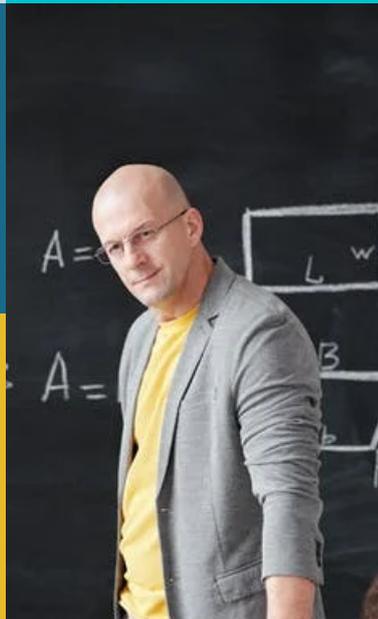
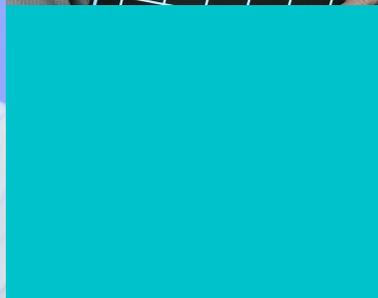
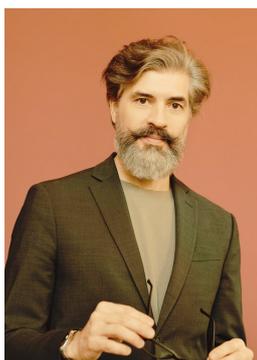


# Recommendations on effectively promoting **Teaching mobility in Europe**

## POLICY LEVEL



Developed under the  
Teach with Erasmus+ project  
[www.teachwitherasmus.eu](http://www.teachwitherasmus.eu)

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of the European Union



This report was carried out as part of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Strategic Partnership project:  
Teach with Erasmus+ (TWE+)

This publication is the outcome of work undertaken by the TWE+ consortium:

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary (as project coordinator)  
European University Foundation, Belgium  
Institut Polytechnique UniLaSalle, France  
Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA), Belgium  
University of Alcalá, Spain

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Date of publication:

July 2021

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### Acknowledgements

Our special thanks go to Ágnes Fazekas, Assistant Professor of the Eötvös Loránd University and leader of the inclusiveness work package of the CHARM-EU for supporting us with her valuable expertise in inclusion and diversity and providing us with excellent input in the field.

Warm thanks are also given to Prof. Univ. Dr. Romiță Iucu, President of the Board of Trustees, University of Bucharest and Chair of UNICA's Edulab Working Group, who shared his excellent insights about the recommendations with us.



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Developed under the Teach with Erasmus+ project [www.teachwitherasmus.eu](http://www.teachwitherasmus.eu)

The Teach with Erasmus+ project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education (agreement number 2018-1-HU-KA203-047818)

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# INTRODUCTION

The mobility of academic staff, whether physical, blended or digital, is a key aspect in internationalising higher education and achieving the European Education Area by 2025. It is one of the main priorities of the European Commission in the field of education outlined in the “Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019–2024”, published by the that-time Candidate for President, Ursula von der Leyen and in the “Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025” by the new Commission in September 2020.

Even though this view is widely shared by higher education stakeholders, student mobility has been in the forefront of action of both policymakers and higher education leaders. This has been the trend not only in recent years but since the adoption of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, which called on EU Member States to promote the mobility “for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services, for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights”. More recently, the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, adopted in November 2020, replaced the term “virtual mobility” for students with the phrase “digitally enhanced mobility”, offering a broader and more connected concept, implicitly referring to teaching mobility as well. Focusing on students however, (unintentionally) has diverted attention away from academic (as well as from administrative) staff mobility, as a result of which there is still a lack of proper understanding of the obstacles of teaching mobility and effective solutions to existing challenges.

In 2018, the Teach with Erasmus+ project (TWE+ hereinafter) was launched with the ambition to broaden knowledge and provide a more comprehensive understanding of academic staff mobility as well as to tackle the challenges linked to the quality of the mobility of academics and support the academic staff wishing to pursue international mobility. To reach these ambitious goals, the partnership completed an international survey to better understand (mainly) junior academic staff needs, personal views, attitudes, and concerns and published its findings in the [Teach with Erasmus+ Research Report](#), as well as the paper [Quality & Impact Tool for Teaching Mobility Assessment](#), which was drafted with the aim to provide tools, templates, ideas to administration and management as well as individual academics to foster institutional quality culture regarding teaching mobility and enhance the teaching mobility experience for instructors. To strengthen the practical aspects of teaching mobility and the learning progress of students, a set of pedagogical tools have been created, including videos and detailed description of the methods. One of the main outcomes of the project is the [Erasmus+ Teaching Mobility Platform \(ETMP\)](#), a brand-new website, akin to a marketplace, where institutions/teachers can offer and find relevant mobility opportunities easily and effectively. This novel platform aims to solve many of the existing challenges, and I expected to be used across the continent. Still, policy actions should be part of the overarching solution, hence, the present document, which is the final project output developed based on the research report and experiences of the TWE+ project as well as on further policy and project papers available, has been prepared with the aim to contribute to respond to these needs and be a practical guide for the stakeholders concerned. In this sense, the paper is directed to (1) policymakers active at the European and national level, i.e. European Commission, ministries, national agencies and other national authorities, etc.; (2) higher education institutions; and (3) academic staff regardless of their experience level in teaching or training mobility.

It is worthwhile noting that the Covid-19 pandemic broke out halfway through the project and evidently it has not left international staff mobility unaffected either. Although currently few comprehensive scientific data is available about how the pandemic will shape the future of academic staff mobility, the authors strived to reflect on the developments of the past one and a half years and on possible future trends.



# Recommendations SUMMARY for policymakers

## Use the European Universities initiative to test and promote new forms of teaching mobility

The alliances of the best universities in Europe should be encouraged to discover possible solutions for the obstacles related to the mobility of academic staff. Piloting solutions with a small pool of stakeholders should provide the best possible answers. More details on page 3.

## Encourage the digitalisation of staff mobility in Erasmus+ countries (and beyond)

Digitalisation of the administrative procedures of staff mobility should be promoted at the highest level. Extending the usage of the already existing digital tools for student mobility should be supported. More details on page 3.

## Mainstream sustainability into teaching mobility guidelines

Sustainability should become a guiding principle in teaching mobility guidelines. Realisation of the new green mobility principals should be strongly encouraged and supported.

More details on page 4

## Make teaching mobility more inclusive

Mainstreaming inclusion and diversity in policy papers as well as supporting monitoring and accountability mechanisms for inclusion and diversity should be encouraged by the main decision makers when talking about mobility of academics. More details on page 4.

# Recommendations for policymakers

## Use the European Universities initiative to test and promote new forms of teaching mobility

Given that the European Universities Initiative is currently the most important testbed for the future models of European higher education, the diverse paths the alliances are pursuing are of special importance and closely followed by the policymakers and other stakeholders of European higher education landscape. As a result, the solutions, models, and schemes being developed in this framework enjoy a better visibility and have a better chance to be adapted by other higher education institutions. In the light of this, alliances should be further encouraged to keep a special eye on the mobility of academic staff, to experiment with new schemes, including blended and virtual activities<sup>(1)</sup>, examine the possible hurdles and incentives of staff mobility for teaching and training as well as help spread and share good practices and lessons learnt.

Based on the well-known and the newly identified obstacles, the possible fields of action have a wide range. It would be of great importance to explore how an alliance can develop and implement a system of joint teaching mobility and how this can be adapted by other higher education institutions. Also, the European Universities can be used to create and share replicable solutions in the area of sustainability, where many institutions have relatively little experience. Alliances can offer another important learning point in reconsidering and applying new curriculum design models for the professional development of academic staff based on the principles of micro-credentials. The use of such a system would allow the construction of flexible training modules both in terms of content and mobility areas, which can be shared with partners.

Nevertheless, to make use of the full potential of the initiative, the European Commission and the National Authorities should provide dedicated funding for networking activities and knowledge sharing that facilitate the valorisation of good practices. Also, encouraging teaching mobility should be considered as a priority during the preparation of the next phase of the European Universities initiative.

## Encourage the digitalisation of staff mobility in Erasmus+ countries (and beyond)

Several studies (TWE+<sup>(2)</sup>, REALISE<sup>(3)</sup>) have shown that an important hindering factor of teaching mobility is bureaucratic hurdles. Making use of the digitalisation boost that European (and global) higher education is undergoing in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, paperless staff mobility would considerably reduce administrative and organisational costs of teaching assignments abroad, thus becoming more attractive to academic staff. Good examples in the field of student mobility already exist, most notably the recently launched initiatives under the aegis of the European Student Card Initiative. This step would be in line with the path the European Commission has been pursuing in its most recent documents, among others in the Digital Education Action Plan and the new Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021 published in September 2020 and March 2021, respectively. Also, replacing outdated paper-based administrative processes with innovative solutions would be essential to boost blended and digitally enhanced mobility and a genuine step towards implementing environmentally friendly schemes.

(1)The authors of the paper do not wish to take sides in the existing discussions around the term "virtual mobility" and "virtual exchange", thus the neutral "virtual activities" or "digitally enhanced mobility" are used throughout the paper.

(2)Teach with Erasmus+ Research Report, p. 40. Available at: <https://teachwitherasmus.eu/sites/default/files/2020-04/TWEResearchReport.pdf>. (Accessed on 11 June 2021).

(3)REALISE project - Report on a comparative analysis of current practices in Erasmus Staff mobility at European HEIs. p. 33. Available at: [https://www.realise-erasmusplus.fr/sites/default/files/KM3668\\_MDX\\_Uni\\_REALISE\\_report\\_v5\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://www.realise-erasmusplus.fr/sites/default/files/KM3668_MDX_Uni_REALISE_report_v5_DIGITAL.pdf) (Accessed on 11 June 2021)

# Recommendations for policymakers

## Mainstream sustainability into teaching mobility guidelines

Concerns about the effects of climate change are not only increasingly prevalent among students but also among staff, consequently becoming a potential hindering factor of mobility. This phenomenon is already strongly present in some countries, where the society in general is more aware of the consequences of climate change. As sustainability, especially the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs<sup>(4)</sup>), are gaining ground in Erasmus+ countries (and worldwide) with a growing number of higher education institutions assuming responsibility for implementing the goals and adopting a whole institution approach, such concerns will gradually become predominant, thus they will need to be properly addressed. Providing guidelines, financial and non-financial incentives specifically focussing on academic staff mobility would help higher education institutions make green travel a rule and not an exception and allow them to find their own solutions of how to achieve the right balance between the benefits of physical mobility and its environmental impact.

While there is an increasing number of higher education institutions to become carbon neutral, significant efforts are being made to measure their carbon footprint, including the carbon dioxide emissions resulting from mobilities, and to compensate them by different offsetting schemes. Designing such complex plans from scratch and implementing them require not only long-term commitment but also considerable investment into human and financial resources that many universities simply cannot afford. Hence, exploring reliable and replicable methods of measuring CO<sub>2</sub> emission of mobilities as well as carbon offsetting schemes that can be implemented step by step would enable other HEIs to start small and save significant time and costs. In this respect, European and national level support to facilitate the sharing of good practices would make this process more efficient. The European Green Deal in the context of the NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan offers an especially valuable opportunity to allocate funds to European higher education institutions for such purposes.

## Make teaching mobility more inclusive

### Mainstream inclusion and diversity in strategies and policy documents

At the European level, there have been various political commitments to strengthen inclusiveness and diversity in higher education. The concept of the social dimension of higher education emerged in the context of the Bologna Process and has gained further importance over the last couple of years. Promoting social inclusion in higher education is one of the four key goals of the European Commission's "Renewed EU agenda for higher education" (2017) and has become one of the key objectives of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020).

Although access, participation and non-discrimination are considered in several policy documents, strategic frameworks and recommendations at the European, national and institutional level, these documents still appear separately from general education and training, including in the field of mobility. Also, bearing in mind the idea of inclusiveness for success, i.e. the equal chances to access and to success in academia, it is recommended that inclusion and diversity (understood in a broad sense) become guiding policy principles that are incorporated in all areas of strategy, policy and practices documents in the field of education, training and mobility. There needs to be a strong commitment and support from the European level to create the impetus for change and drive implementation to the various levels.

(4) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including 17 goals and 169 targets, was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. See more here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Accessed on 12 June 2021)



# Recommendations for policymakers

## Create monitoring and accountability mechanisms for inclusion and diversity

Inclusion in all areas of higher education should not be based on a philanthropic approach but on an adherence to human rights. There is a risk for tokenism that inclusion and diversity remain buzzwords on a political, policy, and implementation level. If there are no or only soft processes in place, inclusion and diversity can remain on the sidelines of policies and practices. In practice, it means that although social inclusion and diversity are highlighted in European education and training policies and strategies (such as the EU Education and Training Strategy 2020 and the Erasmus+ Programme), there is still a lack of safeguarding accountability and monitoring processes. In this sense, meaningful qualitative and quantitative indicators should be created for certain aspects of policies and procedures and specified according to the type of mobility. Additional consultation and feedback mechanisms with networks and umbrella organisations run by people with various backgrounds, own-lived experiences, circumstances and access needs should be included, and where possible, it is recommended to have meaningful engagement with stakeholders.



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