European Commission

Erasmus+ Handbook for individual pupil mobility in school education

Pre-published version for use by Erasmus+ National Agencies and practitioners

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Erasmus+

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ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to help schools, teachers, pupils, parents, and everyone else involved in organising individual pupil mobility activities in **Erasmus+: the European Union's programme supporting education, training, youth and sport**.

The handbook provides step-by-step guidance to prepare, implement and follow-up mobility periods for pupils in school education. It is not a rulebook but a collection of recommendations and guidance for implementation of individual pupil mobility – one format of activities among many available in Erasmus+. The handbook is primarily addressed to schools implementing Erasmus+ mobility projects, however it can also serve to inform hosting schools, parents, policy makers and everyone else involved or interested in Erasmus+.

Material presented in the handbook is meant to cover many different questions, includes practical details of implementation. If you are in charge of implementing a mobility activity, the amount of information may seem daunting at first, but you should remember that this guidance is addressed to audience all over Europe and therefore it tries to cover a lot of ground. In your own context, it may not be possible to apply all the recommendations, especially not immediately. This handbook was created because of an understanding that implementing high quality mobility activities requires effort and dedication. It is intended as a help and an inspiration, not an additional requirement.

If you are not yet familiar with Erasmus+ and wish to read the rules of the programme, you consult the **Erasmus+ Programme Guide**. The Programme Guide is issued yearly as part of the general Erasmus+ call for proposals. It includes information on how to apply for a project, what are the deadlines, eligibility conditions, minimum and maximum duration of activities, level of funding support, and all other details. You can find the Erasmus+ Programme Guide here: Erasmus+: EU programme for education, training, youth and sport.

For further information, you should also visit the website of the Erasmus+ National Agency in your country. For their contact information, you may consult the list of Erasmus+ National Agencies.

All advice in this handbook should be read and understood in the context of the national legal framework in your country and always implemented in full respect of those rules. If you have any questions or doubts, you should clarify them with your National Agency.

USEFUL LINKS

Erasmus+

Erasmus+ Programme Guide
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/erasmusplus-programme-guide

Erasmus quality standards governing all mobility projects
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-quality-standards-mobility-projects-vet-adults-schools

Website of the Erasmus+ programme at Europa.eu
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/

List of Erasmus+ National Agencies
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/national-agencies

European School Education Platform
https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/

Other web links used in the handbook

Europass Mobility
https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-mobility

European Framework for Key Competences
https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions

Eurydice: information about education systems in Europe
http://www.eurydice.org/

European Health Insurance Card
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559

INTRODUCTION

1. PUPIL MOBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION POLICY

In its Communication on the achievement of the **European Education Area** by 2025[1], the European Commission has put forward a set of policies that recognise the important role of education and training in building an inclusive and participatory society. The Erasmus+ programme forms a part of these efforts, recognising that high quality education from the earliest age is the basis for personal fulfilment, finding a job and becoming an active and responsible citizen.

As part of the quality dimension of the European Education Area, the European Commission promotes mobility opportunities for learners and teachers, and cooperation opportunities for institutions. These efforts are aimed at **making learning mobility a reality for all** and thus improving the quality of education and training at all levels. Erasmus+ is the main instrument to make these policy goals a reality for European citizens.

Participation in learning mobility helps the development of digital competences, communication skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, self-awareness, personal independence and civic engagement. It fosters language learning and enables participants to experience Europe's cultural diversity first hand. Learning mobility is also associated with future social mobility, higher earnings and better employment opportunities.

A major goal of the new generation of Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) is to provide a learning mobility experience for more young people. Expansion of mobility opportunities for school pupils is a part of achieving this goal: a more accessible and more inclusive Erasmus+.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/communication-european-education-area.pdf

2. MOBILITY PROJECTS AND PUPIL MOBILITY IN ERASMUS+: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Erasmus+ provides funding for mobility projects as part of **Key Action 1: Learning Mobility for Individuals**.

Applications for Erasmus+ projects can only be made by organisations: pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, school authorities, coordination bodies and similar institutions. As private individuals, pupils or their parents cannot apply for an Erasmus+ grant directly. Rather, pupils are offered mobility opportunities through their school's mobility project. Therefore, to send pupils on a mobility activity with Erasmus+, a school must first successfully apply for its own Erasmus+ project by submitting their proposal to the Erasmus+ National Agency in their country.

A **mobility project** is a set of mobility activities implemented by the same school as part of a broader and systemic effort to improve the quality of its teaching and learning offer. A single Erasmus+ mobility project can include multiple mobility activities and can combine pupil mobility activities with activities for teachers and other school staff. The project's participants can spend their mobility periods at one or various hosting schools abroad.

Similarly, a **mobility consortium project** can offer mobility opportunities to several schools from the same country that share similar objectives. Thanks to their strategic potential, mobility consortium projects are often coordinated by school authorities or coordination bodies.

The defining feature of a 'mobility project' is therefore the existence of an **overarching set of institutional objectives**. Within the project, various mobility activities serve as an instrument to work towards those broader goals. Mobility activities do not exist on their own, they are organised as part of a wider plan.

In practice, that means that a mobility project does not start the day pupils go abroad and does not end the day they come back. The time they spend abroad is the most important period for the pupils individually; however, preparation and follow-up that take place before and after each activity will play a major role in achieving benefits for your school as an institution.

In school education, Key Action 1 includes two types of mobility projects:

- Accredited projects for organisations holding an Erasmus accreditation
- Short-term mobility projects for organisations not holding an Erasmus accreditation

The two project types include the same range of mobility opportunities for pupils and staff, so guidance in this handbook is equally applicable to both of them.

Concepts of a 'mobility project', 'mobility consortium', 'Erasmus accreditation' and others mentioned in this chapter may raise further questions for you if you are not yet familiar with Erasmus+. In this case, you should consult the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for a full description of Key Action 1 opportunities for school education.

3. OBJECTIVES OF PUPIL MOBILITY ACTIVITIES: INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, organisation of a mobility activity is a form of cooperation between the sending and the hosting school. Erasmus+ projects are granted to and implemented by schools because an important purpose of Erasmus+ is to improve schools as providers of education. It is a simple logic: a mobility grant for one pupil benefits one person, while an improvement of a school benefits all of its present and future pupils.

This means that each mobility activity has a double objective:

1. To provide benefits for the participating pupils
2. To provide benefits for the sending school as the owner of the mobility project, and for the hosting school as their partner

Before you start working on your mobility project, you should be aware that the organisational benefits of mobility projects are one of the main reasons for existence of Erasmus+. This is reflected in the programme's rules and policy objectives. Erasmus+ challenges schools to think strategically, to involve different staff members in the project, and to use the mobility activities as a way to evolve the school's institutional culture towards a more open, international way of working.

The secret to an excellent Erasmus+ mobility project is to keep these two objectives in balance: put the well-being of pupils in the first place and achieve it by challenging your school and your staff to be the very best versions of themselves, to learn, to innovate, and to evolve.

Benefits for the participating pupils

Pupils staying abroad will benefit directly by acquiring new knowledge, skills, competences, experiences, attitudes and personal connections. Learning mobility is a practical way to trigger the pupils' social and personal development, increase academic achievement, as well as awareness and understanding of the diversity of European societies.

Immersion into the hosting country's education system is a unique experience that can be acquired only through mobility activities and it is the main driver of the activity's beneficial effects. Immersion enables pupils to learn through personal experience and engagement, by witnessing and personally participating in new ways of learning and thinking. They will be constantly encountering new situations, they will be using a foreign language and they will need to take more responsibility for themselves. The experience abroad will also allow pupils to gain a new perspective of their own country.

Mobility activities are particularly beneficial for improvement of transversal competences such as critical thinking, creativity, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. They are also likely to reinforce the values of tolerance, democracy, and inclusion.

Benefits for the participating schools

It is easy to understand how a study period abroad brings benefits to pupils, but it is perhaps less obvious how such an activity can benefit the involved schools.

To understand the organisational impact of mobility activities, we must consider the close cooperation of school leadership, teachers and administrative staff at the sending and the hosting school which is

needed to set up an Erasmus+ mobility activity. In their 'normal' work, schools do not regularly perform tasks such as preparing a learning programme to be implemented abroad or setting up joint monitoring arrangements with teachers in another country.

For pupils, Erasmus+ is beneficial because it puts them in front of novel and stimulating challenges, information and ways of doing things. It is exactly the same for schools. Overcoming implementation challenges is what creates the institutional impact and builds the capacity of the school to work in an international and innovative way. The long-term goal of Erasmus+ is to change the definition of 'normal' so that it is normal for a school to exchange pupils, staff and practices with their partners abroad.

Cooperating with partner schools abroad brings new ideas into the school, with plenty of opportunities to improve the methods of learning, teaching and school management through exchange of best practices. The first Erasmus+ project often produces a firm partnership between the sending and hosting schools, where one project leads to another, permanently enriching both institutions.

Learning to think about mobility activities as part of a wider cooperation with partner schools abroad is extremely important on your school's path to success in Erasmus+. You should always remember: individual mobility activities are not the purpose of your project, they are its building blocks – each activity should contribute something to a bigger picture.

If you are just starting your first project, these objectives may seem far away and challenging. The solution is simple: do not rush. You should give your school time to go through the process of organisational learning by starting slowly and then gradually increasing the ambition of your activities. To join Erasmus+ you do not have to know exactly how to execute a cross-border mobility activity. Rather, Erasmus+ exists to give you a chance to learn it, to build new capacity in your school that did not exist before.

4. STRUCTURE OF MOBILITY PROJECTS: ONE-WAY, TWO-WAY AND MULTILATERAL EXCHANGES

An Erasmus+ mobility project is created through a grant agreement (a contract) between an Erasmus+ National Agency and a school or another organisation that has applied for funding and successfully passed the selection.

In terms of financing arrangements, Erasmus+ funds are always provided to the school that is sending their pupils abroad (**'sending school'**), rather than to the school receiving the pupils (**'hosting school'**). From a formal point of view, this means that **all pupil mobility activities have the same direction**: from the sending school who owns the project to hosting organisations abroad chosen by that sending school. Variation of this structure exists in mobility consortium projects, where sending schools are not the sole owners of the project, but members of a consortium.

At first sight, this formal shape of mobility projects may seem 'incomplete': it includes activities only in one direction, even though Erasmus+ is very much about mutual exchanges! To understand this 'incompleteness', you should imagine that each school's project is just one piece in a large network of such projects across Europe. Each Erasmus+ school is a potential partner to all others. This structure give the involved schools many more opportunities and much flexibility than a more fixed composition.

Each sending school can add, replace or remove hosting partners in their project at any time and without need for formal modifications to their project contract. It means the school can 'complete' the structure of their project as they wish, and can change and adapt during implementation. New ideas can be implemented easily and quickly.

Most importantly, this flexibility means that schools from different countries can 'combine their projects' by deciding to **work together thematically and through two-way exchanges**. Even schools that do not yet have their own Erasmus+ mobility project can get involved as hosting schools. This way they can gain experience to then apply for their own project and join in with more activities.

When a partnership between two schools 'clicks', the first mobility activity is just the beginning. It can lead to years of fruitful exchanges of pupils and teachers, online eTwinning cooperation, joint applications for other types of projects, and essentially anything else your creativity allows you to imagine.

What's more, **there is no limit on how many schools can work together** in this way! Receiving an Erasmus+ grant means that your school has become a member of a **European community of thousands of Erasmus+ schools**. The size and diversity of this community gives you endless possibilities for finding new partners to work together on any topic. By doing so, you will be gradually building your school's international network and making Erasmus+ an integral part of your school's activities.

Basic model: one-way mobility

- ✓ Only the sending school needs to have an Erasmus+ mobility project
- ✓ The simplest model: an excellent first experience

Bilateral model: a two-way exchange

- ✓ Both schools need to have Erasmus+ or other funds
- ✓ A well-balanced model that puts the partners on an equal footing, allows for a deeper cooperation and is easy to manage
- ✓ Pupils can form tandems and can be staying at each other's families

Multilateral model: unlimited possibilities

- ✓ All sending schools need to Erasmus+ or other funds
- ✓ Schools without funding can still take part as hosting partners
- ✓ There is no limit on the number of schools that can take part

The models presented here are only the basic illustrations of the possibilities available to you. These models are not rules that you have to follow. You will not be asked to formalise them in your Erasmus+ project. However, even though there is no obligation, you may want to write down the terms and conditions of working with your partner schools – this idea is explored further in the handbook chapter on 'Forging a partnership between the sending and the hosting school'.

Having reliable partners that share some of your own objectives will always make it easier to develop new and interesting ideas, and to progress with your project. Finding partner schools that themselves have access to Erasmus+ or other funds can be advantageous because it makes it possible to set up bilateral or multilateral exchanges.

There is also great value in working with schools that do not yet have funds of their own, but are willing to host participants. They may be on their way to become Erasmus+ schools themselves and helping them get started is a great investment into building up your Erasmus+ network.

Helping others and being active in the Erasmus+ community is a part of Erasmus quality standards – the set principles and qualitative criteria that all schools sign up to when they apply for Key Action 1:

> ***Active participation in the network of Erasmus+ organisations:*** *one of the objectives of the Programme is to support the development of the European Education Area. Beneficiary organisations should seek to become active members of the Erasmus+ network, for example by hosting participants from other countries, or by taking part in exchanges of good practices and other contact activities organised by the National Agencies or other organisations. Experienced organisations should share their knowledge with other organisations that have less experience in the Programme by providing advice, mentorship or other support. Where relevant, beneficiary organisations should encourage their participants to take part in alumni activities and networks.*

Looking for partners around Europe can seem intimidating at first, but you should know that many other schools are also looking for someone to work with. To help you find each other, Erasmus+ provides help, including online partner finding tools. You can find more information on that in the chapter on 'Finding hosting schools for your pupils'.

5. STRUCTURE OF MOBILITY PROJECTS: COMBINING DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

The previous chapter dealt with direction of mobility activities and the number of schools involved. In this chapter, we explore how to combine activities in terms of their timing, format and the synergies that can be created between them.

This handbook is written specifically for **individual pupil mobility activities,** including short-term and long-term stays. Apart from individual pupil mobility activities, Erasmus+ mobility projects can also include group mobility of pupils and mobility activities for education staff. All of these options can be combined within the same mobility project.

If we think of individual mobility activities as building blocks of your project, then different activity formats can be imagined like blocks of different shapes. Putting them together in the right way can produce new and interesting results. Diversity of activity formats is usually a sign of a good quality project – it shows that you have tackled your school's objectives in a creative and multi-dimensional way. At the same time, there is no obligation to make your project more complex. As always, the key is to adapt your ambitions to your school's needs and current capacity.

Below are only a few ideas to serve as an inspiration. The list is by no means exhaustive. As your experience grows, your own ideas and creativity will surely surpass the boundaries of this handbook!

Concurrent activities: sending more than one pupil to the same hosting school at the same time

Work on preparation, monitoring and follow-up can be made more efficient for both the sending and the hosting school if done for more than one pupil at the same time[2].

This way of working also allows you to create a 'mobility window' at your school, rather than having different pupils away throughout the school year. For pupils themselves, accompaniment of peers can provide academic and psychological support.

However, caution should always be applied. Ideally, not more than two or just a few pupils of the same age should take part in a concurrent stay. The risk to avoid is that pupils create a group of their own while abroad, rather than socialising with peers from the host country and immersing themselves into the hosting environment.

Combining group and individual mobility of pupils

Group mobility of pupils is typically a short and thematically focused activity. Within the broader scope of your mobility project, such an activity can be useful both before and after an individual mobility activity at the same hosting school.

Instead of departing to the hosting school alone, a pupil who was selected (or is considered for selection) to take part in individual mobility could first visit the hosting school together with other pupils

[2] There is an important difference between concurrent activities for individual pupils and a group mobility of pupils. In individual mobility activities, each pupil must have a tailor-made learning agreement even if they are staying at the same school at the same time and following the same schedule. After the mobility period, they will undergo individual evaluation and their learning outcomes need to be individually recognised. Organising activities concurrently must not reduce the quality of those activities – each pupil must receive required individual attention from both the sending and the hosting school. For a full definition of a group mobility and individual mobility, please consult the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

and teachers as part of a group activity. The group activity can take place immediately before the individual mobility, or with a time gap in-between. The latter is a good option if the selection process has not yet been finalised.

For the supervising teachers, the group activity can be useful to observe the pupil's interactions with peers from the hosting school. It can help the mentors to assess the pupil's adaptability, to see their language skills in practice, etc. Recruiting a hosting family can also become easier if the pupil has had an opportunity to start friendships at the hosting school.

At the level of content, themes underlying group and individual activities can be shared. For example, the pupil in individual mobility can be assigned project work that involves building on results of the group activity and keeping in touch with pupils from both schools, e.g. with the help of online tools. Thematic links are also possible if a group activity takes place after the individual mobility period.

Combining activities for pupils and staff

Organisation of pupil mobility activities is a common effort of the sending and the hosting school. For the two organisations to enter this joint endeavour, they first need to reach a certain level of mutual understanding and trust. Staff mobility activities such as job-shadowing and teaching assignments can be an excellent catalyst for this process.

If a staff member from your school spends a period at the hosting school, they will become familiar with its workings and curriculum much better than would be possible in any other way. Their experience, insight and personal understanding with colleagues from the hosting school will be truly valuable if they later take part in preparing mobility activities for pupils.

A point of caution here is to remember that staff mobility activities cannot be organised only as a preparation for another activity. Staff participating in a job shadowing or a teaching assignment need to have their own learning objectives defined and learning outcomes recognised. Existence of such individual learning outcomes is what differentiates a 'staff mobility activity' from a 'preparatory visit'. This topic is further explained in the dedicated chapter 'Preparatory visits to the hosting school'.

The above points taken into account, it is a fact that a staff mobility period at the hosting school and preparation for a pupil mobility activity are highly compatible tasks. They do not need to be artificially separated. For example, a teacher on a job-shadowing can be tasked with a comparative analysis of curricula in the two schools. This would be both a legitimate learning assignment and a useful contribution to the overall objectives of the mobility project.

Finally, you may also consider a concurrent stay of pupils and staff at the hosting school. Presence of a teacher from the sending school can be reassuring for everyone involved, including the pupil and their parents. As always, caution should be applied when making the exact arrangements. The teacher's involvement should be limited. It should not get into the way of pupils' full immersion at the hosting school and it cannot replace the role of a mentor from the hosting school itself.

It is also important to understand the difference between a teacher in a concurrent learning mobility and an accompanying person. Teachers in learning mobility have their own learning objectives, while the role of the accompanying person do not – their formal role is only to accompany pupils on a mobility activity. The concept of an accompanying person is further explained in chapter 12.

6. TRAINEESHIPS FOR PUPILS IN GENERAL EDUCATION

A school is the most common and simplest choice for hosting pupils in mobility activities. Throughout this handbook, we therefore speak about sending and hosting schools in order to keep explanations straightforward and concrete.

However, the Erasmus+ Programme Guide permits other types of organisations to act as hosts when mobility activity is a 'traineeship'. A traineeship means that pupils learn by observing and performing tasks in a workplace environment. For example, pupils can be learning in cultural institutions (museums, libraries, theatres, cultural centres), non-governmental and civil society organisations, media, local government offices, public service providers, companies and small enterprises.

The main condition for non-school organisations to act as hosts is that they can offer a relevant learning experience to the pupil, given the pupil's age and learning requirements at their sending school. Common examples of learning outcomes targeted in general education traineeships include communication and digital skills, entrepreneurial competences, financial literacy, media literacy, active citizenship, cultural awareness and interpersonal skills.

It is also possible for a mobility period to combine learning in different environments. For example, the pupil can stay at a school as the main host, and additionally spend periods at another organisation who is collaborating with the hosting and sending school to provide a more diverse learning programme.

Readers working in both general education and vocational education and training may wonder about the difference between traineeships in the two fields. Of course, the general concept is the same: learning at a workplace by simultaneously receiving training and performing practical tasks. After that, there are two differences: formal eligibility and learning outcomes.

In terms of formal eligibility, all learning programmes in your country (with very rare exceptions) will be sorted into either school education or vocational education and training. Based on the programme in which the learner is enrolled at the sending school, they will be eligible for funding under school education or vocational education and training.

The division between the two kinds of learning programmes is decided by the relevant ministries in your country and information about it is published on the website of your National Agency. If your school implements multiple learning programmes, you should make sure to be well informed about their formal eligibility under Erasmus+. You can seek the advice of your National Agency if you are in doubt.

In terms of learning outcomes, the question is how the learning content of the traineeship fits with the pupil's existing learning requirements at the sending school. In vocational education and training, this is usually a straightforward matter since work-based learning is a part of the curriculum. It is not the case in general education. For general education traineeships, the question is a practical one: how will the pupil's learning achievements during the traineeship be evaluated, recognised and integrated into their overall learning record once they are back at the sending school?

If you are able to address these elements, then a traineeship for pupils in general education can be an excellent idea. The goal of this handbook is to guide the readers through reflections and actions needed to answer the above question for any pupil mobility activity. In this sense, all the material and advice in the handbook does equally apply to traineeships, even if they are not explicitly quoted every time.

7. MAIN ACTORS IN PUPIL MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

The main actors in mobility activities for pupils include the sending school, the hosting school, the pupil themselves, and their parents or guardians. Other actors such as the Erasmus+ National Agencies and hosting families can be involved as well. This section introduces these different actors and their roles.

Sending school

The sending school is the owner of the Erasmus+ mobility project that provides funding for the pupil mobility activities. It means that the sending school has a grant agreement with the Erasmus+ National Agency in their country and it will eventually report to the National Agency on the results of the implemented activities. For this reason, the sending school is ultimately responsible for the success of the activity and it has the most important role in setting it up.

The sending school will choose a suitable hosting school based on the type of activity they wish to organise, shared thematic interests, the age and profile of the involved pupils, etc. Together, two schools will define the expected learning outcomes of the mobility period and the methods that will be used. After the pupil's return to the home country, the sending school is responsible for the recognition of the mobility period and reintegration of the pupil in their education programme (especially for pupils in long-term mobility activities).

Hosting school

The hosting school is chosen by the sending school to be their partner for one or several mobility activities. In the Erasmus+ Key Action 1, there are no applications or other procedures required to become a hosting school. Therefore, any school can become a hosting school if they are chosen by another school running an Erasmus+ project.

The main task of the hosting school is to welcome the pupil and implement the learning programme as defined in the learning agreement. The hosting school will also have a major role in monitoring and evaluation of the learning activities and it will support the sending school in follow-up tasks, such as recognition of learning outcomes.

Becoming a hosting school is an excellent first step for schools that are interested in Erasmus+, but have not yet received their first Erasmus+ grant. It is the easiest way to enter Erasmus+ and gain experience before applying for your own project.

The pupil and their parents or guardians

The participating pupils are selected by the sending school and must be formally enrolled in that school. Rules on minimum age of participating pupils are defined by the national laws in each country.

The main role of the pupil's parents (or guardians) is to provide support before the departure and during their stay abroad. The parents' role is also important legally, since the schools must make sure to follow all national regulations relating to parental consent, safety and well-being of minors, both in the sending and in the hosting country.

Supporting organisations

Since the purpose of the Erasmus+ mobility project is to improve your school, it is not possible to delegate project implementation to another organisation or external persons. Only limited assistance of other organisations is permitted. In this case, such organisations are referred to as 'supporting organisations'. Specific rules apply to their participation, as detailed in the Erasmus quality standards:

Core tasks - keeping ownership of the activities: *the beneficiary organisations must keep ownership of core implementation tasks and may not outsource these tasks to other organisations.*

The core tasks include financial management of the programme funds, contact with the National Agency, reporting on implemented activities, as well as all decisions that directly affect the content, quality and results of the implemented activities (such as the choice of activity type, duration, and the hosting organisation, definition and evaluation of learning outcomes, etc.).

Supporting organisations, transparency and responsibility: *in practical aspects of project implementation, the beneficiary organisations may receive advice, assistance or services from other organisations, as long as the beneficiary organisations keep control of the content, quality and results of the implemented activities, as described under 'core tasks'.*

If beneficiary organisations use programme funds to pay other organisations for specific implementation tasks, then the obligations of such organisations must be formally defined to ensure compliance with the Erasmus quality standards and protection of the Union funds. The following elements must be included in the formal agreement between the beneficiary and the service provider: tasks to be carried out, quality control mechanisms, consequences in case of poor or failed delivery, and flexibility mechanisms in case of cancellation or rescheduling of agreed services that guarantee fair and balanced sharing of risk in case of unforeseen events. Documentation defining these obligations must be available for review by the National Agency.

Organisations that assist the beneficiary with specific implementation tasks (on paid or voluntary basis) will be considered supporting organisations and must be registered in the official reporting tools. The involvement of supporting organisations must bring clear benefits for organisational development of the beneficiary organisation and for the quality of mobility activities.

In all cases, the beneficiary organisation will stay responsible for the results and quality of implemented activities, regardless of the involvement of other organisations.

If you are considering delegating any tasks to a supporting organisation, make sure to keep them to the necessary and to create appropriate legal protections for your organisation as specified by the quality standards above. Keep in mind that a supporting organisation is an independent service provider in the free market. It does not answer to your National Agency or to the European Commission. This means that it your organisation's responsibility to set up quality control and supervision of their work. This can create additional costs and risks that would not exist if you were to implement the project on your own.

Host families

Accommodating pupils in a host family during their stay abroad is one of the most common ways of providing them with a safe and supportive place to stay.

Stay at a hosting family can be an important part of the learning experience for the pupil. It helps with language learning and provides a full immersion into the local environment and culture. It is also a way to give pupils an 'easy start' in building their social contacts at the hosting country, protecting them from feeling loneliness or isolation. The adults at the hosting family can help with the pupil's adaptation, support them in learning assignments and provide valuable information to the pupil's mentors and parents.

Accommodating pupils at a hosting family is not obligatory. It is one of the decisions to be made by the sending and hosting school based on the different available options, and a number of considerations, such as the age of the pupil, their existing level of language competence, previous experience with travelling abroad, the planned duration of stay, etc. This topic is further discussed in the chapter on 'Accommodation and host families'.

Erasmus+ National Agencies

In each Erasmus+ country, there is a National Agency in charge of selecting and managing projects funded by Erasmus+. If your school is awarded an Erasmus+ project, the National Agency in your country will provide you with your grant through a dedicated contract. For the duration of your project, the agency will be acting as your main advisor and supervisor.

At the end of the project, the National Agency will receive and evaluate your project report, including information on all activities that have taken place within the scope of the project.

Three phases of pupil mobility activities

Preparation

- ✓ Finding a hosting school and starting a collaboration
- ✓ Assigning tasks and responsibilities to your staff
- ✓ Selecting pupils
- ✓ Creating the learning agreements
- ✓ Making practical, logistic and administrative preparations
- ✓ Preparing the pupils before departure and facilitating virtual first contacts

Implementation

- ✓ Introducing pupils to the hosting school and country
- ✓ Facilitating the pupils' social and academic integration at the hosting school
- ✓ Monitoring the pupils' learning progress and well-being during their stay abroad
- ✓ Resolving difficulties and unexpected situations

Follow-up

- ✓ Evaluating learning outcomes and other achievements
- ✓ Recognising learning outcomes and other achievements
- ✓ Reintegrating the pupils at the sending school
- ✓ Reporting to the National Agency
- ✓ Sharing and applying experiences and results within your school
- ✓ Informing your community and the wider public

PREPARATION PHASE

Preparation phase is the most important phase for any mobility activity. Good preparation will make implementation and follow-up phases much easier, so investing time and effort in this stage is the recipe for success.

As the managing organisation of the Erasmus+ mobility project and its funds, the sending school is the main actor of the preparation phase. At the start of the preparation phase, the sending school is in fact the only actor, the one that will gather all the others. For this reason, the guidance in this part of the handbook is presented from the perspective of the sending school.

In broad lines, the preparation phase will start with finding a suitable partner school, then pupils will need to be selected and a learning programme created for them before they are ready to go abroad for their mobility period, which will mark the start of the implementation phase.

8. FINDING HOSTING SCHOOLS FOR YOUR PUPILS

Starting the search for suitable partner schools will be among the first steps the sending school needs to take. Finding potential partner schools might be challenging and take time, especially if you are working on your first project and you do not have pre-existing contacts abroad. Therefore, as a sending school, you should start this process as early as possible, even before your Erasmus+ project is approved.

Erasmus+ also offers a lot of flexibility when it comes to hosting partners. For example, applications for Erasmus+ mobility projects do not require a definitive list of hosting schools to be specified. This means that as the sending school, you have a wide flexibility to choose and even change your mind about your hosting partners.

The number of hosting partner is also your choice. You may organise all of your activities with the same partner school. That can be a good strategy for your first project, a way to make the management easier. But, you can also work with multiple partner schools – this would be a good strategy once you have gathered more experience in Erasmus+. A larger network of partners will increase the quality and diversity of opportunities you are able to offer to your pupils, and it will bring more benefits for your school in terms of inter-institutional learning and exchange.

How to find partner schools for your pupils?

- **Visit the European School Education Platform** – it is the meeting point for school staff, researchers, policy makers and other professionals in school education where you can encounter like-minded colleagues and build your network of contacts. The platform is under further development, with dedicated partner finding tools planned to be available by end 2022.
- **Contact your National Agency** – at different moments during the year, the agencies organise contact events where you may be able to search for partners.
- **Use your existing network** – if this is not your first project, organising individual pupil mobility can be an excellent way to follow-up and bring your partnership to a new level.
- **Ask for help from colleagues** – if you are new to Erasmus+, it can be useful to ask for advice from colleagues in other schools in your area that you know have been active in Erasmus+ or another kind of international cooperation.
- **Contact your local authority** – your local or regional authority may already be involved in other types of cross-border cooperation and their existing contacts could help you identify potential partner schools.

eTwinning

eTwinning is an online community of schools and teachers that offers a secure environment and a variety of tools to work together online. It is hosted on the European School Education Platform and is part of the Erasmus+ programme.

eTwinning provides opportunities for continuous professional development and meeting potential partners during workshops, seminars and online training modules. It also allows schools to set up joint virtual classrooms

Schools taking part in Erasmus+ projects are strongly encouraged to complement their physical project activities with an online eTwinning component. For schools preparing a pupil mobility activity, eTwinning is useful for partner finding and as a cooperation tool in all phases of implementation, from pre-departure contacts to follow-up after the mobility period.

Teachers who register on eTwinning are verified by a national eTwinning office in order to make sure the platform is a safe environment populated by real teachers and school staff.

9. FORGING A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE SENDING AND THE HOSTING SCHOOL

Once you have found a potential partner for hosting your pupils, your two organisations will need to invest time and work into getting to know each other's expectations, interests, curricula and governing rules. Sharing as much information as possible is important to prepare the content of mobility activities and to plan for logistical challenges and administrative procedures necessary to implement it.

To cooperate effectively, the two schools need to establish regular contact by identifying the staff members responsible for the exchanges. Agreeing on key principles of cooperation and putting them on paper is a useful way to structure the partnerships and clarify the expectations on both sides. Even though it is not mandatory in Erasmus+, creating an inter-institutional agreement (sometimes also called a 'memorandum of understanding') is highly recommended.

The two schools will need to find common ground on a number of different topics. We can divide them into two broad categories: content-related questions (curriculum comparison, expected learning outcomes, monitoring methods, evaluation methods, etc.) and organisational questions (travel, accomodation, finances, administrative paperwork, legal framework).

To ensure that all aspects are well-covered, staff members with different profiles should be involved in discussions with the hosting school. For example, you will need teachers to review curriculum requirements, but you will also need adminstrative staff to foresee what kind of paperwork needs to be prepared. For legal and recognition topics, you may also need to seek advice from outside of your school, for example from your school authority.

Inter-institutional agreements

An inter-institutional agreement (or a memorandum of understanding) is a written agreement between two organisations that defines the scope and objectives of a planned cooperation, together with rights and responsibilities of each partner. It formalises a partnership in order to build trust and make the cooperation predictable and long lasting.

An inter-institutional agreement ensures that there is commitment at partner's organisational level, independent from any future changes in the organisation's leadership or staff.

An inter-institutional agreement should include administrative, financial, pedagogic, logistic and emergency provisions that are common for all mobility activities that will take place between the partner organisations. Its existence will make implementation of all mobility activities easier, for example by standardising some of the evaluation and recognition procedures that can then be built into learning agreements of individual participants (see chapter on learning agreements for further details). In case of Erasmus+ mobility projects, the agreement should always refer to **Erasmus quality standards,** which define many of the rights and obligations of the sending and hosting schools.

After a period of implementation, the inter-institutional agreement should be updated to reflect the experience of previous exchanges, for example by specifying which curriculum requirements of mobile pupils can be automatically recognized under certain conditions.

10. DEALING WITH ORGANISATIONAL COSTS OF MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

Finances are among the most important topics to discuss with your hosting partner. Since the sending school is the only one receiving an Erasmus+ grant for the activity, it is necessary to determine how this grant will be shared with the hosting school, who will surely bear a part of the costs.

Erasmus+ funding covers the cost of travel, accommodation, subsistence, language learning, and other expenses linked to the mobility activity. Detailed funding rules are explained in the Erasmus+ Programme guide and you need to become familiar with them before starting any activities. If your hosting partner does not have own experiences with Erasmus+, it is very important to inform them about these rule and conditions.

Among the different costs, Erasmus+ covers a general category labelled 'Organisational support'. It is paid in form of a fixed amount per pupil. Its purpose is to cover various administrative and miscellaneous costs that are not covered by any of the other standard categories.

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide stipulates that the organisational support grant needs to be used to cover organisational expenses both for the sending and for the hosting school. Therefore, the two schools need to agree how the funding will be used. To ensure good cooperation, you should make sure that this agreement is explicit and transparent.

Different arrangements can be made for the organisational costs. A part of organisational support grant can be transferred to the hosting school or the two schools can agree that some of the expenses on the hosting side are paid directly by the sending school.

To avoid discussion on these sensitive issues during the mobility period, it is important to tackle them in advance by creating a list of expected expenses and establishing a clear mutual understanding on who will pay for them. To serve as a clear reference during implementation, agreed solutions should be put in writing, for example in an inter-institutional agreement.

11. PREPARATORY VISITS TO THE HOSTING SCHOOL

In Erasmus+, sending schools can ask for funding for a short preparatory visit to the hosting school before the mobility takes place. A preparatory visit is performed by staff members from the sending school with the objective of finalising the planning with their colleagues on the hosting side, building better mutual understanding, and getting a first-hand impression about the learning environment where the pupil will spend their mobility period.

Preparatory visits are not a standard part of every mobility activity. Rather, they are requested when needed to overcome specific challenges. Some of the situations where a preparatory visit is recommended include:

- For your first few individual mobility activities if your school is new to Erasmus+ or has never tried out this activity format before;
- When you are starting to work with a new hosting partner;
- For activities of one month or longer in duration;
- For pupils with fewer opportunities[3], as well as pupils who may have a tougher time adapting in a new environment for other reasons, e.g. due to lower self-confidence or social skills;
- When a new staff member is joining your school's Erasmus+ team and is preparing to mentor a pupil in a mobility activity.

The above is not an exhaustive list. The Programme Guide permits a request for a preparatory visit whenever it improves inclusiveness, scope and quality of mobility activities. Whichever are the reasons for your preparatory visit, you should be prepared to explain them in your report at the end of the project.

For mobility activities of at least one month and for participants with fewer opportunities, Erasmus+ rules offer the possibility to include pupils in a preparatory visit together with their teachers. Having this preliminary contact with their hosting school and country can help reassure the pupil, and prepare them mentally, as well as practically.

[3] A broad definition of participants with fewer opportunities is included in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. In case you need detailed information in your national context, please consult the website of the National Agency in your country.

12. IDENTIFYING MENTORS AND OTHER RESPONSIBLE PERSONS AT THE SENDING AND HOSTING SCHOOL

Organisation of pupil mobility is a collective task that requires involvement of the school leadership, teachers and administrative staff at both the sending and hosting school.

The key principle of allocating responsibilities to teachers and other staff members is that the participating pupils need to have more than one adult person available for assistance. The hosting school will need to set up day-to-day mentorship for the pupil, but the sending school must also stay involved and have contact persons available for the pupil during their mobility activity.

This section lists the key staff roles in the preparation and implementation of pupil mobility activities. Persons tasked with some of these roles will need to be identified from the very start of your project, while others such as the emergency contacts, accompanying persons and mentors for individual pupils, may be finally settled once the selection of pupils is done. In either case, at this stage you should know which staff members are available and can be involved in the organisation of Erasmus+ activities in one role or another.

School leadership

The leadership of the sending school is responsible for the implementation of the school's Erasmus+ mobility project. Their role is therefore to supervise the implementation, making sure that the Erasmus quality standards are being respected and that each mobility activity is in line with the overall objectives of the school's project.

Furthermore, the role of the school leadership in both sending and hosting schools is to facilitate creation of a firm partnership between the two institutions and to represent their schools in administrative procedures necessary for the mobility to take place.

In case of accredited projects, the school's Erasmus coordinator should act as support to the school leadership and other members of the team.

Mentors

Existence of mentors for individual pupil mobility activities is required by the Erasmus quality standards and is of crucial importance for the success of the activity. In the Erasmus quality standards, the role of the mentor is broadly defined in the following way:

Monitoring and mentoring: *where relevant based on the format of the activity, the sending and hosting organisations must identify a mentor or a similar key person who will be following the participant during their stay at the hosting organisation and who will help them achieve the desired learning outcomes. Particular attention should be given to the introduction and integration of the participants at the hosting organisation, and to the monitoring of the learning process.*

This definition provides the minimum requirements that the sending and hosting school must respect. At the same time, the definition is broad enough to allow for a variety of different implementations. For example, it is not necessary that the mentor must be only one person, but it is necessary that at least one mentor is named at the hosting school, and one at the sending school – a sort of 'remote mentor' – a qualified person following the pupil's learning process from their sending school.

The mentor at the hosting school and their pair at the sending school should be in regular contact to ensure the best possible learning outcomes and smooth reintegration of the pupils upon their return to the sending school.

The role of the mentors is primarily linked with content: that is the learning aspect of the mobility. This is why the role of the mentor would typically be taken by one of the teachers at the hosting school. It should be clear that learning in this situation should be understood broadly. It includes formal, as well as informal and non-formal learning, which implies aspects that could be termed 'personal development' rather than academic learning. In this sense, mentors should also be facilitators helping the pupil to integrate into the daily routines and the social context at the hosting school.

In addition to supporting the learning process, mentors should act as monitors tracking the pupil's progress and making sure that the planned learning programme is being followed. Depending on the division of tasks in the school, they can also have a role in the evaluation and recognition procedures at the end of the mobility period.

Mentoring is therefore a rather demanding task. Potential mentors should be aware that a certain amount of extra work is involved and should only accept this role if they are sure that they are able to give the pupil the time and help necessary. The mentors should have an open-minded personality and be ready to deal with non-academic aspects of the pupil's stay in the school. Most of the mentor's tasks arise during the pupil's stay, but important aspects of the work also take place before and after the mobility. For the different concrete tasks, other teachers and staff should be available to mentors to support and advise them.

The work of the mentors and other involved staff should be recognised by the school as a part of their workload and in accordance with the applicable national legislation (e.g. through financial compensation, quota of working hours, performance reviews).

Contact persons for administrative matters and emergencies

Apart from mentors who will deal primarily with the learning and personal development aspects of the mobility activity, the Erasmus quality standards further require that the schools ensure there are contacts in place for other logistical, administrative and practical aspects of the activity, as well as emergency situations. The Erasmus quality standards state the following requirement:

Support during the activity: *participants must be able to request and receive support from their hosting and sending organisations at any time during their mobility. Contact persons in both organisations, means of contact, and protocols in case of exceptional circumstances must be defined before the mobility takes place. All participants must be informed about these arrangements.*

The standard Erasmus+ Learning agreement template (as further detailed in chapter 14) reflects the quality standards by including three types of responsibilities on both sending and hosting school side. In addition to mentors (the main content supervisors), these responsibilities include contact persons for administrative matters and emergency contacts. By using the standard Learning agreement template you can ensure that the quality standards are respected.

It is possible for one staff member to take more than one type of responsibilities. However, it is strongly recommended to spread the different tasks between multiple staff members working as a team. This

will reduce the workload on each individual staff member. More importantly, it will result in a wider positive impact on the staff competencies since each of the involved colleagues will have the opportunity to learn from the experience. As a result, the school's capacity for cooperation with partners abroad will also be improved, which is an important objective of all Erasmus+ mobility projects. Finally, spreading the tasks between different colleagues will reduce the risk of issues if one of the staff members becomes unavailable.

Accompanying persons

Apart from mentors and contact persons, pupil mobility activities may include accompanying persons: staff members who accompany the pupils for a part or the entire mobility period abroad. Involvement of accompanying persons can be supported by Erasmus+ funds if it is justified in terms of the pupils' needs and quality of the activities. If needed and authorised by the sending school, parents, guardians or personal assistants may take on the role of accompanying persons, in particular to support pupils with fewer opportunities.

The two most typical types of accompaniment are assistance for pupils with disabilities or similar challenges, and short stays of sending school mentors at the beginning of a longer mobility period, as a way to help with the pupil's integration at the hosting school.

In terms of length of stay of accompanying persons, the two cases should be considered differently. Pupils with disabilities may only be able to take part in Erasmus+ with a full accompaniment. Such an arrangement can be costly, but it is well justified and Erasmus+ rules are designed to support it.

On the other hand, accompaniment as a form of integration support should be used more rarely and prudently. In principle, it should be organised only if there is a clear need for additional supervision or support, and generally limited to the first few days of longer stays. This type of accompaniment should be carefully balanced with the goal of mobility activities to foster independence and self-confidence.

13. SELECTING PUPILS

When preparing an Erasmus+ application, the sending school defines categories of pupils targeted by the mobility activities. The target group will be the first element to take into account when setting up the selection process.

In addition, the sending school needs to take into account the general principles and requirements of Erasmus+. In all of its actions, the programme seeks to promote equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity. These principles are reflected in the Erasmus quality standards:

Inclusion and diversity: *the beneficiary organisations must respect the principles of inclusion and diversity in all aspects of their activities. The beneficiary organisations must ensure fair and equal conditions for all participants.*

Whenever possible, the beneficiary organisations should actively engage and involve participants with fewer opportunities in their activities. The beneficiary organisations should make maximum use of the tools and funding provided by the Programme for this purpose.

Selection of participants: *participants must be selected through a transparent, fair and inclusive selection procedure.*

Therefore, the sending school can choose the general target group of pupils to which the mobility opportunities are addressed (for example, in terms of age group or class year), but the final selection of individual pupils needs to follow a structured and fair selection process.

Publicising and promoting Erasmus+ opportunities in your school

As a matter of transparency and fairness, Erasmus+ opportunities need be announced publicly in the school and on its website. Parents and pupils need to be informed about the application and selection procedure, and conditions of the planned activities.

At the sending school, you should take steps to promote the mobility opportunities to pupils to whom it may not immediately occur to apply, for example those with lower academic success or socio-economic disadvantage. Inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities is a key postulate of the programme and building it into your project from the start will create a solid basis for the project's eventual success.

Keep in mind that recruiting pupils for stays abroad can be challenging, especially if you are planning to organise longer activities for the first time. To attract the attention and inform pupils and parents in your school you may consider having public presentations by former participants (from your school or a neighbouring one, in

Inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities

As one of its overarching priorities, the Erasmus+ Programme promotes equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness.

Participants with fewer opportunities are at the heart of this objective. To achieve it, a number of support measures are available, including an option for shorter stays and additional funding to tackle any barriers to participation of participants with fewer opportunities.

case this is your first project) or from participants currently abroad, via video conferencing. First-hand experiences and success stories have the strongest impact on interested pupils, and can do a lot to reassure the parents of the safety and benefits of mobility activities.

Basic recommendations for the selection procedure

The selection procedure can be a sensitive matter since it will necessarily result in some, rather than other interested pupils being given the chance to participate in Erasmus+. Here are a few key recommendations to respect the Erasmus quality standards and ensure the smooth running of the process:

- The selection procedure and the criteria need to be published before the selection starts. In your announcement, make sure to list all information and documents that pupils must submit for their application to be valid.
- You should document the key steps of the process in writing (in particular publication, receipt of applications, assessments, ranking and selection decision).
- The final decision should not be taken by one person, but several, e.g. in form of a committee.
- If the selection is very competitive, it can be a good idea for the committee to involve one or more persons from outside of your school, as a way to increase the objectivity of the process. For example, this can be a person from your local school authority, from a neighbouring school, or another external expert with relevant experience. Former Erasmus+ participants can be involved, if they are of appropriate age.
- Involving a person from the hosting school in the selection can be useful both for the quality of the process and for the hosting school's preparedness.

The selection process can be simplified when that does not hurt equal treatment of applicants. For example, if your available funds are sufficient to support all pupils who have applied, then you will not need a scored ranking list, but a simple assessment of the pupil's basic ability to participate.

Defining the selection criteria

To structure the selection process, you will want to establish a set of selection criteria. It is a good idea to combine general criteria with specific elements relevant for your project. If you expect to have a large number of applications, you can organise a pre-selection round to lower the total workload for your staff.

Overall, you should look for a balance between criteria that reward existing performance and those that look at potential for growth. Pupils with excellent academic record and good knowledge of foreign languages will surely come out on the top of purely performance-based selection. However, you may also receive applications from pupils who are not performing up to their potential in their current situation. For them a mobility experience would be a once in a lifetime chance to break through and grow personally and academically.

Erasmus+ puts a lot of emphasis on inclusion. Making sure that participants with different learning needs are given fair consideration and a chance to participate is very important for the quality of your

project. Your selection process should have multiple dimensions of assessment in order to address the different needs of your pupils.

The following are some possible elements to consider when designing your selection process:

Pupil's motivation
What to look for? - Pupils who show an understanding that the mobility period means not only exciting personal experiences, but also a lot of work and responsibility; - Expectation and willingness to face challenges or difficult periods; - Thinking about what they would want to learn and about ways to prepare for the mobility period.
How to gather the information and assess it? - Giving an exercise that requires the pupils to autonomously make an investment of their own time and effort can demonstrate the motivation and willingness to work for the opportunity; - Motivation letters or essays are a classic way to approach this point, however offering a choice of options (a video, a presentation, a poster, etc.) or combining more than one exercise can be more inclusive and empowering, allowing applicants to express themselves creatively and on their own terms.

Academic performance and potential for growth
What to look for? - Good and balanced overall academic performance; - Absence of major academic weaknesses or recent issues that could worsen in a more challenging learning environment; - Identification of potential for growth in areas where a mobility period can be impactful; - Sufficient ability to learn foreign languages (if required during the mobility period); - Ability to catch up with any required learning content upon return to the sending school.
How to gather the information and assess it? - Using the pupil's academic record. A relevant time period and a subset of key subjects can be defined. - Gathering opinions of one or several teachers that can offer first-hand insight into the pupil's behaviour, responsiveness and habits in the learning setting.

Support statement from the parents (or legal guardians)
What to look for? - Parents must be in agreement with their pupils going abroad and with the wider project the school is implementing, including any specific thematic that it focuses on. - Parents must be ready to provide their support during the mobility period and need to understand that extra effort may be needed to coordinate between them, the sending school and the hosting school. - As personal traits, parents need to show calmness, patience and ability to deal with a lower degree of control. - As a measure of inclusion, exceptions should be foreseen to this requirement for pupils coming from

disadvantaged background whose parents may not able to provide a support statement.
How to gather the information and assess it? - A talk or a short written support statement from the parents; - To make the request easier for parents and more comparable, a support statement can be a reply to a few questions about the parents' expectations and priorities.

Personal resilience, resourcefulness and adaptability
What to look for? - Pupil's ability to deal with new situations, to cooperate with others and participate in social activities; - Capacity to function outside of their known circle of family and friends; - Ability to deal with stress, pressure and negative emotions; - Confidence in their own strengths and awareness of possible weaknesses; - Readiness to ask for help and advice from others.
How to gather the information and assess it? - An interview with the pupils can be a good way to assess these elements. Using a structured or semi-structured interview where all applicants are asked the same or very similar set of questions is preferred in terms of fairness and transparency; - Questions that set a fictional but realistic scenario that can happen during a mobility period can be a good choice to structure this part of the selection. These are questions of the type 'What would you do in the following situation…' Such questions do not have a right or wrong answer, but are rather designed to show the pupil's way of thinking and ability to face issues. - Testimonials from teachers (or other relevant adults, such as sports trainers), as well as peers can be a good way to identify the pupil's social and cooperative skills, and to look beyond superficial traits such as outspokenness or popularity. - If possible in your context and relevant given the duration of the planned activity, you may seek a qualified opinion from a school psychologist or the pupil's family doctor about their physical and psychological readiness to undertake mobility activity; - Take into account the pupil's involvement in activities outside of the main school curriculum, such as music, sports, hobby clubs, volunteering activities, etc.

Inclusion
To be inclusive, the selection process should be designed with a number of practical considerations in mind: - The potential added value of the mobility period for the pupil's personal and academic development needs to be taken into account. An Erasmus+ activity can be a life-changing experience for some or just another point in the resume for others. The best projects are always those that manage to create a real difference for their participants. - In the final outcome of the selection, it is important to balance the influence of factors that recreate existing success or status (academic performance, socio-economic background) with those that demonstrate deeper motivation and potential for growth. - Quotas for certain categories of participants are allowed for inclusion purposes, for example if you wish to ensure gender balance or involvement of participants with fewer opportunities.

Adapting the selection process to your context
The above recommendations range from essentially mandatory due to existing rules of Erasmus+ and national laws (e.g. equal treatment, parental consent) to ideas for inspiration (e.g. the types of exercises and questions to be asked from applicant pupils). When talking to a wide European audience, it is not possible to be more precise. Your context is very important. Therefore, you have the possibility and the responsibility to adapt your selection process in view of the planned duration of your activities, of your project's objectives and structure, the age and profile of the target group of pupils, the hosting school and country, the number of participants in your project, the level of interest that you are seeing, etc. The above proposals generally consider that call for participation is being made to the entire target population, e.g. all pupils in your school of a certain age. However, in some projects the selection can also be performed within a smaller group of pupils that have already been associated to the previous project activities and are familiar with the context. This is acceptable in situations where a sudden enlargement of the potential pool of participants would not make sense, especially if there are very few spots available. However, openness and transparency remain very important even in smaller selections. Balance between these different considerations can only be made at the level of a project, informed by its context. As with the rest of this handbook, these general ideas should be used creatively and responsibly. Their purpose is to advise, and certainly not to force formalities onto situations where they are not relevant.

14. LEARNING AGREEMENT: DEFINING THE CONTENT AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

Preparing the learning content of a mobility activity is perhaps the most challenging part of implementing an Erasmus+ mobility project.

Different European countries use very different education systems with their own specific structure, curricula, priorities and philosophies. Naturally, much of the content learned by pupils of similar age in different countries is eventually the same or very similar, which facilitates the possibility of mobility activities between schools in different countries.

Substantial work is required to establish the points in common and points of difference between any pair of sending and hosting schools that wish to organise a pupil mobility activity. This analysis of the relevant curriculum, expectations and formal requirements is fundamental to the success of the project. The schools should identify any areas the pupil will need to compensate following their return to the sending school, in cases where these were not addressed in the hosting school. The results of such analysis are typically formalised in an inter-institutional agreement.

To organise a successful mobility activity, the results of this analysis at institutional level need to be transformed into a set of learning outcomes describing the knowledge, skills and competences that each individual pupil is expected to learn or improve during their mobility period.

The Erasmus quality standards set out the following requirements in this regard:

Definition of learning outcomes: *the expected learning outcomes of the mobility period must be agreed for each participant or group of participants. The learning outcomes must be agreed between the sending and hosting organisations, as well as the participant (in case of individual activities). The form of the agreement will depend on the type of the activity.*

Learning agreement: requirements and the standardised template

To comply with the quality standards, the sending and hosting schools therefore must define the expected learning outcomes before the activity starts, they must agree them with the pupil and their parents, and they must put them in writing.

In Erasmus+, the document that contains the content conditions for an individual mobility activity with the expected learning outcomes is called the 'Learning agreement'.

A complete learning agreement needs to contain:

- Signature of the following parties: the pupil (and their parent/ legal guardian), the sending organisation, and the hosting organisation;
- Information about the learning mobility, including: education field, type of activity, mode (physical, virtual or blended), start and end date;
- Information about the learning programme the pupil is enrolled in at the sending school;
- A list and description of expected learning outcomes;
- The learning programme and tasks to be completed at the hosting organisation;
- Monitoring, mentoring and support arrangements and responsible persons at the hosting and sending organisations;

- Description of the format, criteria and procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes;
- Description of the conditions and process for recognition of learning outcomes, as well as the documents that must be issued by the sending or hosting organisations to ensure that the recognition is completed;
- Information on how the pupil will be reintegrated at their sending organisation upon return from the mobility period.

A standardised learning agreement template that addresses all of the above requirements is provided by the European Commission and is available on the website of your National Agency. Downloading and reading the standard template should be among your first steps when preparing any mobility activity. If you are encountering the concept of a learning agreement for the first time, the template will give you a concrete idea of its content and importance.

Using the European Commission template is not mandatory. European education systems are quite diverse. Therefore, as a matter of flexibility, Erasmus+ rules allow modifications to the standard template, as well as use of other templates if they conform to the general rules defined by the Erasmus quality standards. Of course, using the standard learning agreement template is highly recommended, as it guarantees full compliance with those standards.

15. IMPORTANCE OF THE LEARNING AGREEMENT

Among the different tasks covered in this handbook, drafting the learning agreement may be the most important one. It can be a challenging task, but it is also an excellent investment. A well-prepared learning agreement is a recipe for the success of the activity. It will benefit the pupils directly, and it will save work for their mentors and everyone working on implementing the activity.

Before entering into more detail on how to prepare learning agreements, here are a few starting tips to frame our thinking:

- **The learning agreement is agreed between three parties:** the sending school, the hosting school, and the pupil with their parents. This is important because the agreed learning outcomes must be:
  - compatible with the requirements at the sending school;
  - attainable at the hosting school, given the content and methods being implemented there;
  - appropriate for the pupil with their specific learning needs and abilities.

  These aspects are too important to be left to improvisation and good will. They need to be discussed in advance and the conclusions written down.

- **The writing process is as important as the resulting document:** consultations between the two schools, the pupil and their parents serve not only to write a document, but also to generate trust, feeling of a joint enterprise, mutual understanding and realistic expectations. Involvement of mentors from both schools means that they will become familiar with the pupil's needs. For school leaders, these discussions will clarify what sort of responsibilities they are taking and to which critical points they must pay attention. Involvement of parents will let them understand the rules and limitations that the sending and hosting schools must respect.

- **Pupils should be familiar and comfortable with their learning agreement:** actively involving the pupils in the preparation process is an important pedagogical strategy aimed at increasing their confidence and feeling of ownership. Even if their final influence on the content is limited, they should be able to express their ideas and concerns. Having clear ideas about what they will do and learn during their stay abroad will mentally prepare the pupil for the obligations they will have and can also help reduce any insecurity that they may feel before departure.

- **Thinking ahead - the learning agreement sets the stage for the follow-up phase:** important tasks such as evaluation and recognition of learning outcomes will follow once the mobility period is finished. These tasks will be made significantly easier if the learning agreement has been prepared well. For the pupil, a good learning agreement will minimise double coursework and catching-up after the mobility, ensuring that their participation in Erasmus+ remains a positive experience and not an additional burden.

- **Reusing of previous work should not reduce quality**: if you are working with the same hosting school, parts of previous learning agreements can be reusable. It is a pragmatic approach, but it should be used with some limits. Copying large parts of an earlier agreement without any further reflection would mean that you are skipping crucial preparation steps both for yourself and for the pupils.

In addition, overly generic learning agreements are likely to cause confusion during implementation when they will need to be applied in a specific context and for specific individuals. Vague or out of place requirements can lead to problems during and after the mobility period.

Of course, eventually some agreements will be very similar to each other, but the reflection, analysis and the exercise of discussing the content with the hosting school, the pupil and their parents really should not be skipped.

- **Learning agreement is not paperwork:** by applying for an Erasmus+ project, you have shown initiative and motivation to provide excellent education for your pupils. Preparation of the learning agreement is at the heart of that. In many ways, a learning agreement is an embodiment of Erasmus+ programme: created through cooperation of education institutions from different countries, overcoming differences and challenges in order to provide the best possible education for your pupils.

- **One mobility is for one pupil, but your project is for your entire school**: do not lose sight of the bigger picture. The purpose of your Erasmus+ project is to improve education in your school. Mobility activities do that by benefiting pupils directly, but mobility activities also build the capacity of your staff to deal with and learn from new challenges.

  Fine-tuning the learning agreements by discussing curricula and practices with colleagues from the hosting country is an extraordinarily valuable professional exercise for all of the involved teachers and staff. It is an immense benefit for them personally and professionally – a unique opportunity that should not be wasted. Over time, these new experiences and skills that your staff will accumulate have the power to transform your organisation from just a school into an Erasmus+ school where international projects, contacts and exchanges are part of the organisation's identity and every day work.

16. HOW TO PREPARE A LEARNING AGREEMENT

The standard learning agreement template provides the basis for the content that a learning agreement needs to have. The template should therefore be your starting point. In addition to that, you can find below a few practical tips and ideas on how to go about the drafting:

- **The sending school should lead the drafting of the learning agreement** since they are the owner of the project and the one who will be reporting about the use of Erasmus+ funds. If your hosting partner is more experienced, this can make the process easier, but you should keep in mind that your school has the final responsibility for the outcome of the activities. Your local, regional and national school authorities may also provide useful advice and guidance on questions you will encounter in this process.

- **Make sure you have the necessary background information before you start**: before starting the drafting process, you should organise exchanges between staff members from the sending and the hosting school to determine key features of the curricula, clear compatibilities and incompatibilities, rules for evaluation and recognition, etc. Education systems in each country are different, so your hosting partner will always be your first reference point and reliable source of information.

- **Stay realistic:** the content of the Learning agreement should take into account the duration of the stay and the many challenges that the pupils will need to face apart from the curriculum, such as the new language, new classmates, new surroundings, homesickness, etc. Space and time should be consciously dedicated to informal, extracurricular, social and leisure activities that will help pupils to integrate and benefit at the personal and not just purely academic level.

- **Identify major gaps or weak points:** some of the requirements applicable in the sending country may not be possible to address during the mobility period. It is extremely important to identify any such gaps and to create strategies to cope with them. Particular categories to consider in this context include graduation requirements and university admission requirements for pupils in last years of their secondary education. If such gaps are identified, the pupil's mentor and teachers at the hosting school should be aware of them. If possible, the learning programme can be complemented with content or activities that would facilitate any catch-up work the pupil will need to do, or exams they will need to take when returning to the sending school. This may create some extra workload, but that is justified if it avoids a stressful reintegration period after the mobility activity has finished.

- Choose mentors that are up to the task and trust them with the responsibility – from this point in the process, the mentors at the sending and hosting organisation should be the leading figures in defining the content of the activities for the pupil that they will supervise. Make sure that they feel empowered and that they are involved intensively. This will guarantee that they are able to fulfil their monitoring and mentoring roles effectively, and that they have the confidence to make adaptation during the implementation, when needed.

- **Involve subject teachers:** the pupil's mentors will play a leading role in the creation of the learning agreement, however to fine-tune it and avoid double coursework for the pupils, it is very useful to involve other teachers as well. For example, they can act as reviewers for the draft version of the agreement or they can act in tandem with their counterparts in the hosting school to prepare the

parts of the agreement relevant for their subject. As experts in their areas, they are best placed to analyse similarities and differences between the two schools' programmes.

In addition to helping with formal alignment of the requirements and expected outcomes, involving more teachers will make it easier to follow-up with evaluation and recognition phases by having everyone on board from the start.

Finally and very importantly, at school level, involvement of a wider team of teachers makes it possible that the benefits of the Erasmus+ project are felt throughout the whole organisation – an aspect that forms an important part of the eventual success and evaluation of your project.

– **Take into account acquisition of skills and competences beyond the formal content** of school subjects. Make sure to give appropriate value to the various forms of informal and non-formal learning that the pupils will surely experience during their stay.

– **Integrate projectwork, research or other specific assignments into the learning agreement:** you can link an individual mobility to your wider project topics by having pupils carry out a specific assignment during their stay at the hosting school (e.g. on a set theme relating to the host country).

  This approach can improve the quality of the activity at many levels: by creating a common thread across different activities in your project, by supporting acquirement of concrete skills and competences, by filling gaps in the pupil's school schedule and by creating materials that the pupil can use to present their experience once they are back at the sending school.

  Perhaps most importantly, this type of assignments can be used as a way to comply with specific formal requirements of the sending school. Project work, research, thematic presentations or papers and similar assignments can be evaluated in a formal way and are often among the easiest elements to be recognised back at the sending school, due to their very concrete nature.

  One aspect to be careful about when designing an assignment of this type is to make sure that it does not force the pupil to spend a large part of their time abroad alone working on a difficult task. To avoid such an issue, it is best to include a strong collaborative element in the task, so that it leads the pupil to interact with their peers at the hosting school. This way their work on the assignment can simultaneously help their social integration and language skills.

– **Make use of European frameworks and information:** they have already been prepared with the transnational dimension in mind and therefore can be very useful in the mobility context. Here are some of the useful sources to take a look at:

  - European Framework for Key Competences
  - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
  - Eurydice (information about education systems in Europe)
  - Europass Mobility

– **Use simple language and be specific**: provisions of the learning agreement need to be operational so that they can guide the implementation and follow-up. The language of the learning agreement should be straightforward, focusing on specific goals that can be understood by the pupil. Concrete language will also make the job easier for the mentors and teachers, and it will facilitate the evaluation process after the activity.

- **Define a schedule of regular checkpoints**: assessing the learning progress at regular intervals will make it possible to observe developments and to intervene on time if learning is not progressing satisfactorily. This aspect is particularly important for longer activities.
- **Change the plan if there is a good reason**: planning is important, and so are flexibility and adaptability. In the real world, not everything will go as planned. Your main concern should be the well-being of the pupil. If there is a need, the learning plan can be modified: either because new and better learning opportunities arise, or because one or more aspects prove to be too difficult to implement. This is normal occurrence – good project management includes identifying such situations and adapting. In terms of formalities, most such changes can be documented at the end of the mobility period. In case of major re-planning, you may consider creating a new version of the learning agreement. In either case, it is important to make sure that all parties agree with the changes.
- **Reflect on the possibility that the planned learning outcomes would not be achieved**: mobility activities are challenging for the pupil and for the two schools involved. You need to be prepared for the possibility that sometimes these challenges can prevail despite the best efforts of everyone involved. For example, pupil's integration at the host family can fail, or they can experience unexpectedly strong negative emotional reaction to separation from parents, leading to premature termination of the activity. The language barrier may prove too much for the pupil to handle, preventing them from participating in learning at the hosting school. Sometimes, such challenges will result in an early return to the sending school and other times the mobility period will be completed, but not all learning outcomes will be achieved. These possibilities should be reflected on during the preparation of the learning agreement.

17. INSURANCE, SAFETY OF MINORS AND OTHER LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Apart from preparing the pupils, the sending and hosting schools will need to collaborate to set up all of the logistical, practical and legal details. The Erasmus quality standards define the following requirements in this regard:

Practical arrangements: *the beneficiary organisations must ensure the quality of practical and logistic arrangements (travel, accommodation, visa applications, social security, etc.). If these tasks are delegated to the participant or a service provider, the beneficiary organisation will remain ultimately responsible for verifying their provision and quality.*

Health, safety and respect of applicable regulation: *all activities must be organised with a high standard of safety and protection for involved participants and must respect all applicable regulation (for example regarding parental consent, minimum age of participants, etc.). The beneficiary organisations must ensure that their participants have appropriate insurance coverage, as defined by the general rules of the Programme and the applicable regulation.*

The help of the hosting school is often necessary to set up the needed practical arrangements and supporting organisations may also assist. As the sending school, you should nevertheless be aware that the final responsibility lies with you in all cases. It means that your job is to act as a quality controller and to make sure that choices made by the hosting school or a supporting organisation ensure high quality activities, as well as the pupil's safety and well-being.

National laws regarding safety of minors differ from country to country and may include strong restrictions or rules. Safety of minors is not within the legal competences of the European Union and therefore no common legal framework exists across Europe. This also means that the Erasmus+ programme does not enjoy any exceptional legal status in the national laws of the EU member states. Being informed about your obligations when working with minors is therefore an absolute must.

Since schools deal with children and minors in their daily work, a certain level of competence on these matters will already exist in your organisation. As a first step, you can ask for advice of colleagues who are most experienced in the matter. Of course, a learning mobility will be different from the usual school trips or similar activities, so a review of the written regulations should be performed in any case. You may also want to ask for advice and guidance of your supervising authority, as well as information from any other schools in your area that have previously completed Erasmus+ activities.

All pupils taking part in individual learning mobility activities must be insured during their stay abroad. The following types of insurance need to be covered:

- travel insurance (including damage or loss of luggage)
- third party liability
- health insurance
- accidents, serious illness and life insurance (including permanent or temporary incapacity, repatriation).

Some of these insurances may already be covered by an existing insurance policy at the sending school, or another policy that the pupil has personally. For example, EU citizens can use their home country's health insurance with the European Health Insurance Card. Existing insurance and their coverage are therefore the first element to verify. For parts that are not covered, a dedicated insurance policy needs to be taken while paying particular attention to its terms of applicability in the hosting country.

18. ACCOMMODATION AND HOST FAMILIES

In terms of logistics, accommodation is one of the most important choices to be made, as it will greatly influence the pupil's personal comfort and options for socialisation during their stay in the hosting country.

The sending and hosting school should agree on the type of accommodation well in advance, so pupils and parents can be informed about the conditions of the stay. In all cases, the details of the accommodation must be known to the pupil and their parents before departure.

The two schools should also agree how accommodation costs and other everyday expenses (such as food and daily transport) will be covered. The role of the hosting school will be to check any candidate premises and complete other logistic and administrative details that need to be done on the ground. On the other hand, as the receiver of the Erasmus+ grant, the sending school will be the one taking responsibility for finances and controlling overall and specific costs (see also section 'Dealing with organisational costs of mobility activities').

Depending on the options available to the hosting school and the agreement made with the sending school, accommodation can be organised at a dormitory, a commercial provider (hotel, hostel or rental) or in a host family. Duration of the activity plays a crucial role in this choice. Accommodating pupils in a hotel may be a good solution for relatively short stays, while school dormitories and host families are generally a better option for longer stays as they allow for a better integration. For pupils, being hosted in a family can add particular depth and immersion to their experience.

If the choice is made to use a host family, the process of finding suitable families should be led by the hosting school with significant input from the sending school in terms of requirements that are expected and the profile of the pupils that will be participating. A preliminary recruitment of host families should start in parallel with the selection process for pupils, eventually being finalised by pairing the selected pupils with one of the available host families. Below you can find useful practical advice on how to recruit and work with host families.

Recruiting and working with host families – practical advice

Start looking for host families well in advance: as soon as you have agreed with your hosting partner that accommodation will be handled by host families, you should ask them to make announcements looking for volunteer families for that role. Whenever possible, candidate families should be the families of mobile pupils future classmates at the hosting school.

Establish transparent requirements and checks: to satisfy safety regulations and reassure the pupil's parents, the vetting process for host families needs to be strict and detailed. Depending on the national regulation, specific documentation can be requested, e.g. recent criminal records of household members. All such requirements and checks should be indicated in the call for volunteer host families and the first point of the application should be an explicit agreement of the applicant family to these conditions.

Recruiting and working with host families – practical advice

Use two-way exchanges if possible: when two schools are exchanging their pupils in both directions, usually the best accommodation arrangement is to make 'pairs' or 'tandems' of pupils who will stay at each other's family, typically in consecutive periods. Agreeing to host a pupil from your partner school can be defined as an advantage for pupils applying to go on a mobility activity. At the same time, exceptions may be needed to ensure that pupils with fewer opportunities are not excluded.

Create a pool of interested families: pre-select more host families than the number of pupils arriving to the hosting school to leave room for flexibility. This will allow for better matching of pupils to families and it will ensure that there are back-up options if any of the host families withdraw, if a pupil needs to change the host family, or if the number of pupils is increased.

Check the accommodation conditions: staff from the hosting and/or sending school should visit the home of the potential host family to confirm that it is suitable to welcome the pupil. The pupil should have their own room, or at most share one with a peer of the same age and gender.

Assess the motivation of the host family and explain the importance of their role: apart from formal requirements, the host families should be aware of their role in integration and learning process of the visiting pupil. They need to be ready to treat the visiting pupil as they would wish their child to be treated in another home. During the selection process, the hosting school should dedicate time to brief the candidate families in detail about these responsibilities and expectations. The selection process should include an interview with the adult family members in order to assess their motivation and ability to adapt to this specific role. To make sure that all household members are available, the interview can take place at their home, as part of the visit to check the premises.

Be the matchmaker: once the final list of pupils and host families is available, you should think of the best possible matches. If there are existing connections between any of the pupils and families (e.g. a friendship formed in previous activities), then there is no reason not to follow them. However, if there are no obvious choices then you should make matches based on practical factors such as the age of the host family's own children, language competences of host family members, etc.

Facilitate first contact: the pupil, their parents and the host family can get in touch via online communication tools before the activity starts. The sending and hosting schools should help with this step and provide advice on what sort of information to exchange (e.g. the pupil's and the host family's typical routines, dietary habits or special requirements, pets, needed clothing, etc.). Talking about and jointly establishing basic house rules can be very useful as it can show in advance if there are any cultural differences to be aware and respectful of.

Plan for emergencies before they happen: the role of host families in unexpected situations is very important. The host family should therefore be involved and familiar with plans for emergencies, as explained in a later chapter of the handbook: 'Exceptional circumstances and emergencies during the mobility period'.

Finances: participation of host families is voluntary and they should not make a profit by hosting a pupil. An appropriate subsistence subsidy can be provided and specific bills covered from the project grant to avoid disproportional costs to the family. The project grant can also be used to provide the pupil with an appropriate amount of pocket money, as agreed as with their parents.

19. PREPARING PUPILS BEFORE DEPARTURE

For many pupils their Erasmus+ experience will be the first time spending a longer period abroad, first time being away from their parents, first time trying to go about their daily life communicating in another language, and many other 'firsts'. Providing targeted and diverse preparation before departure will help them cope with these new situations.

The Erasmus quality standards provide the following principles for pre-departure preparation:

Preparation: *participants must receive appropriate preparation in terms of practical, professional and cultural aspects of their stay in the host country. The preparation should be organised in collaboration with the hosting organisation (and the hosting families, where relevant).*

Practical and cultural preparation will be crucial for pupils, while the text's reference to 'professional' preparation is rather relevant for staff mobility activities (to which the same standards apply).

Preparation includes provision of information and first contacts between participants, mentors and other relevant persons on the sending and hosting side.

The sending school should lead this task by structuring the preparation arrangements, making sure they are well adapted to pupil's age, destination country, duration of stay, monitoring arrangements, etc.

The role of the hosting school is to provide information and help establish contacts with key persons on the hosting side. By being involved in pre-departure preparations, the hosting school will be better informed and able to prepare for the pupils' arrival.

In terms of topics, practical preparation should include information about the hosting school itself and the essentials of the hosting country's education system, travel arrangements, accommodation, daily commuting, school schedule, access to Internet and other services that the pupils will need, such as food canteens, student offices, the library, etc.

Pre-departure training

A structured pre-departure training is an obligatory part of preparation for pupil mobility activities longer than one month.

The exact modality of the obligatory pre-departure training differs between countries. To receive more information, you should contact your National Agency as soon as you know that you will be organising long-term pupil mobility.

Erasmus+ funds can be used to cover the cost of travel to the pre-departure training.

An especially important part of practical preparation is going over the learning agreement with the pupil in a structured way, making sure they understand its practical meaning.

Preparing a well-structured info-package with all of the practical information is highly recommended so that the pupil can have access to it at any time during the travel and stay abroad.

Finally, the need for cultural preparation should not be underestimated, even between very close and similar countries. The pupil will not be visiting another country like a tourist. Rather, they will need to function and complete tasks within the hosting country's education system – a specific environment

with a culture of its own. Examples of topics to cover include social customs, dietary habits, climate and clothing, as well as important holidays and school-break periods (in case of longer stays).

A useful part of preparatory activities can be to task the pupil with researching their hosting country and city. They can prepare their own 'info-package' or they can give a presentation to their class before departing. Such a hands-on approach is more effective than asking the pupil to memorise pre-prepared information.

Personal and emotional preparation

Apart from factual information, pupils departing on mobility need reassurance and a sense of connection with the place where they are going. For this reason, preparation of every mobility period should include contacts between the pupil and persons in the hosting country, including their mentors, teachers, peers and the host family (if this is how they will be accommodated).

Online tools such as eTwinning virtual classrooms can be used for this purpose. If appropriate in the context of the project, the pupil's classmates can take part in joint virtual activities with their future classmates on the hosting side.

Parents, teachers and other staff members (e.g. the school psychologist) should help prepare the pupils by discussing positive and negative feelings they may experience before departure and during their stay abroad. Pupils should understand that feelings of homesickness, insecurity and other emotional responses are normal and expected. Above all, they should be aware that talking about negative feelings is not a problem, and that asking for help or advice during their stay abroad is the correct and responsible thing to do whenever they feel uneasy about their academic or personal situation.

Linguistic preparation

For pupils staying in a country where a different language is used than the ones they are fluent in, linguistic preparation (and continuous support during their stay) will be crucial. This point is also tackled in the Erasmus quality standards:

Linguistic support: *the beneficiary organisation must ensure appropriate language training, adapted to the personal and occupational needs of the participants. Where appropriate, the beneficiary organisation should make maximum use of the specific tools and funding provided by the Programme for this purpose.*

Your own and the hosting school's staff should be your number one resource when it comes to linguistic preparation. In addition, Erasmus+ provides two kinds of linguistic support: the free Online Language Support (OLS) platform and dedicated funds. The exact form of support will depend on the type of activity (longer or shorter than one month) and the language and level needed – for detailed rules, you should consult the Programme Guide. If the support includes funding, you can use it to purchase additional language learning materials and services.

Regardless of the format, the language learning should be guided and supervised. As with other forms of preparation, eTwinning or other online tools can allow the pupil to take part in learning activities with their future classmates at the hosting side. This is an excellent way to start their linguistic and social integration at the same time. Tandem learning with a 'buddy' on the hosting side (e.g. from their host family, if there is one) is another way to enrich the preparation phase and make the arrival smoother.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Implementation phase starts once the pupil has arrived to the hosting country and it comprises the period during which the pupil is staying and learning abroad. Efforts made during the preparation phase will pay off during implementation. If administrative and practical matters have been settled, mentors and pupils will be able to focus on the learning plan.

From the perspective of project management, the most important task for the sending school during this stage is to stay up to date with the developments at the hosting school by seeking information regularly and proactively. The sending school also needs to always remain at the pupil's and hosting school's disposal when needed, especially in case of any unexpected event.

20. INTRODUCING THE PUPIL TO THE HOSTING COUNTRY AND THE HOSTING SCHOOL

The pupil's travel to the host country should be organised in a way that makes the start of their mobility experience comfortable and reassuring. For pupils who are minors, arrangements regarding parental consent need to be taken into account and depending on the pupil's age accompanying stewards may be requested when buying the travel ticket.

If needed, the pupil's mentor from the sending school can accompany them for the travel and the first days at the hosting school. Erasmus+ provides funds for such 'accompanying persons'. This option should be used rationally, however. It is mainly intended for long-term pupil mobility activities, with accompanying person staying only for the first few days. Exceptions could be made when needed for specific reasons such as emotional vulnerability or medical disability (in this case, a professional assistant can be hired). When using accompanying arrangements, keep in mind that you have the responsibility to use Erasmus+ funds efficiently. Funds spent on accompaniment cannot be used for additional mobility, so it is important to have a clear reasoning when setting up such arrangements. You may be requested to explain your budgeting decisions when reporting about your project.

It is recommended for representative(s) of the hosting school to greet the pupil at arrival, so that the process of familiarisation can start. This task is best handled by the pupil's mentor. If the pupil is travelling alone, a person from the hosting school should bring them safely to their accommodation and explain how they will start the next day. If a hosting family is involved, they should also be present at arrival and help with these first steps. Arrival on a weekend can be useful to provide the pupil with enough time to settle. The schedule foreseen in the first days of stay should be balanced and leave at least some unassigned time to let the pupil rest and to avoid overwhelming them.

During the first day of their activity, the pupil's mentor from the hosting school should be the one to show them around the school premises, introduce them to teachers and other pupils, and inform them about key facilities (lockers, canteens, sport areas, library, etc.). The mentor at the hosting school is responsible for helping the pupil integrate into the new school system and for supporting them with any practical problems during the stay. In addition, and especially in case of longer stays, the hosting school can choose one or a few of their own pupils to be 'peer guides' for the incoming pupil. This approach can bridge the most difficult first steps in the pupil's social integration and, very importantly, it can make sure they are not feeling isolated during the crucial first days of their stay.

21. SUPPORT AND MONITORING DURING THE ACTIVITY

For the pupil's emotional well-being and learning success, it is important that they feel supported during their stay abroad despite being away from their family and familiar environment. The sending and hosting school's job is to remain aware of both their learning progress and emotional well-being.

As already indicated in the preparation phase, the Erasmus quality standards define the following requirements in this regard:

Support during the activity: *participants must be able to request and receive support from their hosting and sending organisations at any time during their mobility. Contact persons in both organisations, means of contact, and protocols in case of exceptional circumstances must be defined before the mobility takes place. All participants must be informed about these arrangements.*

Monitoring and mentoring: *where relevant based on the format of the activity, the sending and hosting organisations must identify a mentor or a similar key person who will be following the participant during their stay at the hosting organisation and who will help them achieve the desired learning outcomes. Particular attention should be given to the introduction and integration of the participants at the hosting organisation, and to the monitoring of the learning process.*

As stated in the quality standards, the very first step is to make sure that the pupil is aware who are their assigned mentors at both schools, who are their emergency contacts and other people they can talk to when the mentors are not available.

Monitoring and mentoring is a proactive task. The mentor and other staff at the hosting school need to actively offer their help and seek the pupil's input, particularly in the first part of the mobility period when the pupil is less familiar with them and may hesitate to approach them first. The schedule of the pupil at the sending school should be deliberately designed to provide plenty of opportunities for both formal and informal exchanges with their mentor, so that the mentor has sufficient opportunities to assess their progress and personal situation. The mentor also keeps track of the pupil's attendance, grades and other results (as defined by the learning agreement) and behaviour in term of the applicable rule of conduct at the hosting school.

The support that the pupil might need can be of diverse character: difficulties using the local language, hard times integrating in the new class, difficulties with a particular subject, accommodation related issues, absenteeism or other problematic behaviour etc. The task of the mentor is to facilitate the resolution of different problems by informing and seeking the assistance of fellow teachers and other school staff, and by involving the sending school and the pupil's parents when needed.

Similarly, the pupil's mentor at the sending school needs to be in contact with the pupil at regular, pre-agreed intervals. This is both a way to monitor the pupil's learning progress and to offer them an opportunity to speak to someone outside of the hosting school (which can be helpful in case there are problems the pupil does not feel comfortable discussing with their hosting school mentor).

Information exchange between the hosting and sending school mentors and the pupil's parents is paramount during the entire implementation phase. Each of the three actors is uniquely positioned to monitor the pupil's progress from different perspectives and can help the others fulfil their role more effectively.

The learning agreement includes a paragraph on monitoring, mentoring and support arrangements where a schedule of regular contacts between the pupil and the sending school, as well as the two mentors and the pupil's parents should be defined (typically, these exchanges will take place via online communication tools such as videoconferencing). Mentors should also make written notes on their observations to share them with the sending school and the pupil's parents. The form and topics of such notes should also be defined as part of the monitoring, mentoring and support arrangements in the learning agreement.

If the sending and hosting school have agreed on accommodating the pupil at a host family, this arrangement will have an important role in making the pupil's stay a success. The host family is uniquely positioned to ease the pupil's transition to the local culture and language in an informal and relaxed way. At the same time, the host parents need to exercise a healthy amount of parental supervision and care, having in mind that the visiting pupils are after all teenagers staying in a foreign country.

22. INTEGRATION STRATEGIES AND USEFUL ACTIVITIES TO COMPLEMENT THE LEARNING PROCESS

Successful integration into the social life at the hosting school is important for the pupil's overall mobility experience and an important factor to help achieve the desired learning outcomes. Particularly in long-term stays, integration is an essential condition for the success of the entire mobility activity.

A mobility activity is a special situation, where the sending and hosting schools need to think about more than their usual tasks of providing learning content. For example, it is important to consider how to avoid that pupils feel isolated during weekends or vacations periods, something that is not normally a school's task when it comes to their own pupils.

This said, it is important to keep in mind that integration is a social process – it can be facilitated, but it cannot be pre-programmed. The goal is to strike a balance between creating opportunities for the pupil to engage and at the same time allowing them to remain in control of their time and experiences. The pupil's character, identity and preferences need to be respected. They must not feel forced to participate in activities they do not find comfortable or interesting, nor should they feel constantly supervised or directed.

Below are few ideas and considerations that can help you:

- **Extra-curricular and social activities** are an effective facilitator of integration. The hosting school should inform the pupil about activities at the school or around it, such as sports, theatre or debate groups, hobby clubs, other projects outside of Erasmus+, etc.
- **Share information ahead of the activity**: the hosting school should provide a list of extra-curricular activities before the mobility period starts, so the pupil can have an idea of the available options.
- **Provide personal introduction**: In addition to providing written information advance, it is always important to introduce the pupil to the opportunities in person once they are the hosting school. A personal introduction and interaction with peers involved in different activities will give the pupil a better idea of the offer and encourage them to join.
- **Involve the pupil's peers at the hosting school**: Rather than having the mentor or other teachers do the introductions, it can be a very good idea to task pupils from the hosting school to be the ones introducing the incoming pupil to different extra-curricular activities. This will reduce the formality of the process and at the same time it can help the pupil to start creating their social network at the hosting school. If there is no hosting family involved, establishing a 'buddy' system with one or two pupils at the hosting school can be very useful.
- **Combine social integration and learning tasks**: project-based work and other cooperative tasks can serve as an excellent vehicle for integration. Earlier in this handbook, project work has already been mentioned in the preparation phase as a useful element to include in the learning agreement. From the perspective of integration, project work is useful because it creates interaction with peers and a sense of direction, responsibility and purpose for the pupil. On a smaller scale, simpler cooperative tasks are a good way for the pupil to 'break the ice' and start interacting with more of their peers at the hosting schools.

- **Give the pupil a role in your Erasmus+ project:** if your Erasmus+ project includes collaborative work between pupils in the sending and hosting school (e.g. via eTwinning, or through group exchange activities that happen before or after the individual mobility activity), the pupil can become a 'coordinator' between pupils in the sending and the hosting school.
- **Give a lead role to the pupil themselves**: depending on the duration of the activity and the pupil's profile and existing skills, the hosting school can also consider setting up social or extra-curricular activities where the pupil can take a more leading role themselves. This can be as simple as a language group with peers interested in learning the pupil's language. If the pupil is active in a sport that was not previously practiced at the hosting school, they could become the 'coach' for a group of interested peers. A similar concept can be used for any skill or interest that was available at the sending school, but not at the hosting school.
- **The integration process should be gradual and monitored:** the pupil's mentors need to keep observing the pupil's behaviour and stress levels to avoid overwhelming them with too many activities and obligations all at once. If it becomes clear that too many activities or tasks have been planned, the workload needs to be reduced even if it means not reaching all originally foreseen learning outcomes. The pupil's well-being always remains the highest priority.
- **Plan ahead, but remain flexible**: good planning makes for a good mobility experience, however flexibility and adaptability are equally important. The most creative ideas will often come up once the activity is already on the way. Planning (including the learning agreement) should guide the implementation, but it should not get in the way of improving it.

Of course, the above examples should be taken with care: as ideas rather than ready-made quick solutions. For each pupil, concrete and creative ideas should to be developed by talking to them to learn about their interests, abilities, capacity and motivation.

23. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND EMERGENCIES DURING THE MOBILITY PERIOD

Unexpected events and crises can arise during any activity. It is important to have a plan in place before they happen, which is why the Erasmus quality standards indicate that protocols in case of exceptional circumstances must be defined before the mobility takes place.

An emergency or a crisis can be defined as an extreme situation which would lead to a serious disturbance of the mobility, and which requires urgent action. Crises should be distinguished from regular problems, which are not extreme in nature and therefore require less urgent action. Problems are a normal part of managing the activity. They must be monitored and gradually resolved so that they would not turn into a crisis.

Generally, two kinds of emergencies can take place: personal emergencies related to the pupil as an individual, and externally triggered emergencies affecting the pupil's environment. You should include both of these types of emergencies in your considerations. Below you may find some key examples to keep in mind, although the list is by no means exhaustive.

1. Personal emergencies
   - A psychological crisis triggered by pupil's severe learning, emotional or social difficulties
   - Accidents, injuries and other medical emergencies
   - Being victim of bullying or cyber bullying
   - Being victim of crime or violence
   - Consumption of alcohol or drugs, violent or illegal behaviours, police arrest
   - Conflict with the hosting school or the mentor
   - Conflict or a another kind of serious problem with the host family or a severe problem with a commercial accommodation
   - Death or serious illness of a family member
   - Disappearance or death

2. Externally triggered emergencies
   - Natural disasters
   - Public health crises
   - Public security crises, such as riots or terrorist attacks

Following an emergency, a decision will need to be taken on whether the activity should continue or not. The matter is a joint decision between the sending school, the hosting school, the pupil and the pupil's parents. In any case, if a pupil expresses a strong desire to finish the mobility, this should be respected. An interruption and subsequent continuation of the mobility period may also be considered.

In terms of administrative follow-up, the National Agency of the sending school is best positioned to provide advice as it is in charge of managing the grant agreement providing the funding for the activity. Most emergencies will not require this sort of follow-up, however if the emergency has resulted in additional costs or the activity had to be terminated prematurely, then the agency can provide guidance on applicable rules. In the legal terminology of Erasmus+, extraordinary circumstances outside of the schools' control are labelled *force majeure*. If such a circumstance is declared, it increases the flexibility of the programme rules.

An emergency protocol

An emergency protocol is a description of steps to be done in case an emergency occurs. Its logic is simple: thinking clearly during an emergency is extremely difficult, so to be prepared it is best to think about such difficult situations ahead, decide which steps absolutely must be done and write them down so that important actions are not forgotten in the heat of the moment.

An emergency protocol should be drawn up by the sending and hosting schools jointly. The protocol can be divided in multiple parts, depending on the type and impact of different emergencies. It must contain key information necessary to implement it (e.g. contact information of persons or services to be contacted). If extraordinary costs are expected to implement any part of the plan, the source of the funds should be considered (e.g. insurance coverage). As explained earlier in this handbook, under 'Contact persons for administrative matters and emergencies', emergency contact points need to be established in both schools and known to the pupil, their parents and the host family (if one is involved).

The following are a few actions that should be part of the emergency protocol regardless of the nature of the emergency:

- **Identify the coordinator and other persons that need to be involved**

  Any emergency requires swift and coordinated response. If multiple persons take the lead there is a serious risk that actions will be disconnected, inefficient, conflicting, overlapping, or key steps will be overlooked. Therefore, as part of the emergency protocol a single person should be put in charge of coordination in emergencies. This can be one of the persons named as emergency contacts, the school principle, or a person with specific expertise related to the type of emergency (e.g. a psychologist). In addition, a replacement should be named in case the named coordinator is not available.

  Secondly, other persons with relevant expertise or responsibility should also be named in the protocol, including their specific roles and skills. If the nature of the emergency requires communication with the media (in both countries) and the public, a spokesperson will need to be identified.

- **Assess the gravity of the situation and determine the facts**

  This is a key step in any emergency once it has been identified as such. This step involves gathering facts and assessing them, so that appropriate actions can be taken and correct information passed on.

- **Involve professionals and relevant services**

  Depending on the type of emergency, you may need to contact the medical service or the police. In some cases, the sending country's embassy should be informed, as well as the Erasmus+ National Agencies in both the sending and the hosting country. For practical matters and advice, the insurance company providing the insurance for the pupil may also need to be contacted.

- **Document the event**

  Once the emergency has ended, the events, facts and consequences should be summarised in a written report. The report may be needed in case of insurance claims, legal disputes, National Agency reviews or other administrative procedures. You should make sure to be informed about such requirements in advance, particularly with regards to the applicable insurance policy. Typically, it will be the hosting school drafting the report and sharing it for input with the sending school, the pupil and their parents.

FOLLOW-UP PHASE

The follow-up phase starts as the pupil is finishing their last tasks at the hosting school and returns to their sending country. As stated in the chapter about the learning agreement: that document sets the stage for the entire follow-up phase. The actions that the sending and hosting school will take in this phase should already be known. At this point in time, the planning laid out in the learning agreement should only be fine-tuned to take into account any changes that have taken place during implementation.

24. EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Evaluation of learning outcomes will typically take place during the last days of the pupil's stay at the hosting school, although it may also be continued after their return to the sending school.

Regarding evaluation, the Erasmus quality standards state the following requirements:

Evaluation of learning outcomes*: learning outcomes and other benefits for the participants should be systematically evaluated. Results of the evaluation should be analysed and used to improve future activities.*

The mentor at the hosting school is usually the best positioned person to coordinate the pupil's end-of-stay evaluation, however other staff member should also be involved to provide additional expertise and objectivity.

The structure of the evaluation exercise should follow the planning defined in the learning agreement and needs to cover both formal (academic) and informal learning outcomes. Appreciation and summary of assessments performed during the stay also forms a part of the evaluation stage. In preparation for the next stage, the evaluation must cover all minimum information and assessments required to recognise the pupil's learning outcomes, and it must produce the documentation required for the recognition.

To be complete and relevant, the end-of-stay evaluation should include more than one type of exercise. Examples of useful evaluation exercises include presentations by the pupil, evaluation of project work, written essays or tests, an interview with the mentor or another qualified person, pupil's self-assessment. A combination of structured and more open methods will help take into account the different types of learning outcomes.

Finally, the Erasmus quality standards also mention the need to follow-up on the evaluation results to improve future activities. This aspect is not relevant at the level of one individual mobility, but rather refers to the institutional level of the pupil's sending school. As a beneficiary of Erasmus+, the sending school will typically be managing more activities in the future and should therefore learn from experience to improve their quality.

A good way for the sending school to address this requirement is to organise a reflection exercise after a certain number of activities have been implemented to review their results and identify points for improvement. Involving hosting organisations in this process can be very useful, especially if your school is working regularly with the same partner schools.

25. RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES: DOCUMENTATION

Recognition of learning outcomes is a process of granting official status to knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the pupil's mobility activity[4]. The obligation to recognise the learning outcomes of returning pupils is defined by the Erasmus quality standards:

Recognition of learning outcomes*: formal, informal and non-formal learning outcomes and other results achieved by the participants in mobility activities must be appropriately recognised at their sending organisation. Available European and national instruments should be used for recognition whenever possible.*

This provision means that the pupils' learning outcomes must be documented (listed) in writing and certified with a formal agreement (signature) of the hosting organisation as the institution that has provided the education programme attended by the pupil. A co-signature of the sending organisation is strongly recommended, although not formally required.

In addition to quality standards, a document listing recognised learning outcomes is required as proof for the sending school to claim the Erasmus+ grant for the participant. This is specified in the standard Erasmus+ grant agreement[5]:

Supporting documents: *proof of attendance of the activity in the form of Europass Mobility or another type of document specifying the participant's name and learning outcomes, as well as the starting and end date of the activity. […]*

Use of structured European or national recognition instruments is highly encouraged since it allows the pupils to present their achievements in a wider variety of contexts, for example in applications for stipends, university, traineeships, student jobs etc.

As indicated by the text of the grant agreement, the most important and most commonly used among these instruments is Europass Mobility: a standardised template designed to document learning outcomes achieved during a cross-border mobility period. Europass Mobility is an ideal instrument for use in Erasmus+ because of its Europe-wide standardisation and possibility to register the learning outcomes with National Europass Centres (specialised offices created for this purpose in each country).

Completion of Europass Mobility should be coordinated by the pupil's mentors from the sending and hosting schools, with all subject teachers contributing to the description of the pupil's learning outcomes and achievements. The descriptions should take into account that one country's national grading system cannot be taken for granted in the international context. A timetable and a portfolio of work can be included as accompaniment to the certificate in order to allow any reader to evaluate exactly what the pupil has learned.

While Europass Mobility is the only template recommended by the European Commission, it is not legally mandatory. If necessary, adapted or alternative templates (e.g. a learning agreement complement) are acceptable under the formal terms of the Erasmus+ grant agreement.

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[4] Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy: A selection of 130 key terms

[5] Quoted text references the standard Erasmus+ grant agreement for projects under call 2022

26. RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES: REINTEGRATION

The second aspect of recognition includes the pupil's reintegration at the sending school upon their return from the mobility period.

Reintegration involves analysing and translating the results of the pupil's work during the mobility into the context of the sending school's curriculum. The comparison points for this exercise should be established in the learning agreement and at this stage need to be put into practice. The pupil's mentor at the sending school should take the lead role in this exercise, supported by the subject teachers.

A well-prepared and well-executed mobility activity should result in a smooth reintegration of the pupil at the sending school, with minimal additional workload and stress. Situations where returning pupils are required to sit examination in all or almost all subjects are often a sign of poor preparation. Such situations should be avoided at all costs, as they can negate the positive effects of the mobility period for the pupil, and can create a bad reputation, lowering interest in mobility activities among the other pupils at the school.

Effective reintegration demonstrates to other pupils and parents that excellence and internationalisation are a policy of the school and that pupils taking part in Erasmus+ will receive concrete support from the school's staff and leadership.

Of course, aligning and translating requirements between curricula in two different countries is challenging. It may not be possible to avoid additional workload entirely. In this case, it is important that the workload is managed and structured by the sending school, rather than letting the pupil deal with it on their own.

These are some of the most important actions and considerations for school leaders and project managers during the reintegration phase:

- **Identify the requirements before the mobility starts**: the conditions for reintegration, expected workload and key requirements need to be identified during the preparation phase and included in the learning agreement.
- **Role of the school leadership**: active support and flexibility from the school's leadership during the reintegration process will show that the mobility activity is not an individual matter, but truly part of a project initiated and implemented by the school as a whole. The main responsibility of the school leaderships is to make sure that subject teachers cooperate with the mentor by providing information and expertise, by staying flexible and adapting their own requirements and schedule to the specific situation.
- **Control the reintegration workload and avoid double coursework:** condensed and duplicated work is the most obvious risk for returning pupils. As a first step to prevent these risks, the learning agreement should serve to 'cross out' all requirements that have already been met during the mobility period and therefore cannot be re-tested. The pupil's mentor at the sending school will be in charge of coordinating this exercise and the overall reintegration. The pupil's other teachers must work as a team to support the mentor and the pupil. It is extremely important for the school leadership to sensitise all subject teachers about the fact that they cannot act in isolation or add new unannounced requirements on top of what has been defined

before departure. Reintegration must happen at the level of the school, not subject by subject. Especially after a longer stay, a non-coordinated approach can easily create serious risks for the pupil's mental well-being and academic success. The responsibility to prevent such issues lies on the sending school and specifically on its school leadership.

- **Control the timing:** the schedule of the school year is predictable, with clear milestones and known workload peaks. The start and end date of the mobility activity are yours to decide: choose their timing to avoid clashing with critical periods and to allow time for smooth reintegration.
- **Collect more information as it becomes available**: during the pupil's mobility period their mentor at the sending school needs to keep collecting information continuously. It means regularly consulting with subject teachers and noting down key information as it becomes available (e.g. the dates and deadlines of key exercises and exams). This information should then be passed on to the pupil so they can better prepare.
- **Define priorities**: identifying the most important requirements that the pupil will need to fulfil upon return is the sending school's responsibility. With input from all subject teachers, the pupil's mentor should create a list of tasks to be completed and prioritise them in order to advise the pupil on how to best invest their time and effort.
- **Consult the hosting school**: while reviewing the pupil's achievements during the mobility period, subject teachers at the sending school may have additional questions or doubts. To resolve them, a communication channel with the hosting school must remain open during the reintegration period so that these questions can be resolved in the best way for the pupil.
- **Ensure maximum flexibility**: whenever possible, practical arrangements should be made to facilitate the reintegration of the returning pupil. This can be as simple as rescheduling certain exams, providing a longer deadline, or organising an additional examination exercise.

27. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR RETURNING PUPILS AND THE SENDING SCHOOL

Reporting for Erasmus+ mobility projects is done through a dedicated online tool where project managers from the sending school need to introduce each individual mobility that has taken place as part of the project.

After a mobility activity is completed, the project manager will need to launch a request to the pupil to fill in a feedback survey - known in Erasmus+ as a 'participant report'. Completion of the participant report is obligatory and is a shared responsibility of the pupil and the sending school, as defined by the Erasmus quality standards:

Gathering and using participants' feedback*: beneficiary organisations must ensure that participants complete the standard report about their activities, as provided by the European Commission. The beneficiary organisations should make use of the feedback provided by the participants to improve their future activities.*

The participant report is not just a formality or interesting form of feedback. The replies of different participants will be aggregated and included in your project report. If many pupils do not reply to the survey, this will reflect negatively on your evaluation score.

To achieve high submission rates, it is highly recommended to inform the pupil and their parents about this obligation before the mobility takes place and to explain its importance. Once the mobility period is completed, it should be one of the first points for follow-up when the pupil is back at the sending school.

It is best if the pupils complete their survey on their own, or with the help of their parents, if needed.

28. SHARING EXPERIENCES AND RESULTS

Pupils who have taken part in a successful mobility activity are the best ambassadors for your school, for your project and for the Erasmus+ programme.

In fact, as recipient of European Union funding, your school has an obligation to share and promote the results created with the support of EU funds. The following provisions in the Erasmus quality standards define this responsibility:

Sharing results within the organisation: *beneficiary organisations should make their participation in the Programme widely known within the organisation and create opportunities for participants to share their mobility experience with their peers. In case of mobility consortia, the sharing should take place in the whole consortium.*

Sharing results with other organisations and the public: *beneficiary organisations should share the results of their activities with other organisations and the public.*

As indicated by the quality standards, sharing happens at two levels: within your school and towards the outside, to the general public and other schools in your area. In your project report, you will be asked about the ways you have complied with the standards and promoted your activities. Investing time and effort into sharing and follow-up will increase the quality of your project and your evaluation scores.

The main principle of the follow-up phase is that the effects of the mobility should not be limited to the pupils participating directly in the activities. Pupils coming back from a mobility period will have stories to tell and their mentors will have developed their professional skills as well. These powerful experiences should resonate through your school and help you to make European cooperation a part of its institutional culture.

Here a few ways to share and promote your work on pupil mobility activities:

- **Create opportunities for sharing with peers**: the returning pupil could give a presentation about their stay to their class, as well as to other classes in the school, or to a larger audience. You should also encourage the pupils to share their personal experiences and non-academic achievements: new friendships, informal skills, feeling of independence, self-confidence, etc. The personal dimension of sharing can serve to better transmit the benefits at the academic level as well.
- **Inform the parents**: presenting mobility experiences in parent meetings is another way to increase future interest for mobility activities. It is also an opportunity for the involved staff and school leaders to showcase how their work is improving the quality of the school's services.
- **Involve the mentor and other staff:** the staff members who have worked on preparing and implementing the activity will have gained valuable experience as well. They may be able to organise a training for their colleagues – a great capacity-building exercise for your organisation. Equally, the staff members can take part in promoting the school's activities to parents, or they can present their work to local policy-makers, the media, etc.

- **Involve your hosting partners:** during your sharing events, pupils or staff members from your hosting partner schools could join in via video-conferencing. Their participation can bring an additional dimension to the event and tangibly show the cross-border character of your work. Of course, you should also be ready to set up a similar kind of online participation of your own pupils and staff in sharing events of your hosting partners.

- **Share with other schools and institutions in your area:** hearing about your project experience and the results you have obtained can be very interesting for other schools in your local community. For example, you can invite their staff to your school for a presentation, or you can get in touch with your local school authority in order to set up a sharing event (if such a body is part of the school system in your country).

- **Become a mentor school:** your success may inspire other schools in your area to try out Erasmus+. In this case, you should consider becoming a 'mentor school' for one or a few of them. Taking up such a role is a sign of excellence that you should definitely highlight in your future project reports.

- **Produce testimonials:** if you ask the returning pupils to write testimonials about their experience, you will be able to use them in your school's newsletter. Such testimonials are also useful because they can remain in your records and used again. A collection of testimonials built over time can serve as a lasting legacy of your work in Erasmus+.

- **Contact local media:** the local media in your area may want to publish a story about the pupils who have successfully completed a mobility activity abroad. Be proactive and approach them to see if they would be interested.

- **Inform your National Agency:** if you think some of your mobility activities have been particularly successful or illustrative of the impact Erasmus+ is having on schools and pupils, it is a good idea to talk about it with your National Agency. A part of the agencies' work is to identify and collect success stories for programme promotion at national and European level. Perhaps your project can become one of them!

- **Encourage your pupils to join Erasmus+ alumni activities**: depending on the country where you are based, there may be associations or other type of alumni networks set up for pupils who have completed an Erasmus+ mobility activity. Your National Agency can provide you with more information about such opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The preparation of this handbook follows the launch of the second generation of Erasmus+ programme in 2021. The new Erasmus+ brought an important novelty to the school education field: mobility of pupils has now been included in the programmes's Key Action 1.

The importance of this almost technical change can perhaps be better appreciated if we consider the history of this action. In the field of higher education, Key Action 1 model of creating continuous flows of transnationally mobile learners and staff has been among major forces driving the transformation of the European higher education systems in the last 35 years. In the programme generations, similar opportunities were available to learners in vocational education and training, and now they are finally available to all pupils in general education.

However, making mobility opportunities available to pupils is only the first step. When wanting to implement these activities on the ground, schools and teachers will face administrative, curricular, legal, practical and other obstacles. These challenges are different in every corner of Europe, dictated by specificities of national education systems and everyday situations in each school. Besides, schools are not universities – they do not possess the same capacity, resources or administrative autonomy.

The existence of this handbook is an acknowledgment of these difficulties. Its goal is humble: to provide motivation, reassurance and some practical help. It aims to be useful while recognising the diverse realities you, its readers, are facing.

More than on any handbook, success of the new Erasmus+ will depend on the efforts and creativity of teachers and school leaders who are ready to take the role of educational entrepreneurs and pioneers, and to build paths for others to follow. In many ways, this book is a recruitment call, an invitation to dare, to innovate and to make a difference for your school and for your pupils.

If you are uncertain, a simple solution may be available: start small. Start with one pupil. The first mobility in a school marks the way for all that will come after it. That first step is crucial and worth focusing all your efforts on. Ambitions can grow later, with time and experience.

Finally, if your questions remain unanswered by this handbook, there are other places to look. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide is referenced many times over throughout these pages because it is indeed its governing authority and the starting point for all answers. Secondly, the Erasmus quality standards provide a shorter, denser version of the same principles explained in this handbook. These standards can serve as an overview and a form of checklist for any Erasmus+ project.

When it comes to practical questions, best advice is most likely to come from a source closer to you, in your own context: be it a colleague from another school nearby, from your school authority or from your Erasmus+ National Agency. After all, some questions do not have predefined answers. Practices are yet to be made and your project will be a part of that process. This is a part of what makes it so valuable and worth doing.