

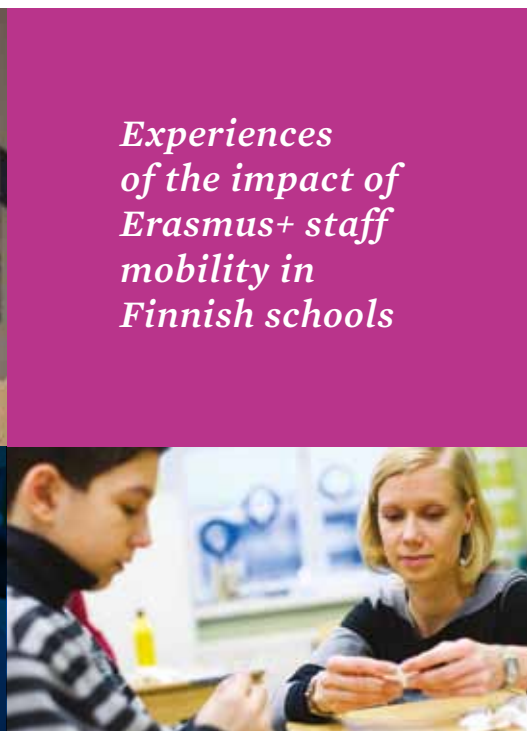
FACTS.

1C/2017

express



New perspectives on everyday schoolwork



*Experiences
of the impact of
Erasmus+ staff
mobility in
Finnish schools*

BACKGROUND

The European Union's Erasmus+ programme funds, among other things, international mobility projects of pupils, students and teachers. In Finland, the staff mobility projects mean professional development activities abroad for teachers from comprehensive and general upper secondary schools.

The staff mobility projects in the Erasmus+ programme should answer to schools' development needs. In this way, instead of just benefiting individual teachers, projects will have an impact on schools as a whole and their operating cultures. Mobility projects should also be linked to schools' curricula and strategies and their development.

In 2016, Finland was a partner in an international study which looked at how well the aims of the staff mobility

projects had been achieved in schools, what impact they had had on school communities and at how to achieve long-term results. The survey *Impact and Sustainability of the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1 Mobility Projects for School Education Staff* was coordinated by the Erasmus+ National Agency of Lithuania, and the other partners were Poland, Germany and Estonia.

Each country first conducted a national study, and a transnational report comparing and bringing together the national results will be published in 2017. The Centre for International Mobility CIMO (from 2017 the Finnish National Agency for Education) was responsible for conducting the study in Finland. In this publication, we will present our national results.

The study looks at the impact of staff mobility projects from the perspectives of both teachers and head teachers as well as pupils and parents, a perspective not often studied before in Finland. The data was collected through a survey, with answers from 250 teachers, 150 pupils and 109 parents from a total of 56 schools. In addition, group interviews were conducted with a total of 18 teachers and head teachers. The material was further complemented by case studies from two schools and one school consortium; these were also carried out as interviews.

Both teachers who had participated in projects and those who had not took part in the survey. By this, we wanted to ensure that we identified impact on school communities as a whole and not just on the project participants.



FINNISH NATIONAL
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Erasmus+

Overall, teachers found mobility projects very successful.

"These projects provide an opportunity to look at your teaching style from a different point of view. For me, it gave a new perspective on my subject."

INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS OF MANY TEACHERS

Professional development courses were the most popular form of staff mobility in the Erasmus+ programme for Finnish teachers: 56% of respondents who had been on a mobility period abroad had participated in a professional development course or training. *Job-shadowing* was also popular; nearly 46% of mobile respondents had learned new competences through job-shadowing. Teaching assignments were clearly less popular with only about 6% of respondents having been abroad to teach in a partner school. Some respondents had participated in mobility projects several times and attended different types of professional development activities.

Mobile teachers regarded mobility projects in general as very successful. Organisation of activities and intercultural experiences, in particular, exceeded the expectations of over 50% of respondents

and met the expectations of the rest. Participants were also almost as happy with the organisation of the host course provider or school.

Contents of the training courses received the most critique, though still relatively little: roughly one in ten respondents felt that the contents of the courses did not quite meet their expectations.

Respondents were also happy with the support from their national agency. There was enough information available about mobility projects and how to participate in them, and people were also happy with transparency of project funding. They regarded the application form as difficult and complicated, but, on the other hand, they were grateful for the support during the application process.



PUPILS AND PARENTS THOUGHT THAT MOBILITY PROJECTS IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING RESULTS

More than 70% of pupils who responded to the survey thought that the lessons of their teacher had become more interesting following the mobility period. After their visit abroad, teachers had used more modern technology in their teaching. 75% of pupils said that their teacher had shared his or her experiences and views of the visit and told about school life in another country. Most of the students also thought that their school projects and homework had become more interesting.

Most of the parents who took part in the survey regarded mobility projects useful and felt that schools had given them enough information about them. Parents were happy with the amount of information they had received even

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES

Erasmus+ is European Union's programme for education, training, youth and sports that funds European co-operation in different sectors.

The Key action 1 of the programme supports transnational learning mobility of individuals. Support is available for mobility of both pupils and young people as well as staff. Transnational mobility of staff from day-care centres,

comprehensive schools and general upper secondary schools takes place within joint European mobility projects that are based on the partner schools' development needs and the aim of which is to develop teachers' competences. Funding is always applied through an organisation, such as a school or a local education department.

In practice, the professional development abroad through the projects means participation in courses or training events, *job-shadowing* colleagues or teaching assignments in partner schools.

In addition to teaching staff, staff members involved in school development can take part in mobilities.

though only a third of the mobile teachers said that they had shared what they had learned with the parents.

Almost all parents thought that professional development of teachers abroad also had a positive effect on school development. A clear majority also thought that learning results and the quality of teaching will improve through international projects. According to one parent, for example, a teacher's teaching methods had become more inspired after professional development abroad and the teacher in question had also arranged a pen pal class for the pupils. Parents regarded the role of the school as very important in developing children's international skills.

Parents think that schools play an important role in developing children's international skills.

"International skills are important in the modern world. It is good to take advantage of the opportunities available to encourage children to develop their international skills and their interest in other cultures and languages. Teachers' visits abroad are clearly one of these opportunities."



WHAT IMPACT DOES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS ABROAD HAVE ON THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

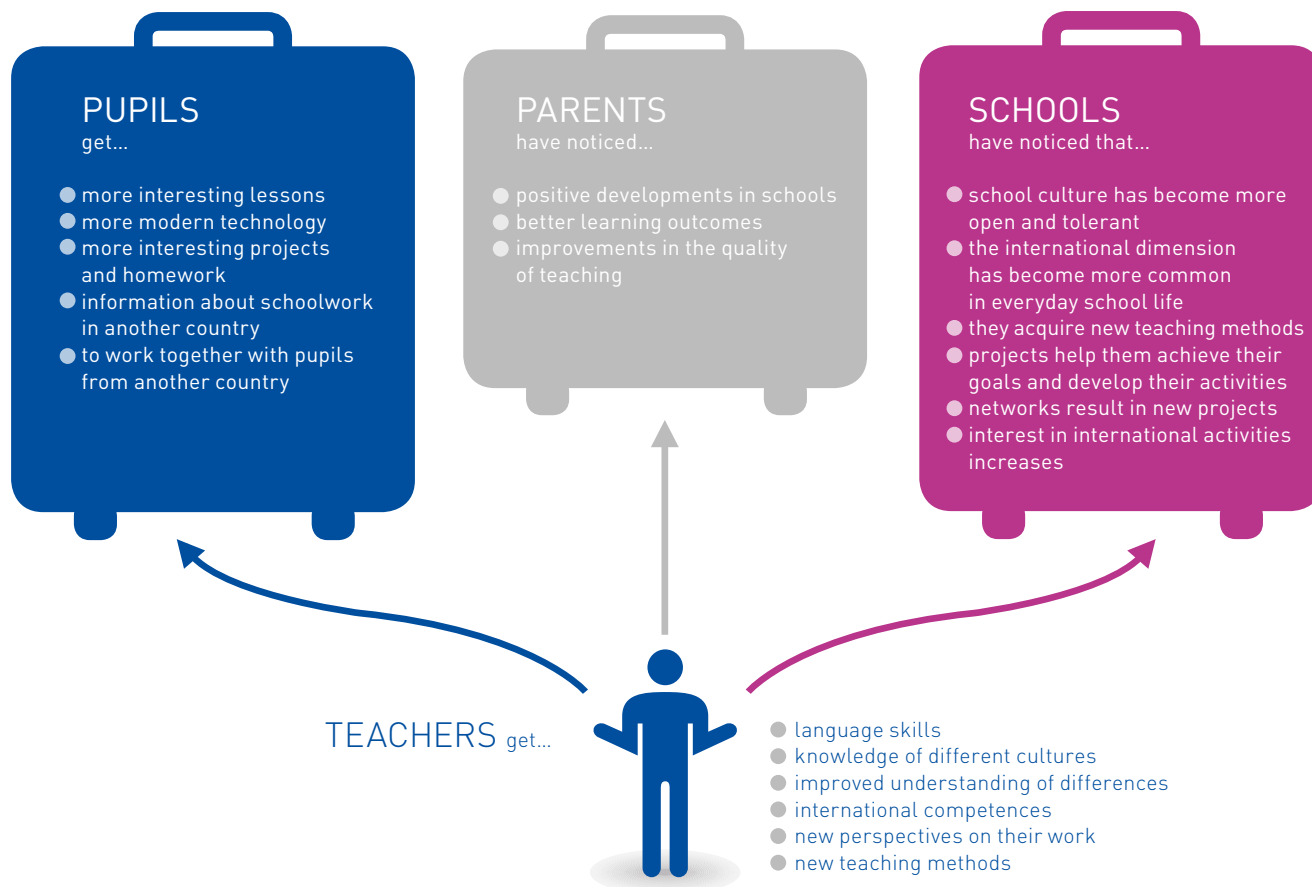


FIGURE 1: PARENTS’ OPINIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL INTERNATIONALITY, TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ABROAD (N PARENTS = 109)

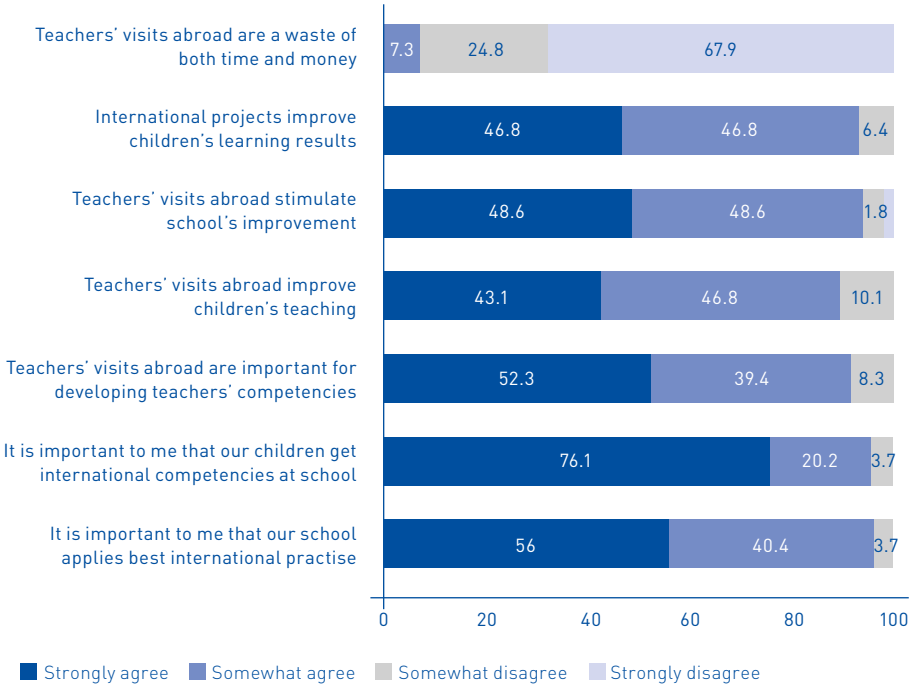
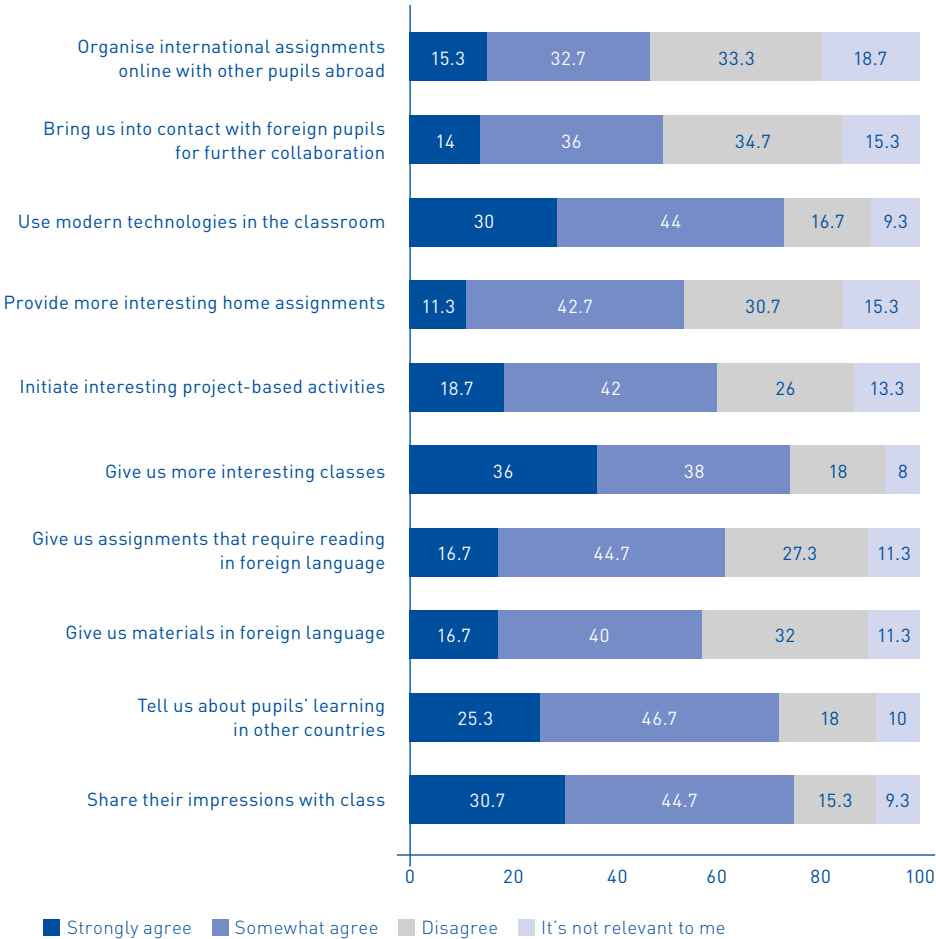


FIGURE 2: CHANGES IN TEACHERS’ PERFORMANCE AFTER MOBILITY VISITS (N PUPILS = 150)



SCHOOL LIFE BECAME MORE INTERNATIONAL AFTER STAFF MOBILITY PROJECTS

Teachers who responded to the survey thought that mobility projects have helped schools achieve their strategic goals. After a *job-shadowing* activity, one school decided to change their operating strategy following the model of an Icelandic school so that teachers now begin planning for the new school year a week before the end of the pupils’ summer holidays.

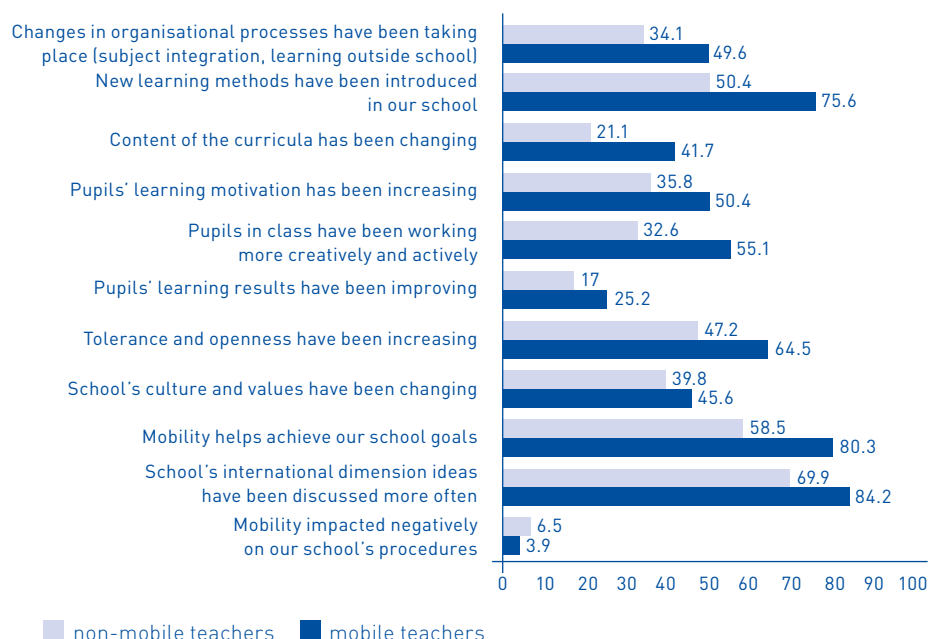
Changes in school culture were the best indicators of the impact of projects: international topics have become more visible in schools and school culture has become more open and tolerant.

We learned in the group interviews that many teachers had got to know new colleagues across Europe during their visits and these networks have resulted in new international projects in schools. Visits had also brought new teaching methods to schools, contributing to schoolwork in that way.

Networks formed during visits abroad result in new international projects.

“Our project has become a process that will not end even if the project itself will! It will have an impact on our school long into the future!”

FIGURE 3: THE IMPACT OF ERASMUS+ KA1 MOBILITY ON SCHOOL, PERCENTAGE OF THOSE AGREEING (MOBILE TEACHERS N=127 AND NON-MOBILE TEACHERS N=123)



TEACHERS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN STAFF MOBILITY PROJECTS THEMSELVES ALSO SAW CHANGES

Teachers who had participated in mobility projects saw the impact of projects more clearly than those who had not been involved with the projects themselves.

However, even many of the teachers who had not been part of the projects had noticed the same changes. 70% of them felt that there had been more discussion about international issues in the school after the project and almost 60% believed that projects had contributed to achieving school aims. About a half of these teachers had observed introduction of new teaching methods and an increase in tolerance and openness. Furthermore, the open answers indicated that other teachers and pupils had become more interested in international cooperation and shown more

eagerness in participating in projects after visits abroad.

The impact does not seem to reach everybody in the schools, however, as just over 25% of non-mobile teachers did not have a clear idea about projects or their impact.

“At their best, these mobilities give a new spark for new enthusiasm which has an effect on the whole school community.”

Thanks to the project, other teachers and pupils have also taken an interest in international activities.

SHARING INFORMATION IS DEEMED IMPORTANT BUT COULD BE DONE MORE EFFICIENTLY

In the open answers, respondents commented how the pressures of work and the lack of time and convenient opportunities made it difficult to share information and competences acquired through the mobility projects in the school community. Non-mobile teachers also felt that the information sometimes was only shared among a restricted group in the community, such as a subject or an international team, meaning the rest of the school could not benefit from the project.

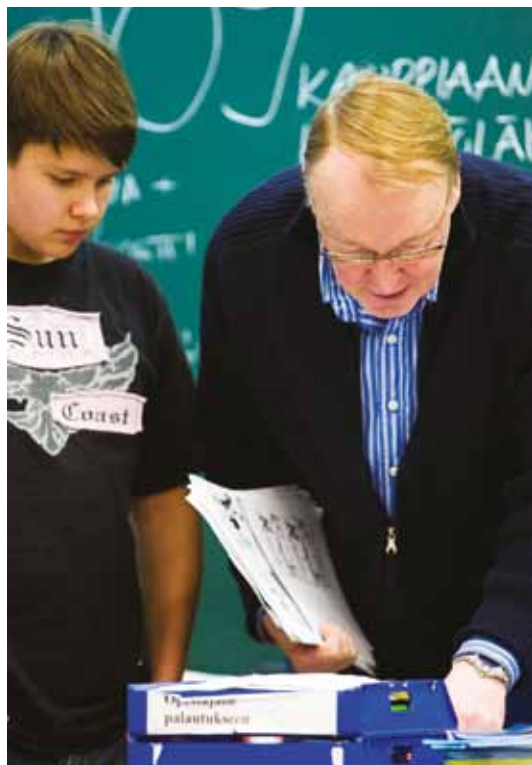
It also became apparent in the interviews with teachers and head teachers that there are no existing structures to readily share information at schools, the result of which is that information sharing relies on the initiative of the individual teacher who participated in a mobility activity.

However, both mobile and non-mobile teachers regarded it as very important that information and competences were shared as widely as possible in the school community.

Information was mostly shared directly between colleagues in a spoken form: about 87% of mobile teachers told their colleagues about their experiences, for example, in their subject team or in a teachers' meeting.

Other ways to share information and experiences included, among other things, inviting colleagues to follow lessons, giving a presentation in a conference or a seminar and distribution of new material from the training online.

New ideas and ways of working brought from the visit abroad were rarely taken outside participants' own schools. Only about one in ten of mobile respondents say that they had told about their experiences and new information acquired to media or teachers from other schools.



There is no time nor existing structures for sharing experiences.

"The challenge in our school is how to share experiences and learning effectively; it unfortunately often remains the responsibility of those who did the training."



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ABROAD ALSO HAS AN IMPACT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

In the survey, we also collected information about how mobility projects abroad affect teachers.

A key finding was that although the actual topic of the training abroad was a pedagogic or a subject-related method, over 80% of respondents thought that the more general competences, such as language skills, knowledge of other cultures and international cooperation, developed the most during the training.

In the open answers, respondents emphasised how international cooperation broadened minds: many had gained a new perspective on their own work and, on the other hand, had been able to share their own expertise to other participants. It was regarded particularly important that people approached training with an open mind and were ready to welcome new perspectives.

Most of the participants had increased their understanding of education systems in other countries and got new ideas to apply in their own schools. 70% of respondents had learned

new teaching methods. In contrast, there was much less help towards solving pupils' behavioural problems or with group management skills: only a little over 25% said that they had learned about these issues.

Respondents believed that careful preparation helped gain the most from the mobility period. For example, those who had also learned about the culture of their target country in advance had got more out of their period abroad than those who had only studied about the education system of the country.

"The benefits from a training period abroad go well beyond the contents of the course; living in another culture is a personal challenge, provides a new perspective on one's environment and life, and increases understanding of differences. You can process all this in your mind long after the project."

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO and the Finnish National Board of Education merged at the beginning of 2017 into a new organisation called the Finnish National Agency for Education. The new agency continues to provide expert services in the same fields: developing education and life-long learning as well as promoting international mobility and cooperation.

ISBN 978-952-13-6346-7 (pb) • ISBN 978-952-13-6347-4 (pdf)

ISSN 2242-2951 (printed) • ISSN 2242-296x (pdf)

Photographers: Hanna Anttila, Satu Haavisto, Ari Korkala, Mikko Lehtimäki and Hannu Piirainen.

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Education, early childhood education and care, organisation: www.oph.fi

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