L'Observatoire Erasmus +

Facilitating mobility among vulnerable populations

{ Editorial }

Inclusion has been identified as the European Commission's priority for the next Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme. The aim is to promote all forms of diversity as a valuable source of learning. The projects deployed throughout the period should therefore make it possible to reach more people who have fewer opportunities due to economic, social, cultural, health and disability conditions, geographical isolation or learning difficulties.

Since 2014, the Erasmus+ France / Education and Training Agency has been addressing the issue of vulnerable group inclusion through a variety of strategies: making the programme more accessible, boosting employability of target groups, implementing the programme across the entire country and building a positive image of Erasmus+ for all citizens.

As a follow-up of these actions, the Agency will be actively contributing to the inclusion strategy of the next programme. For this reason, we are proud to launch with this opus a series of «Inclusion» Notes from the Erasmus+ Observatory, which will regularly shed light on this topic. The objective is to support discussions and actions for decision makers and key stakeholders by publishing reviews on inclusion indicators, the programme's impact on vulnerable groups, and the profile of these groups.

These "Notes No. 13" focuses on rarely explored themes in the Observatory's work such as motivations, barriers and, above all, drivers of mobility among vulnerable groups. To further examine this topic, we wanted to listen to what these learners had to say as well as their individual journey towards mobility with one objective in mind: identify the relevant levers to help vulnerable groups benefit from the Erasmus+ programme in the future.

Laure Coudret-Laut,
Director of the Erasmus+ France / Education and Training Agency

AGENCE ERASMUS+
FRANCE · EDUCATION & FORMATION
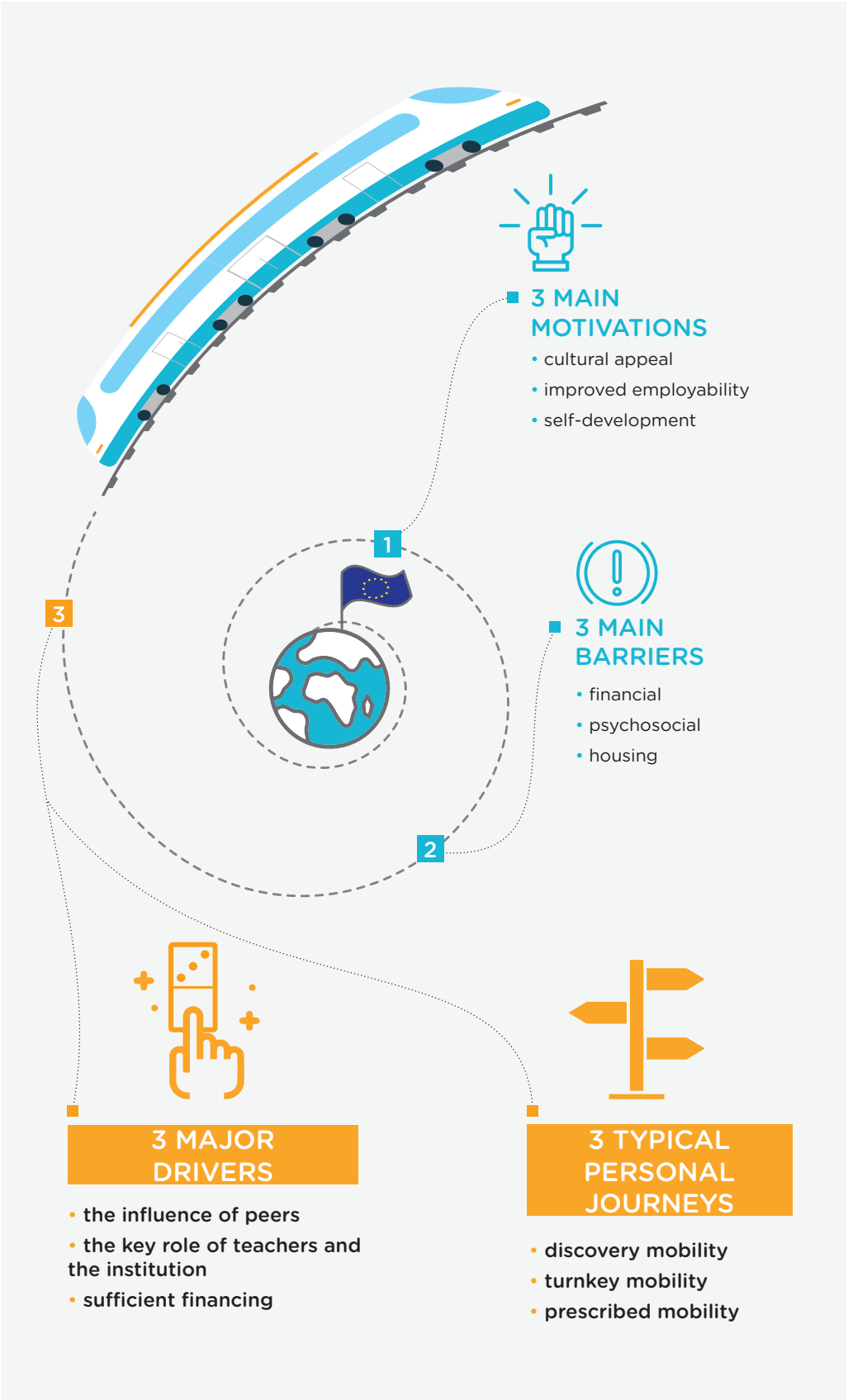
{ CONTENTS }

{ Introduction }

In previous work, we designed tools to measure the rate of inclusion of "vulnerable populations" in the Erasmus+ programme and performed initial analyses of the profile of these learners. This work was notably covered in the Erasmus+ Observatory's Notes No. 3 and No. 10, highlighting the increasing accessibility of the programme and the inclusion of more diverse profiles of learners, particularly in the sector of vocational education and training, and in the shorter programmes offered in higher education.

This new study follows on previous work and is intended to more precisely shed light on the profiles of vulnerable learners. We therefore analysed the personal journeys of about 30 vulnerable learners in higher education, and vocational education and training that ultimately resulted in an Erasmus+ mobility project. The goal was to identify and determine the motivations, barriers and different drivers allowing the learners to overcome obstacles and succeed with their projects. A few experts in the field who lead projects to support these vulnerable populations were also surveyed to complete the analysis.

The results demonstrate that the three major barriers to mobility among the learners surveyed are financial, psychosocial and housing-related. Three primary drivers were observed in all profiles surveyed: the influence of peers; the key role of teachers and the institution, and access to financing to cover most costs. Finally, in this note, we have modelled three typical journeys towards mobility of vulnerable learners, each one of which is based on a primary driver and secondary drivers: the "discovery mobility" journey, the "turnkey mobility" journey and the "prescribed mobility" journey.

Key points

3 MAIN MOTIVATIONS
- cultural appeal
- improved employability
- self-development

1

3 MAIN BARRIERS
- financial
- psychosocial
- housing

2

3

3 MAJOR DRIVERS
- the influence of peers
- the key role of teachers and the institution
- sufficient financing

3 TYPICAL PERSONAL JOURNEYS
- discovery mobility
- turnkey mobility
- prescribed mobility

{ Method }

• Vulnerability index

In this note, the term "vulnerability" refers to social and economic fragility, in other words, a risk of hovering just above the poverty level or even becoming poor. The vulnerability index was designed for previous work[1] and is based on seven risk factors defined in the Erasmus+ programme guide: disability, health problems, educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, social obstacles and geographical obstacles.

• 2018 survey on learner profiles

This study is based on the data from the 2018 "Learners" survey, which calculated the vulnerability index of learners who took part in mobility programmes during the 2016-2017 academic year. From the 8,480 respondents, we selected those whose vulnerability index was the highest, i.e. a sample of 611 learners in higher education (HE) or vocational education and training (VET).

• A semi-structured interview-based telephone survey

The goal of this questionnaire survey was to identify the different factors that trigger mobility in vulnerable populations. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with motivations to participate in an Erasmus+ mobility programme and the barriers to mobility. The second part focused on determining mobility drivers.

A preliminary review of the scientific literature helped define a classification for the motivations, barriers and drivers. This classification was then used as a filter to analyse the respondents' answers.

A total of 28 learners (11 in vocational education and training and 17 in higher education) answered the questionnaire on the phone in a semi-structured interview, which took place between February and May 2020.

• Interviews with organisations supporting projects

Seven sending organisations were chosen among those that have significant experience with learners who face major mobility barriers. The goal of these interviews was to collect feedback from organisations in the field that support learners with their mobility projects and to gain a comprehensive overview of all motivations, barriers and drivers of mobility.

{1}

The learners and organisations surveyed

• Sending structures surveyed

STRUCTURE	CONTACT
Consortium interrégional des Missions Locales	International Mobility Manager
Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France	International Department Manager
Pôle emploi	Cross-Border and International Relations Manager
Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil	Erasmus+ Mobility Coordinator
CFA CCI Dordogne	Mobility Director
Université Paris Est Créteil	International Relations Manager
Paris Descartes Faculty of Medicine	International Relations Manager

• The learners surveyed

The learners who were asked to participate in the survey were those in a situation of high or very high vulnerability at the time of their mobility project.

At least three risk factors - barriers to mobility - are common among these learners.

---

[1] *Observatory Notes No. 3 and No. 10*

Vulnerability index

• VET learners :

The index is based on seven risk factors that explain why certain young learners have fewer opportunities or are less able to participate in an Erasmus+ mobility programme (disability, health problems, educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, social obstacles, geographical obstacles). They are defined in the Erasmus+ programme guide. A score is assigned to each risk factor (1 = present, 0 = absent). The minimum is a 0, attributed to any person presenting no risk factor, and the maximum is 7 for a person presenting all the risk factors. A learner is considered vulnerable in this study when his or her index is equal to or higher than 3.
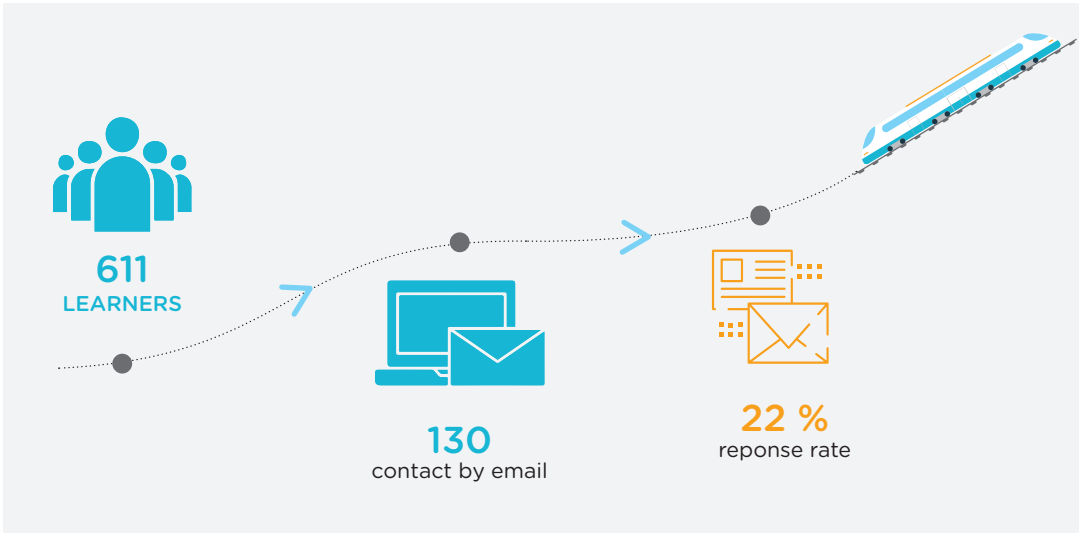
• HE learners :

The index is based on the vulnerability index designed by RESOSUP[2] with its seven variables (financial difficulties, failure to seek treatment, diet, need to work, helping families/dependants, physical or psychological health, housing difficulties). The first three variables, which relate to financing, are weighted with a coefficient of 2; the others with a coefficient of 1. The maximum score is therefore 10. A learner is considered vulnerable in this study when his or her index is equal to or higher than 3, and highly vulnerable when it is higher than 5.

Of the 611 learners in question, 130 were contacted by email to participate in the survey[3] and 28 answered the survey, for a response rate of 22%. It should be noted that it was more difficult to engage VET learners in this survey than the HE students.

The sample of 28 learners having participated in the survey showed the following characteristics at the time of their participation in the mobility programme:

• A large majority of women (19, compared to 9 men)

• An average age of approximately 23

• Five individuals with a disability[4]

• A large majority of recipients of scholarships based on social criteria (19 learners)

611 LEARNERS

130 contact by email

22 % reponse rate

---

[2] REseau des Observatoires du SUPérieur

[3] We gave priority to individuals whose vulnerability index was the highest for the first interviews, then adjusted our approach progressively in order to achieve a balance between the two educational sectors in question.

[4] The disability issue could not be addressed in this survey as the data on these individuals' specific disabilities was insufficient.

• Profiles of the learners surveyed

	HE learners	VET learners
Number of respondents	17	11
Men/women breakdown	W = 13, M = 4	W = 6, M = 5
Average age and homogeneity of the group	23.4 years	7 aged 18 or younger 4 between the ages of 27 and 43
Level of training/education at the time of participation in the mobility programme	Mostly Level 6 = 15 learners (12 learners in "Bachelor 3" and 3 learners in "Master 1") Level 5 = 1 Level 7 = 1	Mostly Level 3 = 8 learners (infra-baccalaureate) Level 4 = 3 learners
Average mobility programme period	219 days	24 days for VET learners in college 76 days for adult VET learners
Types of mobility	Internship = 1 Studies = 16	traineeships
Host country	Germany and Spain: 9 respondents Scandinavian countries: 3 English-speaking countries: 2 Estonia: 2 The Netherlands: 1	Spain and Portugal: 6 English-speaking countries: 2 Sweden: 1 Germany: 1 Hungary: 1

61% of this survey's sample consists of learners in a lower socio-economic class. The 2018 survey on learner profiles had indicated that 38% of learners in a mobility programme in 2016/2017 belonged to this category[5]. Furthermore, almost all the learners surveyed are considered to be highly vulnerable (94% of the HE students and 100% of the VET learners).

Different factors, such as the parents' social class, financial resources or level of education, can explain, and even predict, the student's mobility based on what is called "mobility capital" or "migration capital". An individual's migration capital[6] depends on his or her social resources (experience and proficiency in foreign languages, cultures and lifestyles; geographic fragmentation of the family and relations; prior travel; the ability to organise a career in different countries; creating social and migratory networks, etc.).

These data demonstrate that **the migration capital of the sample of learners having answered the survey was low, and Erasmus+ mobility would therefore seem *a priori* not to be an option.**

{2}
Mobility motivations and barriers

3 MAIN MOTIVATIONS

• Cultural appeal
• Improved employability
• Self-development

3 MAIN BARRIERS

• Financial barriers
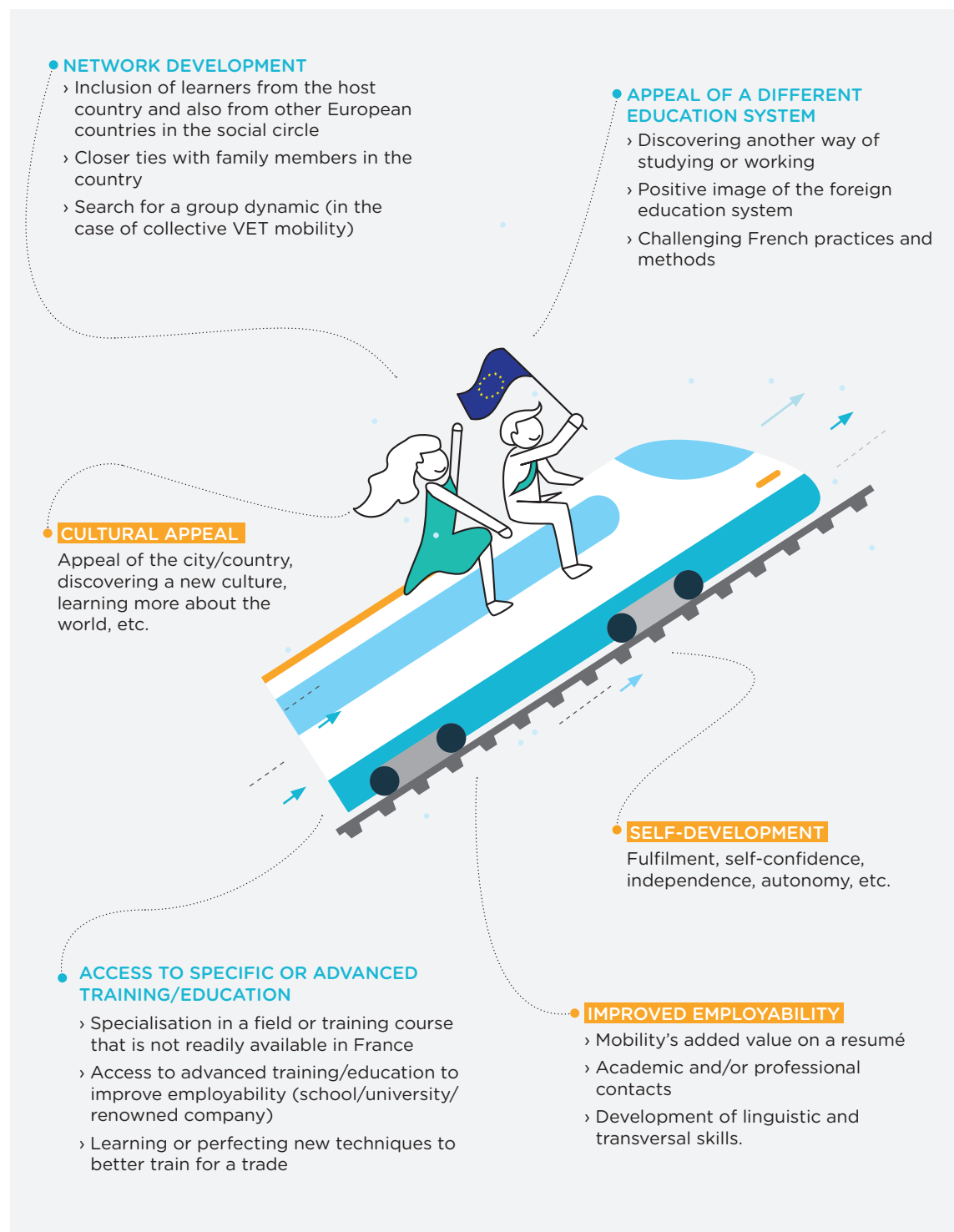• Psychosocial barriers
• Housing

[5] *See Observatory Note No. 10.*

[6] *See ERLICH (V.), "Les mobilités étudiantes en Europe. Des inégalités renforcées face aux défis de l'internationalisation." Observatoire National de la Vie Étudiante. 2013.*
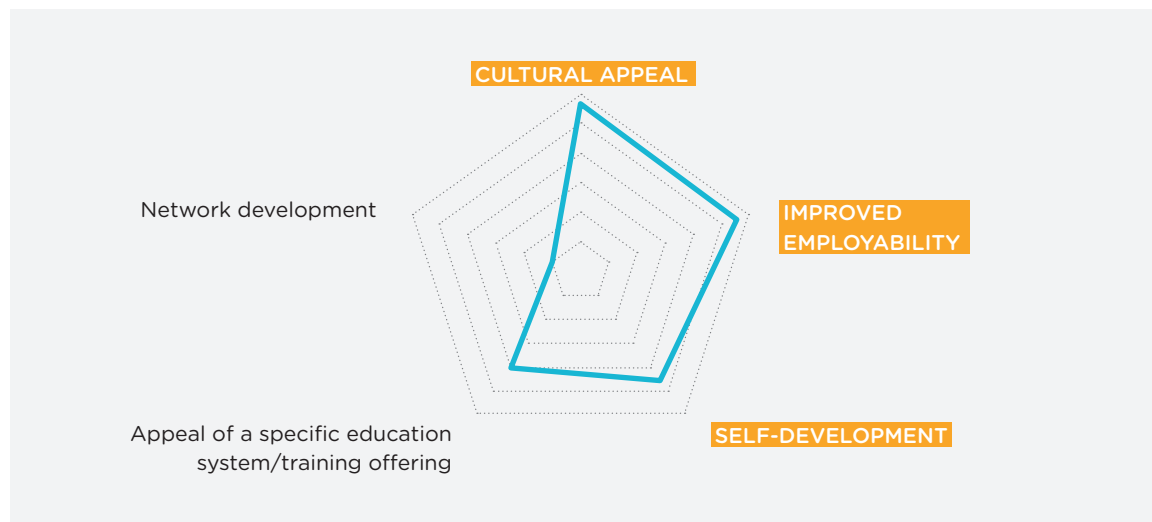
{2.1}

Mobility motivations

The categories of motivations were designed at first on the basis of a review of the scientific literature[7], then were adjusted in line with the profiles of the vulnerable learners thanks to the data drawn from the interviews with organisations supporting projects.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT
› Inclusion of learners from the host country and also from other European countries in the social circle
› Closer ties with family members in the country
› Search for a group dynamic (in the case of collective VET mobility)

APPEAL OF A DIFFERENT EDUCATION SYSTEM
› Discovering another way of studying or working
› Positive image of the foreign education system
› Challenging French practices and methods

CULTURAL APPEAL
Appeal of the city/country, discovering a new culture, learning more about the world, etc.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT
Fulfilment, self-confidence, independence, autonomy, etc.

ACCESS TO SPECIFIC OR ADVANCED TRAINING/EDUCATION
› Specialisation in a field or training course that is not readily available in France
› Access to advanced training/education to improve employability (school/university/renowned company)
› Learning or perfecting new techniques to better train for a trade

IMPROVED EMPLOYABILITY
› Mobility's added value on a resumé
› Academic and/or professional contacts
› Development of linguistic and transversal skills.

---

[7] *For example, see CUBILLO (JM.), SANCHEZ (J.), CERVINO (J.), "International students' decision-making process". International Journal of Educational Management. 2006.*

The following diagram highlights the influence of motivations among the learners surveyed[8] and identifies **the three primary drivers for mobility: cultural appeal, improved employability and self-development.**

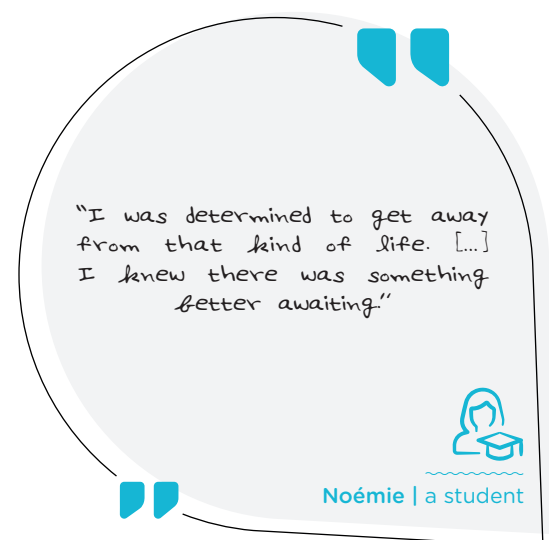• **Graph 1: Measuring the weight of key motivations in taking part on a mobility activity**

CULTURAL APPEAL

IMPROVED EMPLOYABILITY

Network development

SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Appeal of a specific education system/training offering

In search of a rewarding experience

The choice of destination is of major importance and is based on the particular appeal of the host country, to such an extent that some learners even talked about "falling in love with" or having "very strong affection for" the country. A number of individuals surveyed stated they chose a specific institution because of its partnerships abroad. This particularly applies to HE students.

This cultural appeal covers multiple expectations: learning about a different country, culture and mentality, and also more about the world. The learners talked about a real mind-opening experience and one that was much more than a simple vacation in the host country.

All the individuals surveyed had already travelled abroad before they joined the Erasmus+ programme, mostly in Europe, on school trips (43%) or on vacation (57%). Cultural appeal is often the result of these previous trips. For some, in particular in border zones, the taste for travel runs in the family. For those who only travelled infrequently beforehand, a short school trip (often in secondary school) gave them a taste for foreign countries and sparked this desire to participate in a mobility programme.

Behind this appeal of travelling abroad at times lies a longing to move away from one's personal situation in France. For example, a home environment that does not feel satisfactory may result in a motivation to leave. Erasmus+ is "the beginning of freedom" and "a breath of fresh air during very complicated and stressful studies".

"I was determined to get away from that kind of life. [...] I knew there was something better awaiting."

Noémie | a student

[8] *We gave a score of 1 to each of the 28 people surveyed if the motivation was mentioned or identified in his or her personal journey towards mobility. No weighting was applied. This is an indicator of the recurrence of the motivation in the group in question.*

Personal and skills development

An Erasmus+ trip provides many benefits in terms of personal development: greater self-confidence, learning how to live on one's own, and an ability to solve problems and leave one's comfort zone. For a number of learners, Erasmus+ mobility is even a pretext to enjoy a personal experience.

to be mobile enhances one's profile for the job market in France, and is also an initial experience in a country that may allow the learner to find a job there afterwards.

With regard to the acquisition of skills during the mobility programme, all the learners surveyed indicated their transversal skills improved (people skills, autonomy, open-mindedness and adaptability). Also, learners who joined a mobility programme for a traineeship specifically mention the acquisition of technical skills.

> "What motivated me was wanting to be able to communicate with everyone. [...] Open-mindedness, independence, discovering another culture, and also really improving the language I wanted to learn."
>
> **Valentine |** a VET trainee

With Erasmus+ mobility, learners are looking for an immersive experience, which at times results from difficulties they have experienced throughout their education in learning foreign languages.

> "To add a skill on the resumé and show that we're mobile, and also because jewellery techniques are different in each country."
>
> **Romane |** a VET trainee

> "I was quite frustrated with how I was learning languages, in particular German, in secondary school and college. After five years of German, at the end of college, I felt I wasn't fluent enough. I obviously wanted to improve it."
>
> **Pierre |** a student

> "I wanted to fill an address book for my career. I attended a seminar on dog grooming on site. My training supervisor taught me grooming and different breeding techniques."
>
> **Lucie |** a VET trainee

For vulnerable learners, Erasmus+ mobility is a major lever to improve their employability. It is perceived as an asset on a resumé, and a driver to engage with academic and/or professional contacts that will be of use in the future. In fact, the ability

The specific case of prescribed mobility

In some institutions, such as political science institutes, students are required to participate in a mobility programme (for studies or an internship). This may be a decisive factor when a learner chooses an education/training programme.

> "For me, the greatest advantage was that it was a prerequisite of my university programme."
>
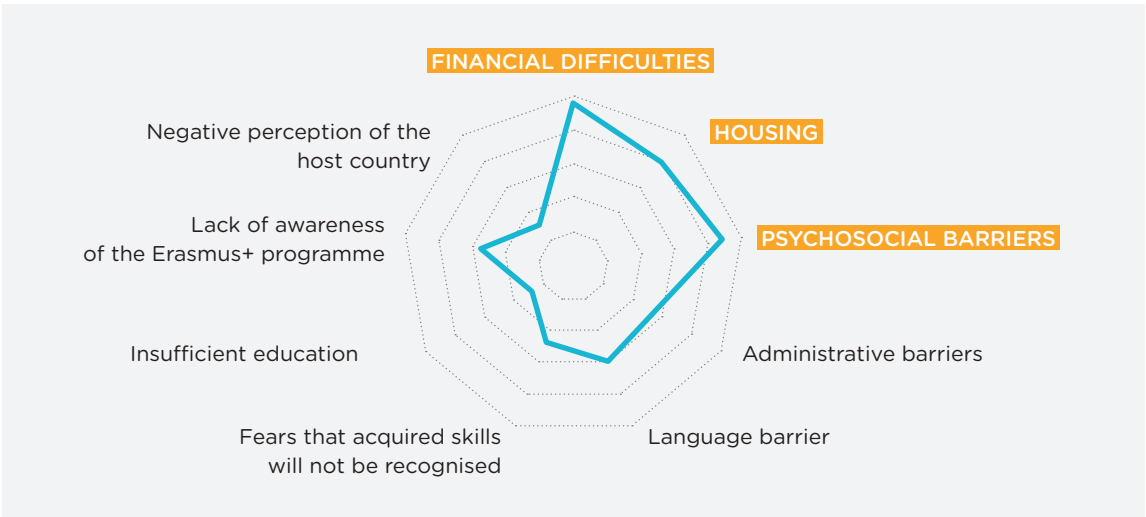> **Eloïse** | a student

{2.2}

The many significant barriers to mobility

The categories of barriers were established based on a review of the literature[9] and were adjusted in line with the survey data. Most barriers may apply to all mobility programme learners. However, vulnerable populations are particularly affected by a series of barriers which, combined together, limit their chances of joining an Erasmus+ mobility programme. Their personal situation (education, health, job, etc.), their home countries, their financial situation, and the influence of their families are a few factors that constitute barriers to their mobility[10].

The interviews demonstrate that **three barriers are particularly critical for vulnerable populations: financial, housing, and psychosocial barriers.** After these three, the following barriers by order of importance are the language barrier, a lack of awareness of the Erasmus+ programme and administrative barriers. There are only a few other barriers.

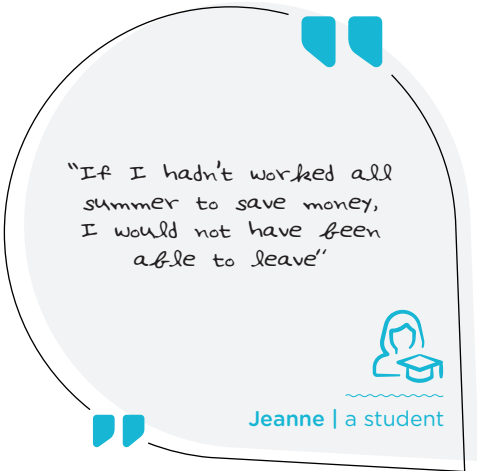• **Graph 2[11]: The impact of mobility barriers**

---

[9] For example, see SOUTO-OTERO (M.), HUISMAN (J.), BEERKENS (M.), et al., "Barriers to international student mobility. Evidence from the Erasmus program". Educational Researcher, 42(2), 2013.

[10] See TALLEU (C.), "L'accès des jeunes avec moins d'opportunités à la mobilité internationale dans un cadre non formel", Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education Populaire, 2016.

[11] For each of the 28 people surveyed, we allocated a score of 1 or a 0 if the barrier was mentioned or identified in his or her personal journey that led to the mobility. No weighting was applied. This is therefore the frequency of occurrence of the barriers.

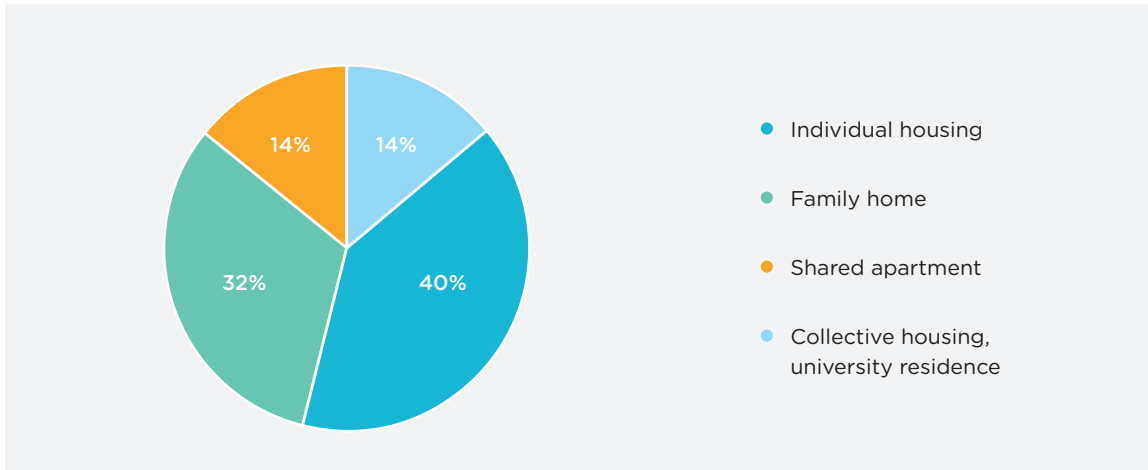| TYPE	DETAILS
Financial barriers	Limited financial resources Obligation to resign from a student job in France Difficulties in finding work in the host country
Housing barriers	Leaving a home in France Finding and paying for housing abroad
Psychosocial barriers	Psychological barriers: Lack of self-confidence: fear of the unknown, solitude, not fitting in, and difficulty in leaving one's family and friends Social barriers: Reticence or opposition of one's family and friends, social class, disability, age, gender or religious discrimination, etc.
Administrative barriers	Cumbersome, complex red tape
Language barrier	Insufficient fluency (real or perceived)
Lack of awareness of the programme and existing opportunities	Lack of information and visibility, and uncertainties regarding Erasmus+ advantages, etc.
Negative perception of the destination	Level of development Cultural differences Safety and security, weather, etc.
Level of education	Low grades High selection rate to enter the programme Less accessibility of certain destinations
Fears related to recognition of acquired skills	The programme is considered too different Fear of losing proficiency compared to the French programme

The cost of mobility, the main barrier for vulnerable populations

Among the individuals surveyed, half of the VET learners faced financial difficulties when they left for the host country. With regard to HE students, the proportion of those surveyed in financial difficulty was even greater, as 88% stated that, when they left for the mobility programme, at times they were not able to meet their basic needs (food, rent, electricity, etc.). Furthermore, almost all of these students had to work to meet these needs.

For these learners who have limited financial resources, the residual cost of Erasmus+ mobility requires preparation and planning. The sources of financing for their mobility project are limited, as parents rarely help, except in the case of VET populations under the age of 18 who, for the most part, live with their parents. HE students, however, finance their trip themselves. In their case, it is extremely difficult to find student work abroad, in particular due to the language barrier. Some of those surveyed stated they had taken out a bank loan so they could take advantage of the mobility programme. The amount of scholarships is often considered to be insufficient or not in line with the cost of living of the host country.

"If I hadn't worked all summer to save money, I would not have been able to leave"

Jeanne | a student

• Graph 3[12]: Housing conditions of the learners surveyed

- ● Individual housing
- ● Family home
- ● Shared apartment
- ● Collective housing, university residence

The housing problem is twofold, as the housing in the host country must be found and paid for, and a solution must be found for the housing lived in before the learner's departure. This problem mostly concerns HE learners. For VET learners, whether students in vocational education or job-seeking populations in vocational training, housing is financed and most often found by the sending organisation. To this end, the organisation relies on a network of partners to offer learners collective or individual housing or a room with a family, in line with the specific situation.

HE students, however, must find housing on site and then pay for it. The search for housing is often an issue, in particular when there is no up-to-date information on the real estate market in the host country. Students face a number of difficulties: the language barrier, which limits their access to information on potential offers, and a lack of awareness of cultural codes in the host site's real estate market (common practices, resources, specific sources of information, etc.).

One quarter of the individuals surveyed wanted to share an apartment in the foreign country but were not able to for the reasons referred to above.

In addition, some may need to vacate their housing when they leave France and then find housing again when they return. In some French cities where the real estate market is stretched, learners must at times sublet or pay rent for two homes.

> "Before leaving, I totally panicked. I had to find an apartment and job when I arrived in Berlin. I was facing tremendous financial instability, which was very stressful."
>
> **Salomé** | a student

---

[12] *Individual housing: alone or as a couple; collective housing: boarding, rooming house for young workers, etc.*

Psychosocial barriers

"This was my first foreign stay of over one month and my fluency in German was very poor (A2), so my ability to understand and speak was limited at times. [...] I was afraid I wouldn't be able to communicate. [...] Also, I also had more personal fears, because I was living with someone at the time and not for very long."

Pierre | a student

Among the fears expressed about signing up for a mobility programme is a fear of the unknown, of not being able to adapt, of being alone, of failure, of not understanding the courses or the company's professionals, and of not making oneself understood.

The learners surveyed referred extensively to their uncertainties as they prepared for their mobility project. Some talked about a lack of information and advice to guide them; others about a fear of not being selected, which is often a sign of a significant lack of self-confidence. The process to join a mobility programme is generally described as stressful, all the more so as Erasmus+ mobility implies leaving one's usual comfort zone. A few also mentioned a feeling of illegitimacy in terms of joining the mobility programme, as it did not fit in with their cultural codes or social class.

"I come from a poor, working-class environment. For people from blue-collar homes, access to university is already complex. In my case, for example, I'm the first one in my family to go to university. So it can be very difficult to move abroad in these circumstances."

Emma | a student

Finally, some learners are reluctant about leaving their family and friends (especially those under legal age). In their minds, mobility makes it difficult to stay in contact with family and friends, especially for those who had a boyfriend or girlfriend when they left.

Family and friends: a barrier for one third of the learners surveyed

Family and friends express concerns and sometimes try to dissuade learners from leaving. This is especially the case for HE learners. In fact, VET mobility, for most of those surveyed, is collective and supervised by a teacher, which boosts the buy-in of families for the project.

Erasmus+ mobility is something entirely new for families, as they never participated in such a programme as a student and rarely had access to higher education. Support for learners is therefore limited whether regarding administrative red tape, logistics, finances or moral support. The perception of the language barrier, in particular, is a major concern for families.

Negative perceptions of the destinations (regarding weather, safety, the quality of infrastructure, etc.) and cultural or religious barriers increase reticence among families and friends. Parents advised against some destinations, which had an impact in some cases. This pressure on choices generally worked in favour of the Erasmus+ programme, as European destinations raise fewer concerns than other more remote destinations the learners contemplated at first.

"We won't help you with money; you're going to find yourself without funds; you won't know anyone; we aren't going to come and get you."

Serena | a student
quoting her brother

"She was afraid I'd go to a faraway or underdeveloped country or … I don't know. With all the stereotypes around about places that are dangerous and trafficking in women."

Zoé | a student, referring to her mother
Zoé wanted to go to Jordan, but ended up going to Sweden.

Lack of awareness of the Erasmus+ programme

Before leaving, most of those surveyed thought that Erasmus+ mobility - when they were aware of it - was an opportunity for university students only. The sending organisations surveyed very much confirm this lack of awareness of the programme among young people for whom there are very few opportunities.

This lack of awareness also applies to the learners' teachers and tutors. Many say it is difficult to access information and advice within their institution.

"I heard about Erasmus for the first time in my last year of college. It was in class. A teacher talked to us about the possibility of a traineeship in England or Spain. He explained how to apply. But I had never heard about it beforehand. It was the first time."

Nassim | a VET trainee

In terms of vocational education and training, some learners stated that their tutors advised them against a mobility project. Student mobility may in fact be a source of upheaval for these organisations: disrupted teaching cycles, potential absences during exam periods, etc.

The learners surveyed and who lived in rural areas at the time of their mobility project found it more difficult to access information. One of the project leaders surveyed, who is in charge of international relations at Pôle Emploi, stated: "It is difficult to reach out to young people in rural areas, who have less access to information and advisors than those in urban areas."

Administrative barriers

Administrative formalities are a barrier for three quarters of the HE learners. They are considered cumbersome and complex, and an additional source of stress, in an environment in which the student no longer has his or her usual support circle. The role of the sending organisation is therefore crucial for the success of the mobility project. To remove this barrier, personal support is required, specifically adjusted to suit the situation of each learner.

For learners involved in a traineeship mobility programme, the search for an internship can be difficult, especially when they have to go abroad for an interview or a signature. If they have to wait for long between the proposed mobility and the finalisation of the project, the risk of the mobility applicants abandoning the project is high. For example, this is the case of vocational trainees supported by Pôle Emploi. The responsiveness of the organisations is a key driver in these situations.

"My referring teacher was supportive, which was really encouraging. She was very nice, and convinced that mobility was a positive step forward. She really motivated me and made herself available. [...] She helped me make the learning agreement, and really explained how to do it properly. [...] She was the referring teacher in history and had her own office where we could meet alone."

Salomé | a student

{3}

Mobility drivers for vulnerable populations

The individual journeys of learners take multiple forms, marked by successive opportunities and personal decisions: the choice of a study subject, an institution, a traineeship, mobility, etc. They are all the more diverse today among learner populations, as there are more and more educational and training opportunities available[13]. Vulnerable populations, for their part, are in a different situation as, in light of their profile, their range of opportunities is more limited, in particular in terms of mobility.

To analyse the factors that lead to a downturn in an educational pathway and understand mobility drivers among vulnerable learners, transition-triggering events must be examined.[14] These events, which lead to a change in the individual, may

be different in nature: a discussion with a family member, friend or professional; participation in an event; the use of an information portal; the granting of a scholarship, etc.

The interviews with learners therefore attempted to trace their journey from the first contact with the Erasmus+ programme to the time of their departure by trying to identify all the transition-triggering events that directly or indirectly led to the mobility project.[15]

The table below presents the typology of drivers used. They are divided into three major categories: key persons, organisations, and tools.

KEY PERSONS	Influencers/promoters	*Social networks, friends, peers, ambassadors*
	Financial support	*Family*
	Resource people[16]	*Teachers, international relations officers, mobility contacts, etc.*
ORGANISATIONS	Hosting, information and orientation services; socio-professional insertion structures	*Pôle emploi, community aid projects for young people*
	Technical support for mobility	*Institutions*
	Specific events	*Open houses, forums, information sessions*
TOOLS	Financing	*Erasmus+ scholarships, regional scholarships, scholarships based on social criteria, merit-based scholarships, emergency aid*
	Technical tools	*Websites, platforms*

Not all of these drivers have the same impact. Although all the personal journeys analysed present specific characteristics, some drivers often appear to be at the origin of a decision to apply for mobility; this is called the "bifurcation concept" in

sociology. We will call them primary drivers. Others play a role later on in the person's journey, and consolidate a project that already exists until its completion; we will call them secondary drivers.

---

[13] *TALLEU (C.), "L'accès des jeunes avec moins d'opportunités à la mobilité internationale dans un cadre non formel", 2016.*

[14] *Transition refers to a triggering event that has a positive or negative impact on the life of people and leads an individual to adopt new behaviour, and change lifestyle or social relations. See, for example: Goodman, Schlossberg and Anderson (1984, 2006). Counselling Adults in Transition. Linking Practice with Theory. New York, Springer Publishing Company.*
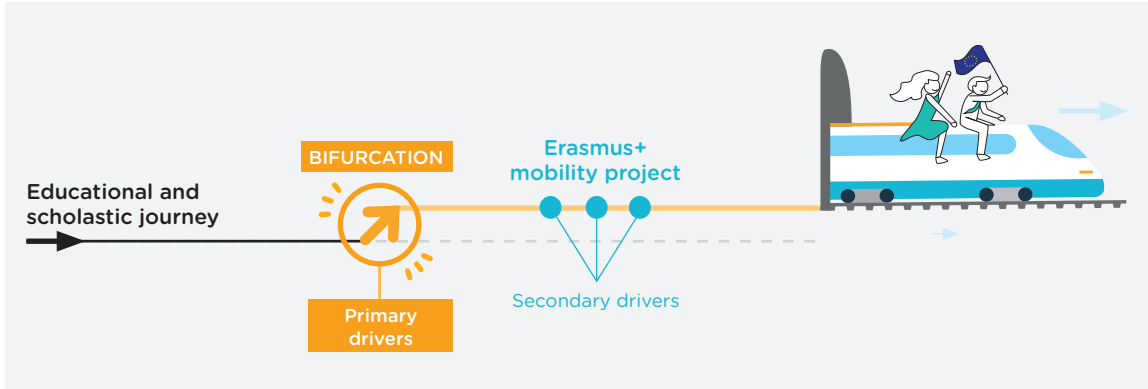
[15] *The analysis of the individual journeys performed during this study is based on biographical interviews in which the quality of information collected depends on the memory of the individuals. The learners were surveyed in 2020 regarding their mobility project that took place in 2016 or 2017. Many stated during the interview they had no precise recollection of certain aspects. This was particularly the case for those under the age of 18 at the time of their mobility project.*

[16] *Resource people whose task is to inform, train, facilitate, involve and support regarding Erasmus+ mobility.*

[17] *BIDART (C.), "Crises, décisions et temporalités : autour des bifurcations biographiques." Cahiers internationaux de sociologie. (1) p. 29-57. 2006.*

• **Primary and secondary drivers:**

{3.1}

Primary mobility drivers

The drivers behind an initial decision to apply for Erasmus+ mobility are, depending on the individual:

• Influencers/promoters and, more particularly, peers, whose feedback is key in making a decision about mobility;

• Resource people, primarily teachers, who often inform the learner of the existence and accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme;
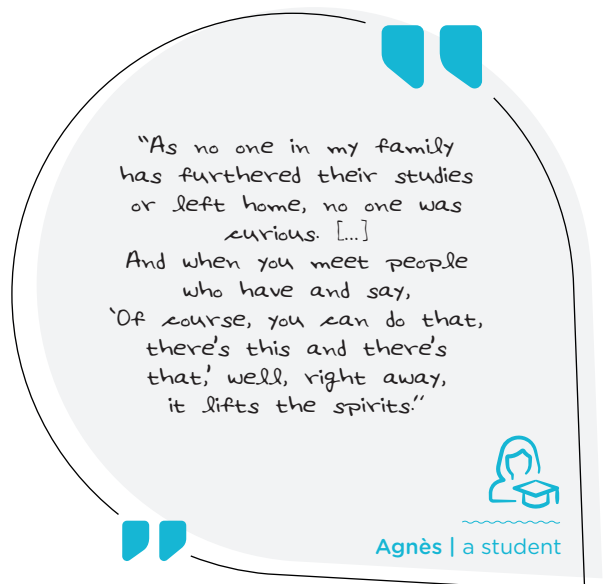
• The different hosting, information and orientation structures, as well as socio-professional insertion structures which, for some categories of learners, play the same role as teachers in institutions;

• The specific events which may, due to the enthusiasm they create among certain learners, trigger a decision to choose mobility.

The key role played by influencers:

The influence of family members, friends and classmates in terms of choosing an Erasmus+ mobility project is significant. People in the learner's circle who have participated in an Erasmus+ mobility programme or another type of mobility programme are great ambassadors, say the learners surveyed, as are the learners on a mobility programme whom they meet during their training/education. The sharing of experiences, impressions and advice on what needs to be done in most cases downplays concerns and reassures vulnerable learners.

The informal sharing of information and experience between learners is a driver that plays a decisive role for more than three quarters of the learners surveyed. This form of information sharing may take place in person or virtually in all areas of the learner's social interactions.

Some multimedia content on the topic of mobility in education and training is also mentioned repeatedly: films, documentaries, video testimonials (most often on YouTube).

"As no one in my family has furthered their studies or left home, no one was curious. [...]
And when you meet people who have and say,
'Of course, you can do that, there's this and there's that,' well, right away, it lifts the spirits."

Agnès | a student

Specific case of resource persons

Access to clear, precise, up to date and timely information has a direct impact on a decision to study abroad.

> "They put us into small groups (...) and talked to us. They explained that it was a fabulous experience, that there were other cultures, and even if we only used the language at school, it wouldn't be a problem because there are other ways of communicating with hands, gestures, etc. They really put us at ease, and even if we didn't understand everything, there were other ways of understanding. They said this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and that not everyone in college is entitled to it."

Charlotte | a VET trainee

Teachers play a key role in this regard, mainly because of their close relations with learners. In many cases, they are the ones who inform the learner of the existence of the Erasmus+ programme and identify an opportunity they may have heard their peers talk about before, but vaguely and without enough details to trigger a decision. The teacher provides initial information, sparks a desire to participate in a mobility programme, and constantly supports the project.

VET teachers, in particular, play a fundamental role. They are the ones who present Erasmus+ mobility opportunities to their students, motivate them, select who will leave, and accompany them in the host country. They are present throughout the process to supervise the learners and provide information at each stage.

> "She is really our resource person. She is the one that provided all the information. If she hadn't been there, we wouldn't have been able to join the Erasmus programme."

Valentine | a VET trainee
talking about her English teacher

The same is true for socio-professional insertion structures (advisors at Pôle Emploi and community aid projects for young people), international relations professionals and Erasmus+ coordinators.

In addition to providing encouragement, personal support is beneficial for many learners. One-on-one interviews provide a framework for discussions on motivations and barriers encountered by the specific learner, and also help overcome barriers by finding solutions suited to the individual (documents, explanations, tools, advice, help, etc.).

Close oversight by people involved and available to reassure the learners and rapidly answer their questions played a major role for half of the learners surveyed. A number of project-leading organisations stated they had implemented specific protocols for support in the event a learner had a health issue, for example.

Specific events that favour a mobility project

These key events in the personal journeys of individuals may take many forms: open houses; a conference, forum or student fair; an information session; workshops, etc. They provide an opportunity for conversations between the learner and one or more individuals who will play a leading role as a primary driver.

"An event was organised in my faculty, a kind of conference with professors, Erasmus coordinators and people who work at the university (...) and who came to talk to us about the programme. One of those kinds of meetings took place, and that's when I decided to sign up. I took interest, and then this conference really encouraged me because I understood it better."

Paul | a student

The learners surveyed referred to different initiatives taken by the institutions, even if the precise name of the event is not mentioned. At times, the descriptions resemble those of events organised for #ErasmusDays[18].

Smaller events, such as information sessions, conferences or institution-wide presentations present initial information but, more importantly, trigger the enthusiasm required to make the decision to participate in a mobility programme.

For learners under legal age in the VET sector, the participation of parents and traineeship tutors in these events often overcomes certain barriers, lets the different stakeholders express their views, and therefore consolidates the project.

The common point of these events, in addition to providing information on Erasmus+ mobility, is to present testimonials and feedback from learners who have already participated in a mobility programme. They highlight the advantages of mobility and provide students, as well as trainers/teachers, with the impetus to apply. They also bring together individuals who will go to the same location.

---

[18] *An annual event organised in France and throughout the world in institutions and project-leading organisations, whose goal is to promote the actions undertaken as part of the Erasmus+ programme.*

"There was a forum with students who came back from their exchange year. The students were divided up by country, so we could talk to them about their experience and also about their host university. That was a key point. [...] It takes place every year. [...] It was motivating and perhaps helped me make the right decision. One person went to Brazil, for example, to a certain university, and if the experience had been bad, it could help change choices. I feel we didn't have much information on the courses that were available either. [...] It was great to be able to talk to students to find out what courses they were able to choose."

Zoé | a student

Additionally, the key role of classes to prepare these populations facing a number of mobility barriers must be noted. These sessions dedicated to language learning (conversation workshops, bilingual one-on-ones) and an introduction to the country's culture reassure learners before they leave and therefore reduce the risk of the project being abandoned.

Access to information, a major challenge for vulnerable populations

For vulnerable populations, the institution is the number one source of information on the Erasmus+ programme thanks to brochures, posters, emails, slide shows, publications on the website or social networks, etc. One of the individuals surveyed refers to the example of a college newsletter that presents the profile of individuals who participated in a mobility programme once every year.

Clear, accessible tools are an excellent asset. A website that publishes explanations, dates, online documents, etc., may significantly facilitate formalities and provide information, and thereby overcome certain barriers referred to above.

The websites of sending organisations and partners are also a major source of information. Some have interactive maps or practical information provided by the students who participated in prior years (transportation, housing, vaccinations, etc.). Student associations are also great sources of information.

{3.2}

Secondary drivers for the finalisation of a project

These drivers are key to the successful outcome of an existing mobility project. They consist of the various forms of financial support (scholarships and family aid) and the technical support provided to finalise the project.

Scholarships, a major driver for very low-income populations

Being granted a scholarship (Erasmus+, regional, merit-based, etc.) is a cornerstone event that, in and of itself, influences the outcome of a mobility project.

The role of scholarships is all the greater as only a minority of the individuals surveyed stated they had received financial help from their parents. The others financed their mobility project with different scholarships and their own funds. Some stated they became financially independent when they turned 18 as their parents could no longer help them.

"It was a barrier and a major concern for a long time. But I finally found out that there were Erasmus scholarships and that was a big help, especially to offset the fact that the APL (personal housing aid) no longer existed. That was a big advantage. If I hadn't had that, I wouldn't have been able to go."

Paul | a student

Administrative support, essential for college students

Almost all vocational education learners talk about the institution (college) taking care of all of the administrative and logistical formalities. For these populations, this assistance bypasses certain major barriers facing younger populations. The teacher does most of the work in this regard: administrative formalities, reserving housing and transportation, and identifying the traineeship sites. The students generally only have to express an interest in mobility (verbally or in writing, depending on their situation) and provide a few documents (parents' authorisation, photocopy of their ID card).

There is no similar system for HE students. However, in very few cases, a student may receive help to find housing on site (dormitory, student residence in partnership with the university).

In higher education, the size of the institution has a major impact on the type of support offered. The interviews with the learners indicated that small institutions (political studies institutes, business schools, architectural schools) offer personal support for mobility, which effectively takes into account the barriers to mobility facing vulnerable populations. In larger universities, learners more often referred to a feeling of anonymity.

Parental support

This driver mostly concerns vocational education learners. Parents often help these students who are under legal age when they leave. In addition to material support, most vocational education learners benefit from solid psychological support. Their parents provide reassurance and encouragement. HE students rarely benefit from this type of support.

{3.3}

Three typical personal journeys of vulnerable learners towards mobility

Three types of personal journeys were identified in the interviews. For each one, a primary driver can be identified, followed by a series of secondary drivers.
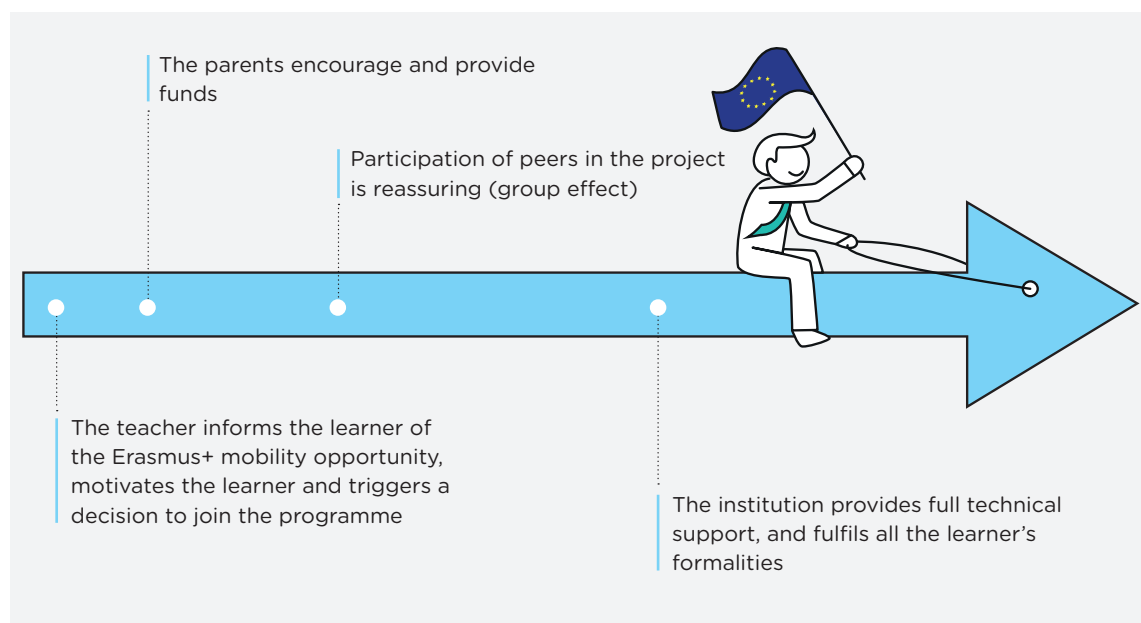
TYPE 1: DISCOVERY MOBILITY

• PROFILE

- Learners aged 18 or younger
- Vocational education students
- No prior knowledge of the Erasmus+ programme
- Primary driver: the actions taken by a teacher
- Very strong support for mobility provided by the teacher and institution (information, administrative formalities, help in overcoming psychosocial barriers, management of logistics and preparation for mobility)
- Short collective mobility projects supervised by a teacher
- Mobility is an introductory experience

• TYPICAL PERSONAL JOURNEY AND SERIES OF SUCCESSIVE DRIVERS:

The parents encourage and provide funds

Participation of peers in the project is reassuring (group effect)

The teacher informs the learner of the Erasmus+ mobility opportunity, motivates the learner and triggers a decision to join the programme

The institution provides full technical support, and fulfils all the learner's formalities

"The teacher did a lot; in fact, he's the one who launched everything. We just had to fill in our resume and motivation letter. [...] Our teacher, when he wants something, he is ready to go the extra mile to get it. He sold us the project. For him, it was important we participate."

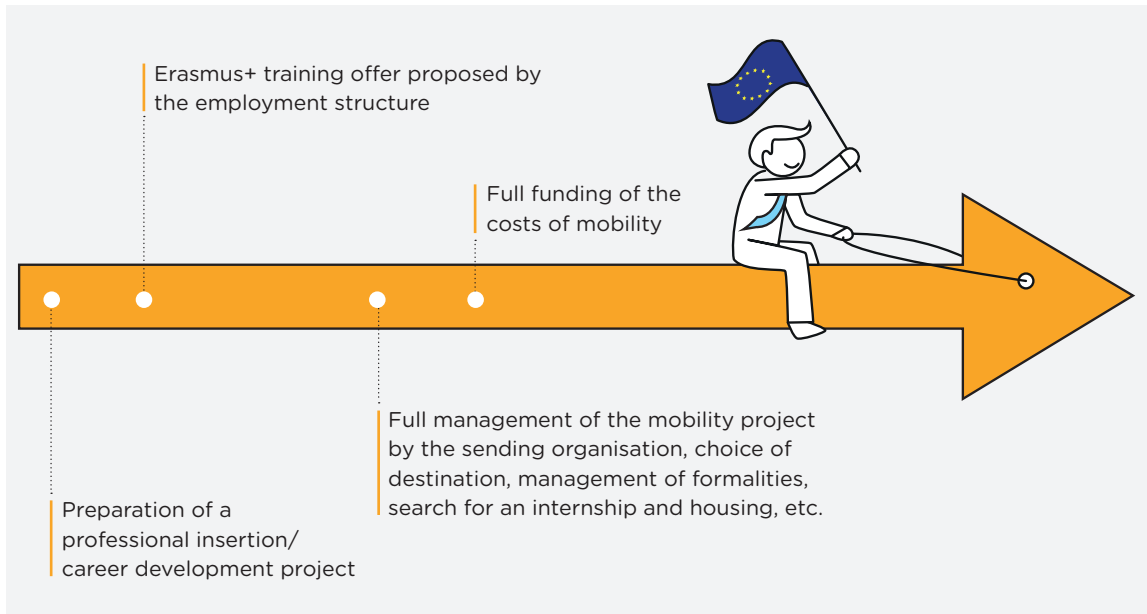Raphaël | a VET trainee

TYPE 2 : TURNKEY MOBILITY

• PROFILE

- Vocational training learners, traineeship mobility
- Adults seeking a job
- A mobility project that is already structured and fits into a precise career plan (skills development, specialisation, change of career, etc.)

- The learners are more mature and can see the benefits of mobility for their career
- Primary driver: the information and facilitating role played by the professional insertion advisor

• TYPICAL PERSONAL JOURNEY AND SERIES OF DRIVERS:

Erasmus+ training offer proposed by the employment structure

Full funding of the costs of mobility

Full management of the mobility project by the sending organisation, choice of destination, management of formalities, search for an internship and housing, etc.

Preparation of a professional insertion/ career development project

"I wanted to work in a company I really liked and be able to work 'for free' for the company, and prove my skills so that it would think about keeping me on. I wanted a contract with a prestigious company to open doors for me."

Adrien | a VET trainee

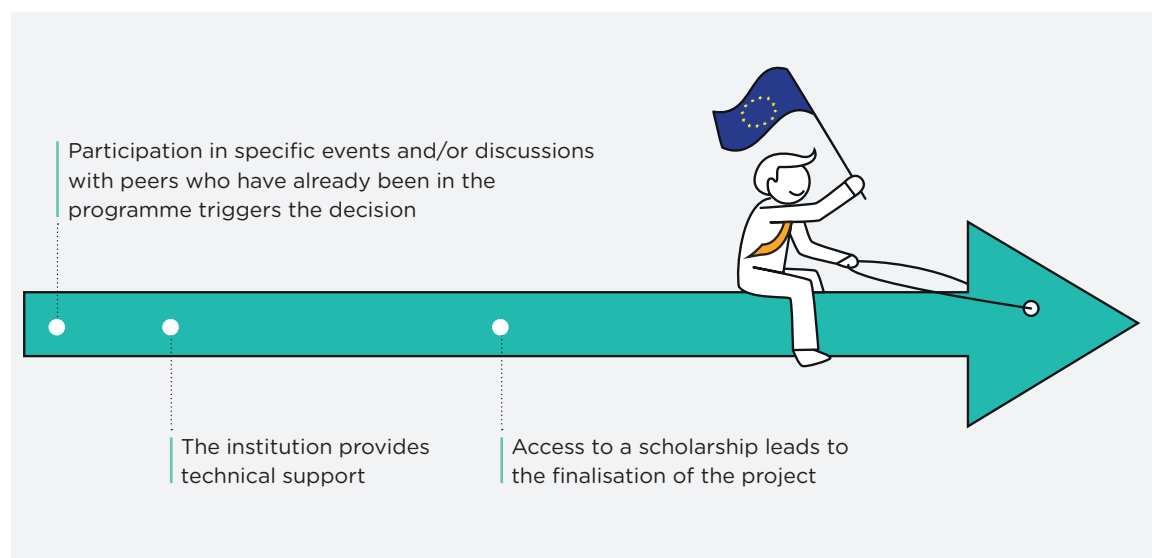## TYPE 3 : PRESCRIBED MOBILITY

• PROFILE

- Higher education learners
- Prior awareness of the programme thanks to peers
- Strong motivation to join
- Many mobility obstacles: significant costs to be paid, housing issues, strong psychosocial barriers

- Reticent family environment, which may also be dissuasive
- Primary driver: feedback from peers

• TYPICAL PERSONAL JOURNEY AND SERIES OF DRIVERS:

Participation in specific events and/or discussions with peers who have already been in the programme triggers the decision

The institution provides technical support

Access to a scholarship leads to the finalisation of the project

"At the end of my first year, students who had already participated made a presentation to other students. These meetings and feedback really made me want to sign up."

Sophia | a student

TYPE 3 : PRESCRIBED MOBILITY

Two project-triggering scenarios exist for HE students:

The desire to join a mobility programme is present before starting HE studies, and is at times even the reason behind the choice of courses or institution.

> "I had very good language teachers in secondary school and college, which had a major influence. [...] The logical outcome was to study abroad."
>
> **Emma |** a student

The desire to participate in a mobility programme occurs during the learner's studies in a higher education institution.

> "It was almost impulsive. Let's say that, at the time, I wanted to travel and see different things, and then this opportunity popped up. I didn't really believe in it until I heard I was on the main list. That's when I started to consider it seriously. [...] I had never thought I'd study abroad beforehand."
>
> **Victor |** a student

For a more inclusive Erasmus+

At the end of the interviews, the learners were asked to suggest areas of improvement that could make the Erasmus+ programme more accessible to all populations. A few key points were identified:

• The amount of the scholarships must be increased and adjusted to match the cost of living of host countries;

• More communication must be deployed earlier to learners, staff, families and companies;

• More information-sharing events with learners who have already participated in a mobility programme must be implemented;

• The learners' language tests and the mobility period must be more suited to the learners.

"I was very afraid of going because I knew I didn't have any money. I had no support from my family and no money. I think it would be really great to present those who joined the programme, but not just the stays that are super-cool and really great [...] but also talk about the students who don't have money and struggle from their first year to their fifth year to prepare for a better future. Well, with some organisation, it's possible to study abroad. Thank goodness there are Erasmus scholarships. It's possible – you just have to hang on."

Ève | a student

WHO ARE WE?

Agence Erasmus+ France / Education Training promotes and manages the Erasmus + programme and its initiatives for the education and training sectors.

The Agency is actively involved in developing the Erasmus + programme, as well as national and international challenges in the fields of education, higher education and vocational training.

Agence Erasmus + France / Education Training is a public interest group (PIG) placed under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Youth, the Ministry of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation and the Ministry of Labour. It is located in Bordeaux and employs 130 people.

Erasmus + is the European programme for education, training, youth and sport launched in 2014. It is structured around three main pillars: individual mobility, partnerships with key players and supporting political reforms.

The Erasmus + programme (2014-2020) is the first funding scheme to democratise mobility, with special attention paid to vulnerable groups.

agence.erasmusplus.fr

L'Observatoire Erasmus +