



## Learning Mobility for Adults: Put quality of learning mobility at the centre

EAEA Response to the Public Consultation

May 2023

### The issue: most adults do not have access to learning mobility

The benefits of learning mobility for adults are numerous, for both individuals and society. As illustrated by the [EAEA Position Paper on Erasmus+](#), learning mobility is critical for the development of new skills, the strengthening of European solidarity, cohesion and democracy, the promotion of health and well-being, as well as the motivation to learn.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, we encourage the European Union and the Member States to step up their efforts to incentivise, support, and recognise the learning mobility of adults. The inclusion of a mobility scheme for adult learners in Erasmus+ is an important, positive development; yet, more resources and investments are needed, since only about 5,000 people attended mobility activities according to the [annual report 2021](#).<sup>2</sup> For reference, in the same period 186,100 students and teachers in the field of school education went abroad thanks to Erasmus+. While the number of adult education participants is expected to increase, the limited budget, as well as the restrictive eligibility criteria attached to the programme have had a negative impact on the effectiveness of Erasmus+ for adults' learning mobility.

**However, when it comes to adult learning mobility, the quality of mobility should be the focus of efforts, alongside aiming to increase participation numbers.**

Bolder action on this issue is necessary, also because the [multiple issues](#) preventing adults' participation in education and learning<sup>3</sup> are exacerbated when it comes to learning mobility: the lack of time and resources is an even more serious obstacle in the case of learning mobility, as these experiences require additional preparation, commitment and expenses.

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<sup>1</sup> EAEA (2022): Include adult learners in Erasmus+ mobility actions – but do it right! EAEA Statement. Online: [https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EAEA-statement\\_Erasmus-mobility-for-adult-learners\\_April-2022.pdf](https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EAEA-statement_Erasmus-mobility-for-adult-learners_April-2022.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission/Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022): Erasmus+ Annual Report 2021. Online: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff16650b-7b6e-11ed-9887-01aa75ed71a1>, p. 53

<sup>3</sup> Güner, Duygu/Nurski, Laura (2023): Understanding barriers and resistance to training in the European Union. Bruegel Think Tank, Blog Post. Online: <https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/understanding-barriers-and-resistance-training-european-union>



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In order to address these challenges, the upcoming Council Recommendation on learning mobility should encompass an **enabling framework setting out structural, sustainable and effective policies to help adults access learning mobility**.

In the [European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel](#), organised by the European Commission, citizens from all corners of Europe have called for more efforts at the European level to promote adult learning mobility, increasing the budget allocated to this sector, promoting more inclusive programmes and reaching out to learners of all ages and backgrounds. It is crucial, therefore, that the next EU actions in this area take into account the valuable contribution of the participants to the Citizens' Panel.<sup>4</sup>

### The solution: build an enabling framework on quality learning mobility for adults

EAEA supports a [lifelong learning approach to learning mobility](#) and underlines the **fundamental importance of quality physical mobility**, which cannot be replaced by programmes that are exclusively run in virtual settings.<sup>5</sup> While online and virtual learning opportunities can be valuable additional and complementary tools, physical mobility offers a unique, rich, life-changing learning experience. The upcoming Council Recommendation should create a holistic, enabling framework for the learning mobility of adults, including specific, targeted and coherent measures.

The EU and the Member States should recognise **learning mobility as a fundamental component of the universal right to adult education and continuing training** (Art. 14(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights), the right to employee training and the right to paid training leave – in conjunction with the right to freedom of movement (Art. 45 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights). Member States, in particular, should review their legislation on the [right to paid training leave](#), removing obstacles to the use of this right for participating to a learning mobility.<sup>6</sup>

Time constraints due to work prevent adults from participating to learning mobility. By providing for a transnational and [European right to paid training leave](#), adults would be able to attend a learning mobility without incurring in any loss of income.<sup>7</sup> This is especially important for people in low paid jobs. The EU has the competence and the opportunity to introduce a Directive setting minimum, legally binding standards on the right to paid training leave (based on Articles 151 and 153(1)(b)

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2023): European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel. 21 recommendations to make learning opportunities abroad a reality for all. Online : [https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/learning-mobility-panel\\_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Commission%20has%20decided,be%20a%20list%20of%20recommendations ; https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/Learning%20Mobility%20Final%20recommendations.pdf](https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/learning-mobility-panel_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Commission%20has%20decided,be%20a%20list%20of%20recommendations ; https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/Learning%20Mobility%20Final%20recommendations.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Lifelong Learning Platform (2023): Learning Mobility for All: A Lifelong Learning Approach to Targets, Process and Monitoring. Statement. Online: [https://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/WGINT\\_LLLP-Statement\\_Learning-mobility\\_April-2023.pdf](https://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/WGINT_LLLP-Statement_Learning-mobility_April-2023.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> EAEA (2023): Widening Access to Adult Learning through Transnational Paid Education Leave Schemes for All Workers. EAEA Statement. Online: [https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EAEA-statement-paid-training-leave\\_final.pdf](https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EAEA-statement-paid-training-leave_final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

TFEU). This recommendation is in line with the call of the Citizens' Panel to remove the barriers faced by employees participating in learning mobility programmes (Recommendation 20).<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, Member States should prohibit discrimination and unfair treatment in the workplace based on a person's decision to attend a learning mobility. This requires awareness raising among employers of the benefits of learning mobility of their employees for the workplace as well as incentives such as twinning programmes for staff exchange.

### **Quality first: Setting European objectives and indicators**

We recommend that the EU set common objectives on learning mobility for adults and create a strategy to reach these goals. Since learning mobility is a cornerstone for making the fundamental freedoms accessible, the EU should establish an ambitious action plan to enable the highest possible number of adult learners to pursue learning opportunities abroad. Also the Citizens' Panel has recommended to develop an inclusive framework for learning mobility, expanding existing programmes to people of all ages and backgrounds (Recommendation 3).<sup>9</sup>

In this regard, it is essential to provide both qualitative and quantitative indicators that can illustrate:

- The quality of the learning programme itself, including learning measures implemented before, during and after the mobility.
- The accessibility of learning mobility, taking into account factors such as the profile of learners (e.g. gender, age, socio-economic status, educational attainment, migration background, special educational needs and disability, parenting and caregiving responsibilities, membership of an ethnic or linguistic minority), and the availability of grants, financial aid and support measures.
- The involvement of learners in the relevant decision-making processes and in the design, implementation and evaluation of learning mobility.

Accordingly, the European Commission's [Mobility Scoreboard](#) should include a new section on adult learning and education, with dedicated indicators and statistics.<sup>10</sup>

### **Including all adults: Financial and structural support needed for quality learning mobility**

Inclusion of adults of all backgrounds in learning mobility is crucial to promote lifelong learning and the implementation of the European Education Area. The EU and the Member States should provide adequate financial support for adults' learning mobility, also by widening the eligibility criteria for adult learners and educators in the [Erasmus+ Programme](#), as recommended by the Citizens' Panel

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<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2023): European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel. 21 recommendations to make learning opportunities abroad a reality for all. Online : <https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/Learning%20Mobility%20Final%20recommendations.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2023): Mobility Scoreboard. Enhancing learning mobility in Europe. Online: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/mobility-scoreboard>

(Recommendation 10).<sup>11</sup> Adult learners from all backgrounds should be able to participate in Erasmus+ mobility opportunities.

**More funds at all levels of governance** should be allocated to help adult learners going abroad, also by enabling the use of Individual Learning Accounts for this purpose. In addition, learning mobility could be linked to micro-credentials to record learning outcomes and ensure competence orientation. Coherence of policy initiatives and funding programmes at all levels of governance play a central role in allowing all adults to access the right type of funding for their learning needs.

In order to address the potential lack of personnel replacements at the work place, organisations should be enabled to establish **twinning and partnership programmes** to facilitate exchange programmes. Such partnerships could be a win-win situation for employers whose workers participate in a learning mobility, and learners alike who can learn new skills and gain insights from other work structures abroad.

It is essential to provide free-of-charge and accessible services for the **recognition and validation of skills and competences acquired during learning mobility**. These services should include recognition of soft and transversal skills and competences, as well as practical skills acquired in different learning environments. Recognition and validation of skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning can help adult learners to boost their confidence in their capabilities and competences, encourage further learning, and enhance their employability and career prospects.

**European learning portfolios** could be used to record the multiple benefits of non-formal learning through learning mobility for adult learners. These, supported e.g. by self-assessment methods, could strengthen motivation for further learning and should also be taken into account in validation processes of learning.

Learning mobility programmes should be designed to be **inter-, multi-, and dual-generational**, in line with Recommendation 5 of the Citizens' Panel. Such programmes can help to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where adult learners can learn from and with learners from different age groups and backgrounds. Adult learners who are parents or caregivers may face additional challenges in participating in learning mobility. Therefore, it is essential to offer targeted support measures for them, such as providing childcare services and offering flexible learning schedules.

Moreover, it is crucial to **address psycho-social, cultural, personal, and motivational barriers** to adult learners' participation in learning mobility. This can be done by supporting adult educators and staff to accompany learners in the process, providing tailored career and study guidance services, offering pre-departure preparatory workshops, and continuous linguistic support.

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<sup>11</sup> EAEA (2022): Include adult learners in Erasmus+ mobility actions – but do it right! EAEA Statement. Online: [https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EAEA-statement\\_Erasmus-mobility-for-adult-learners\\_April-2022.pdf](https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EAEA-statement_Erasmus-mobility-for-adult-learners_April-2022.pdf) ; European Commission (2023): European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel. 21 recommendations to make learning opportunities abroad a reality for all. Online : <https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/Learning%20Mobility%20Final%20recommendations.pdf>

Finally, raising awareness about learning mobility's benefits, organisation, and support measures, including available opportunities for learning mobility in the **Europass portal**, can help to encourage more adult learners to participate in such programmes. This can be done through targeted marketing and outreach efforts, highlighting success stories and positive experiences of adult learners who have participated in learning mobility.

**EPALE**, the electronic platform for adult learning in Europe, could be used as a **space where adult learners share their stories and experiences of learning mobility**. These collections could serve as a basis for monitoring and scientific analysis of the benefits of learning mobility for adult learners in fostering the development of skills and competences, and the impact on individuals, their lives and careers, the community and society.

#### EAEA recommends policy-makers to

1. **Promote a human rights-based approach to learning mobility that promotes a holistic vision of adult learning and education;**
2. **Set European objectives and indicators, formulate a strategy, and monitor progresses, focusing on quality learning and mobility;**
3. **Establish transnational, European paid training leave schemes that allow adults to participate in learning mobility actions;**
4. **Provide grants, and expand access to Erasmus+ and the use of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) for adults' learning mobility;**
5. **Facilitate twinning and partnerships allowing organisations to develop exchange programmes, addressing the potential lack of personnel replacements;**
6. **Provide free-of-charge and accessible services for the recognition and validation of skills acquired during the learning mobility, including soft and transversal skills and competences, and promote micro-credentials and European learning portfolios to record learning outcomes and benefits of learning mobility;**
7. **Design inter-, multi- and dual-generational learning mobility programmes to promote social inclusion and cohesion;**
8. **Offer targeted support measures for parents and caregivers;**
9. **Address the psycho-social, cultural, personal and motivational barriers to adults' learning mobility;**
10. **Raise awareness about learning mobility's benefits, organisation, support measures through Europass and EPALE.**



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For more information

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*The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 120 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.*