from school, and they must readmit pupils when they return from the exchange<sup>535</sup>.

However, if pupils enrol in a mobility programme run by the school within a school-to-school partnership, they receive State funding for their education<sup>536</sup>. The same regulations apply for pupils when abroad as at home, therefore, the schools need to ensure that all its obligations are fulfilled during mobility which is quite difficult<sup>537</sup>.

### **Funding for the sending school**

The school does not receive State funding for the outgoing pupil if they are considered on leave of absence from school.

## **Status of pupils hosted in Sweden**

### **Registration in the host school**

Schools have discretion to decide on whether to admit pupils from abroad, as the framework set by the State does not include anything specific about temporary mobility. A temporary resident has the right to attend school, this right also applies to pupils living with a host family within an exchange programme. However, this right only gives the hosted pupil access to an introductory programme to study Swedish, before becoming eligible to attend a national programme. Therefore, exchange pupils are generally only accepted by schools on an exceptional basis and placed in classes according to where there is a place available<sup>538</sup>.

### **Funding for the host school**

Schools receive funding if they host exchange pupils.

### **Certification for hosted pupils**

Provided they fulfil all the knowledge requirements for a course in a given subject, hosted pupils can be awarded marks for the course.

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<sup>535</sup> School Act Chapter 5 § 16: pupils have the right to return to the same educational programme after spending a maximum one year abroad and to continue their course.

<sup>536</sup> Briga, 2018.

<sup>537</sup> Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 6 September 2020.

<sup>538</sup> Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 28 October 2020.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Hosted pupils may receive the school leaving certificate if they are admitted in a national programme and follow it for the full three years. This is rare and difficult for exchange pupils as they enter the Swedish schools as exceptions, and not through an introductory programme to learn the language and meet other prerequisites, which then gives access to a national programme.

## Procedure for recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU). It should be noted that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>539</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

Currently there are no mechanisms or guidelines for recognising learning periods abroad of up to one school year or for translating courses taken abroad into courses – each giving points and marks– which are foreseen in the national curriculum, and which need to be completed to receive the school leaving certificate *Gymnasieexamen*<sup>540</sup>.

Pupils enrolling on a mobility programme outside of the school-to-school partnership framework, are considered to be on leave from the education system for the duration of the mobility and therefore recognition is not possible<sup>541</sup>. However, the school principal has the discretion to assess the particular situation of the exchange pupil and give a passing mark (E) without requiring them to take exams<sup>542</sup>: this is usually done for short periods abroad as the longer pupils are away, the more difficult it is to give them a mark. This option is not usually pursued as it would impact the final results in the school leaving certificate<sup>543</sup>.

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<sup>539</sup> Within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>540</sup> Information received from the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 6 September 2020, and from the Department for International Co-operation, Swedish Council for Higher Education, on 6 November 2020.

<sup>541</sup> Information received from the Department of International Cooperation, Swedish Council for Higher Education, on 10 November 2020.

<sup>542</sup> School Ordinance Chapter 7 § 16.

<sup>543</sup> Briga, 2018.

Pupils always have the right to ask that their study period abroad be noted on their certificate<sup>544</sup>.

### **Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year**

Pupils can have any course and subject of their study plan validated and given a mark through an extended exam that will cover all the learning outcomes of the particular course. The teacher is responsible for the assessment and validation; tools such as the Europass mobility certificate can be used to complement this process<sup>545</sup>.

The longer the learning period abroad is, the more difficult it will be for pupils to take the extended exams as there will be more subjects to be examined in. Most pupils – including those who have been on trimester exchanges – usually take exams to pass only some of the courses they took abroad (e.g. foreign languages) and then they repeat the school year.

### **Recommendations for achieving automatic recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school**

Based on the findings of the Country report, this section identifies the current challenges and enablers for recognition of learning periods abroad and suggests recommendations for making progress towards automatic recognition as foreseen by the European Education Area by 2025.

#### **Challenges**

- Recognition of learning periods abroad is rare and usually only applied for short periods abroad (e.g. trimester) through the use of a learning agreement within school-to-school partnership mobility programmes.
- Pupil exchange programmes run by private organisations are not considered to be school programmes: young people take leave from school (gap year) to enrol in such exchanges.

#### **Enablers**

- School principals can allow pupils to be admitted to the next year with a “passing mark” and a form of recognition based on equivalence of school attendance abroad

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<sup>544</sup> Abroad Upper Secondary School Ordinance (SFS 2010:2039 chapter 8, 17-18§.).

<sup>545</sup> Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 28 October 2020.

(although this is not a common practice, as pupils wish to have a record of high marks for their university entrance exam)

### **Recommendations**

- Recognise individual pupil exchange programmes run by private organisations as school programmes.
- Provide guidelines to all schools to support a common approach to automatic recognition, based on a learning agreement which identifies learning outcomes broadly in line with the national curriculum. The experience of schools which do recognise learning periods abroad – including through the practice of the “passing mark” – should be taken into account when developing a common approach. The learning agreement should include a reintegration plan to allow the pupil to catch up with core content missed during study abroad and provide enough time to do so. For recognition of periods of a full school year abroad, catch-up may take place over several months in the next school year.
- Provide guidance on how to translate courses taken abroad into the modules/courses set out in the school curriculum in Sweden, awarding points and grades to be included in the school leaving certificate. Recognition of learning periods abroad should not have any negative impact on the final mark of the school leaving certificate and therefore on university admission.



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