

Conclusion

The aim of our survey was to test the experiences and attitudes of university staff regarding Erasmus staff mobility. The participants were academic and administrative staff working in HEIs in the ten European countries of the project partners. The quantitative and qualitative data analysed in this report provides an overview of the responses of these 6202 respondents of the questionnaire, and the 48 interviews conducted with members of senior leadership in the ten partner HEIs.

This report has produced quantitative data and set them against trends identified by previously recorded data – for example, there has been an increase of administrative staff participation in mobility since 2012, and also an increase of women’s participation over the past three decades. Through this research we have been able to enrich the quantitative findings with the qualitative data of perception and indirect experience. The 48 interviews conducted in the ten partner universities have also contributed significant perspectives from senior leadership roles.

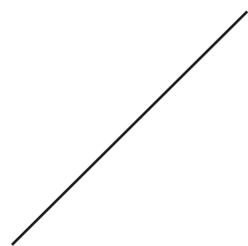
The inclusion of both direct and indirect experiences of mobility during a five year period between 2012 and 2017 has contributed to creating a fuller picture of staff mobility by recording not only the perceptions of staff who went on mobility, but also that of their colleagues and senior leaders. Alongside the responses from staff that went on one or more mobilities during this time (31% of the sample), the perspectives and experiences of the 69% of respondents who had not carried out a mobility have added important insights into the general perceptions around Erasmus mobility in HEIs. For example, 84% of university staff who have not been on mobility but who know colleagues who have been, recognise that Erasmus staff exchange has helped them professionally.

Benefits and obstacles have been explored under three headings: Management; Promotion and Dissemination; Encouragement and Recognition. A range of insights have emerged in all these areas: it has been recognised by respondents and university leaders that international staff mobility bears several benefits to the individuals, institutions and societies involved. Benefits include enhancing the university’s educational mission, improving society’s sustainability, contributing to emotional well-being, providing opportunities for personal development and collaboration, enhancing skills, helping to reach specific targets (e.g. administrative staff) and, overall, favouring problem-solving. The study has also identified obstacles to mobility. In terms of mobility management, these largely draw attention to insufficient funding and difficult working conditions (high workload or not being able to find replacement at work). Responses around the promotion of the programme indicate dissatisfaction around the visibility of opportunities and partner universities. Finally, there are clearly opportunities for developing better dissemination and recognition processes around staff mobility. These would articulate clearer, more concrete outcomes, which would in turn promote the opportunity for wider participation by convincing more staff – and their managers – of the value of staff mobility to the institution as a whole as well as to the individual.

The data in this report provides valuable guidance for universities seeking to improve the experience of international staff mobility for their staff, and also to a lesser degree for visiting staff. It is clear from the data that the mobility experience is highly valued by staff: 99% of those who went on mobility thought that their participation in the Erasmus staff mobility programme met their expectations to the fullest. This is an important starting point for any

future discussions about the promotion, support and development of staff mobility programmes: whatever the barriers are, the experience is valued both by participants and their colleagues. Furthermore, university leaders and policy makers should also be encouraged by the wide range of recognised benefits that emerge in this report. These benefits extend beyond the immediate personal sphere and show impact on the culture and quality of institutions, through the enhancement of elements such as working practices, international networking and general professional development including both attitudes and skills.

The overall analysis is encouraging. While some obstacles may continue to create real barriers for some potential participants, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the number of staff who would go on a mobility can be increased by addressing some of the issues identified in this report. For example, communication is a key topic that emerges across the data. This ranges from the basic dissemination of information to more complex perspectives on articulating the connection between personal development and university strategies. The latter calls for the benefits of international mobility to be recognised by staff development policies. It also points to the need to align mobility with experiences that can contribute to recognition through promotion opportunities. Furthermore the report indicates that there is much scope for connecting the impact of staff mobility with university, faculty and service strategies. By breaking down the principle of personal and professional development into some readily identifiable specifics, the analysis of the data shows how faculties and services benefit from the outcomes of staff mobility often without fully recognising this, hence missing opportunities to make the most of international staff



mobility for furthering their own strategic aims, including the development of their staff. The impact on the general internationalisation of any institution is evident. These insights provide a significant motivation for attempting to reduce any barriers to participation in staff mobility at institutional, national or European level.

Annex I – Number of questionnaires by country

Country	Number of responses	Non-rounded proportion	Rounded-up percentage
Belgium	322	0.051918736	5%
France	1592	0.25669139	26%
Germany	105	0.016930023	2%
Italy	706	0.113834247	11%
Other	40	0.006449532	1%
Poland	808	0.130280555	13%
Portugal	617	0.099484037	10%
Slovenia	214	0.034504998	3%
Spain	743	0.119800064	12%
Sweden	407	0.065623992	7%
UK	648	0.104482425	10%
Total	6202		