

Part 4

Analysis for  
Transnational  
Mobility  
of Apprenticeships  
Regional and Local Level



Key skills in youth mobility 

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



## 1. Foreword

This context for this study is the project **Key Competencies for Mobility –KEYMOB**<sup>1</sup> (reference number 2018-1-ES01-KA202-050359) of the Erasmus+ programme.

The European Commission has diagnosed a clear mismatch between the skills or competences acquired in education and those really necessary in the workplace. One of the proposed solutions is promoting work-based learning and, to that end, encouraging relationships between the various actors that can stimulate these initiatives: companies, business organisations and regional governments and institutions.

Another important goal in dual education is improving so-called transferable or transversal competences, applicable to varying work situations and different environments in a global market, by offering additional internships, but also by adapting the training itself.

Increased mobility of apprentices between companies from different countries exposes these work-based learners to different situations, new environments and different cultural and organizational contents and it stimulates their capacities for autonomy, resilience, problem solving, adaptation to new situations and innovation.

This study is based on the Catalan Department of Education statistical data on student mobility for the undertaking of Training at Work Centres (FCT) of Post-secondary and Higher Education Training of the last four years and the results from a survey conducted at public and private centres that currently form part of the Education Department's **Programme for Training Mobility and European and International Cooperation in Vocational and Educational Training**. The survey was conducted in April 2019 and, therefore, it reflects the planning of centres for mobility placements for the course 2018-2019.

The study results confirm that mobility placement for Vocational and Educational Training students helps to develop the professional competencies of participants, both transversal and technical and, therefore, contributes to improving employability levels. It is important to continue working towards student mobility because, in addition to it being beneficial to students directly, it also improves the professional levels of our human capital, of its social cohesion and, furthermore, it contributes to minimising social inequalities and, in short, to working towards a competitive and dynamic society in the 21st century.

Finally, we would like to thank all those people who in one way or another have participated in drawing up the study, especially all the participants in international mobility placements who have completed the questionnaire that made this study possible.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2018-1-ES01-KA202-050359>

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### 3. Introduction

***“The Europe 2020 Strategy sets ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. Young people are essential to achieve this. Quality education and training, successful labour market integration and more mobility of young people are key to unleashing all young people’s potential and achieving the Europe 2020 objectives”. Youth on the Move. European Commission<sup>2</sup>***

Back in the year 2000, with the so-called Lisbon Strategy, the European Commission (hereafter EC) marked the start of a decisive commitment to cooperation in the spheres of education and training, which two years later was defined in the Education and Training Strategy (2010) and subsequently, in the Education and Training Strategy (2020). The latter of these explains the support for student and teacher mobility all around Europe and proposes the challenge that, with a time horizon of the year 2020, at least 10% of graduates in Higher Education in the European Union should have spent a period of study or training abroad, with a minimum stay of three weeks. At the same time, with regard to the learning of foreign languages, it establishes that the citizens of the Union must be able to communicate in two other languages apart from their mother tongue. The instrument that should permit the achievement of these two goals is the so-called “Lifelong Learning Programme” (LLP).

Another important date is 2010, when the European Union (hereafter EU), in its Europe 2020 Strategy, defined international mobility as one of the seven emblematic initiatives for guaranteeing and recovering unitary governance, as a sustainable territory and as a leading world economy. This initiative responds to the major priority of smart growth in order to tackle the economic and financial crisis begun in the year 2007 and that still persists at present.

European construction has raised challenges of great magnitude deriving from the economic, social and cultural diversity that characterises the states and regions that have gradually joined the Union. Rising to meet these challenges still involves an important set of obstacles that need to be overcome.

The challenges focus on the will of all Member states to consolidate knowledge and innovation as a driving force for future growth. To achieve this requires quality education, applied research, promoting innovation and knowledge transfer in Europe. Before this commitment to the future, the following challenges arise: firstly, generating innovation translated to the Union for Innovation initiative; secondly, improving education, training and lifelong learning through the Youth on the Move initiative; and, finally, in third place, favouring a digital society with the Digital Agenda for Europe.

Labour and macroeconomic imbalances between the regions is one of the main obstacles to integration, above all the structural imbalances between the level of training and the levels of unemployment between regions. To work on this point, and without starting from zero in any

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2010), *Youth on the Move*.  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0477:FIN:EN:PDF>

of the cases, the evidence shows perceptibly higher and differing degrees of progress and, despite the still formidable obstacles that exist, the process is continuing ahead.

In the case of Vocational and Educational Training (VET), the promotion of joint VET policies, or of worker and young-people mobility in training, although not achieving the challenge of total integration, does evidence higher levels of progress, but more work is necessary. Among the first measures implemented in this area we can find the search for mechanisms of mutual recognition for formal and state-backed training modules, diplomas and professional certificate. Subsequently, resorting to actions involving mobility has been an effective instrument for cooperation between Member states in this development of a shared professionalisation and training.

Specifically, resorting to mobility placements as an effective instrument for cooperation between Member states in this development of shared professionalisation and training, which is extended in parallel to the implementation of the free circulation of workers, was a major milestone in a process that, due to its very complexity, has to be gradual and moderated.

However, no European and/or state legislative measures can eliminate – only at the very most reduce – obstacles as varied as language diversity, or the socioeconomic differences between regions. The promotion of educational mobility among the generation currently in the process of training, as a commitment to the generations that will have grown up during their entire lives within the European formation process, and that will be the basis of the future European citizenry, is a successful initiative promoted by the EU.

One of the leading roles in universities has been played by the Erasmus programme. Studies have shown that it has been a successful tool with regard to achieving the EU's 2020 goals (reaching the milestone of 20% of students who are taking courses involving international mobility by the year 2020) and, in general, on the increase in both academic and personal competences of the students who have travelled abroad. In this sense, the concern of the EU to reduce the mismatch detected between the competences of students when they complete their studies with regard to their employability and the demands of the generators of employment, have led to the decision being made to increase the budget for this programme in such a way that the number of users can be doubled until the year 2020.

This goal raises two questions: the first, how to manage to introduce sufficiently stimulating measures to overcome the barriers that hamper certain sectors of students from becoming users of the programme. The second, to value how the employability of programme users is increased in such a way that the impact is clearly positive, within the context of the EU's employability programmes. A reflection can be made on the student profile sketched by the results of the studies conducted to date. Everything points towards the Erasmus student being a student with personal expectations that show a high level in relation to the average of students from their local area. These expectations are translated into competences that are, from the outset, higher than those of their co-citizens and into a distinct interest, even among states of the Union, to go to study outside of their home state.

The Union understands that the organisation of mobility placements involves important costs and processes that have to be funded with European funds from the same programme. The management of the placements brings with it an administrative burden of a certain complexity that, once applied for a couple of placements, can be made use of in the same format for subsequent ones. In other words, it is efficient for institutions that manage a broad number of applications for mobility placements, and very inefficient for institutions that participate in mobilities in a sporadic fashion, or with a small number of participants. To avoid these externalities, a series of measures must be taken that permit mobility to be undertaken with guarantees.

Analysis of the data indicates that, despite the large number of students that enjoy mobility schemes, students from Vocational and Educational Training are much lower in proportion than university students. In Spain, the proportion of VET students with respect to the total of students on mobility placement schemes is 15%, a percentage not matched by the proportion of students that are studying at each of the levels. Also, it is relevant to point out the importance for VET mobility schemes of a common framework of qualification validations which facilitates mobility. The difficulty of reaching agreements in these aspects means that the immense majority of mobility schemes for VET students are in the area of workplace trainee internships, in such a way that each state validates its own studies, which would correspond to the hours of internship that students have undertaken at a foreign workplace. Most attempts made at homologation and validation of training credits beyond those corresponding to internships at companies, have not seen tangible results. One idea that has prospered, although only in an incipient way, has been that of defining a general framework with determined requirements for student training.

Mobility projects for VET students admit a broad spectrum of promotional and management institutions and organisations of a certain complexity and differentiate between these and between states. The relative simplicity of the EU-States-Universities circuit that operates for university-level mobility placement schemes has no parallel in Vocational and Educational Training. It seems evident to be able to have institutions that act as intermediaries, with a role similar to that of the universities. However, if we take into consideration that measures that permit mobility schemes to be undertaken with sufficient guarantees as required, then the inferiority of conditions between the capacity of a VET centre and the capacities required to be able to participate in mobility programmes seems evident. The support of the intermediary organisations mentioned previously, of a semi-public nature, such as the chambers of commerce, could be a solution to this situation, with the aim of avoiding discrimination among the potential participants of a centre with sufficient capacity or others without the required capacity, or with respect to university students.

It could be affirmed that the profile that VET students present is notably similar to that described to identify university students with difficulties with regard to mobility. What seems to occupy first place in all the analyses conducted regarding obstacles to mobility is the economic aspect, the lack of sufficient purchasing power to be able to afford a mobility placement independently of family contributions, in second place, the opportunity costs of lost income as the mobility programme is undertaken. In fourth place is the problem of recognition, validation or loss of

learning pace during the student's mobility placement. A third of students stated problems of this type, which shows that homologation processes are not well defined or that the perception of mobility being a waste of time or not very useful with respect to the "serious" studies undertaken by students in their own state is a conviction well rooted in some states and/or social sectors.

Some of the recommendations to resolve these problems are:

- Recognising the periods students spend abroad and the possibility of integrating the period of mobility into the domestic curriculum.
- Increasing students' foreign language skills

With regard to the first point, this is an important problem to analyse within the European framework for Vocational and Educational Training studies. Progress has been made but it has not yet been expressed as a simple validations table. And the majority of validations, practically the only ones, are those referring to validation of training at workplaces, company internships or equivalents. In all cases, the importance of having training experience in another Member state represents the entering into force of an added value to ordinary training, but simultaneously, the students do not always value the personal and economic gain that may be represented by an extra period of training. For that reason, advancing in the field of greater recognition for training done in other Member states is emerging as fundamental.

With regard to the second point, if the language barrier is already important for university students, for VET students it can turn out to be formidable. Across the whole set of Erasmus states, 67% of students stated that English was the language used in teaching in the state where they were staying, whereas the English language was the mother tongue for only 7% of the students. The majority of mobility placements in VET are proposed in English, but that turns out to be quite limiting, as the majority of placements, as will be seen later, are aimed at countries where the mother tongue is not English, as training at workplaces will frequently be the situation in which the student will have to relate within the training programme in the language of the host country.

With regard to validations and recognitions, since the duration in the case of VET is shorter than that of university degrees, the need to distribute the set of credits and practical training in less time, for states without a dual structure, means that the training structures are less flexible and the organisation of mobility placements can be more significantly impacted by this conditioning factor than university studies. Added to all this are additional burdens, non-existent in the university sphere, because certain students are minors, which will mean legal burdens will need to be added to the already-existing processes.

Measures proposed to resolve all the drawbacks previously mentioned are, for example, ensuring that mobility programmes are consistent with the training itinerary of students. If the training contents of the states are proposed as a "natural" prolongation of the training, as a continuum without disruption, then there is notable stimulation of mobility. And definitively,

actions to avoid linguistic and cultural barriers. The multilingual reality of the EU means that language obstacles have a special relevance. If the English language facilitates communication during mobility placements as a condition of the world lingua franca, the mastery of the English language is not generalised across the Union, which adds a further degree of difficulty to mobility placements, along with prior knowledge of the characteristics of the business and labour culture of the destination country acting as an element facilitating the success of the mobility programme.

In view of obtaining optimum results in the improvement of professional qualifications and employability, two factors are of prime importance; the quality of the learning undertaken and the fit into a coherent training itinerary with recognition of credits and certification. It is a good idea to highlight the aspects of the mobility programmes that must be assured in order to preserve their efficiency.

- A coherent relationship between international training durations and the goals of the development of technical and transversal competences that are proposed. On this point it would be necessary to reflect on the usefulness of short-term stays when aiming to achieve the goals proposed.
- The direct involvement of VET centres in the sending and hosting of students.
- The participation of companies that have workplaces that meet the quality and safety requirements necessary for undertaking learning processes, including the teaching capacity of the company tutors.
- The existence of learning assessment procedures established and agreed between companies and training centres.

#### 4. Technical characteristics of mobility schemes in Catalonia

All the international mobility schemes in Spain are managed by the **Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (Servicio Español para la Internacionalización de la Educación - SEPIE)**. SEPIE is the national agency for the dissemination, promotion and impact studies of the Erasmus+ programme in the education and training sphere (2014-2020). Furthermore, it coordinates and participates in national and international projects and its mission is carrying out the coordinated management of decentralised actions of the Erasmus+ programme, in the sphere of education and training, including their budgetary management, as well as their dissemination among possible beneficiaries and the efficient and transparent management of European funds.

## 4.1. Programme for training mobility and European and international cooperation in vocational learning

Within Catalonia, the General Department of Vocational and Educational Training and Special Regime Education (DGFPIERE) promotes the Programme for training mobility and European and international cooperation in vocational learning. The aim of the programme is to accompany the centres that teach vocational education in the establishment of their own European and international strategy. This strategy must favour participation of teaching staff and students in projects for training mobility and European and international cooperation, principally with Member states of the European Union.

The mission of this programme consists of accompanying and providing support to centres that teach Vocational and Educational Training for the implementation of a strategy that enables the promotion of training mobility and participation in international projects.

The main goals of the programme are:

- Improving the knowledge of the educational community regarding the various European programmes, their characteristics and their opportunities
- Encouraging the exchanging of experiences and best practices among the Catalan centres related with internationalisation
- Making available to centres those projects and alliances established by the Department of Education with companies, organisations and administrations of other states in order to facilitate mobility and cooperation
- Providing support to centres in the design and management of European cooperation and mobility projects
- Providing support to centres for the progressive development and deployment of a plan to boost the internationalisation of Vocational and Educational Training
- Promoting the participation of centres in European networks for the exchange of good practices and cooperation in the sphere of Vocational and Educational Training.

To be able to meet these goals, 5 work networks of a territorial scope are being created. These networks are:

- **Network 1:** formed by the Baix Llobregat and Barcelona Comarcal areas.
- **Network 2:** formed by the Barcelona consortium.
- **Network 3:** formed by the Maresme-Vallès Oriental and Vallès Occidental areas.
- **Network 4:** formed by the Catalunya Central and Girona areas.

- **Network 5:** formed by the Lleida, Tarragona and Terres de l'Ebre areas.

The networks established by the programme will have their own work plan. Each centre attached to one of the networks must comply with a set of annual targets measured in terms of results and satisfaction and at the end of each academic year it is envisaged that each centre will produce a report that:

- Presents the results achieved, in relation to the programme indicators.
- Presents the best practices developed.
- Proposes improvements for the next academic year.

Furthermore, each network has an associated coordinator with the main function of providing support to the centres of the network coordinated. The coordinator is also in charge of planning, coordinating and announcing network meetings that may take place over the course of the school year.

Moreover, each centre has an international mobility and cooperation coordinator with the main mission of promoting the centre's participation in international projects, within the VET sphere, that principally include the training mobility of students and teaching staff alike. Other functions of the coordinators are:

- Designing and implementing, with the help of the management team, the centre's internationalisation strategy.
- Leading the mobility committee, if applicable.
- Promoting and disseminating European programmes among the centre's teaching staff and students.
- Providing the information and documentation necessary for the teaching staff and students participating in training placements.
- Managing the mobility placements of the centre and the documentation deriving from participation in the different projects.
- Promoting the exchange of experiences and best practices with other centres.
- Participating in the activities and programmes promoted by the General Department of Vocational and Educational Training and Special Regime Teaching related with the European projects.

For every academic year, the programme consists of an announcement specifying all the actions to be carried out as well as all of the centres that are attached to each network. One of the actions that is included is the programming of regular meetings to carry out monitoring and provide support to all the centres in the networks. These meetings can be organised by the Department of Education generally for all the centres, or alternatively by the network

coordinator. In the latter case, the centres attached to the network to which the coordinator belongs participate and meetings are held at the headquarters of each one.

Furthermore, the programme consists of a website with the address <https://projectes.xtec.cat/mobilitatfp/ca/inici/>. This website has as its goals:

- Introducing the programme.
- Publishing all the news that arises relating to the programme on a general level.
- Publicising the international projects in which the Department of Education is participating.
- Having a tool where any company and/or institution can search Vocational and Educational Training centres with the aim of recruiting and generating new links between the centres and foreign businesses.

## 4.2. Department of Education Consortium

The **Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE)** permits the possibility of forming consortia to apply for funding to engage in international mobility schemes.

The DGFPIERE applies for training stays, so that vocational training students and teaching staff can undertake training stays with companies, organisations and education centres in other countries directly to the national agency SEPIE, through two consortia, one for Vocational and Educational Training and one for higher education. These consortia are framed within the Erasmus+ programme. All Vocational and Educational Training centres in Catalonia can join the consortium. In this way, the member centres apply for funding from the consortium to be able to undertake its international placement schemes. The training stays that are carried out within these consortia must follow eligibility criteria of the Erasmus+ programme and those set by the DGFPIERE at the time of formalising the application of the consortia.

The main mission of the Department of Education consortium is that of promoting training mobility and European and international cooperation in Catalonia and the main functions are:

- Managing and providing support for international mobility schemes requested by centres attached to the consortium, projects of the KA102 and KA103 types within the Erasmus+ framework.
- Managing and providing support for V.T. mobility placements outside of the Erasmus+ framework.
- Managing and providing support for other international projects in the V.T. sphere such as, for example, KA2, KA3 and POCTEFA.

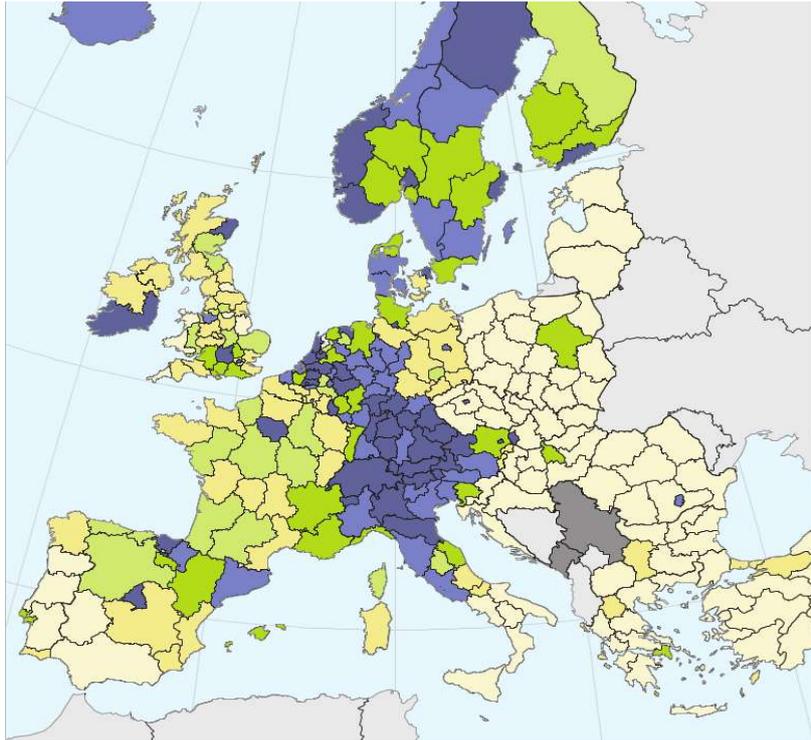
The types of mobility schemes managed by the consortium are:

- **FCT:** international mobility placements related with training in the workplace. These are those mobility placements where students carry out obligatory internships at companies abroad.
- **DUAL:** international mobility placements related with training in the workplace but in line with the requirements of the DUAL system.
- **Studies:** international mobility placements that are not related with in-company internships and are related with the Vocational and Educational Training studies undertaken by the student. These mobility schemes are usually stays to study a part of certain training modules abroad.
- **Teaching staff mobility schemes:** these are mobility placements aimed at the teaching staff of educational cycles. In the last editions from the Department of Education mobility placements related with AICLE methodologies on the one hand and DUAL training in Europe on the other have been organised.
- **PIC:** (Centre Initiative Project). With the spirit of encouraging training stays in other countries, the DGFPIERE has created Centre Initiative Projects or PIC. These projects are designed so that centres can undertake training stays that are not eligible within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. Examples of these types of projects are:
  - Training stays at companies for periods shorter than those established in the Erasmus+ programme or the goals of the Vocational and Educational Training consortium.
  - Training stays at companies by CFGS students from centres that do not have the ECHE charter.
  - Training stays at education centres for periods shorter than those established in the programme.

## 5. Characteristics of mobility in Catalonia

### 5.1. Geographical

Two clear patterns can be detected in international mobility; the mobility of frontier regions towards cross-border regions, in other words the south of France, and mobility towards regions of the “Blue Banana”, mainly Germany and the north of Italy, painted on the map in the colour blue:



Map: Eurostat GISCO 06/2014

Figure 1. Eurostat Map.

A first conclusion is that the VET mobility programme is evidence of an inertia that is fully consolidated in the real economy around the benefits brought by the creation of the EU which is the elimination of frontiers and customs duties, and that this effect is noted above all in the frontier areas with the Girona, Alt Pirineu and Aran comarcas. The areas of study for mobility are mainly in the sphere of the social sciences.

## 5.2. Since when have mobility placements been organised in Catalonia?

Mobility placements at centres in Catalonia have become consolidated over time. Some 61% of the centres have carried out mobility placement programmes for over 5 years, which shows that the experience accumulated by launching mobility programmes has generated structures within the centres that have led to inertia being gained when it comes to generating more mobility placements:

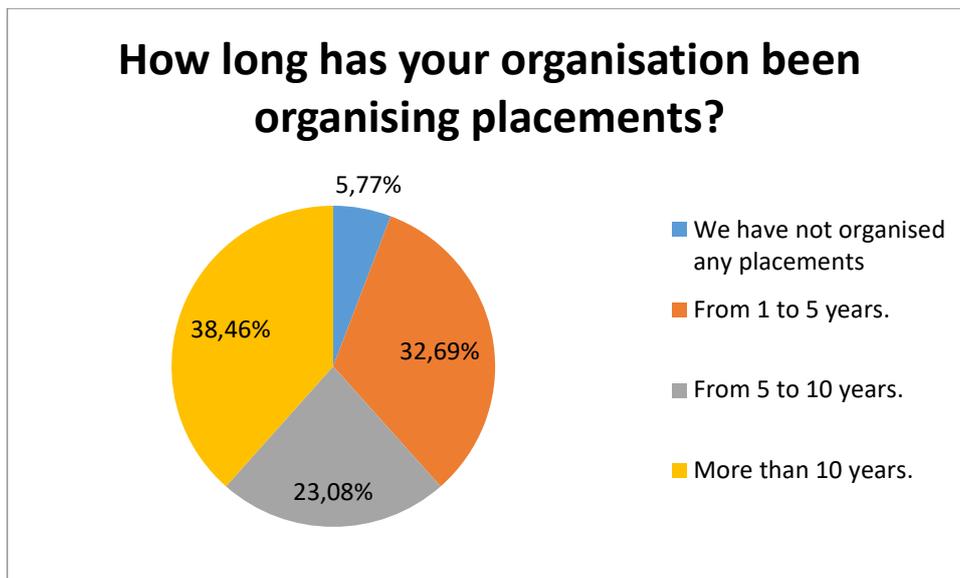


Figure 2. Duration of placements.

## 5.3. Documents of quality

This data leads us to believe that mobility schemes are gaining momentum in Catalonia and, therefore, centres are generating expertise and acquiring experience that is improving the quality of the mobility schemes despite the inefficiencies explained in the introduction.

It is worth highlighting that 75% of the centres have incorporated internationalisation programmes into their management and/or quality programmes, with the Centre Education Project (PEC) being the most cited document.



Figure 3. Quality documents.

#### 5.4. Management of mobility placements

With regard to the preparations and management of mobility placements by the centres, just over 80% are carried out by territorial agencies or, in the case of Catalonia, consortia attached to the Department of Education. Through the consortia, the students apply for mobility placements and centres receive support for implementing mobility placements. It is reported that nearly 10% of centres resort to private and/or non-profit intermediary agencies to obtain support when organising mobility placements.

Despite the existence of many Vocational and Educational Training institutions with sufficient power and critical mass of students to be able to organise mobility placements, a large number of centres still exist that, due to their administrative or economic capacity, cannot reasonably organise these mobility placements according to the requirements of the Erasmus+ programme.

In this aspect, the creation of the mobility consortia KA102 and KA103 promoted by the Department of Education and resorting to intermediary companies is support for centres that do not have this organisational capacity, especially when they begin their first experiences in student mobility placements.

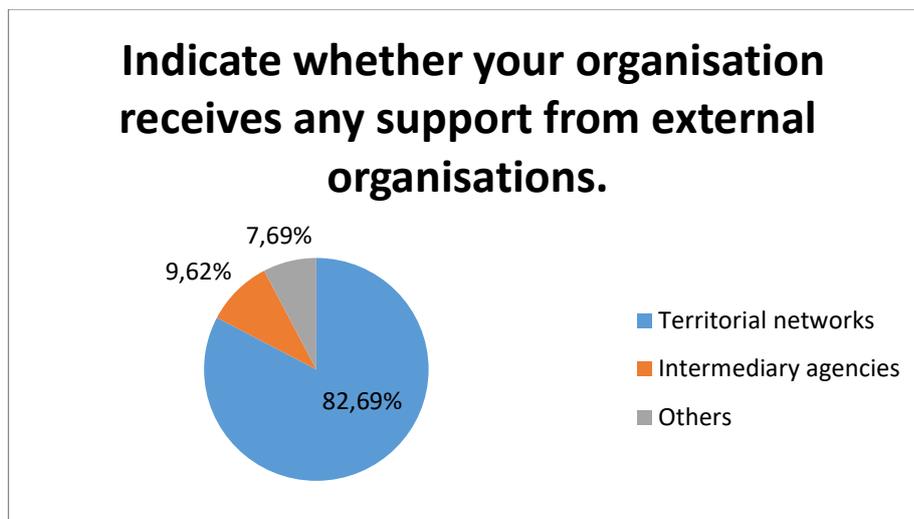


Figure 4. Organisational support.

## 5.5. Funding

With regard to funding, practically two thirds comes from European funds, either because the centre applies directly to the national agency, or through the Generalitat of Catalonia consortium member.

A long way behind are other types of public funding, through municipal councils or other non-specified typologies, and finally it should be highlighted that private funding is still very scarce, even lower than the mobility placements self-funded by students themselves, the penultimate category in the number of mobility placements. There has not been any detection so far of any private companies funding mobility placements/stays abroad for students.

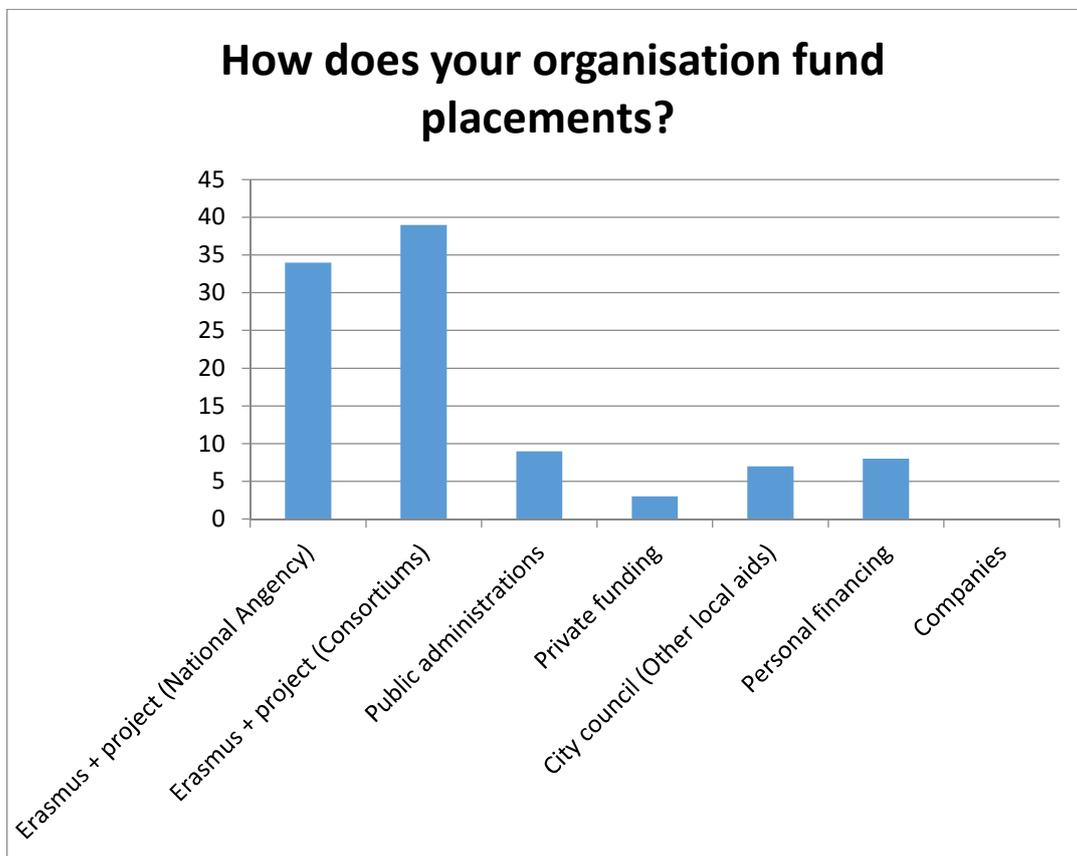


Figure 5. Funding of mobility placements.

## 5.6. Typologies of mobility placements

With regard to the types of mobility placements undertaken by students, the immense majority, close to two thirds, are internship mobility placements and the rest are shared between study placements which form less than a quarter, and the remaining proportion is divided among other categories, with Dual training and teacher training placements.

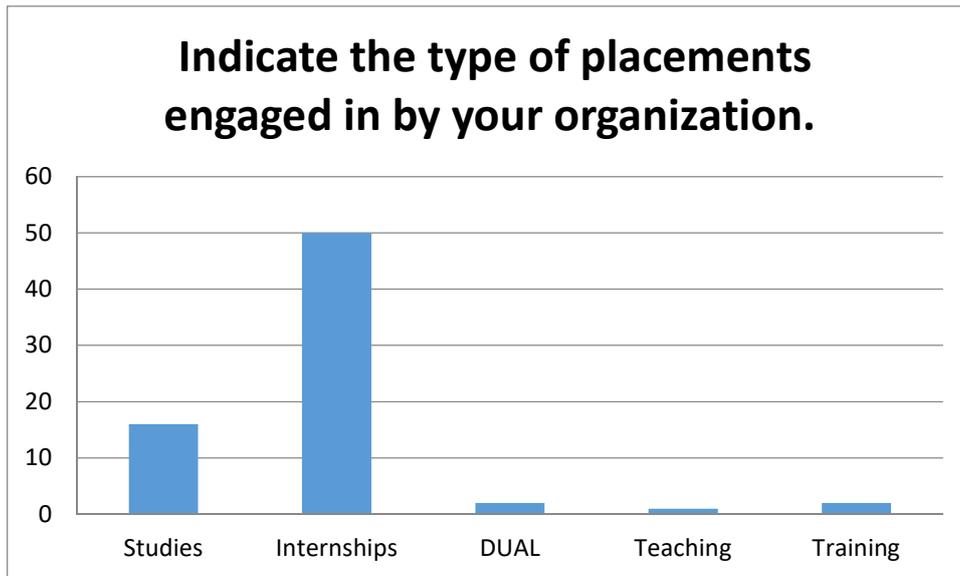


Figure 6. Typologies of mobility placements.

Study mobility placements can be related with validations and recognitions. In the case of Vocational and Educational Training, unlike university studies, for a few courses (specifically the majority of current training cycles are 2 years) it is necessary to undertake both the theoretical part and the practical part at workplaces. For those countries that do not have dual training systems, this means less flexibility in the organisation of mobility placements.

## 5.7. Duration

In the case of studies-type mobility placements, the duration in practically 60% of cases is of one week:

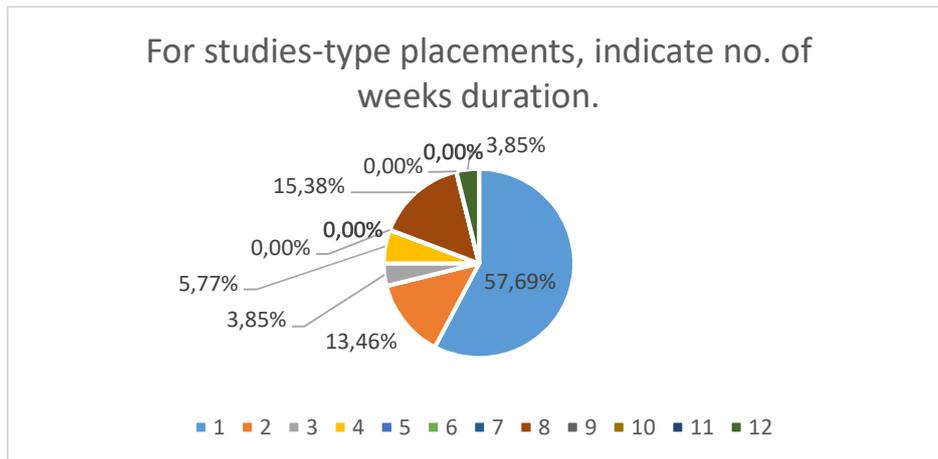


Figure 7. Duration of placements.

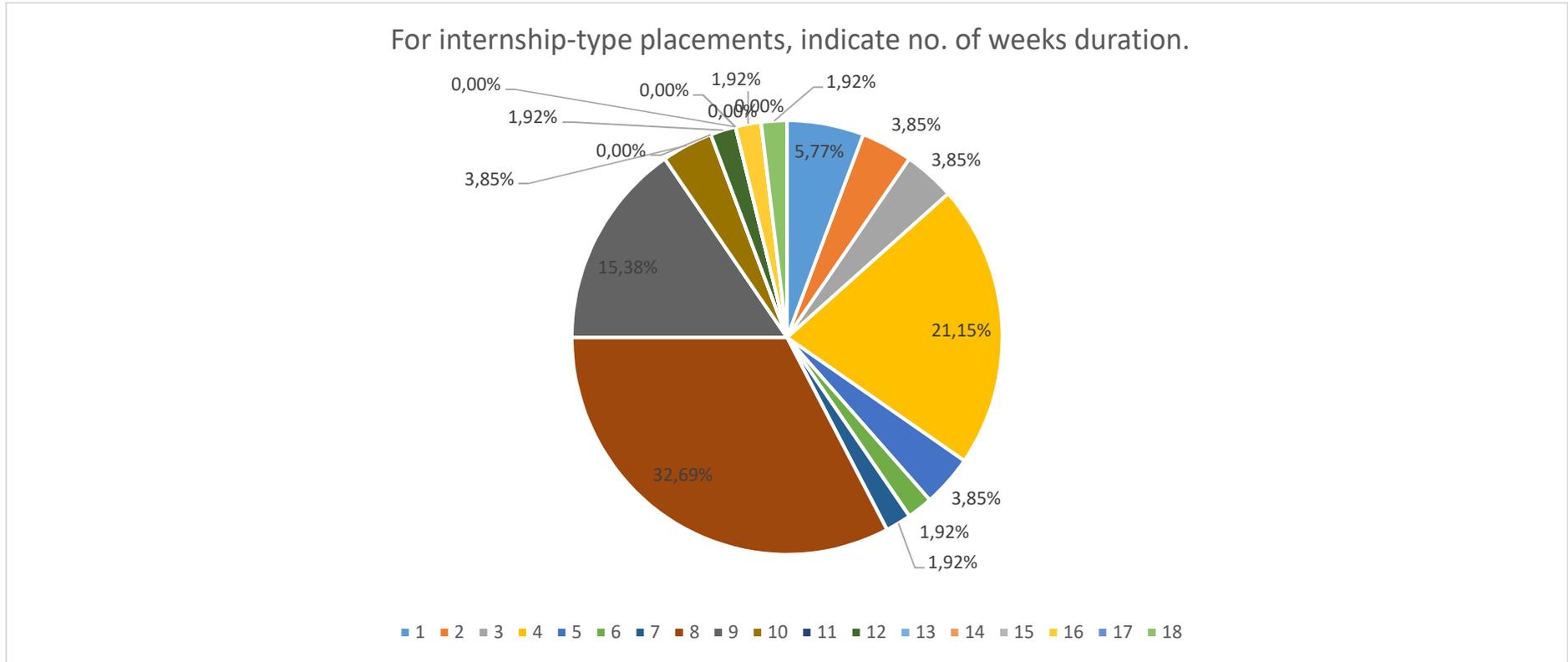


Figure 8. Duration of internships at companies.

Mobility placements that are eligible within the Erasmus+ programme are the following:

- Post-secondary training cycles: minimum 15 days
- Higher education training cycles: 60 days (in the case of training internships at companies) and 3 months in the case of study stays

With regard to internships, some 51% of stays have a duration of between 8 and 10 weeks. The rest of mobility placements are of a shorter duration, with 21% having a duration of 4 weeks. As we can observe, the duration of stays is aligned with the Erasmus+, from which the funds mainly originate.

Normally, in the field of Vocational and Educational Training, long-duration mobility placements are not the norm. Currently, in the case of Post-Secondary training mobility placements (KA102-VET), the Erasmus+ Pro programme is promoting, from this year, long-duration mobility placements for periods exceeding 3 months (internship) with measures such as: positive evaluation of projects that contemplate these types of activities and the possibility of applying for grants for preparatory prior visits by teaching staff. It is to be expected that these measures will have repercussions in the coming academic years. For example, there are some 50 long-term mobility placements planned for the academic year 2019-20, within the framework of the Department of Education's KA102 consortium.

## 5.8. Preparation of students

With regard to the preparation of students, the main aspects worked on are linguistic preparation, cultural preparation and technical preparation.

The Erasmus+ programme offers online linguistic preparation for all students participating in a mobility placement (studies or internships) called Online Linguistic Support (OLS) and some 45% of students do this preparation only through the OLS. Even so, the majority of centres carry out a series of actions such as offering extra reinforcement classes (25%), making curriculum adaptations (5%) or, in a smaller number, reaching agreements with language schools (3%). It is worth noting that in all post-secondary courses, Technical English is offered as a training module.

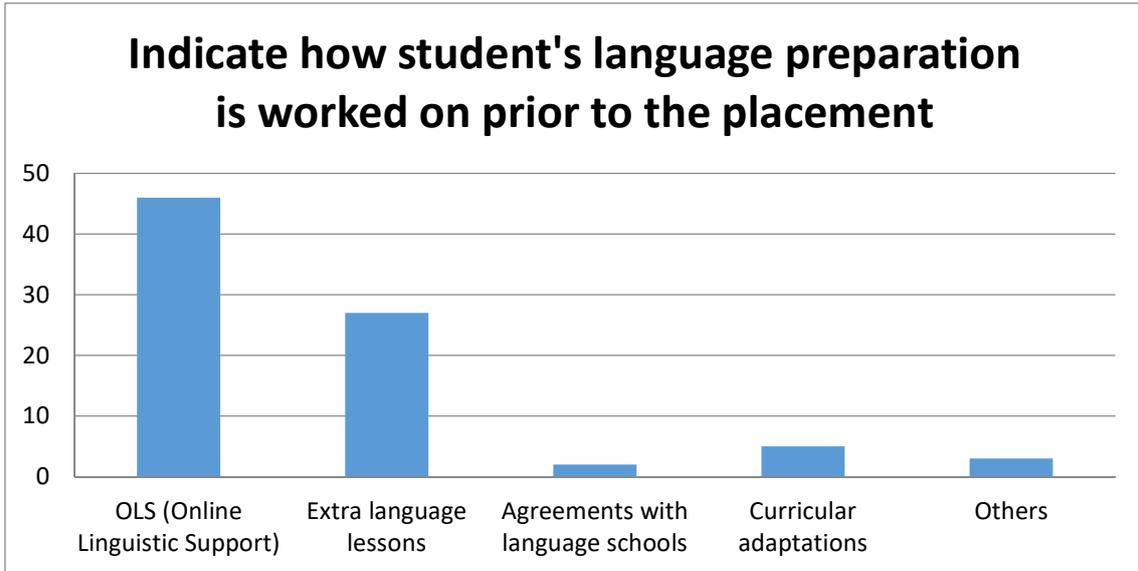


Figure 9. Linguistic preparation.

According to statistical data from the Department of Education for the year 2017, some 55% of mobility placements in post-secondary and 40% of higher education training organised within the Department of Education consortia are conducted in English, even when the first language of the destination country is not English.

Having a knowledge of English does not rule out the student needing knowledge, even if rudimentary, of the own language of the host country, because if the majority of mobility placements are at places of work it will be necessary for the student to relate with people using the common language in the host country.

With respect to cultural preparation, 40% of centres hold information sessions at the centre itself or provide information dossiers on the country where the mobility placement will take place (25%).

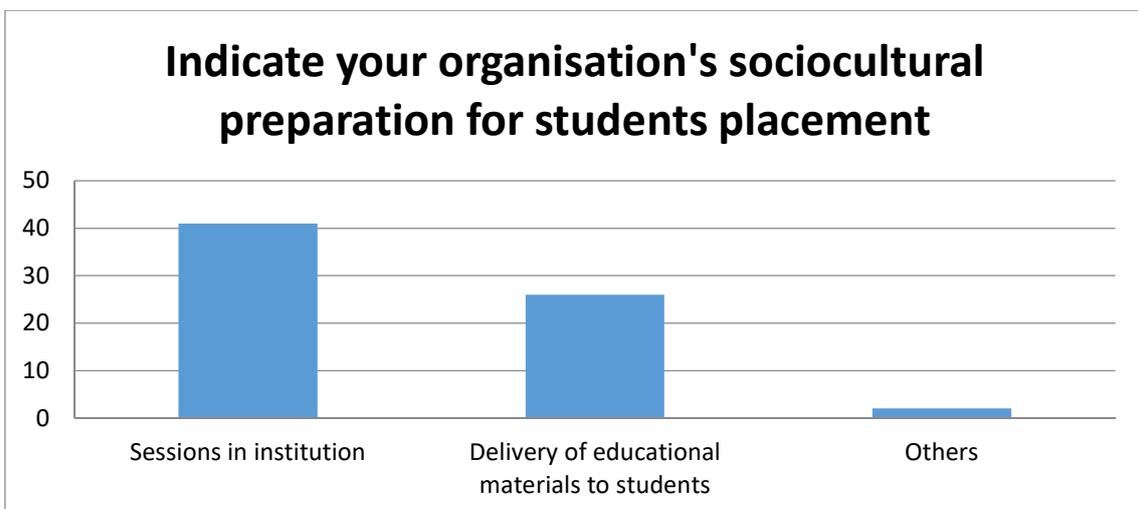


Figure 10. Sociocultural preparation.

It is necessary to say that the centres organise actions for cultural preparation (40%) and technical or workplace preparation (48%), giving slightly more importance to the latter.

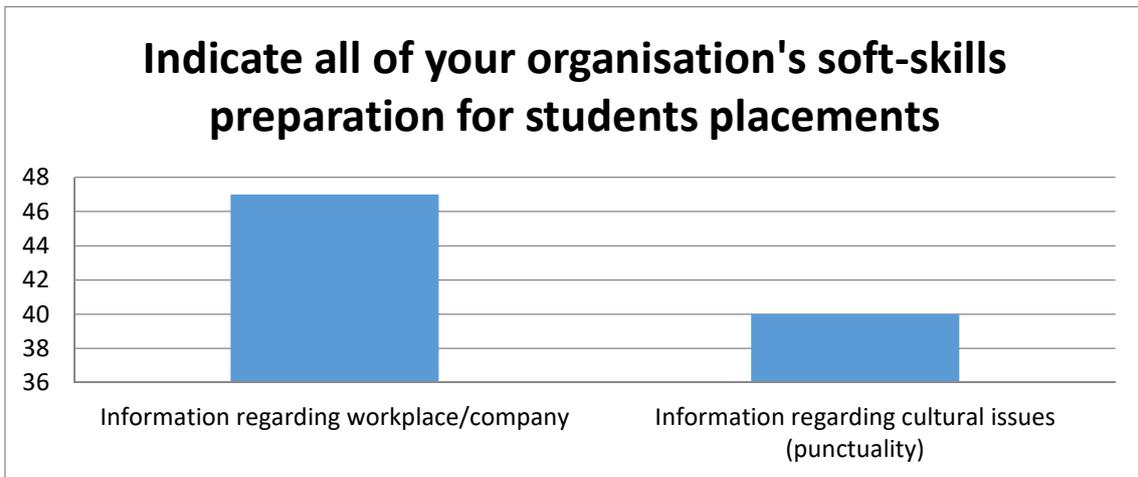


Figure 11. Preparation of soft skills.

With regard to the impact of mobility placements on students, we can say that for the majority of students, over 50%, the effect of the impact of the placement is high. By categories:

With regard to transversal IT skills, the impact is high or very high on 44% of students.

- With regard to transversal technical skills, the impact is high or very high on 71% of students.
- With regard to linguistic skills, the impact is high or very high on 88% of students

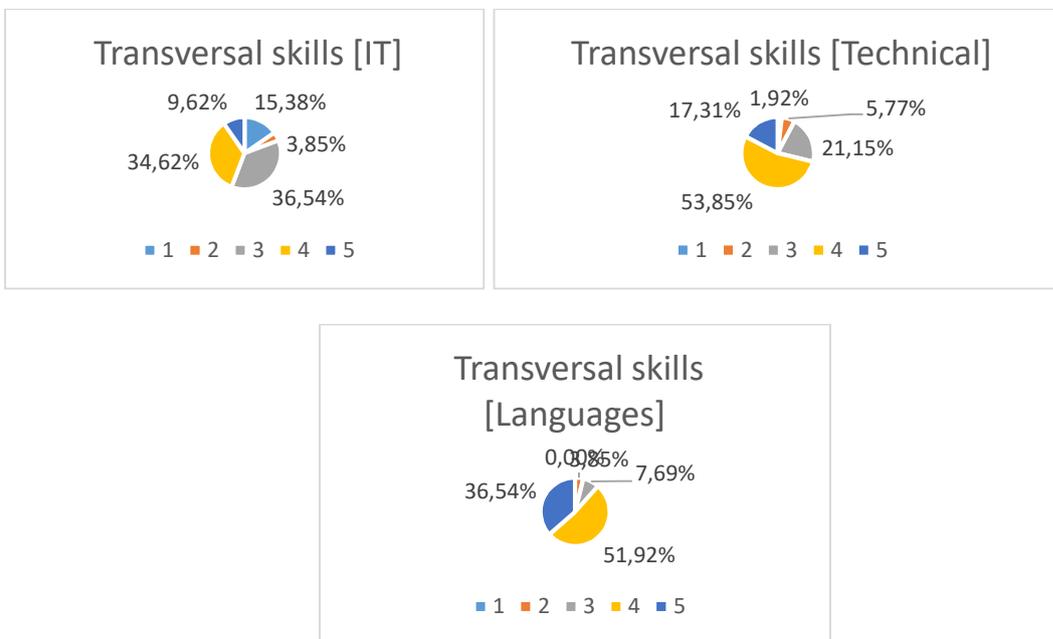


Figure 12. Learning of transversal skills.

In summary, we can point out that the impact at all levels, on a labour, technical and personal level alike, is high or very high in two thirds of students. Even if the goal of the mobility placement is professional (in other words, company internships), students value their improvement on a personal level at the same level as their acquiring of technical/professional skills, and this shows the decisive role and importance of key competences in people's professional development.

The monitoring of mobility placements by the student's centre tutor, both of the student and of the host centre, is mainly carried out by electronic means, above all email and telephone. Personal visits to the host centre or the assigning of a tutor at the centre are in the minority, accounting only for some 25%. One explanation for this would be the cost of the tutor making visits to the host country, especially if not accompanying a group of students.

In Erasmus+ projects, the centres are assigned an amount for so-called *Organisational Support*. For Higher Education this concept can be used for costs directly related with the execution of mobility placements (except for participants' travel and accommodation costs). In post-secondary training, it can be used for costs directly related with mobility activities (except for participants' travel and accommodation costs), including the preparation of students (educational, intercultural, linguistic) and it can also be used for the control and support of participants during the placement and the validation of the learning results<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the programme envisages more help for preparation and monitoring for post-secondary cycles, where it is seen as more necessary due to the age of the students (many of them minors) and the fact that they have different needs to the Higher Education students.

With regard to the dissemination of mobility projects, news on the centre websites and the social networks account for 90% of the dissemination. Moreover, some 50% of the centres take advantage of the experiences of students to disseminate them among other candidates potentially interested in a mobility placement in the following years.

Lack of information can be a key element in the field of Vocational and Educational Training. In the university world, the concept of mobility is common. Doubts regarding the viability of mobility and even the very lack of knowledge that students have (especially post-secondary students) regarding this possibility means that centres, and especially tutors and coordinators must make an added effort in terms of the dissemination of mobility projects among students.

Finally, with regard to reciprocity, in 63% of training cases there is reciprocity of students, however, the percentages are inverted in the case of study mobility placements, only 34% of cases.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://sepie.es/doc/convocatoria/2019/erasmus-plus-programme-guide-2019\\_es\\_v2.pdf](http://sepie.es/doc/convocatoria/2019/erasmus-plus-programme-guide-2019_es_v2.pdf)

## 6. Analysis of data on mobility practices in Catalonia

### 6.1. Analysis of Post-Secondary mobility practices

Mobility practices among Post-Secondary Training families continue to be dominated basically by two families: the science and technology family and the humanities and social science family. The main mobility in the technical sphere is due to the majority of non-cross-border destinations being directed at industrial regions in the centre and north of Europe, whereas mobility placements related with the social sciences sphere are destined at cross-border destinations in France, where the third family in number of mobility placements is also directed, in the hotel and catering family.

Moreover, in education of a sporting or artistic nature, there has been no progression, either levels have practically stagnated or have seen very meagre growth.

According to the **Report on Labour Incorporation of Vocational and Educational Training 2018<sup>4</sup>**, in any of the levels considered, the employment incorporation rate is higher than that of 2017, except for graduates of visual arts and design education which fell by 0.15 points. In this aspect, the mobility of students could be a favourable factor for improving labour insertion.

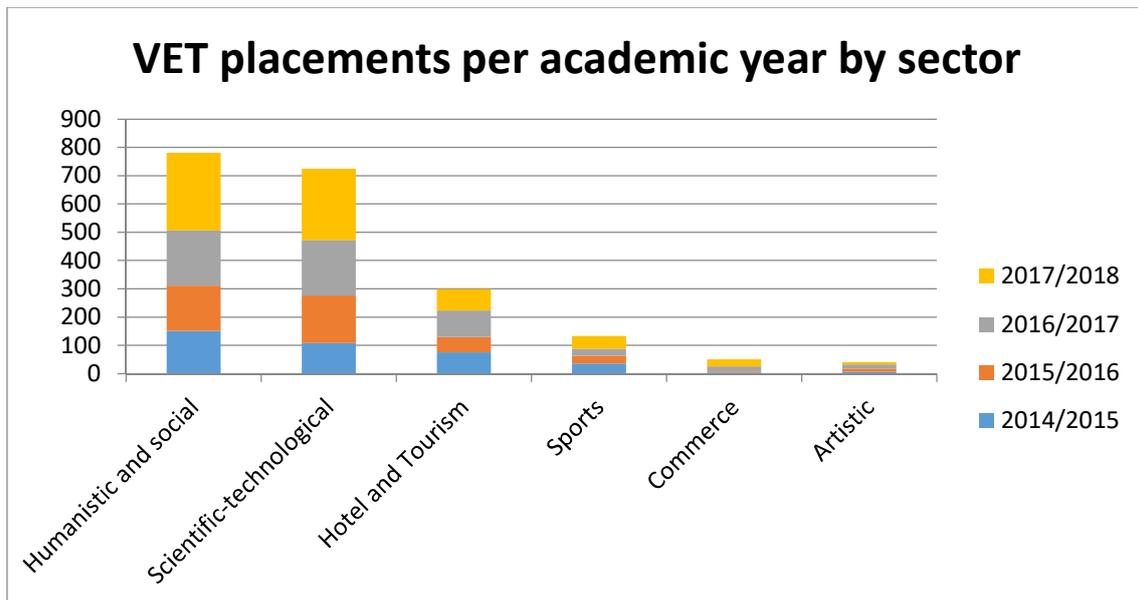


Figure 13. Professional families and placements (VET).

Language is also a determining factor when it comes to choosing mobility placements in the post-secondary cycle. Countries with Romance languages that facilitate communication where

<sup>4</sup> <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/estadistiques/insercio-laboral/estadistica-insercio-laboral/insercio-laboral-2018.pdf>

learning of the host country language is easier, such as Italian or French, are where most mobility placements take place.

In post-secondary training, where the student average is usually the lowest among all mobility placements, it would initially seem that mobility placements would be less attractive. But for the last year observed, the increase in students involved in placements from all families is significant.

The continuous increase seems to be due, partly to the value of the grants awarded by the Erasmus+ programme and partly to the consolidation and increased knowledge of mobilities, although this does not mean not executing the measures that have been proposed to favour the use and subsequent usefulness for employability of mobility placements.

A growth tendency could be observed in the last biennial that is gaining momentum, above all in the two families mentioned previously, with each annual increase always higher than the increase in the immediately previous year:

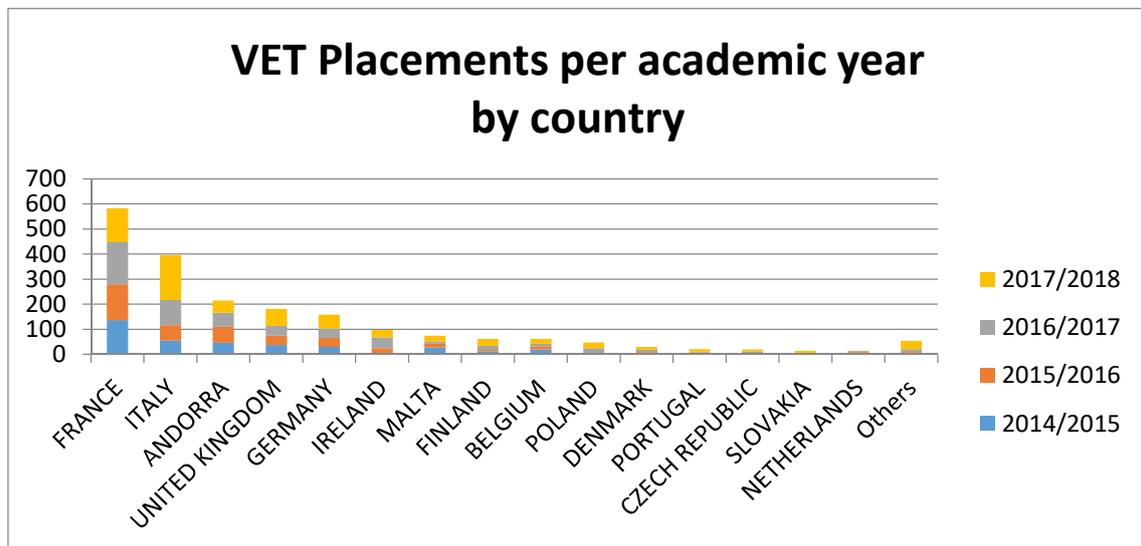


Figure 14. Placements per year and by country (VET).

## 6.2. Analysis of Higher Education training and education mobility placements.

In the same way, in Higher Education training and education cycles, the pattern is practically identical to that of post-secondary mobility placements, where we can see that the most frequent placements are related with professional families in the sphere of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science and Technology.

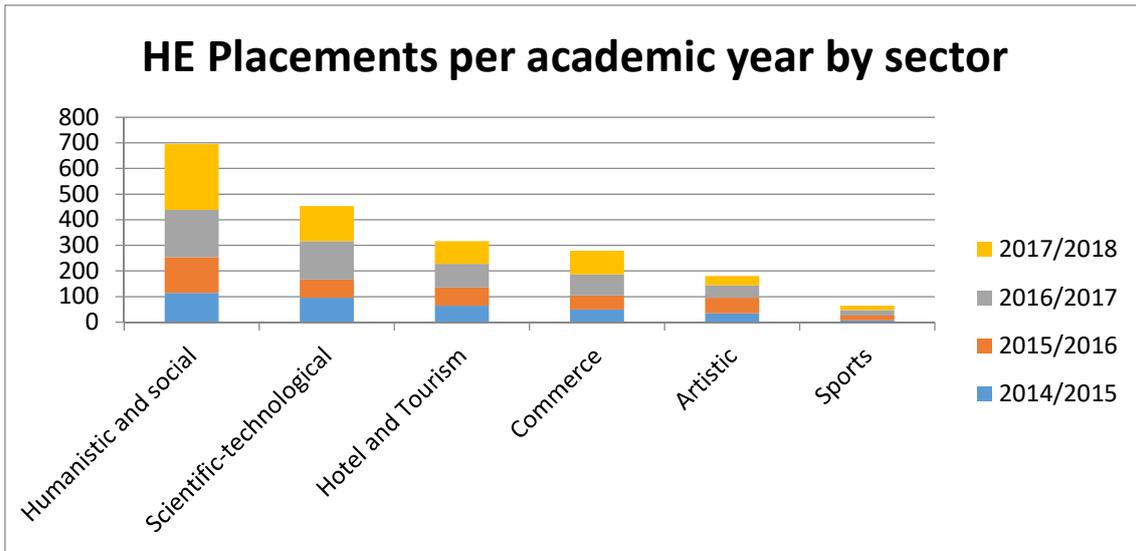


Figure 15. Placements by professional families (HE).

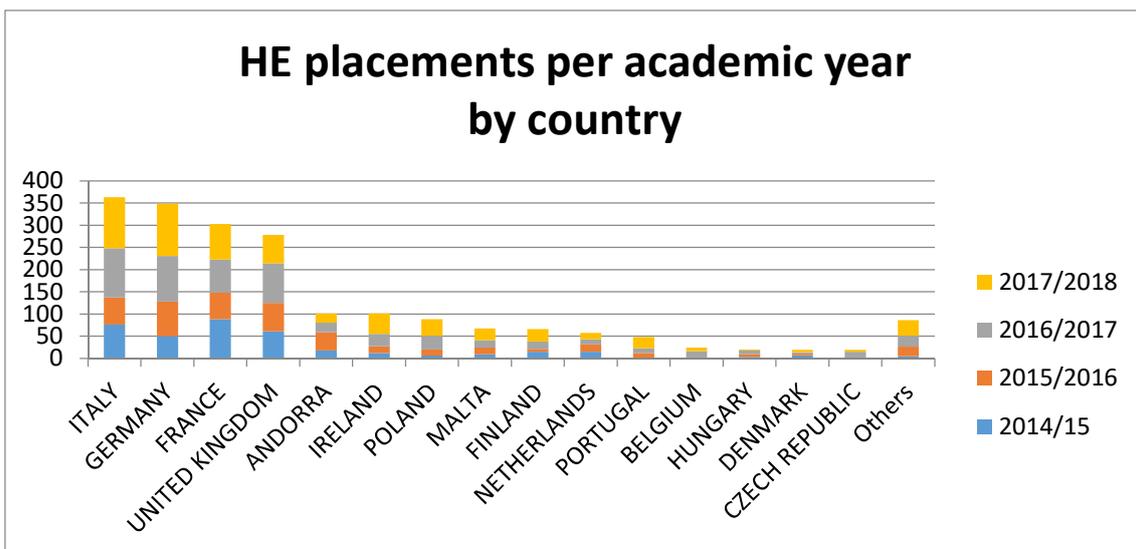


Figure 16. Placements per year by country (HE).

The factor of mutual intelligibility between languages remains very much present in the Higher Education cycles, but there is a notable exception in technical mobility placements in Germany, a factor explained by the large offering of placements at companies in these sectors, a fact that would mean that any student wanting to train in this sphere would find it easier to secure a destination in this country. This has been especially significant in the last two years.

A tendency of progressive growth is to be expected in coming years and, as has been indicated, due to the difficulties that may be generated in the sphere of communication and language problems, it would be recommended to take measures to iron out and/or resolve this problem, especially in those professional families in which fewer mobility placements are currently being made.

The circumstance detected of having a small group of 4 countries concentrating the majority of mobility placements would permit the creation of a guided procedure to facilitate mobility placements in these countries.

The sporting and artistic families of courses, however, continue without obtaining any major share in mobility placements, in both Post-secondary Training and Higher Education.

However, the increase has been progressive and constant over the period observed in the families mentioned as offering the highest employability, and the tendency is maintained and hopefully will be maintained in the future.

### 6.3. Comparison between PSET and HE mobility placements.

First of all, we can observe that mobilities among work experience students on a global level have progressively increased over the last four years.

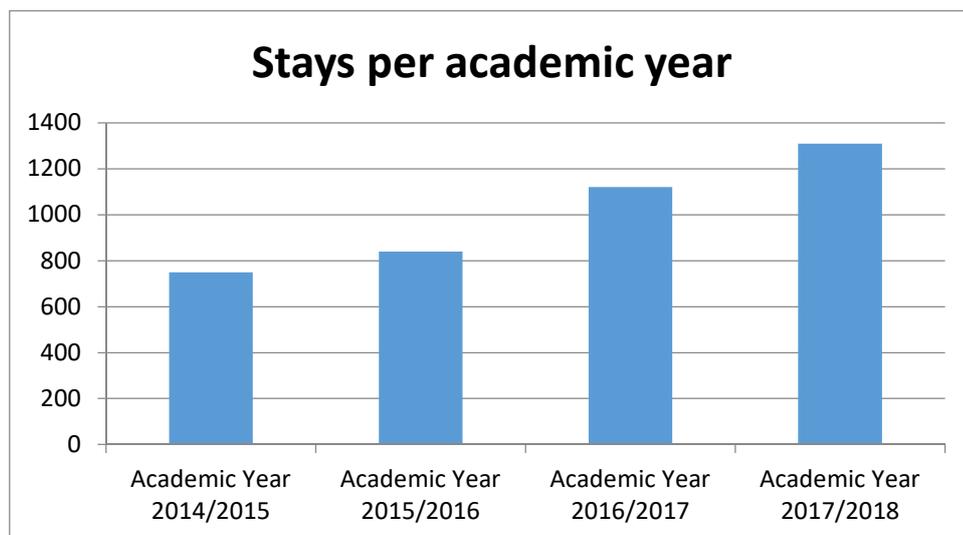


Figure 17. Stays per academic year.

Mobility placements in Post-secondary education and training continue to experience greater international mobility than those of Higher Education, in part this is attributable to a higher number of students matriculated in PSET. Another factor is the value of Erasmus+ grants, as the grants for VET (Vocational Education and Training) students can triple those awarded for the same period of time to HE (Higher Education) students.

Among all the professional families, the mobility placements that stand out are those that have a higher practical/technical load, such as mechanics and/or social and health care. A factor that would explain this and mentioned previously is the barrier that is posed by the language of other Member states, and therefore, training in which the spoken part is less important, such as those previously cited, favour international mobility.

As for data on gender, mobility placements show a tendency that is growing but slow-paced towards parity between the number of men and women, with the number of female placements still being lower than that of males. This proportion is slightly inverted in Higher Education mobility placements, where the female presence is slightly higher.

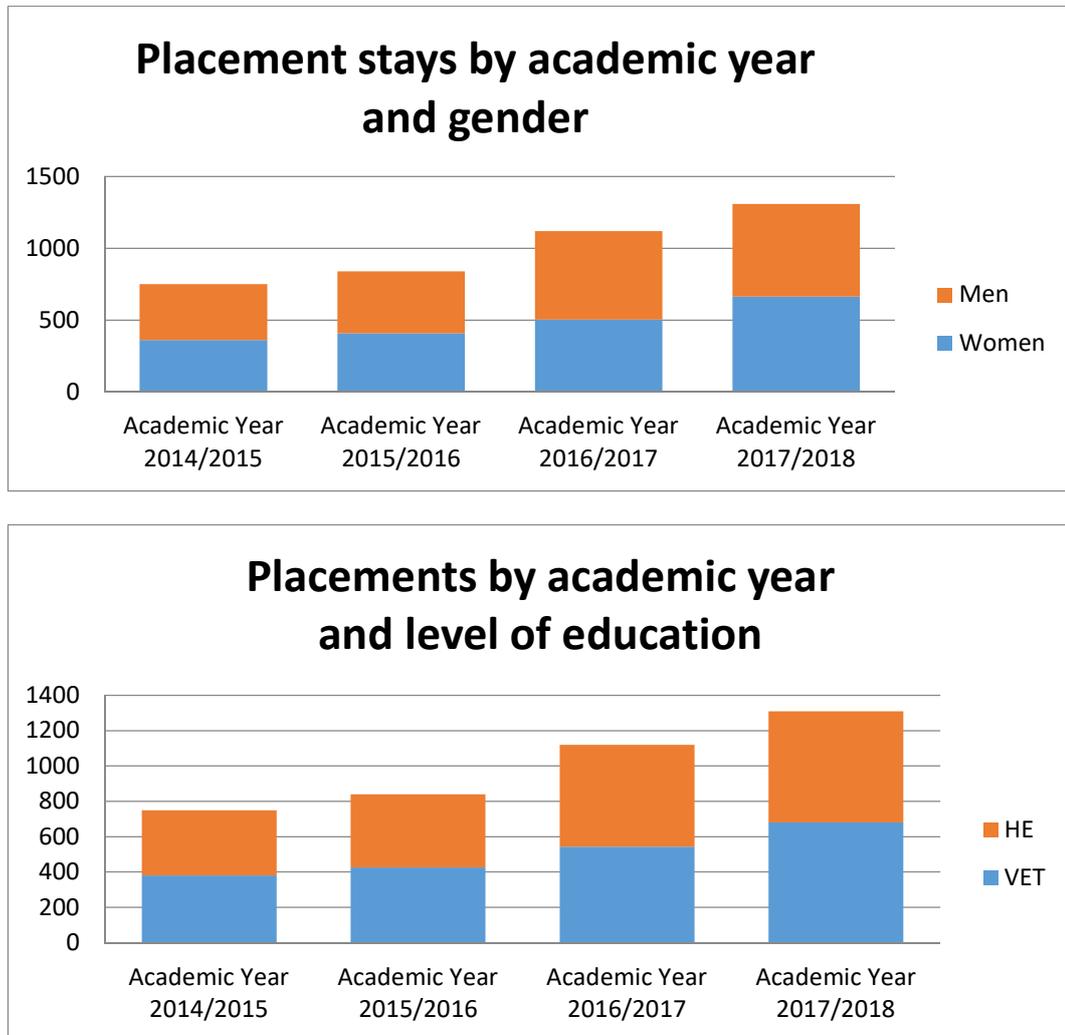


Figure 18. Stays by academic year, gender and level of education.

The fact is that women, at all academic levels, are progressively more numerous than men, and Vocational Education and Training is no exception. As commented previously, in the technical sphere, the male presence is slightly higher, whereas in hotel and catering, commerce, and health and social services, the female presence is higher.

In any case, these percentages are not proportional to matriculation data, as according to statistical data from the Department of Education<sup>5</sup>, women represent 41.24% of the registrations in post-secondary education and 45.8% in higher education. This detail is interesting to highlight, as it evidences better competence levels among women than among men, at least in terms of requirements for mobility.

Moreover, and according to the report on the **Labour Incorporation of Vocational Education and Training 2018**<sup>6</sup>, women outnumber men in employment obtained through less assisted channels. Despite the company internship being the most effective route to incorporation for men and women, the second route in importance is, for men, their personal networks and, for women, the processing of their CV. In this sense, it is to be expected that mobility placements undertaken by women could, therefore, improve the job search for this group.

The opportunity cost/risk perceived in mobility placements in another Member state has been discussed as a dissuasive factor when looking at a possible placement. The lower the initial income level, the fewer the probabilities of entering a mobility placement, therefore the higher the level of income, and not necessarily of education, the greater the female presence. Combined with the previous two factors, this means that the number of mobility placements among the female gender is increasing.

It does not seem necessary to favour greater female mobility, therefore, as the growth tendency is stable, so measures seem to be best concentrated on the general linguistic skills of all students, not on specific measures related to gender.

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<sup>5</sup> Statistical data from the start of the 2018-2019 academic year:

<http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/departament/estadistiques/estadistiques-ensenyament/estadistica-inici-curs-2018-2019/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/estadistiques/insercio-laboral/estadistica-insercio-laboral/insercio-laboral-2018.pdf>

## 7. Conclusions

Once the data have been analysed we can extract various conclusions, both with regard to identification of the sociodemographic profile of the participating students and to the importance of mobility and the acquisition of competences, whether technical or transversal, in the increase in possibilities for incorporation into the world of employment in both the regional and the European sphere.

Below we detail the main features:

### **Sociodemographic profile of students**

- The number of women who undertake mobility placements is equivalent to the number of men, although in the majority of professional families the number of men matriculated on the course is higher than that of women.
- The most highly represented professional families are humanities and social sciences and science and technology and the least represented are artistic and sporting families.
- The destination countries mostly chosen are France and Italy. However, it is necessary to mention the increase in internships in Germany and the United Kingdom.

### **Incorporation and impact**

- Mobility placements consolidated over time (more than 5 years).
- Improved competence levels of participants, in both linguistic and technical competences and the so-called **soft skills**, which are increasingly more important in the professional work environment: teamwork, negotiation, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, task planning, motivation, change management, social skills, autonomy, body language, etc.
- Increased probabilities of incorporation into the labour market.

## 8. Proposals

In light of the conclusions presented, a series of recommendations are presented to promote high-quality mobility placements among Vocational and Educational Training students.

**Improve the visibility** of mobility placements for Vocational and Educational Training students:

- Create a specific denomination for VET mobility placements that improves their visibility aimed at students, that identifies with clarity the possibilities for mobility. Erasmus+ is the umbrella that groups together all the initiatives for the different educational stages but an own brand name would reinforce knowledge of the options for students.
- Multi-platform campaigns for making the programme known among students.

**Support for students with lower economic resources:**

- Increase in the amount of the grants, especially those for HE, whether from:
  - Regional and local authorities.
  - Businesses, as actually there is little record of such grants from companies.
  - European Commission.

**Support for students**

- In post-secondary mobility placements, where the students as a general rule are minors, reinforce accompaniment and tutoring, whether by the hosting centre or the originating centre.
- Prior work at education centres in order to reinforce transversal competences or soft skills.

**Linguistic and cultural support**

- Actions for reducing linguistic and cultural barriers.
- Increasing the mastery of the English language among students.
- Increasing the mastery of the first language of the destination country.
- Design of training modules to find out the most outstanding characteristics of the business and employment culture of the host country.
- Training of the teaching staff responsible for student mobility.

**Organisational support**

- Vocational and Educational Training centres should have sufficient budgets to prepare structures for the organisation and management of mobility placements.

## 9. References

*European Commission. Erasmus+ Projects Results.*

*Statistical data from the Catalan Education Department.*

*Statistical data from the qBid platform.*

*European Commission (2010), Youth on the Move.*

*European and international programme of training mobility and European and international cooperation in vocational education and training.*

*Report on Labour Incorporation of Vocational Education and Training 2018.*