



ON THE MOVE BUT NOT THERE YET

European policies on international mobility of students in initial vocational education and training are working but more is needed

Young people in initial vocational education and training (IVET) today have more opportunities to do part of their training abroad than their peers of a decade ago. In most EU Member States they tend to receive better information, support and funding to cover a learning stint in another country; in many cases there is also better recognition of what they have learned when returning home.

This progress is owed largely to the **2011 Council recommendation** ⁽¹⁾. This highlighted 10 areas where policy action was needed to boost IVET learners' mobility, ranging from information and guidance to recognition of skills acquired abroad and to the portability of grants and support to disadvantaged learners ⁽²⁾.

To monitor the policies EU Member States, Norway and Iceland have adopted to improve the mobility of IVET learners, including apprentices, the European Commission mandated Cedefop in 2014 to create a dedicated mobility scoreboard ⁽³⁾. This tool has been operational for three years, showing individual country progress in relevant areas. It allows European and national policy-makers, mobility organisers in the participating countries and other stakeholders to evaluate, compare and adjust their action where needed. It is updated every two years by Cedefop

with information provided by its national **ReferNet** partners ⁽⁴⁾.

This briefing note presents the results of the 2019 update compared to the 2017 version.



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IVET MOBILITY TODAY AND TOMORROW

There are still constraints on IVET learner mobility.

- VET systems vastly differ from one country to another, making it difficult to give and to get credit points. The adoption of the recommendation on automatic recognition in 2018 acknowledges this.
- There is a pay problem linked to apprentice mobility: why would an employer sending an apprentice abroad continue to pay his/her wages while the benefit of his/her work goes to the employer hosting the apprentice?
- There remain challenges for VET learners younger than 18.

However, considering that IVET mobility helps learners develop key competences crucial in a rapidly changing globalised world, most countries have been

⁽¹⁾ Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 — *Youth on the move* — promoting the learning mobility of young people.

⁽²⁾ 1. Information and guidance
2. Administrative and institutional issues
3. Recognition of learning outcomes
4. Partnerships and funding
5. Motivating for mobility
6. Long-term preparation of mobility
7. Quality of mobility
8. Portability of grants/loans
9. Support for disadvantaged learners
10. Involving multipliers

⁽³⁾ The scoreboard was presented in Cedefop's briefing note *Supporting training and learning abroad: the EU mobility scoreboard for initial VET* of September 2016.

⁽⁴⁾ The IVET mobility scoreboard is part of a wider initiative involving both the **EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** and Eurydice, the latter developing a similar mobility scoreboard for higher education: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard>

working to identify barriers to learners' free movement and to find ways to remove, or at least lower, these.

In this context, Cedefop is currently taking a closer look at cross-country mobility in apprenticeships, aiming to identify the conditions and actions facilitating apprentices' mobility ⁽⁶⁾.

Both the Commission and the European Parliament have proposed to increase the Erasmus+ budget to enable many more VET learners to benefit from mobility.

IVET MOBILITY POLICIES: RECENT PROGRESS

Progress over the past two years has been most visible in three areas: removal of institutional barriers, recognition of skills/knowledge acquired abroad, and support of disadvantaged learners.

Several countries have reduced administrative and institutional barriers to mobility (area 2). Croatia has started collecting data on the challenges encountered both by incoming and outgoing learners, to identify and tackle them better. In Hungary, the Public Education Act, which entered into force in 2017, has reduced red tape for learners, enabling them to complete compulsory studies abroad without lengthy prior authorisation. Iceland changed its legislation in 2017 to allow third country nationals to study vocational subjects, improving access to study visa and residency permits (the previous law only applied to university students).

Progress has also been made on the recognition of skills and knowledge acquired abroad (area 3). Slovenia has laid out guidelines for the recognition of prior learning in upper secondary education, including knowledge and skills acquired through mobility schemes. In the United Kingdom, experts in charge of implementing the [European credit system for VET \(ECVET\)](#) have encouraged organisations involved in IVET learner mobility to use more systematically the ECVET tools designed to facilitate recognition of skills and knowledge learners have acquired abroad.

A few countries have recently promoted the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility activities (area 9). In Finland, for example, the project *Internationalisation for all* has been developed to promote successful inclusion practices among VET providers and raise disadvantaged learners' awareness of the value of a study trip abroad. In 2017, Lithuania issued recommendations to promote the participation of learners with special needs in mobility activities.

⁽⁶⁾ Initial results of Cedefop's first thematic study on long-term cross-country mobility in apprenticeships are expected to become available this year.

MOBILITY POLICIES: BEST OF THE BUNCH

Adopting the methodology underlying the follow-up of the Bologna process ⁽⁶⁾, the IVET mobility scoreboard distinguishes five levels of national achievements in developing mobility policies: excellent, very good, good, some progress made, and little progress made. Based on this methodology, Cedefop's 2019 review reveals that most countries have covered four out of the 10 areas reasonably well: information and guidance; partnerships and funding; long-term preparation for mobility; and quality of stays abroad. Several countries have developed good practices in these areas ⁽⁷⁾.

Some countries have been ramping up their existing information and guidance on mobility programmes, funding sources and administrative procedures. They have added tools which help learners clarify their interests and values, identify their skills and reflect on their experience, formulate plans, and make career-oriented decisions, also taking on board the perspectives opened up by mobility schemes. Such practices help IVET learners to integrate their learning and career plans with their mobility objectives, in order to make the most of these; Estonia, Finland and Sweden have been leading the way ⁽⁸⁾.

To develop partnerships, countries have set up databases (Bulgaria, Slovenia); international contact seminars (Czechia, Romania); assistance services for VET institutions and/or enterprises (Belgium, Germany, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Austria and Finland); and participation in international networks (Estonia, France) ⁽⁹⁾.

Good practices in long-term preparation for mobility include securing IVET learners' access to foreign language learning ⁽¹⁰⁾; reinforcing their awareness of intercultural contexts; and 360-degree training in basic digital competences ⁽¹¹⁾ addressed both to IVET learners and teachers. Portugal's experience in this

⁽⁶⁾ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/methodology_20161121_v.04.pdf

⁽⁷⁾ For a more complete overview of the good policy practices observed: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/good-practices>

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches?countries%5B%5D=323&countries%5B%5D=324&countries%5B%5D=342&fiche%5B%5D=2115&year%5B%5D=2019>

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches?fiche%5B%5D=2157&year%5B%5D=2019>

⁽¹⁰⁾ This is particularly successful where early language learning policies are also in place, as they provide a strong basis for all learners, hence also for those who later on move to IVET.

⁽¹¹⁾ The 2011 Youth on the move recommendation points out the importance of fostering digital competences in view of optimal mobility conditions.

area is particularly inspiring, with communication in foreign languages a compulsory part of all upper secondary level VET programmes. Since 2018, the subject *Citizenship and development*, which aims to reinforce learners' awareness of intercultural contexts, has become mandatory in all school programmes. ICT is a compulsory subject for all programmes from primary to upper secondary education ⁽¹²⁾.

An interesting example in terms of quality is the Belgium-fr introduction of so-called customs and cultural pointers, as well as teaching units on appropriate behavioural conventions, with the idea of enabling students to understand and deal with cultural differences better ⁽¹³⁾.

There is room for progress, however, as the average level of implementation of the recommendation is just 'good'. This means that most countries still have some way to go to attain a 'very good' or 'excellent' score.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Countries' performance in developing mobility policies appears to be poor in two areas in particular.

First, efforts to involve disadvantaged learners in mobility activities have been limited: in most countries, no action has been taken beyond passing on information about European funding available to special needs learners through the Erasmus+ programme. Several countries are even justifying the lack of specific attention to this group as a way to avoid stigmatising those at a disadvantage. Such a view overlooks the need for scaffolding, to bring disadvantaged learners to an equal footing with others.

However, some initiatives merit mention: Germany and Croatia have actively been providing information and support covering the needs of disadvantaged learners; Estonia and Lithuania offer specific psychological and professional pre-visit preparation to those with special education needs; and Germany, Latvia and Lithuania have been posting successful mobility experiences of disadvantaged learners on the social media accounts of their national Erasmus+ agencies, to raise awareness and to motivate others

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches?countries%5B%5D=338&countries%5B%5D=344&fiche%5B%5D=2176&year%5B%5D=2019>

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches?countries%5B%5D=20418&fiche%5B%5D=2197&year%5B%5D=2019>

to do the same ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Second, scores are rather poor in governing mobility policies. Many lack targets and evaluation in most policy strands; both aspects go hand in hand, as evaluation would not make sense if no prior targets were set.

OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the *Youth on the move* recommendation is being monitored according to the methodology described. For the 2019 mobility scoreboard update, Cedefop scrutinised the mobility policies and structures (including policy governance) each country has put in place in each of the 10 action areas, and rated countries' performance in how far the requirements of the recommendation have been met. A country performance score, so-called 'indicator score', could then be calculated for each country for each area or indicator. Box 1 shows an example of an indicator.

BOX 1: INDICATOR FOR AREA 5 (MOTIVATING FOR MOBILITY) AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SCOREBOARD'S INDICATORS

Portugal has promoted mobility through in-school language clubs and publications including student testimonials, emphasising values such as the development of cognitive and social skills, networking opportunities, multicultural experiences, and a stronger sense of ownership of education and career decisions. Teachers' and parents' attention has been drawn to benefits such as European awareness, citizenship and social participation. A reference frame for developing a sense of European citizenship at primary and secondary schools was adopted to promote a mobility culture from an early stage; this is expected to help increase learners' knowledge of European cooperation programmes, including Erasmus+ and eTwinning. An Action plan for youth was set up in the Algarve region, involving 90 municipalities, regional offices and associations. Its ambitions include a regional fund for international mobility.

Based on the indicator scores, Cedefop was able to calculate scores rating overall national performance. The picture that emerges is of work still very much in progress, although most countries have tackled several areas.

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/country-fiches?countries%5B%5D=329&countries%5B%5D=323&countries%5B%5D=324&countries%5B%5D=326&countries%5B%5D=332&countries%5B%5D=333&fiche%5B%5D=2239&year%5B%5D=2019>

The countries for which data are available can be clustered into four major groups, as shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1: COUNTRIES BY LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the 2011 <i>Youth on the move</i> recommendation	Countries
Excellent performance (near full implementation)	None
Very good performance	DE, LT
Good performance	BG, CZ, EE, FI, FR, LV, LU, NO, UK
Some progress made	BE (de), HR, CY, DK, ES, HU, IS, IRL, IT, MT, PL, PT, SK, SI
Little progress made	AT, BE (fl)
Not enough data to allow for ranking	BE (fr), EL, NL, RO, SE

Source: Cedefop, online IVET mobility scoreboard database ⁽¹⁵⁾.

PROGRESS BY COUNTRY

Individual country scorecards are available on Cedefop’s website. Each scorecard summarises the performance of a particular country in implementing the recommendation in each of the 10 thematic areas and in terms of policy governance.

CONCLUSION

2021 will be the 10th anniversary of the Youth on the move recommendation. In comparison to 2011, the political commitment to promote learning mobility in IVET will appear to have increased in most of the countries monitored. IVET mobility policies and systems have been developed and structured. Along with launching and strengthening Erasmus+ since 2014, other EU level initiatives such as Erasmus Pro and the 2018 Council recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition have been adopted and are being implemented.

However, barriers remain. Mobility in IVET is still sometimes perceived as putting local labour markets at risk of losing their training investments if a significant number of mobile learners decide to settle abroad.

Another issue is that the exact impact of the policies carried out is not known, as countries’ progress in developing relevant policy evaluation has been slow and the European Union still lacks systematic and comparable statistics in this area. The outcomes of the survey on the availability of VET mobility statistics, launched in 2019 by the European Commission, are eagerly awaited.

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/overview/T1B?table=T1B&year%5B%5D=2019>