



European  
Commission

EAFA

10  
YEARS



# Mobility of Apprentices Toolkit

For VET providers and companies



Employment,  
Social Affairs  
and Inclusion

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# Introduction to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) toolkits

The [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) (EAfA) is a flagship initiative of the European Commission. It brings together policymakers and key stakeholders to strengthen the quality, supply and overall image of apprenticeships, while also promoting apprentices' mobility.

Over the years, EAfA has produced online resources, organised activities and events to tackle key issues related to quality apprenticeships. It has also provided EAfA members with opportunities to connect and exchange ideas and good practices. The EAfA toolkits represent a new online resource providing advice and steps designed to support individuals and stakeholders to implement, improve and assess a measure, activity, action, or programme.

More specifically, EAfA toolkits aim to:

- increase knowledge of key aspects of quality apprenticeships among EAfA members and the broader community of stakeholders involved in vocational education and training (VET) and work-based learning;
- improve the quality of apprenticeships on-the-ground and promote coherent approaches across the EU;
- provide concrete and tailored guidance on specific issues related to quality apprenticeships, directly responding to the needs of different stakeholders;
- encourage mutual and peer learning, including through the promotion of good practices on selected issues.

## Introduction to the Mobility Toolkit

Mobility undertaken for learning purposes can be a challenging topic but the rewards for all involved parties can be significant. This toolkit is designed to help you maximise the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of mobility and covers learning mobility experiences in general, beyond Erasmus+.

### What is a *quality* apprenticeship?

The Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA)<sup>1</sup> **sets out criteria for quality apprenticeships**, to consider when offering apprenticeship opportunities, including in the context of mobility. According to the EFQEA, **quality apprenticeships can be defined as “formal vocational and training schemes that:**

- combine learning in education with substantial work-based learning in companies and other workplaces;
- lead to nationally recognised qualifications;
- are based on an agreement defining **the rights and obligations of the apprentice, the employer and, where appropriate, the VET institution;**
- ensure apprentice is paid or otherwise compensated for the work-based component.

The EFQEA also stipulates that transnational mobility of apprentices, either at the workplace or in education and training institutions, should be progressively promoted as a component of apprenticeship qualifications.

## How did we get here – policy background

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has placed a significant focus on apprenticeships and mobility schemes. This has been supported through programmes such as ErasmusPRO launched by the European Commission in 2016, which was strengthened by receiving additional funding until 2020. ErasmusPRO is a strand of Erasmus+ dedicated to long-term learning mobility of VET learners who spend some time abroad either at a partner VET provider, in a company or another relevant VET organisation. The learning period must include a strong work-based component and an individual learning programme must be defined for each learner.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, the European Parliament<sup>3</sup> called on the European Commission to expand mobility programmes for apprentices. As a result, the Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) was reinforced to address long-term and cross-border mobility opportunities by increasing funds.

The topic of mobility of apprentices and mobility integrating work-based learning opportunities is closely aligned with broader, long-standing EU priorities and initiatives. In 2020,<sup>4</sup> Member States set a target aiming at 8% of (VET) learners in Europe participating in cross-border learning mobility by 2025. Initiatives such as Erasmus+,<sup>5</sup> EURES,<sup>6</sup> European Social Fund+,<sup>7</sup> ALMA,<sup>8</sup> etc have promoted mobility opportunities for youth and adult learners across Europe. As mentioned above, EFQEA also calls for the transnational mobility of apprentices to be promoted.

The 2023 proposal for a new Council Recommendation on learning mobility Europe on the move – learning mobility opportunities for everyone<sup>9</sup> moreover aims to boost mobility in all areas of education and training, including apprenticeships. It does so by inviting Member States to make learning mobility an integral part of all education and training pathways; promoting a lifelong learning mobility culture and fostering cooperation between key stakeholders; increasing efforts to promote mobility opportunities to increase participation; and improving the recognition of learning outcomes.

Interest in mobility amongst EAFA members led to the establishment of a [Community of Practice](#) on this topic and then to the publication of this toolkit.

## Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit provides support and guidance to the following key stakeholders involved in apprenticeship mobility:

- **vocational educational and training (VET) providers**, enabling them to access practical examples and concrete guidance on how to best support both apprentices and companies in providing and taking part in quality mobility opportunities.
- **companies**, enabling them to learn about good practices from other employers and receive practical advice on how best to be involved in quality mobility opportunities that can be beneficial to both apprentices and businesses.



# Understanding mobility as part of an apprenticeship: some mobility basics

## Why be involved in mobility?

Mobility in European VET has a long history, and evidence shows that being involved in mobility brings a wide range of significant benefits for the stakeholders involved.

- If you are an **apprentice** you will have the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills. You can learn new technical skills or enhance ones you already have by learning new practices. You can develop language and inter-cultural skills, and you can build your personal and professional networks – all of which can help you in your personal and work-related life later on.
- If you are a **company**, you can benefit when apprentices bring new skills and approaches into your organisation which can help your company to internationalise. Also, being involved in mobility can make your company more attractive to potential employees.
- If you are a **VET provider**, as well as the benefits derived from being able to see your apprentices develop in new ways, mobility helps you to enhance your learning offer to prospective students and can support internationalisation objectives.

## Who are the key players?

Along with the **apprentice**, the key players in a mobility experience are what are termed the **'sending' and 'hosting' organisations**. Sending organisations comprise of the companies and VET providers in an apprentice's home country that help to organise the apprentice's placement abroad. Hosting organisations (which can also be companies and VET providers) host the apprentice during their placement. You may also find that intermediary/supporting organisations are part of the picture in your country or region; they can support sending and hosting organisations, enabling mobility experiences to take place by offering services which otherwise companies and VET providers might find it challenging to provide alone.

## What are the key stages of a mobility experience?

While it is natural to focus on the placement abroad when thinking about transnational mobility, good preparation and finalisation of the experience, when the apprentice is in their home country, are equally important to the success of the entire venture. In terms of the 'effort' required to obtain successful outcomes, arguably the first and final stages are the most important. A well-designed and prepared mobility experience should, in some respects, 'run itself' with little need for intervention to make adjustments (though some minor adjustments are inevitable). A well-executed finalisation stage will ensure that the maximum benefits are obtained for all parties concerned.

This toolkit guides stakeholders through a three-stage mobility journey – initiation, implementation and integration – presenting resources relevant to all three stages. However, it is important to keep in mind that the three stages of apprenticeship mobility are part of the same journey. Taking all appropriate steps during the initiation stage can help ensure the successful implementation of mobility opportunities, which, can result in better long-term results in the integration phase.

## How long can a mobility placement be?

The actual length of time an apprentice will spend abroad can vary. For example, if mobility periods are supported with funding **from Erasmus+**, it can be 'short-term', meaning it will last up to 3 months, or 'long-term', which takes 3 to 12 months<sup>10</sup>. Other durations are possible where other funding sources are used. Short-term apprenticeship mobility placements are generally easier to organise and are therefore more common<sup>11</sup> but longer-term placements offer more opportunities to acquire a wider range of skills or to develop them more deeply.<sup>12</sup>

## Mobility under the Erasmus+ programme

Under [Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals](#), the Erasmus+ programme supports mobility activities for both learners and professionals. Mobility activities under Erasmus+ can take different formats:

- **Short** (10 to 89 days) **and long-term** (90 to 365 days) **learning mobility**: spending a period learning abroad at a host VET provider/company;
- **VET skills competitions** (1 to 10 days): supporting learners and accompanying staff (e.g. mentors) to participate in international sectoral competitions to showcase their skills, exchange experience, know-how and practices;
- **Group mobility**: a new format available from 2024, providing the possibility to organise group mobility for VET learners, including apprentices<sup>13</sup> under Erasmus+.

All mobility projects funded by Erasmus+ should:

- support **inclusion and diversity**, by supporting participants from all backgrounds;
- promote **environmentally sustainable and responsible practices** among participants;
- contribute to the **digital transformation** by integrating digital tools and learning methods;
- encourage **participation in democratic life** by helping participants to develop participatory, as well as social and inter-cultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy.

## What role do digital tools have in mobility?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools have become an established part of the toolbox that learners, VET providers and companies use on a daily basis. But what role should they play in mobility? Evidently, digital tools cannot and should not replace the actual experience of going abroad but they can be an essential tool in every stage of a mobility experience. They can enable sending and hosting organisations to initiate mobility periods and to keep in regular contact during a mobility exchange to ensure its smooth running. They also make it possible for apprentices to have initial discussions with potential hosting companies and to keep in touch with their sending organisations when they are abroad.





## The three stages of your mobility journey

### Stage 1

#### Initiation

Preparing a successful mobility experience



**Step 1**

Getting started with mobility opportunities



**Step 2**

Understanding legal obligations and requirements



**Step 3**

Building partnerships



**Step 4**

Preparing the mobility learning agreement



**Step 5**

Preparing apprentices for their mobility experience



**Step 6**

Developing professional staff skills for mobility

### Stage 2

#### Implementation

Managing and supporting the placement



**Step 7**

Providing a quality onboarding experience for the apprentice



**Step 8**

Getting to know your apprentice



**Step 9**

Ensuring continuous communication between the partners



**Step 10**

Making sure your apprentice is supported throughout their stay

### Stage 3

#### Integration

Maximising the benefits of the mobility experience



**Step 11**

Capturing and recognising apprentices' achievements



**Step 12**

Taking stock of lessons learned from mobility experiences

# Initiation:

preparing a successful mobility  
experience





# Introduction

## Why should I get involved in transnational mobility for apprentices?

Involvement in transnational mobility can bring benefits to both companies and VET providers:

- **Sending companies** benefit from apprentices who return with more developed skillsets and a more international perspective, who have been exposed to an array of new ideas and work processes and who can positively contribute to their sending companies upon return.
- **Hosting companies** can benefit from an injection of new perspectives from their visiting apprentices, who can add an international dimension to their teams and contribute to their work, develop new business activities and support services to accommodate apprentices (e.g. mentoring or buddy schemes), which consequently can improve their internal processes and work cultures.
- **VET providers** that send apprentices in placements or support the hosting process can use mobility to enhance their training programmes and increase the attractiveness of their VET provision.

**All parties** can benefit from the positive reputational effects that being involved in transnational mobility can bring. It helps to create a positive public corporate profile, enhancing reputations nationally and internationally as ‘good’ employers<sup>14</sup> or VET providers, contributing to wider corporate social responsibility goals and increasing attractiveness to future apprentices. They can also profit from being part of wider European networks and having access to new contacts, which increases visibility and strengthens their profile.

### Good practice – promoting the importance of mobility

If you are a VET provider, [Go International – a practical guidance on strategic internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training](#) is a helpful resource to identify ideas on how to promote and implement mobility in your organisation. This publication provides practical guidance to include international cooperation in the strategic planning of VET training providers – from small to large institutions, and taking into account differences across countries and VET systems.

Furthermore, the [Erasmus in Schools](#) project led by [ESN France](#) and in partnership with [ESN Spain](#), [EuroApp Mobility](#) and [OBESSU](#) and supported by the National French Erasmus+ Agency, is an example of cooperation to promote mobility. The project aims to raise awareness among school students about mobility opportunities and increase their understanding of the importance of participating in mobility for their education and future career prospects. The project will develop a range of tools to inform students about available international mobility schemes, and show how any student, regardless of their socio-economic background can participate in mobility opportunities.

## Getting started

Getting involved in mobility for the first time can be a daunting prospect. For example, it raises questions about how to fit a mobility period into the curricula and the sequencing of learning and, for sending companies, the consequences it could have in terms of workflows and having to find cover for the time an apprentice is away. Moreover, for both hosting and sending companies/VET providers, focusing on building the case for mobility to ensure that mobility becomes an integral component of the organisational culture and is supported by the senior leadership is a crucial element to take into account.

However, help is available for newcomers; there are various resources available to help guide you through the process. For instance, the [Erasmus+ programme](#) offers funding for mobility, while reports such as [Apprentices in Motion](#) provide guidelines on how to smoothly implement apprenticeship mobility.

Whether you are a sending or hosting organisation, it will help to know how the apprenticeship system works where your foreign partners are operating - even if it is just an outline. Cedefop's [Apprenticeship schemes in European countries](#) offers an overview of different apprenticeships across Europe that can provide some basic background information that can be useful when designing apprenticeship mobility exchanges.

## Building effective relationships between sending and hosting organisations

Having an effective relationship between sending and hosting companies is an **essential foundation stone** for successful mobility experiences. If you are organising a mobility exchange yourself, it will pay dividends to make sure you are setting up regular communication channels so that you can understand your partner organisation, their apprenticeship programmes and how mobility fits into the picture for them. This will make for a smooth mobility experience for your apprentices. Experience shows that, in time, developing mutual understanding in this way can lead to long-term partnerships, if the partners wish.

Alternatively, you might wish to use an **intermediary organisation** that can provide the services to both hosting and sending organisations, making sure the relationships function effectively. They can perform an important function because they have expertise and can operate at a scale, which can be difficult for individual companies or VET providers to acquire.

## Steps to follow



### Step 1

### Getting started with mobility opportunities

Companies and VET providers wishing to engage in mobility experiences should firstly aim to understand the available EU and national support, both financial and organisational.

One of the possible funding sources is Erasmus+. Erasmus+ is the European Union's Programme that supports learning mobility periods abroad in all of education and training. It is managed by the European Commission together with the [National Erasmus+ Agencies](#). All the information about the available funding opportunities can be found in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide<sup>15</sup>, which is published every year. Getting familiar with the Erasmus+ Programme Guide is the first step to understand which of the available opportunities best fit your organisations' interest and needs. You should also visit the website of your National Agency, which provides more details and resources to support you in getting familiar with the programme principles and rules. For example, the [quality standards for mobility projects](#) on good management practices, to provide quality and support to participants, and guidance on how to share results and knowledge about the programme.

### Spotlight on mobility under Erasmus+

#### What types of mobility projects are possible under Erasmus+?

Erasmus+ supports VET providers and other organisations active in VET to organise learning mobility activities, both for VET learners and teaching/training staff, with the overall objective to support VET, as well as organisational development.

There are two types of project formats to which a VET provider can apply under the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1:

- **Short-term mobility projects for learners and teaching staff (up to 18 months):** This project type can be a good entry point for organisations applying for Erasmus+ funding for the first time, or for those that wish to organise only a limited number of activities.
- **Accredited mobility projects for learners and teaching staff:** Organisations willing to have a more long-term participation in the Erasmus+ programme, and receive funding regularly for mobility activities, can apply for an accreditation in VET.

### What kind of mobility activities are supported by Erasmus+?

Organisations that have been awarded an Erasmus+ accreditation or a short-term mobility project in VET can organise the following types of mobility activities for their staff and learners:

- **Staff mobility activities**, including job shadowing (e.g. learning new practices in a host organisation); teaching/training assignments (e.g. teaching or training in a host organisation); and courses and classes (e.g. bringing together participants from different countries to exchange ideas and practices). These can be helpful ways to ensure mobility becomes part of your organisational culture, particularly for newcomer organisations.
- **Learner mobility activities**, including VET skills competitions for learners and staff (e.g. mentors) to participate in international sectoral skills competitions and learn from other participants; short and long-term mobility to spend time abroad in a host organisation; as well as group mobility (from 2024).<sup>16</sup>

If your organisation is interested in mobility, but it is not ready or not willing to submit an application and receive EU funds directly, you can participate in Erasmus+ projects managed by other organisations by doing the below:

- **Joining an accredited consortium:** These are consortia of VET providers, companies, or local/regional authorities working together to promote and organise mobility activities. You can check the [Erasmus+ project platforms](#) to identify the accredited consortia coordinators, or reach out to the relevant [Erasmus+ National Agency](#) of your country to ask for more details.
- **Hosting participants from another country:** Any company or VET provider can become a host for learners or staff coming from a partner organisation abroad.

VET organisations can also look into potential funding opportunities under the Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve (ALMA) initiative, which supports young people (18-29) not in education, employment or training (NEETs) to integrate into society and the labour market through a work-related experience abroad. Organisations implementing the ALMA initiative have to cover all costs related to individuals' participation in the project. As the initiative is implemented through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), to find out more about opportunities under it, you can reach out to [ESF+ Managing Authorities](#) and check the [ALMA Guidance Manual](#).

Lastly, beyond EU level programmes, mobility schemes might be available in your country – for example Cedefop has compiled a [list of mobility schemes](#) other than Erasmus+ available to training organisations across Europe, but you can also take a look at the [EaFA Factsheet on Financial support to apprenticeships in the EU](#), which includes examples of funding schemes for companies that you might be able to access.

Interested companies can also seek support from [EURES advisers](#) to find candidates and vacancies for mobility. They can publish their apprenticeship vacancies on the [EURES portal](#) to increase the pool of potential candidates. The EURES website also provides tips on steps to be considered [during, before and after recruiting abroad](#).

**Intermediary organisations** exist in many countries and regions, which specialise in (long-term) apprenticeship mobility or specifically design grant schemes that are worth exploring. It is worth noting that Cedefop has a [dedicated section](#) which could help you to navigate your country's financing instruments. Certain countries have adopted good practices in terms of encouraging mobility commitments. You can find information on what tools these countries use to promote the mobility of apprentices on [Cedefop's website](#).

The box below provides some examples of intermediaries that can be found across Europe. Search online to see if one exists in your country, they may be able to help you.

### Spotlight on mobility intermediaries

The German chambers [Berufsbildung ohne Grenzen](#) (Training without Borders) and their mobility coaches network provide company-related, independent and free advice on all questions relating to apprenticeships abroad during and after training.

[The International Young Workers Exchange \(IFA\)](#) is an Austrian organisation with a long tradition of assisting all types of apprenticeship mobility. IFA helps companies and schools with the planning, organisation and administration of projects abroad. It acts as a one-stop shop for companies (especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking EU and national funding.

[Travel to Farm](#) is a nonprofit agricultural exchange organisation based in Denmark that sends and hosts young farmers from all over the world. They support young farmers throughout the process – from their application to return. They also advise on available national and private grant schemes for individuals in Denmark.

Furthermore, other organisations act as facilitators by promoting mobility in their respective country and/or across Europe. For example, [Euro app mobility \(EAM\)](#) develops a long-term mobility for VET training centres in France, while within the project [My Apprenticeship in Europe \(MONA\)](#) they aim to improve the quality of long-term mobility in Europe. They advise companies and VET providers and can be [contacted here](#) for more information.



#### Step 2

### Understanding legal obligations and requirements

The legal status of apprentices often changes from country to country, as they can be classified either as students or workers. This is a crucial element to take into account, as an apprentice might be considered as a worker in their country of origin, but only as a student in the country hosting them during their mobility, with potential consequences in terms of their rights as well as the obligations of the VET providers/companies involved (e.g. in relation to social protection, pay, leave entitlements, etc.). For example, for Austrian apprentices going on mobility, legislation states that the obligation to provide remuneration and social protection to apprentices remains with the sending organisation, whereas in the case of French apprentices the obligation to provide pay or compensation is with the hosting organisation. For more information on your legal obligations and apprentices' rights, you can:

- consult intermediary bodies (where existing) as they might be able to provide guidance on what your obligations are as a sending/hosting organisation.
- check the [country profiles](#) developed by Cedefop for some helpful information on the legal status of apprentices and the entitlements/benefits to be provided to apprentices. However, as rules and regulations on apprenticeships in the host country do not always apply to apprentices on mobility, it is very important that sending and hosting organisations agree on who will be responsible to make sure legal obligations towards mobile apprentices are upheld (e.g. with regards to wages and social security coverage).

Beyond country-specific legislation, you can refer to the EFQEA as a guiding document to better understand what criteria to consider when sending/hosting apprentices on a mobility experience.



## Building partnerships

### Step 3

Organising and implementing mobility activities will require you to work with different organisations across countries. This is why partnership building is a key step that can not only help you in the recruitment process, but also allow you to exchange ideas with and learn from other experienced organisations. Furthermore, building strong partnerships means ensuring that apprentices participating in mobility work with trusted hosting/sending organisations.

Several tools are already available to support partnership-building, these include:

- looking for organisations to partner with through the partner finding tools available on the [European School Education Platform](#) (ESEP) and the [Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe](#) (EPALE);
- searching for organisations that have already implemented mobility projects under Erasmus+, to potentially collaborate with, through the [Erasmus+ Project Platform](#);
- reaching out to intermediary organisations in your country who might be able to put you in touch with other VET providers/ companies interested in mobility;
- participating in staff mobility activities under Erasmus+, as mentioned above;
- joining the [Community of European VET practitioners | EPALE \(europa.eu\)](#).

Partnerships, moreover, can be a tool to improve equality and inclusion. For example, you could cooperate with organisations (e.g. VET providers; civil society organisations; community centres) who work with people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This could be helpful to both ensure participation from a diverse range of apprentices in your mobility programme through greater outreach, and to design and implement mobility activities that are tailored to the needs of specific groups of participants.

### Good practice – Code of Practice

Agreeing on a set of principles or rules to abide by when implementing mobility opportunities can be a useful way to ensure that all organisations working in partnerships embrace the same values. For example, the [Grow Abroad World Alliance](#) - a group of organisations offering placements (apprenticeships and traineeships) in the agricultural sector all over the world - provides an example of a [Code of Practices](#) stipulating principles and criteria for quality exchange programmes and a [Charter](#) that can be used as a template by companies and VET providers.

**Look up intermediary organisations in your countries: these can provide support to organise mobility opportunities or identify funding schemes.**





#### Step 4

## Preparing the mobility learning agreement

A **mobility learning agreement** is the lynchpin of any mobility experience and should be agreed before the start of the exchange. It should set out the objectives of the mobility period, what is expected of each of the parties (apprentice, VET provider and companies involved) their roles and responsibilities. More specifically, in addition to the elements included in a traditional apprenticeship agreement, a mobility agreement should:

- define the apprenticeship programme in agreement with the apprentice, the sending and the hosting organisations and companies;
- clearly indicate who is providing the supervision and mentorship, as well as general support to the apprentice during the stay abroad;
- include all the learning outcomes the apprentice is expected to acquire during the mobility experience to support the recognition of the mobility experience.

### Good practices – mobility agreement

**Erasmus+ provides guidance for and templates** of mobility learning agreements. Furthermore, Erasmus+ National Agencies generally produce guiding documents on how to design learning outcomes and can provide support to VET providers and other organisations – for example, this [guidance](#) was produced by the French National Agency.

EuroApp Mobility provides [examples of mobility agreements in French and English](#) (in line with French labour law), that can be used as inspiration for your own agreements.



#### Step 5

## Preparing apprentices for their mobility experience

Apprentices will get the most out of mobility experiences only if they are well prepared and VET providers and companies have a key role to play in this. There are two main aspects: preparing people for the workplace; and preparing them for the wider experience of living in a foreign country. Close cooperation between sending and hosting organisations is very important here to make sure that the sending organisations understand the needs of the apprentices who will be going abroad and properly communicate these needs to the hosting organisations.

If you are just starting out with mobility, there are some basic elements all stakeholders should make sure are covered. Over time it may be possible to develop these into more extensive preparatory programmes. Elements that you should consider are:

- **providing apprentices with a 'welcome pack'**, well before they leave their home country, of basic information about the company and the country they will be working, learning and living in – this could also involve pre-departure information sessions (perhaps online);
- making sure **apprentices know who their (first) supervisor will be**, which part of the business they will be working in, who some of their work colleagues may be – you could even organise an online call involving the apprentice, and their sending and host organisations while they are still in their home country;
- offering and **language / cultural courses** to help apprentices gain confidence that they will be able to cope with their stay abroad, including being ready for any feelings of 'culture shock' they might experience on arrival;
- cooperating with VET providers in the country of origin and sending companies to **engage apprentices' parents / caregivers**, so they can all help to prepare the apprentice for working and living in a new country.

Of course, some apprentices will need more support than others. Some apprentices may have not travelled abroad before and may struggle with learning a new language. Other apprentices may have accessibility needs that need to be addressed, e.g. using assistive technology on site if available or helping apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds to cover their living expenses.

## Good practices – inclusive mobility opportunities

### Inclusive mobility opportunities

[InclusiVET](#), a project by OBESSU, while not specifically focused on mobility, aims to support VET institutions to become more inclusive through the development of a series of tools. For example, project outputs include a self-assessment tool to evaluate their own student engagement, accompanied by guidelines on how to develop institutional strategies for creating more inclusive VET; as well as an online training course and capacity building resources for VET institutions, student organisations and other organisations who have a role in supporting students.

Furthermore, the [Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education](#) has developed [advice](#) on how to ensure that apprenticeship offers, regardless of whether they include mobility or not, are inclusive. Examples of possible steps include workshops and training to increase awareness among teaching/training staff, better data collection to inform recruitment strategies, using simple and accessible language during interviews and assessments, and collaborating with local organisations working with specific groups of learners for increased outreach. The website also provides testimonials from apprentices with special needs that can be of inspiration to you.



### Developing professional staff skills for mobility

#### Step 6

Designing and implementing mobility periods is typically an add-on to someone's main job role. As such, it is very important to ensure support across the whole organisation – from the management/leadership team who will need to invest in mobility, to the administrative staff who will play a crucial role in ensuring contractual and financial obligations are complied with, as well as trainers and supervisors who will work directly with apprentices. Teachers and trainers, company supervisors and VET school managers tend to develop the skills and expertise they need 'on the job', as an extension of their normal set of professional skills. You will find VET providers and companies all over Europe who have built up considerable expertise in organising effective mobility exchanges. But professionalising mobility skills is also important to help improve quality; and opportunities are developing in this direction. For example, [Euro app mobility \(EAM\)](#) launched [MOBLT](#), in 2023. Its goal is to equip mobility project leaders for apprenticeships with relevant skills (organisational, educational, financial, legal etc.) and nearly 50 hours of blended-learning educational content is available.

As mentioned above, Erasmus+ offers opportunities to staff (e.g. teachers, trainers, administrative staff) to participate in mobility themselves (e.g. job shadowing, teaching/training assignments abroad, courses and classes, preparatory visits) as a way for sending/hosting organisations to learn about challenges and opportunities, as well as gaining a better understanding of the steps involved in mobility.

**Gather information to better understand what your legal obligations towards mobile apprentices are**

## Checklist

Are you ready to offer a quality mobility experience? Fill in the checklist below and decide!

Steps	Yes	No	Comments
<b>A</b> Explore the funding opportunities available at EU level, by reading the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, and at national level, by visiting public institutional websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>B</b> Contacting your Erasmus+ National Agency or other national intermediary organisations to ask for support and guidance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>C</b> Building partnerships with organisations abroad to jointly design the mobility experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>D</b> Contacting EURES advisers to find apprenticeship candidates or advertise apprenticeship vacancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>E</b> Reading tips to be considered during, before and after recruiting abroad on the EURES website or other relevant websites, or documents (e.g. Erasmus+ quality standards)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>F</b> Drafting and sharing with apprentices' mobility and learning agreements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>G</b> Concluding legal and contractual arrangements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>H</b> Assigning a supervisor to and informing the apprentice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>I</b> Preparing and training the supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>J</b> Preparing a 'welcome pack' for apprentices with basic information about the company and the country they will be working, learning and living in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>K</b> Offering language/cultural courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Steps	Yes	No	Comments
<b>L</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Cooperating with VET providers in the country of origin and sending companies to engage apprentices' parents/ caregivers
<b>M</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Addressing inclusivity and accessibility needs of apprentices and making sure that apprentices with special needs can also undertake mobility opportunities
<b>N</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Developing professional staff skills for mobility by consulting available EU resources



# Implementation:

managing and supporting  
the placement





# Introduction

It is crucial for companies and VET providers to work together during the mobility period to guarantee a positive experience for both the company and the apprentice. There are several ways to improve the overall mobility experience, and taking proactive steps can make a significant difference.

## Steps to follow



### Step 7

### Providing a quality onboarding experience for the apprentice

First impressions count, both for hosting organisations and apprentices. So, providing a comprehensive pack of **onboarding support** when the apprentice arrives is important. It helps to make the apprentice feel included in the working environment from the beginning, and should also provide opportunities for leisure activities outside of working hours to help their integration into a new country.

A welcome pack with useful information about the host country and its regulations can be very helpful for new apprentices. The HR department of the hosting company can work closely with the sending company / VET provider to provide the necessary guidance. At the same time, such packs should be just one element of the welcome provision – additional support should also be provided if you want to ensure a mobility experience that maximises the benefits for all the parties involved. For example:

- **language support** should be available if needed to ensure that the apprentice can fully engage with their new surroundings. In some cases, intermediary organisations may offer such support.
- organising **informal get together** events with other apprentices can ensure apprentices feel supported and can build a network of contacts with their peers, to where they can ask questions and share potential concerns.
- organising **informal social gatherings** can be a great way to help apprentices feel included and welcomed. You might consider arranging a programme of social and cultural activities, which could be organised by the apprentices' new peer group.

Some elements of the onboarding support offered to incoming apprentices can be the same for everyone but where necessary you should also have the flexibility to **tailor support to individual needs**. This is especially the case when dealing with apprentices who might have additional support needs.



### Step 8

### Getting to know your apprentice

Sending and hosting organisations have an important obligation to make sure that opportunities exist to get to know an apprentice during the preparation phase of the mobility experience. A hosting organisation would probably have been sent information on their skills, qualifications and experience through a CV and/or application for the mobility period. They may even have had a chance to talk to them, either formally through an (online) interview or informally online. For apprentices with special needs, they might also have received additional information to help them adjust in the workplace. However, they might not have had the chance to see how they could best fit into their organisation in detail.

To ensure a smooth integration into the company's dynamics, the apprentices' existing competences should be evaluated. This way, you can design or adjust personalised learning plans and objectives that best suit their needs and aspirations.



## Ensuring continuous communication between the partners

### Step 9

**Throughout the mobility period** good communication is one of the keys to success. Hosting and sending companies / VET providers should keep in touch with the apprentice and one another to ensure that everything is running smoothly. All relevant parties should meet frequently to:

- check if the apprentice's experience is going as planned; by doing so, you can ensure that all parties are satisfied with the mobility and can adjust it according to obtained feedback, tackling possible issues as soon as they emerge;
- check that the monitoring arrangements themselves are working and make any required adjustments;
- ensure you and your partner's (the sending or hosting institution) expectations remain aligned, the communication is streamlined and efficient, and enough support is given to the apprentice.



## Making sure your apprentice is supported throughout their stay

### Step 10

When starting a new job in a different country, having support from peers and people with experience can make a big difference to feeling included and comfortable. Apprentices will automatically have a workplace supervisor, but they also need others they can talk to.

The apprentice should be provided with a **mentor**<sup>17</sup>. A mentor is an individual with experience and knowledge who helps to guide participants through their mobility experience. They should have enough experience to be able to offer guidance and counselling to participants and deal with their welfare, practical issues and personal development. Mentors should provide more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help; they should seek to build on-going relationships with participants and support and challenge them to achieve their goals. Ideally, they should be assigned early on in the mobility experience so they can be actively involved with participants from preparation through to the final stages of their mobility experience. Mentors can be appointed and resourced either by the sending or hosting organisation. If they are appointed by the sending organisation, they should keep in contact with their mentees through regular (online) calls.

It is also a good idea to create a **buddy system**. In a buddy system two individuals are partnered together as 'buddies' to work together and benefit from sharing information and experiences of their work. It is a peer-to-peer system where the new arrival can pick up tips and hints about their new workplace and working practices, while their 'buddy' can also learn from what the new arrival brings in terms of their experience. It is a well-established method of knowledge-sharing used to onboard new employees. It can be a win-win for the mobile apprentice and the host company.



## Checklist

Have you already followed all the steps to offer the best mobility experience and support your apprentice during this time? Look at the checklist below and see if you are missing something.

	Steps	Yes	No	Comments
<b>A</b>	Allocating a buddy for the apprentice (hosting company / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>B</b>	Allocating a supervisor to the outgoing apprentice (sending company / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>C</b>	Going through the welcome pack for the apprentice (hosting company / VET provider) to answer questions and clarify doubts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>D</b>	Arranging informal meetings with the apprentice (hosting company / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>E</b>	Checking learning objectives and outcomes with the apprentice and eventually revising learning agreements (hosting company / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>F</b>	Regularly monitoring progress made by the apprentice and discussing it with them (hosting company / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>G</b>	Maintaining communication with the sending/hosting institution (cooperation of all)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

# Integration:

maximising the benefits of the mobility experience



## Introduction

Once an apprentice has completed their stay abroad, it is important that they are supported to make the most of what they have learned. Indeed, this final part of a mobility experience is more than a 'follow-up'. It is an integral and essential component of the entire mobility journey that helps to make sure that the apprentice and sending organisations benefit as much as they can from the experience. The ultimate aim of this component is to integrate skills and competences acquired into everyday working life and into the personal life of the apprentice.

### Steps to follow

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#### Step 11

#### Capturing and recognising apprentices' achievements

Apprentices will have developed a range of skills during their mobility period. Some of these will have been planned in advance and captured as part of the learning objectives included in the learning agreement signed by all parties at the start of the mobility experience. To ensure the achievement of skills and objectives, some form of **assessment** will have been carried out during the placement itself (either as periodic formative assessments or final, summative assessments) as foreseen in the learning agreement. Where a mobility period counts towards an apprenticeship, this will have been necessary to ensure identified standards have been achieved. But the apprentice may have developed other skills not anticipated in the learning agreement or outside the workplace as part of the experience of living in a new country. It is important that the wide range of skills and competences developed by apprentices through mobility are captured and recognised.

Rules and procedures to support the recognition of the learning outcomes of mobility can vary across countries. At the EU level, the 2018 [Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad](#) aims to tackle the uncertainty around recognition procedures. The Recommendation states that learners have a right to have their learning outcomes from a period abroad recognised in their country of origin, as long as these are broadly in line with those in the national curricula of that country. While VET providers can still set specific requirements to allow for the recognition of learning outcomes, from a mobility experience, it is important that both sending and hosting organisations take into account national curricula when preparing learning agreements, setting learning objectives, and assessing apprentices' skills.

There are several steps that can be taken to ensure that skills and competences acquired through mobility are adequately recognised, so that apprentices can take advantage of these for their future jobs or when applying for other education opportunities.

As a minimum, apprentices should be provided with a **completion certificate or letter from the host employer** which testifies that they have undertaken the mobility period and achieved the learning objectives and developed the skills anticipated. Furthermore, sending and host organisations can support apprentices to fill out the [Europass Mobility Template](#), which allows them to outline the skills they acquired during their mobility experience as well as any courses they attended.

Apprentices should also be given **recommendation/reference** letters describing progress that they have made. These letters might be very useful for their future employers, as it will provide them with your first-hand account of apprentices' personality and work ethics. It will also strengthen your mobility offer for future apprentices (you can develop a template for this purpose). Furthermore, host organisations can issue a [European Digital Credential for Learning](#) for apprentices. These are standardised certificates that describe the skills and knowledge acquired by apprentices (e.g. through classes, projects, specific activities) and can be helpful tools to ensure that competences are certified and, documented. The Europass website provides thorough [guidance](#) to organisations interested in issuing a Digital Credential.



Beyond the provision of the above documents, apprentices should also be offered **support to unpack and identify their experiences and other skills** they might have acquired during their stays abroad through both formal and less formal means. For example, language skills might have been developed through a formal course, but also informally through daily usage, while enhanced inter-cultural skills might have been acquired only through informal learning. HR departments in sending organisations or guidance counsellors in VET providers may have the required experience to support apprentices through these processes – and to help apprentices enhance their CVs accordingly, or to create a [Europass e-portfolio and CV](#), which as well as documenting experiences, skills and qualifications, offers a range of tools and resources to support career development. You can get inspired by the Europass Certificate Supplement, available in all EU languages (and more) and the [national inventories of Europass Certificate Supplements](#) on what information to include in these types of documents.

Identifying skills that might otherwise lie hidden can be mutually beneficial to the apprentice and their sending company as, once identified, they can be utilised in the workplace. In addition, these de-briefing processes can be used to bring **new perspectives and innovative new ideas** on work processes back into the sending company.

**Graduate apprentices** who have done their mobility experience after they have completed their apprenticeship and who have left their apprenticeship provider may be faced with the question, ‘what next?’ once they have finished their placement abroad. Such individuals should be provided by the sending and hosting organisations with appropriate guidance to access their next job or education and training course.

### Good practice – assessing transversal and soft skills

Aside from specific and technical competences, mobility can help apprentices to develop their transversal and soft skills. It is therefore important that hosting/sending organisations provide apprentices with the opportunity to highlight these skills too.

For example, the [AKI project](#) by FGYO, BIJ, LOJIQ and OFQJ as well as the Walloon Business Union (UWE) provides a tool for organisations to help apprentices test and showcase the transversal competences they acquired through their mobility. The project focuses on five competences typically acquired in an international mobility experience: open-mindedness; adaptation to change; interpersonal relations; sense of responsibility; and self-confidence. The AKI assessment kit includes a questionnaire for participants and a follow-up sheet for supervisors and apprentices, so that apprentices and their tutors can reflect on the outcomes of the mobility experience. An [app](#) has also been developed (AKI-App) for ease of access.



### Taking stock of lessons learned from mobility experiences

#### Step 12

**Gathering feedback** is an important way of improving the quality of your mobility offer. It can be gathered from all relevant parties including apprentices, buddies, mentors and supervisors. Methods you can use include formal techniques like surveys and interviews as well as less formal methods such as follow-up conversations. Which method is most appropriate will depend on your own circumstances including the number of apprentices involved. To the extent possible, it is best to anonymise the feedback process, so that everybody feels encouraged to provide honest information.

It is important to remember that feedback is only useful to the extent that it is used. It should be **integrated into planning processes** and used to evaluate and redesign your offer, to enable continuous improvements to be made based on the needs of involved parties.

## Checklist

Have you successfully completed and followed up on your mobility experience? Fill in the checklist below.

Steps	Yes	No	Comments
<b>A</b> Organising assessments and validation of apprentices' skills based on learning agreements (hosting employer / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>B</b> Providing the apprentice with a completion certificate or letter (hosting employer / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>C</b> Providing the apprentice with recommendation or reference letters (hosting employer / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>D</b> Offering support to the apprentice with identifying their new experiences and other skills acquired (hosting employer / sending employer / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<b>E</b> Gathering and integrating feedback from apprentices and mentors/supervisors in an anonymous manner (hosting employer / VET provider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

## References

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