

# UEAPME comments on the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme

UEAPME and its members have a lot of experience in using the Erasmus + programme to foster mobility in vocational training. However fostering VET mobility in Erasmus+ programme is suffering from numerous weaknesses and shortcomings highlighted below.

## 1 - Simplifying administrative and financial rules

UEAPME insists on the fact that the new rules, procedures and budget calculation of the Erasmus + programme are more complex than before without showing clear advantages. A frequent problem raised is the **high amount of administrative burden** for applicants as well as for sending and hosting companies and organisations involved in Erasmus+ projects, which has increased significantly.

**Furthermore programme related documents are only available in English language**, which constitutes a further obstacle for the programme management. Moreover, they often contain complicated terms and lead to additional work for participating companies, especially SMEs, which mostly do not have sufficient employees.

→ **It would be important to provide the relevant documents in all official EU-languages**

Despite the willingness of ERASMUS + to favour territorial approaches, these rules do not really take into account the needs and ambitions of larger consortia and pool projects.

Ex.: Currently training centres are asked to anticipate for the two next years the partners, destinations and duration of mobility while participants may not be recruited or sending/ hosting companies are not known at the time of application.

Budget calculation are based on per diems depending on target group, destination, and are decreasing with the duration of the mobility. These rules makes it complicated to shift budget adequately whenever a change occurs in the project. It would be useful to come back to lump sum.

**The use of the online “mobility tool” is not particular complicated, but the tool should take more into account the user needs and not only serve the National Agency’s perspective of final controlling.**

Ex: in addition to the ever rising reporting obligations, multipage learning agreements and database registrations, host companies are for example also obliged to apply for a “Participant Identification Code” since 2014. For host companies this comprehensive and partly redundant registration process not only constitutes a substantial amount of additional workload but also overburdens especially those who do not employ interns on a regular basis. The current relaxation of this registration requirement for ongoing projects is not only non-transparent but also has not led to any significant simplification.

Measures to improve and assure quality are necessary but bureaucracy must not exceed the benefits and purpose of the programme. Unfortunately, the current administrative barriers make the program unappealing to numerous companies and several already refrain from employing trainees. Additional complexity of rules create more uncertainty and new possible misinterpretation which is a clear disincentive for project leaders, who need high clarity and certainty to adapt quickly to changes.

Last but not least companies, schools and participants need stability. **The programme should not change on a yearly basis.**

- Therefore increased efforts on the part of the European Commission are needed to reduce the administrative burden and thereby facilitate the registration process and projects.

### **The potential of the VET Charter needs to be better promoted at European level**

The Erasmus Mobility Charter in VET is an important and attractive tool that contributes to make mobility in VET the rule and no more the exception. Therefore the VET Charter should be aligned to the Higher Education charter more flexible and easier to get.

## **2 - Optimising resources dedicated to mobility**

Funding has been reduced within the Erasmus + programme. In certain Member States such as France, the rate of financing has decreased compared to previous years (681 € for a stay of two weeks in Spain instead of 900 € before).

Specific language support is no longer funded for projects of less than 21 days. The mobility of accompanying person is supported only for groups with apprentices under 18 years old.

The former **language classes** in the most frequently spoken foreign languages and specifically subsidised in the past, were replaced by mandatory, non-subsidised online language tools (OLS). These online programmes are not comparable to language classes in terms of quality and efficiency.

- **An evaluation of these online language tools (OLS) is necessary.** Access to the e-learning portal should be possible for all and strengthen but it should not be a substitute of existing language training and preparation;
- **the reintroduction of the former language classes is highly important** as well as **of the co-financing of the linguistic support for all participants** without language restriction, due to a lower level of language skills in VET and need for specific boosting;.

UEAPME recalls the need to strengthen and valorise the role of intermediary organisations such as Skilled Craft Chambers.

There is also a crucial need for action regarding the **support of the mobility organisers**. Despite the slight increase of the administration fee, most parts of their costs arising throughout the organisation process are not covered. Without national public support, the organisation of the mobility would not be possible.

**Given these obstacles,**

- **it is of high importance** to give the possibility **to fund the mobility of at least one accompanying person** for the mobility of all groups of participants as it was the case before;
- **and to increase the administration fee to be included for the calculation of the grant:**
  - the time dedicated not only to administrative management and logistic as today, but also the time necessary for the pedagogical organisation and evaluation of mobility actions;
  - the time spent for debriefing and supporting the participants and the companies to reflect and communicate the experience and acquired skills and competences;

In this perspective, it is important to support and promote all efforts and experiences to integrate mobility as a learning situation in training pathways and to evaluate and validate learning outcomes. The adequate use of existing tools as EUROPASS and ECVET have to be further promoted.

In order to facilitate capacity building of training centres and companies, the exchange of teachers, trainers, and tutors from companies should be encouraged within Erasmus+.

- **The possibility to use Erasmus+ mobility actions to establish operational alliances and agreements with potential partners should be made more explicit.**
- **Mobility actions and/or services adapted to trainers, tutors and entrepreneurs' needs should be encouraged and highlighted within Erasmus+.**

In addition, coherent, complementary and well-coordinated co-funding schemes at European, national and regional level are necessary in order to enable training centres to cover the total range of costs and to plan and implement not “one shot” but more permanent actions.

### **3 - Facilitating the involvement and promoting the investment of small companies**

The company is a key player in the organisation of sending and hosting learning mobility, but especially small companies do not have appropriate internal structures to manage sending and hosting alone.

Companies often point out the lack of awareness of possible benefits, problems of costs/benefit effectiveness and the crucial need of suitable support.

It is the work of intermediary bodies and training centres to mobilise, prepare, support and valorise the investment of companies in the process.

- **The role of Skilled Craft Chambers at regional and local level regarding the proximity and close link to craft companies should be highlighted.**

Not only students and apprentices, but also **partner- and participating companies** would benefit from an improvement of the programme. Especially in times of high (youth) unemployment rates, we need to support companies with a focus on small companies that invest in the employability of young people and reduce further bureaucratic barriers.

### **4 – Recognising the value of short term mobility schemes**

Such short term mobility experiences of two or three weeks play a major role as gateway to the programme and teaser for longer mobility. The short term mobility schemes are easier for companies to release their apprentices from work for a short term period than for a longer stay.

Long term stays proposed under Erasmus PRO are interesting, but it is easier to find participants from a school based system than from a dual background system notably as apprenticeship.

**To conclude:** Erasmus+ programme could better take into account the VET sector needs. The current “**one size fits all**” approach applied in Erasmus+ does not meet the real needs of VET pathway. Forms, tools and procedures should be better adapted to the VET realities.

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