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IMPROVING STAFF (TRAINING) MOBILITY IN EUROPE: ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL STAFF TRAINING

THE UNICA HOSTED PLATFORM STAFFMOBILITY.EU

iMOTION
ERASMUS STAFF TRAINING



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IMPROVING STAFF (TRAINING) MOBILITY IN EUROPE: ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL STAFF TRAINING

THE UNICA HOSTED PLATFORM STAFFMOBILITY.EU

February 2021

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Introduction



The aim of this report is to look at the development of staff mobility, and in particular staff training mobility, rather than teaching mobility. Teaching mobility has taken place since the beginning of the Erasmus programme and has received some review and analysis. It is also governed by inter-institutional agreements in the same way as study exchanges. Staff mobility for the purpose of training, staff development, curriculum development or job shadowing is a more recent development. It can be undertaken by academic staff, but also support staff, technicians or senior managers. Both academics and administrative staff are seen as multipliers in the internationalisation process of universities.¹

Although Erasmus has been going for more than 30 years it is mainly identified as a student mobility programme, where students from within the European Union and EEA can spend 3-12 months studying or more recently working in another European country. There have been many reports on the impact that study and/or work abroad has had on students over the years, and the programme has been adapted in each 7-year cycle to meet the changing demands and policies of the European Union.

Staff mobility has been the poor relation in contrast, with statistics rarely reported, or if reported then as a sideline or add-on, meriting at most a paragraph in a lengthy report on students. However, staff mobility has always been part of the programme: “The spread of staff exchanges and the joint development of teaching programmes, which go hand in hand, promise an

¹ European and national policies for academic mobility: Irena Ferencz, Bernd Wächter (ed) ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education 2012, p26

improvement of the quality of teaching in key-sectors of education.”² ; and in the early days under ICPs (Interuniversity Cooperation Programmes) teaching exchanges happened within an ICP, where academics taught in specific subject areas at each other's institutions. This was relatively easy to organize, as the academic staff had often set up the ICP between 2-10 universities in a specific subject area and often knew each other very well. Some ICPs involved only teaching mobility or curriculum development, which also included mobility of academics. Originally teaching mobility had to be a minimum of one month but that had changed by 1993/94 to one week with a maximum of 12 months. Teaching staff exchange was seen as contributing to making the benefits of European cooperation available not only to those students who took part in exchanges but also to the majority of the student population, who did not.³ This is a very topical idea given the way universities are having to adapt to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During Socrates (2000–2007) staff mobility was recognized as a separate activity in Erasmus, with a move away from ICPs, and a more bilateral, rather than network approach. As the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) came into being (2007-2014), a more centralized approach became common for student mobility in particular, as it was realised that there were very good examples of credit mobility, but also very lax practices in student mobility. Teaching exchanges continued to be available, but the introduction of training for administrative staff, programme directors and professional service staff at HEIs became possible. This had involved lobbying from HEI International Office staff with the European Commission, because until then administrative exchanges were only possible by using part of the organisational support (OS) budget, not as a separate activity in its own right. This meant that the limited activity that did take place was not recorded and tended to be undertaken by staff from International Offices or by academics heavily

²Report on the Experience Acquired in the Application of the Erasmus Programme 1987-1989, Commission of the European Communities SEC(89) 2051, Brussels, 13.12.1989,p.3

³ Erasmus Programme Annual Report 1993, Com(94) 281 final, Brussels 6.7.1994, p.10

involved in the management of student mobility in their Department. This changed quite radically under Erasmus+ in 2014.



What is Staff Training under Erasmus+

Staff training under Erasmus+ are training opportunities available to staff working in education, both in teaching and non-teaching capacities. Training periods abroad can consist of job shadowing, observation periods or specific training courses abroad. ([Opportunities for Individuals | Erasmus+](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmusplus/opportunities/overview_en) | ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmusplus/opportunities/overview_en)

Erasmus+ supports training periods for staff working in higher education institutions. With Erasmus+, you can train at a higher education institution in an Erasmus+ Programme or Partner country. If you are working in a higher education institution in a Programme Country, you can also train at an organisation outside the sector in a Programme country. A training period between two Programme countries must last a minimum of **2 days** and cannot last more than **2 months**. This excludes travelling time. Financial support is provided by the sending institution, based on the availability of grants at the home institution and then the distance between the home and host country and the maximum rate for the country to be visited.

Staff training started in 2007 with the launch of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). It complemented the exchange of teaching staff which had started in 1987, but for which individual agreements between institutions had to be reached. Training, for both academic and professional service staff, does not have to be governed by an inter-institutional agreement.

Literature review

According to the 2012 ACA Paper on International Cooperation in Education⁴ in comparison to student mobility, substantially fewer countries stated that they had a national policy for increasing staff mobility. This is consistent with previous research⁵ results which have underlined that staff mobility stretches from being just a “footnote” in student mobility



polices, to the core of strategies in science, research and innovation policies. This has much to do with the way staff is defined and understood in national contexts. Staff in the higher education setting may include administrative staff, research staff, teaching staff, and in some European countries like Germany, a borderline category of PhD “students” who are not necessarily enrolled as students, but working as university “staff” in research projects. The modes of employment/engagement of staff (full-time, part-time, fractional-time, honorary), the hierarchical structure of staff, as well as their types of mobility, are also much more sophisticated than in the case of students. Therefore, ACA was not surprised to see a general lack of a dedicated national mobility policy for staff per se.⁶ Despite the lack of a clear and comparable definition of staff within Europe, their analysis of documents considered relevant for staff mobility revealed that staff mobility was seen as multipliers for student mobility and the staff as international networkers. This

⁴ European and national policies for academic mobility op.cit, ACA 2012, p.53

⁵ Mapping Mobility in European Higher education, 2 vols., Bonn: DAAD (Dok&Mat 69,70) Teichler, U., Ferencz, I. and Wächter, B. (eds.)

⁶ European and national policies for academic mobility op.cit, ACA 2012, p.53

is the “footnote” type of staff mobility reference, occasionally found in student mobility policies. The “multiplier staff” may vary and include administrative staff, teaching staff as well as PhD students. This short-term type of mobility is mainly funded through Erasmus, or also nationally financed programmes, as is the case in Germany and the Netherlands, for example.

The type of activity “performed” abroad is most commonly teaching, training or research. Nevertheless, well-integrated short-term staff mobility recognised in the home institution for career advancement has begun to gain attention at the national level in countries such as France. As indicated above, the impact of staff mobility on the travelling staff or on their HEIs has been subject to much less research than the effect on students. This was recognized by the Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact Study 2018.⁷

The positive effects that have been recognized refer mainly to teaching staff or do not differentiate between teaching and training activities. Improved skills and competences, new teaching approaches and research opportunities are cited, as are improved personal and social development and intercultural awareness. The EIS (2014) found that 70% of the staff surveyed agreed that the most important aspect of mobility was the increase in their knowledge of good practices and their skills. The EIS explored the association between mobility and the relationship staff have with their HEI and towards Europe. Significant differences between mobile and non-mobile staff were observed: the relationship of mobile staff to the home HEI, city and country was stronger for mobile than non-mobile staff (5% to 10% more) and substantially stronger towards Europe (85% compared to 69%).

The 2018 Erasmus report states that 99% of staff were satisfied or very satisfied with their Erasmus+ experience abroad and the participant reports demonstrate that the activity contributed greatly to a sense of shared European identity and being open minded to working abroad. 95% of mobile staff agreed that the European Union is necessary and saw an added value in being

⁷ with references to the CHE Consult et al (2014) Erasmus Impact Study (EIS): ESN 2015, 2014, 2013; Unlu 2012, Aydin 2012, where this had already been noticed.

European. 91% of mobile staff improved their intercultural competences and are better able to get along with people from different backgrounds and to consider different cultural backgrounds.

In the Annex of the ICF survey of the evaluation of the mid-term Erasmus+ Programme in October 2017 one interesting discovery was that staff who had taken part in an Erasmus mobility (both teaching and training) were more likely to continue working internationally. They explored the frequency and nature of ongoing contact with international networks and aimed to establish whether there were any significant differences in staff exchanges with international colleagues between different groups of participants and non-participants of Erasmus+ initiatives. The survey asked respondents how often they cooperate with international colleagues and what methods they use to maintain contact and share information with people and organisations from abroad. The findings are expressed in terms of the percentage of respondents who maintain frequent contact with international colleagues, and the percentage of respondents who are using three of the more professional approaches to maintain contact and share information (i.e. those working together to develop projects, those exchanging information relating to their profession, and those keeping each other up-to-date about relevant developments). HE staff who had taken part in an Erasmus mobility (10,880, of whom 5,117 went abroad for training) compared to the control group (385) were 69% compared to 53% more likely to maintain frequent contact with international partners; for developing international projects it was 78% compared to 66%; for the exchange of information it was 76% compared to 62% and for updating each other on developments in their profession it was the greatest gap, 62% compared to 44%, although it was the least engaged in activity.⁸

The other interesting area is the recognition of experience and professional development as a result of taking part in a staff mobility. The report compared experiences between the different sectors and types of mobility activity. The responses suggest that HE staff were more likely to have received a financial reward (28% agreed with this statement), compared to the overall average,

⁸ Annex 3b Results of staff survey, Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and ex-post evaluation of predecessor programmes, ICF,2017, p. 61 and 62

particularly for those participating in long term activities. However, the responses suggest that HE institutions were the least likely of all sectors to have acknowledged the participation of their staff (only 53% of HE staff agreed with this statement) and the least likely to have accepted the experience as training or professional development (83% of HE staff agreed with this statement). Agreement was particularly low for HE staff who went abroad to teach. HE staff were also less likely, compared to the overall average, to state that the experience had influenced their careers, or helped them to attain a new function or new level of seniority within their institution.⁹

Recognition of Staff Mobility

	Went abroad for training (5,117)	Went abroad to teach (6,761)¹⁰
Accepted as training	88.1%	80.5%
Financial reward	32.1%	28.5%
New function	48.7%	44.0%
Acknowledged	57.0%	51.5%
No Difference	49.1%	51.5%
Negative influence	13.9%	12.2%

⁹ *ibid*, p. 104

¹⁰ Erasmus+ participants were asked how their experiences had been acknowledged and recognised by their institution. They were asked to confirm the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. My international experience was accepted as training that is part of professional development
2. I have received a financial reward / compensation (other than the project grant)
3. My international experience helped me attain a new function / level of seniority
4. My experience was acknowledged by my hierarchy and/or my peers - for example I was congratulated in private or thanked publically
5. Taking part in an international activity made no difference to my career in the school
6. My international experience had a negative influence on my career in my institution (e.g. it created envy among my peers).

The survey used a Likert scale with four options (strongly disagree, rather disagree, rather agree, and strongly agree) for each statement.

In 2018 the Erasmus+ programme emphasised the need to train academic staff in innovative pedagogies and curriculum design, and required HEIs to set institutional targets in terms of the number of staff to support to take part in such training. HEIs started to substantially support their teaching staff by dedicating more than a third of their Erasmus+ funded staff training mobility for this purpose¹¹. This, however, is self-reported by institutions and hard to verify.

Staff Training Statistics for Erasmus



When the IMOTION project¹² was proposed in 2013 there were already 42,817 staff exchanges supported in 2010/11, involving 2,262 HEIs and with staff training representing 26.2% of all staff mobilities (11,218). At an EU level training mobilities increased from 11,218 in 2010/11 to 33,657 in the 2017 Call, representing 48.3%

of all staff mobilities¹³. Most outbound staff originated from Poland (3,785), Germany (3,218), Spain (3,095) and Romania (2,131) with the UK reporting 1,518. In terms of inbound participation the picture is somewhat different with Spain hosting 3,632 participants, the UK 3,077, Italy 2,841 and Germany 2,306. It is useful to look at the statistics of two countries: Germany and the UK in more detail.

¹¹ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2018 p.35

¹² Erasmus Accompanying Measures grant agreement 2013-2888/001-001, project number 538524-LLP-1-2013-1-BE-ERASMUS-EAM

¹³ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2018 p. 35

Germany

Number of Erasmus+ Staff Mobilities with Programme countries

	Teaching	Training
2014	3,338	1,652
2015	3,106	1,930
2016	3,367	2,716
2017	3,252	3,218
2018	4,007	2,598
2019	4,068	3,512

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The realised mobilities of the completed projects from 2014-2017 show a dynamic increase in the area of staff mobilities. Especially mobility for the purpose of training of HEI staff grew rapidly, whereas the mobility of teaching staff stagnated. In 2014 training mobilities represented 33% of the total, whereas it had reached 50% by 2017, dropping back slightly to 46% by 2019. With an increase in the Erasmus budget this development could be extended for projects in 2018 and 2019. It is possible to surmise that the exponential growth of staff training weeks and the promotion of these through IMOTION since 2014 had led to this increase.

Germany seems to be bucking the trend for Programme to Partner country mobility with administrative training taking precedence over teaching mobility from the beginning of KA107.

¹⁴ DAAD website accessed 9/11/2020
<https://eu.daad.de/service/auswertung-und-statistik/statistik-zahlen-und-fakten/de/74677-statistiken-zahlen-und-fakten/>

Number of Erasmus+ Staff Mobilities with Partner countries

	Teaching	Training
2015	525	1,041
2016	1,003	2,401
2017	1,969	3,370
2018	1,947	3,317
2019	2,087	3,511

© Nationale Agentur im DAAD/2020¹⁵

The dynamic development of staff mobility with partner countries can be seen clearly in the completed projects 2015-2017 with training representing 66% of all staff mobility in 2017, dropping back to 63% in 2018 and 2019. This development was also taken into account in the assessment and funding of projects in 2018 and 2019. In 2019 an additional budget line contributed to the further increase.

United Kingdom

UUKi does not report on international outward staff mobility – just the number of international staff who come and work at UK HEIs. Whereas for students this is reported on in detail¹⁶. However, the National Agency does report the data in depth.

It is interesting to analyse the UK outward mobility for training in more detail¹⁷. In 2007/8 only 111 staff took part in a staff training activity, compared to 1,472 teaching mobilities, representing just 7% of all staff mobility. By 2017/18 (the latest year for which comprehensive statistics are

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ UUK Facts and Stats, 2020

¹⁷ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2018.

available) this had increased to 1,481, compared to 1,319 teaching mobilities, representing 52.9% of all staff mobilities. It was in that year that the number of training mobilities overtook the number of teaching mobilities for the first time. In 2016/17 the two types of mobility had been practically equal at 1,296 teaching and 1,283 training mobilities. By 2018/19 the number of training mobilities reached 1,518 (51%) of all staff mobilities.

For the UK the most popular host countries between 2014/15 and 2017/18 for staff training were Finland (600), Germany (501), the Netherlands (367), Spain (300), Italy (281) and Sweden (262), so not totally mirroring the general EU pattern. In the 2017 call Spain was the most popular with 444 staff mobility participants followed by Germany with 339 participants and then France with 272 and Italy with 226¹⁸. These statistics do not differentiate between teaching and training mobilities referring to the total of outward staff mobility of 2,974. It is, however, still a further increase of 174 staff mobilities (6%) compared to 2017/18. Annex 19 of the report lets you see which country is favoured by which other country, but as it does not distinguish between teaching and training an analysis would have some flaws although as indicated above staff training mobility is now almost equal to teaching mobility (48.3%). However, the split between the two activities is not equal in all countries.¹⁹

Why the shift?

With the advent of KA107, which is heavily focused on staff mobility in contrast to student mobility in most applications, one can assume that the decline in teaching mobility is partly due to the fact that the more mobile academics are not necessarily going to teach in both a Partner and a Programme country in a given year.

However, professional services staff, especially those at the beginning of their careers, are more



¹⁸ Ibid, op. cit. p. 40.

¹⁹ Ibid, Annex 16, p.35

likely to start a mobility in a Programme country, rather than opting for a Partner country, especially with the growth of staff training weeks, making this an easier option to pursue if promoted actively within the home institution. There are exceptions to this (see German data above), but the fact that applications for KA107 are competitive also plays a role here. So, there may be staff training mobility to Australia, as it is a desirable country from which to learn, whereas other Partner countries may not be as popular.

Furthermore, already from 2015 it was possible to combine teaching and training within one mobility, but this was then reported and funded by the sending institution under teaching²⁰. This therefore would not explain why teaching mobility is showing a decline since 2017 in comparison with training mobility at an EU level, even if this is not mirrored in all countries.



Finally, the fact that there was an additional emphasis to train academics in curriculum development from 2018 means that the mixed training/teaching mobility is likely to have increased, as well as the standard staff training. An academic member of staff who visited another institution to observe their curriculum and discuss this with Programme Directors would be classified under training and not teaching. As stated above, the EU report²¹ implied that this type of mobility now represented a third of all staff training mobility.

²⁰ The sending institution would then report the single mobility on the Mobility Tool+ as a teaching mobility but will select the "Combined Teaching and Training". In addition to selecting this option, the beneficiary should enter the name of the organisation providing the training activities, its location and the duration of the training in the field "Mobility Comments".

Key Action 103 Operational Handbook, UK, p.27

²¹ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2018, p.35

Development of Staff Training

Under the LLP staff training first became a directly fundable activity in the same way as a teaching mobility. However, no inter-institutional agreement had to be signed. This made logical sense, as to receive training it is best to go where you might gain the greatest benefit. This may not necessarily be at a partner institution.

Using the Erasmus Accompanying Measures funding several new web platforms to make certain parts of the Erasmus programme more accessible were developed. For example, JOIMAN is a platform in which an experienced group of partners could share knowledge and know how on the solutions found for administrative problems faced in the management and running of Joint Programmes (www.joiman.eu); it ran from November 2008 to October 2009, but was followed by the JOI.CON project (Joint Programme Management – Conference and Training), as an offspring of JOIMAN aimed at training present and future coordinators of Joint Programmes running from 2011 to 2012, with some follow-up continuing to 2015. This would have led to a certain group of administrative staff being able to access very specific training.

After five years of staff training being a separately funded Erasmus activity IMOTION in 2013 aimed at meeting a broader need and this resulted in an online platform (<http://staffmobility.eu>) that centralised information about staff training events organised in Europe in order to provide easy access to the information. The platform supports HEIs in the promotion of staff training events and in finding speakers/trainers for these events, as well as supporting those organising job shadowing. It is intended as a two-way platform, so that professional service staff and academics can find suitable offers. The platform also allows organisers of staff training events to get feedback from the participants.



Middlesex University in the United Kingdom, as part of the Key Action 2 Strategic Partnership project²², produced a report on Realising the potential of the international mobility of staff in higher education (REALISE) in 2017. This report, based on a survey among 6,202 HEI staff in 10 partner countries, who had or had not undertaken a staff mobility, produced some further

interesting insights into the differences between academic teaching staff mobility and administrative staff mobility. 1,936 of respondents (31%) had taken part in an Erasmus mobility since 2012/13. Of those who had taken part the majority (64%) were academics. The survey results therefore refer to 690 administrative mobilities. According to the REALISE analysis compared to the EIS 2014 report there has been a 10% increase in participation of administrative staff in staff mobility in the last 5 years. 32% of the administrative staff who went on mobility were International Relations (IR) staff. This result is consistent with previous findings and has already been alluded to above.²³ It is not surprising as this group of staff are more aware of the opportunities, although in the UK for several years the National Agency through its Operational Handbook did not encourage these staff to take part in Erasmus staff mobility if funds were limited. Student services, library and departmental administrative staff account for 37% with Human Resources, IT, Finance and Technical Services and Admissions representing the lowest number of participants.

When looking further at the activities undertaken during the visit the split (once the teaching and research seminars at 50% is disregarded) is general training (17%), organised training weeks (10%) and work shadowing (13%) with the remainder classified as Language Learning or Other at 10%.

²² 2016-1-FR01-KA203-0242670 <http://www.realise-erasmusplus.fr>

²³ EIC 2014, p. 43

It is also interesting to note that 48% of all staff only undertook one visit in the last 5 years, whereas 22% had made two visits and 10% one every year over the last five years.

The majority of respondents (55%) went for one week and 34% for less than a week. Visits of more than one week amounted to 20% of all visits. The most visited countries were Spain (14%), Italy (10%), UK and Germany (8% each) and France (7%). This is consistent with the official 2015 EU statistics for teaching visits. The data from the REALISE study does not break destinations down further into training and teaching, so cannot be compared to the statistics above²⁴.

Staff Training Weeks and the role of IMOTION

Staff (training) weeks started to be offered by HEIs and commercial providers from 2008 onwards. The majority were badged as Internationalisation events, with the primary audience being staff in International Offices. They were often limited to one person per institution and in some cases competitive to attend. The main aim was for staff new to the field to learn from more experienced providers.

Staff training was actively discussed in the UK among Higher Education European Officers as early as 2009 at the HEURO Annual Conference, where Middlesex University and City University London presented on their approach to managing staff mobility in their institutions. With the option of staff training being launched in the LLP programme in 2007 certain institutions, e.g. those located in capital cities were being inundated with requests from across Europe for Erasmus training visits. Most were asking to come for a week to “see how you do things”. Most International Offices decided that individual visits were too hard to manage and coordinate to be of value to either their university or the visitor. One option was to run an Erasmus Training Mobility Week, which is what Middlesex and City did. Sapienza University of Rome did it for similar reasons, but also as it

²⁴ Report on a comparative analysis of current practices in Erasmus staff mobility at European HEIs, Middlesex University, 2017 p. 10-13

represented a strategic decision for Internationalisation at Home (IaH). This at the time was far less spread as a strategic concept in the UK.

In the UK the first mention of Staff training weeks advertised via the National Agency was in November 2013, with one offered in Spain in February 2014. Individual partner universities may have written to their partners before then. Since then there has been a steady trickle of adverts from certain partners. By 2019 UUKi had decided that in addition to the Outward Mobility Network, which was established in 2013, it was worth having a sector wide Working Group on staff mobility which meets quarterly to facilitate consultations and discussions on focused themes.



In particular, the working group will:

- i. Be a forum for dialogue at the national level on outward staff mobility policy and practice
- ii. Discuss how to take forward recommendations from the REALISE project with a particular focus on the recognition of staff mobility within institutions.
- iii. Contribute to the profiling of staff mobility and its impact on student mobility through the Go International: Stand Out campaign
- iv. Respond to challenges raised at the Network on the theme of outward staff mobility and through the REALISE project
- v. Provide expert insight, up-to-date intelligence, and examples of good practice on outward staff mobility in outward mobility activities across the sector.
- vi. Develop a survey, analyse and disseminate the data results in relation to staff perceptions on barriers and benefits to staff mobility.
- vii. Feedback findings to the UUKi Outward Student Mobility Network and provide content for UUKi website, newsletters, and other forums.

The UK Strategy for Outward Mobility 2014-2016 was published in December 2013, but there was no specific strategic objective for staff mobility; it was focused almost exclusively on student mobility. The Outward Student Mobility strategy 2017-2020 was updated in 2017, but again contains no specific reference to staff mobility.

In recent years, under Erasmus+ there has been a shift, with some of the staff training weeks being used more for KA107 activities, but open to participants from other EU/EEA countries or as show cases for lesser known universities. Some of these latter programmes offered are light in content, often used to invite new and existing partners with the main purpose being to give them a chance to promote themselves to their students. The training element is often missing in these staff weeks, but the cultural element is high. "The aim of the event is to establish new partnerships, promote various universities and their study possibilities to University of XXX students. It is an excellent opportunity to network and discover future opportunities for further projects, research and more ways to keep connected!

We really hope that the excellent strategic location of XXX in YYY and in the region will convince you to visit us. YYY is one of the most beautiful towns breathing with history and it ranks among the largest cities in YYY."

The second trend, which is more welcome is that of the focused training week, e.g. Innovation and Global Engagement in Doctoral Education. The host has identified a topical area, focused on a particular type of administrative and academic staff, has named the key speakers and explained the methodology for the 3-day training event.

The third type of training week is a hybrid model, combining workshops with a very specific audience in mind joined with a one-day conference, open to a wider audience. It is split into a conference and workshops targeted at younger academics/researchers, who may benefit from some of the sessions on the theme of Prospering in Academia.

Of the 55 UNICA members from 38 European capital cities some members, notably those from the following Erasmus countries: Denmark, Greece, Latvia, The Netherlands, Republic of North

Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia have not offered staff weeks through IMOTION. This represents 8 of the 37 countries and approx. a quarter of the members. This is interesting when for example in Romania other institutions are offering a large range of training weeks (42). It could be that the institutions feel that as there are already so many offerings that they do not need to do so. However, other UNICA member universities are running five different staff weeks e.g. Free University Berlin or both member universities in Hungary are running one each. There are also universities who run regular staff training weeks but never use IMOTION.

IMOTION's Role

As can be seen from the anecdotal information above staff training weeks and job shadowing developed in a very ad hoc manner across Europe. [UNICA](#) (Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe) found that despite its success in terms of a steady increase in uptake year on year there was no coordinated source of information on the opportunities available for staff training. The concept of "Triple R2: the right



person, at the right place, at the right time" too often does not work for staff training, as information was scattered and not easily accessible. As seen above dissemination is often just to partners or within consortia, sometimes via the National Agency or just mentioned on an HEI website. And, in many cases it is then only available to staff from International Offices.

UNICA, together with the European Association of Erasmus Coordinators (EAEC), and the Santander and Compostela networks, representing 223 European institutions, bid for an Erasmus Accompanying Measures project to build a platform devoted to the promotion of staff training

courses, where individual HEIs could promote their training week in a set format. Users would then be able to search the database by topic and country. The secondary part of the platform was to enable participants to upload their CV and details to enable job shadowing to be facilitated and for organisers of staff training weeks to find experts in a particular area. This part of the tool would allow staff week organisers to implement the “triple R” concept.

Job shadowing is important on a national level, but often has greater impact on an international level. Nationally there are often professional bodies who provide group training and staff get to know each other and then meet to undertake job shadowing on a regional basis. Undertaking job shadowing in another country is more of a challenge, but is particularly valuable for younger staff. It can be used as a staff development opportunity and to create or strengthen certain abilities. It has the benefit of adding an intercultural dimension which institutions are trying to instill in their students. The multiplier effect of a member of staff having undertaken the same activity as a student can be highly effective. It makes staff think about their own jobs and, also gives them the opportunity to prepare presentations about their own universities, which in comparison to academics, they are often not used to doing.

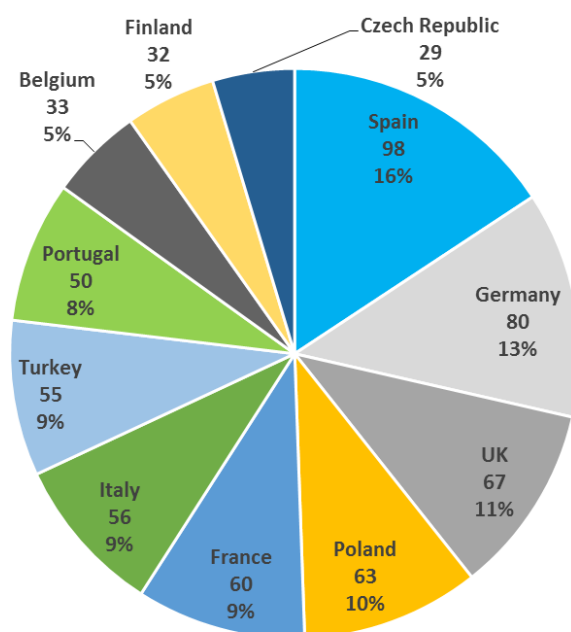
To set a quality standard at the beginning of the project it was planned for the Steering Committee to select and publish only staff training offers that provide high quality information. This mechanism, together with the possibility of participants to provide feedback would encourage organisers to improve the quality of their training events and to make them meet the demands and needs of HEI staff. The aim was to eventually improve the overall quality of Erasmus training. By the end of the IMOTION project (30 September 2014) 50 staff weeks from 17 countries were published on the staffmobility.eu website. Currently²⁵ 200 staff weeks are listed from 20 countries including one from a non-EU/EEA country, covering 12 different target groups, with International Relations, Academic and Student Affairs, Research & Development and Doctoral Education being the most popular target groups. Most programmes are offered in English, with the exception of

²⁵ website accessed on 25 January 2021

two offered in Spanish. In the seven years since its launch the use of the website to advertise staff weeks has shown an exponential growth.

1,640²⁶ staff week announcements have been published on staffmobility.eu since its launch; 997 users from 652 HEIs in 33 countries are currently registered on the platform, as well as 222 experts. The countries with the largest number of registered users are: Spain, Germany, the UK, Poland, France, Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Belgium, Finland, and the Czech Republic (see the chart below).

Users of IMOTION by country



Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Austria, Hungary, Latvia and Cyprus have 15-20 users each; Norway, Sweden, Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Slovenia, Romania and The Netherlands are each represented by 10 to 13 users each. Bulgaria, Slovakia, Switzerland, the Republic of North Macedonia, Iceland, Lithuania and Luxembourg have 1-8 users each.

²⁶ Many universities update previous announcements in case of recurring staff weeks, therefore the actual number is likely to be higher

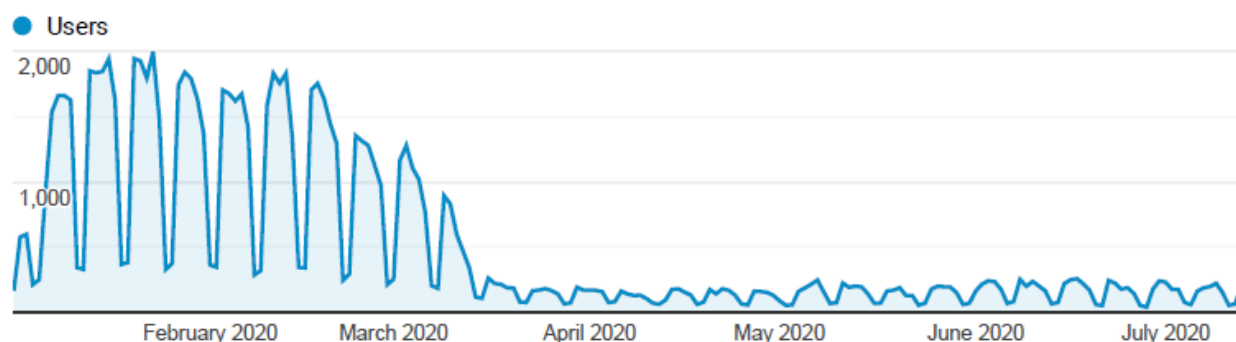
The data on the activity and engagement of visitors to the platform confirms that the popularity of staffmobility.eu has constantly grown over the years: as shown in the table below; the number of visitors, new visitors, and sessions shows a significant increase between 2017 and 2019.

Engagement of visitors with IMOTION (2017-2020)

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Visitors & users	80,939 (+37%)*	107,899 (+33.31%)*	140,885 (+30.57%)*	76,576 (-45.65%)*
New visitors	77,771 (+6.82%)*	106,339 (+36.73%)*	135,793 (+27.70%)*	70,112 (-48.37%)*
Sessions	175,795 (+22.38%)*	247,121 (+40.57%)*	313,926 (+27.03%)*	149,681 (-52.32%)*

*Increase/decrease compared to the previous year

The decrease of engagement in 2020 can be explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the postponement/cancellation of most staff weeks scheduled in 2020. This is confirmed by the dramatic decrease in terms of visitors' engagement which can be observed after March 2020, when lockdowns and the closure of borders were decided in most European countries (see the graphic below).



The positive trend of the period January – February 2020 (before the start of the health crisis in Europe) compared to the same date range in 2019 is a further confirmation of the disruptive effects of the pandemic:

Engagement of visitors with IMOTION in Jan-Feb 2019 vs Jan-Feb 2020

	Jan – Feb 2019	Jan – Feb 2020
Visitors	35,789	41,204
New visitors	30,354	34,899
Sessions	76,084	87,998

The analytics of the platform by visitors' geographical location in the years from 2017 to 2020 show a rather stable "top 10" of countries, with Germany always being in first place and Poland and Spain competing for second place for the number of visitors active on staffmobility.eu. The UK, France, Turkey, Italy, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Greece, Sweden and Finland are the other more represented countries by number of visitors, with slight changes depending on the year of reference.

Visitors and Users by country in 2020

	No. of visitors/users	% of visitors/users
Germany	6,973	9.10 %
Poland	6,453	8.42 %
Spain	6,092	7.95 %
United Kingdom	5,003	6.53 %
France	4,880	6.37 %
Turkey	4,000	5.22 %
Italy	3,643	4.75 %
Czech Republic	3,608	4.71 %
Portugal	2,873	3.75 %
Greece	2,247	2.93 %

The growth is not surprising, as it is really the only platform available, illustrated by this request to the Erasmus network in the UK:

"I'm writing to seek some information about what other institutions do to assist their staff in finding Erasmus+ teaching and training opportunities. At the moment, our support largely amounts to directing our staff to the [IMOTION website](#) for staff training weeks, and providing a list of our current staff teaching mobility partnerships. We don't currently provide much assistance to anyone seeking to undertake a more bespoke training activity, or to set up a teaching mobility visit, other than advising them to draft a provisional teaching or training plan to send to prospective hosts and providing contact details if available.

I'd like us to do more to help identify and source opportunities and wondered if anyone had any bright ideas. Does anyone have a good system for recording and sharing previously visited host institutions and contacts with their staff community? Do you have a system for linking incoming enquiries from staff at other European institutions with interested staff at your institution? Is there a platform for any of this, other than the IMOTION site (which is currently only for staff training)? Do any of you have a mentoring or buddy system for staff?"²⁷

The only feedback from this request was from Regents University London, who indicated that they did the following:

- Disseminating any incoming partner offerings to their Heads of Department
- Approaching partners on colleagues' behalf with job shadowing requests
- Passing on incoming requests to the relevant department to assess whether or not they could be accommodated
- Meeting incoming staff in order to help create opportunities for outgoing staff



Job shadowing opportunities on the platform are far more limited with only two on the site, one from 2014 and one for 2020. Given the change in working practices since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 in higher education job shadowing may see an increase. It is now more of an accepted practice to connect virtually to gain information. Many conferences and other training events have taken place via Zoom, MS Teams or other software. Job shadowing is potentially easier to organise remotely, as it does not entail someone travelling to another country for a week, but can be organised more flexibly over a month or two with the staff members meeting once a week online. For staff training weeks this is less practical or desirable. So, there may be a positive development in terms of staff training as a result of the pandemic. Similarly, for teaching staff the

²⁷ Staff Programmes Manager, The University of Edinburgh 30 July 2019.

use of webinars and joint development of online teaching may well be accelerated, meeting some of the aims of the new Erasmus programme such as:

- Digitalisation / digital tools; innovative pedagogies
- Environmentally friendly practices
- Student support and recognition
- Intercultural communication; transversal topics²⁸

The staffmobility.eu website has been maintained by UNICA for the last 6 years not just 18 months, as agreed under the funded project, but it does need dedicated administrative and technical support to keep it current and useful, especially for job shadowing and for the recruitment of trainers. The website needs to be redesigned and updated in order to fix the current technical issues ²⁹: the filters *Application Open* and *Upcoming* and the link to the *View the Archive of past staff weeks* do not work; many staff weeks which already took place or were cancelled due to COVID-19, are still listed. Part of the problem is also that it is the organisers of the staff weeks who would need to update the information.

Furthermore, despite the popularity of the platform, there is a strong potential for growth and strategies should be planned to reach out to a higher number of HEIs and ensure a more equal representation of countries: approx. 605 HEIs have used and published staff weeks on staffmobility.eu whereas more than nearly 5,500 HEIs in Europe have now signed the Erasmus Charter and have the possibility of participating in Erasmus staff training.



²⁸ Presentation by Johannes Gehringer, HE Unit B1 at the Quality Teaching Mobility Online Conference (1/10/2020)

²⁹ The technical issues have already been fixed at the time of this report going to press.

Quality Aspects of staff training



The impact of staff training, whether job shadowing, staff training weeks, general training or a mixture of teaching and curriculum development has not been systematically assessed by the European Commission. Although every participant is required to complete an online report to which the home institution, the National Agency and the Commission have access, the questions are structured in such a way that only the benefit to

the individual participant and not the hosting (or home) university or their students is obtained. The ICF study does offer some insights here as does the REALISE study.

IMOTION stated that “The platform also allows organisers of staff training events to get feedback from the participants.” However, this information is held, if it was obtained, at the level of the individual institution who organised the staff training week. The only way to obtain this feedback would be to contact each provider. However, for future users of the IMOTION platform it would be possible to require users to agree to provide feedback on their training week. In order for funding to be received from Erasmus there need to be clearer rules in future programmes, as training weeks should not be seen as tourism, in the same way that teaching mobility should not be seen as academic tourism.

Future Research

As has been shown there has not been a systematic review of staff training on behalf of either the European Commission or academic researchers. There are a couple of projects in the pipeline linked to staff training mobility and teaching exchanges under Erasmus.

ACA is conducting a comparative analysis of Erasmus+ staff mobility³⁰ flows based on Erasmus+ staff mobility data (KA103 and KA107) that is already regularly collected through the EUSurvey, but not necessarily systematically processed at system level. The data will be analysed, over a six-year timespan and for nine participating countries – Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, and Slovenia – with a view to identifying staff mobility flows and interesting patterns, in a comparative perspective. ACA will be closely working with the Erasmus+ National Agencies in the nine countries. Tangentially, through this initiative, the potential for further analysis of Erasmus+ staff mobility data will be assessed as well, particularly in the area of impact on teaching at the home and host institutions. The analysis was scheduled to be completed in autumn 2020.

The Teach with Erasmus+ project (TWE+) aims to create an online “Marketplace” for teaching staff in order to facilitate, encourage, and promote teacher mobility across Europe. The project fulfils this objective primarily by the development of an online platform (ETMP) where teachers can meet online to offer their expertise for international partners and/or to invite fellow teachers for



³⁰ ACA Newsletter 229 – 5/2020

teaching assignments at their Higher Education Institutions. The ETMP will be a logical continuation of staffmobility.eu, the current platform providing a marketplace for staff mobility for training. As there is currently no central platform providing a database of opportunities to (especially junior) teaching staff, most teaching mobilities are based on existing bilateral contacts or are organised somewhat ad-hoc and at random, often resulting in low-quality teaching mobility.

Besides the online marketplace/hub for teaching mobilities, the platform will supplement academic staff with a [research on teaching mobility](#), the [Quality and Impact Tool for Teaching Mobility Assessment \(QUITMA\)](#), a [virtual catalogue on pedagogical tools and methods](#), and information about the staff mobility programme and the Erasmus+ Programme (guidelines on Inter-Institutional Agreements, ECTS, staff mobility recognition and more).

The objectives of the future Erasmus programme (2021-2027) is to be more inclusive and accessible; more participatory, more forward-looking; more international, simpler and digital. With the outbreak of COVID-19 across the world in 2020 staff mobility in a physical form has been seriously curtailed. However, there are examples of virtual collaboration taking place in both the teaching and training area. A staff week does not really lend itself to taking place on-line, as many of the benefits gained are through the actual mobility, seeing another campus, location, city. In order to increase the quality and relevance of staff training the Working Group on Staff Mobility at the Commission has suggested: blended staff mobility; linking HEI and the world of work, creating a link to HR development policy and further recognition of staff mobility.



The FESC project ([Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences](#)) to increase the quality of student mobility by focusing on staff competencies is another EU-funded project, recognising that staff members in

International Relations Offices (IROs) and at faculty level in HEIs play a pivotal role in the implementation of internationalisation strategies and in enabling student mobility, notably with

regards to the management of the Erasmus+ Programme. Accordingly, their performance has a critical bearing on the quality of the mobility arrangements offered to incoming and outgoing students.

The main purposes of the FESC project are as follows:

- Identifying relevant skills, know-how and processes to acquire the necessary competencies for Higher Education staff working with student mobility;
- Creating a framework which defines quality criteria for staff members working with student mobility that serves self-auditing purposes for institutions;
- Analyse how HEIs ensure relevant training for those staff members;
- Create tools and guidelines that enable staff members to understand and improve their competencies;
- Analyse how the current accreditation process for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education compares to the ESCAF, and make a policy proposal regarding the pertinence of establishing a European professional certification framework for staff members working on student mobility in the context of Erasmus+.

They are currently offering that training online in December 2020 and January 2021 and the seminars are recorded and can be openly accessed thus not requiring any travel by participants. The workload of the presenters is however increased and it may be worth thinking of how to cover these costs in future Erasmus programmes.

The Staff Mobility Working Group at the Commission felt that the focus for staff training should be on: use of digital tools; innovative pedagogies; environmentally friendly practices; student support and recognition; Intercultural communication.³¹ To find out whether these are the areas

³¹ Presentation by Johannes Gehringer, HE Unit B1 at the Quality Teaching Mobility Online Conference, 1/10/2020.

that professional services staff and academics tasked with course development are interested in further research will need to be undertaken.

Conclusion

The staffmobility.eu platform has served a purpose in facilitating the promotion and uptake of staff training weeks and is well regarded by many in the sector, especially as there is nothing else to meet this need. However, its quality could be improved, by dedicating more staff resource to it: updating the staff weeks that are listed and removing staff from the database who are no longer available as experts or for job shadowing. There are over 200 experts listed, with most in the international relations area and operating in English. However, some of these staff have retired or are no longer active in the field. Some of the profile links are not accessible, and in any case they are only accessible to staff who have themselves registered on the site. The platform can be further sophisticated by creating a category of virtual or hybrid mobility opportunities, and listing training such as that provided by the FESC Project.

For the next Erasmus programme it will be useful, in order to increase the quality of both teaching and training mobility to include virtual mobility as a selection criteria. Virtual mobility should not be funded, but be a precursor to actual mobility, with the requirements in terms of contact hours being reduced for example, if in the previous three years the individual had already contributed to several online classes or hosted/taken part in webinars.

As described above staff mobility can be divided into four groups:

- Teaching staff who teach/train abroad
- Teaching staff who train abroad (Curriculum Development)
- Senior Professional staff who train others abroad (Training as Trainer)
- Professional Services staff who train/job-shadow abroad

We have concentrated in this report on the last group, but we want to suggest some improvements for data collection for the next Erasmus programme. It has clearly been shown that data between the groups is not collected or reported systematically, and it is impossible to draw definite conclusions about the benefit and quality of the experience undertaken for each category. Training as Trainers is not at all recorded in an obvious way in the statistics. We recommend that data is collected in these categories in the future and reported as such by the National Agencies.

Where Erasmus funding is limited training for academics to learn a new technique should not be funded under staff training, but research funding should be used for this. However, this should not be mandated at an EU level, but National Agencies should be able to set priorities, based on experience in their country for outgoing staff mobility. Ideally training for academics should be used for senior academics who need to be trained in a new technique e.g. flipped classroom or setting up a MOOC, or for junior staff to gain experience of teaching to a different audience.

Although we have not concentrated on teaching mobility in this report we feel that the evaluation process needs to be refined to assess the value to the students receiving the teaching. As part of the teaching, the host university should be obliged to collect feedback from a certain percentage of their students, which they supply to the visiting teacher to integrate into their report to the Commission via the Mobility Tool. Currently the member of staff is obliged to state how many students will receive their teaching in the work plan, but in the evaluation there is no reference to how well their teaching was received.

Similarly, for professional service staff training the current evaluation process is based on the benefit to the individual and there is no way of assessing whether the host institution has benefited from the visit. This also applies to staff training weeks, where a scoring system should be devised to indicate whether it was well organised; useful in what way; recommended for whom; should it be repeated; were the trainers running the sessions appropriate; suggested changes.

Ideally, for all four categories the data should be collected on a publicly available website, where future participants and institutions who are releasing Erasmus funding to participants could check whether the activity is worth funding.

