

Workshop Report

Facilitating European Mobility of Foreign Language Teachers

Monday, 3 June 2024 at Goethe-Institut Brussels

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1. Words of welcome

Rafael D. Deschka, Director Language and Education Programs and Deputy General Director of Goethe-Institut Brussels, and **Tanja Kreetz**, Deputy Director of the Brussels Office of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), introduced the shared mission of Goethe-Institut and DAAD to improve the quality of education through international cooperation and mobility. Both Goethe-Institut and DAAD are supporting the qualification of prospective teachers through international mobility programmes. They introduced the workshop’s objectives, to present good practices and identify solutions to tackle barriers to cross-border mobility of foreign language teachers in Europe. This was contextualised by referring to recent European policy developments of the European Education Area, the Bologna process, as well as recent ideas to innovate the education systems in Europe, such as expressed in the Letta report ([link](#)) published in April 2024.

2. Introduction into relevant developments and policies in the EU

Jacqueline Pacaud, Head of Sector, European Commission, DG-EAC

The European Education Area (EEA) and teacher mobility

The EEA, introduced by the European leaders in 2017 as a comprehensive EU framework for education and training, aims at improving access to quality education for all. One of the priorities of the EEA is to make mobility a reality for all; another one focuses on teachers and trainers, to support their professional development.

The 2020 “Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future” ([link](#)) highlights the pivotal role of teachers in shaping the quality of education and training in Europe. Based on the open method of coordination, the Commission facilitates the exchange of good practices through working groups gathering experts from MS. The EU policy process is supported by the Erasmus+ programme, which funds both short-term and long-term mobility and cooperation projects.

Participation of teachers in Erasmus+ mobility activities

For what regards school education, teacher participation in the Erasmus+ programme is lower than that of pupils, with about 40% of teachers compared to 60% of pupils, respectively. Teacher mobility activities include participation in courses, job shadowing and teaching assignments. Most of the mobile teachers are engaging in courses (or job shadowing). Impediments to teacher mobility include language barriers, differing curriculum structures and varying holiday periods and a lack of recognition for mobility experiences upon teachers' return.

Recent developments

Council recommendation “Europe on the Move”

In November 2023, the Commission proposed the Council Recommendation (CR) ‘Europe on the Move’ – learning mobility opportunities for everyone ([link](#)), which was adopted by the Council of EU Ministers in May 2024. The CR includes a teacher mobility framework aimed at removing the remaining barriers to mobility and thus increasing the number and quality of teacher mobility opportunities. Member states and the Commission are now starting the implementation phase.

Additional Erasmus+ initiatives

- European Policy Experimentations Call 2024 (application deadline: June 4), with Topic 4 focusing on School Education and on teacher mobility under one of its priorities ([link](#)). Selected proposals will be announced in September.
- Teacher Academies (TA) Initiative ([link](#)), supporting 27 TA thus far, with more to be selected on June 6.
- European Innovative Teaching Award ([link](#)), launched in 2021 for Erasmus+ funded cooperation projects.

The way forward

To increase mobility activities in school education by 20%-30% annually, the Commission would need at least the tripling of the Erasmus+ budget in school education for mobility activities in the next programme period (2028-2034). Currently, only 48% of the demand can be supported. Jacqueline Pacaud urged the participating education stakeholder organisations to leverage soft power and encourage their national authorities to implement the CR to complement the Commission's efforts.

3. Input from the Interreg project EMRLingua

Dorien Coppens, Researcher, Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM)

Dorien Coppens presented the findings and recommendations deriving from the research Susanne Sivonen and herself undertook at ITEM in the context of the Interreg project EMRLingua, “Teaching across the border in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR): Legal obstacles and opportunities”. The research methodology included a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and legal analysis of relevant legislation and policy.

Research objectives

- Reflect on cross-border mobility as a solution to combat (language) teacher shortages.
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the legal and administrative obstacles secondary school teachers face in cross-border mobility.
- Propose potential solutions and best practices for overcoming these obstacles in the EMR.

Main obstacles identified

- Recognition of qualifications
- Different employment conditions
- Social security and taxation
- Additional considerations such as diverging educational cultures and practices

Proposed solutions

To overcome these intertwined obstacles, a holistic, overarching approach is required:

- **(Central) information provision:** Provide targeted information to prospective teachers and schools. Include an overview of responsibilities and mandates.
- **Recognition of professional qualifications:** The teaching profession is classified as a regulated profession under the Professional Qualifications Directive at the EU level, which entails that the qualification requirements are laid down in (national) laws, regulations or administrative provisions. Joint training programmes, modules, exchanges, internships, and secondments can help bridge differences in the teaching profession in the EMR. Such initiatives can enhance intercultural competencies and be positively evaluated during the recognition process.
- **Fostering cooperation in the EMR:** Promote collaboration at national, regional and operational levels. Involve national authorities and operational entities, such as schools.

Beyond these concrete recommendations, she argued that it is crucial to reflect on the extent to which we want to harmonize the teaching profession. Smaller steps, such as exchanges through Erasmus+ programs allow bridging differences with respect and appreciation for linguistic and cultural differences. While teacher shortages create opportunities for quicker access to the teaching profession, these solutions are often punctual and need a more strategic approach.

4. Internationalisation of Teacher Training – a German perspective

Lehramt.International

Jelena Bloch, Programme Coordinator at DAAD

Jelena Bloch introduced the BMBF-funded Lehramt.International programme of DAAD, launched in 2019, which aims at promoting the internationalisation of teacher training on an individual, institutional and structural level in Germany. The current funding period ends in 2024, but the programme is expected to be extended until 2029.

Programme components

- **Module A:** Model projects at German HEIs are funded to establish international contacts in the teacher education and to anchor internationalisation on an institutional level (currently 220 HEIs partners in 55 countries).
- **Module B:** Scholarships are funded for internships for future teachers of all subjects and school types worldwide. Since 2019, it has received over 6,100 applications and awarded over 2,800 scholarships.
- **Module C:** Information, target-group specific marketing, consulting, and policy dialogue to raise awareness of representatives of state politics and the education administration and to address challenges and solutions in specific regions.

36% of all international HEI partners in Lehramt.International are with EU Member States, and also 36% of scholarship holders complete their internship at schools in EU Member States, with Spain being the most popular country, hosting 300 scholarship holders. The US is the top partner country with 25 of the 220 international partners.

Programme findings

Findings based on a survey which was completed by 2,300 former scholarship holders of Lehramt.International include:

- 66% are open to working temporarily in a school abroad.
- 94% state that they improved their intercultural skills
- 86% feel better prepared for working in multicultural classrooms.
- 88% have become more engaged in their role as teachers.

Insights and recommendations

- Internships abroad boost international and intercultural learning experiences and the professionalisation process.
- They should be integrated into teacher training programmes and should play a role in the future career to encourage student participation.
- Credit recognition following the stays abroad should be guaranteed for students across school types and subject areas.
- The range of teacher training courses offered in English should be increased, to boost the internationalisation of the curriculum and to make it easier for international students to study in Germany
- Targeted scholarship programmes should be created both at the level of prospective teachers (students) and of practicing teachers.

SCHULWÄRTS!

Benjamin Günther, Programme Coordinator at Goethe-Institut

Launched by the Goethe-Institut in 2015, the SCHULWÄRTS! programme targets student teachers and those in the transition between training and their practical teaching year in Germany, regardless of subject fields or nationality. It is also possible to apply as a young teacher if the mobility is approved by the employer. The programme includes an internship (8-16 weeks) at a partner school of the Goethe-Institut in over 40 countries worldwide, offering financial support of up to 3,000 Euros, structural support, preparatory and follow-up seminars, and opportunities for reflective learning.

Programme components

Before the mobility

- **Pre-departure seminars** in Munich composed of intercultural training, training in post-colonialism, anti-racism, and teaching German as a foreign language.

During the stay abroad

- **Participation in job shadowing** of German as a foreign language class abroad, to understand the dynamics of teaching a subject in a foreign language, enhance intercultural and linguistic competencies, and expose prospective teachers to different methodological and didactical environments.
- **Exchange on didactical approaches** with their host schools, offering insights into the German education system.
- **Ongoing monitoring** during the stay abroad via Moodle courses, weekly online consultations and consultations hosted by the colleagues of the Goethe-Institut in the host country.

After the mobility

- **Reflection of the mobility** (methodologically, related to intercultural incidents) offered by Goethe-Institute using the format of a three-day follow-up seminar to consolidate the experience.

Benefits and impacts

A second publication about the results of the programme is upcoming (planned for 2025), based partly on a quantitative study, which is expected to provide insights into the programme's impact on both the host schools and the participants. Preliminary findings independent from the study include:

- **Addressing teacher shortage:** Participants often feel more encouraged in their teaching profession, see the internship as an eye-opener to further mobility opportunities and appreciate the conditions of teaching in Germany.
- **Interest in working abroad:** The mobility experience often sparks an interest among participants in working abroad. Some alumni remain in the countries where they completed their internships.
- **Financial Support:** Financial and structural support facilitates mobility, however, for students with financial constraints some destinations may still be unaffordable.

- **Recognition:** Different curricula should not be an obstacle to mobility and experiences abroad should be recognised and valued in participants' CVs.

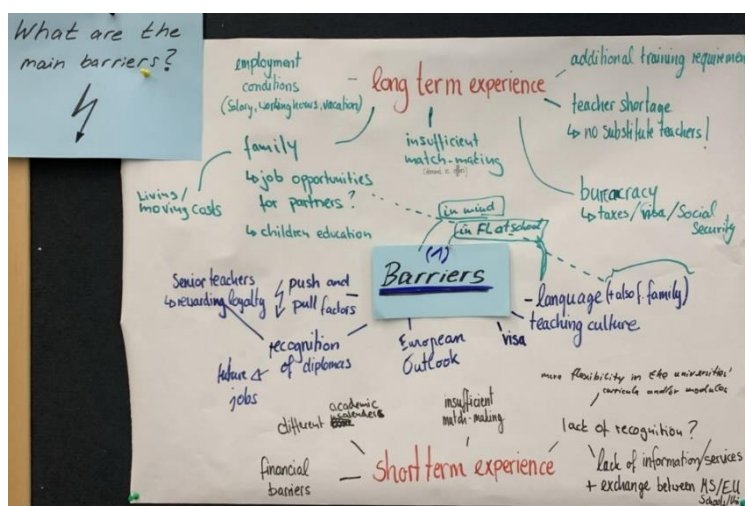
5. Outcomes of the World Café

Based on the input and examples given by the speakers of the preceding sessions, the World Café was organised to facilitate parallel table discussions among participants, in which they focused on, exchanged, and discussed **barriers**, potential **solutions**, and the necessary **stakeholder groups** that play a key role in the mobility of (future) teachers.

(a) Obstacles

What are the main barriers to cross-border mobility of foreign language teachers in Europe?

Table coach: Verena Holzapfel, Project and Event Officer, DAAD Brussels Office



Obstacles that keep prospective and practising teachers away from mobility opportunities are complex and vary depending on the phase of life and length of stay. For this reason, the workshop participants proposed a division into “Short-term experiences” (days up to a year) and “Long-term experiences” (longer than a year) as a basis for discussion. As some problems are independent of periods, a third category was created accordingly. Issues that are sorted in one category can of course be cross-cutting and apply to some extent to the other categories as well.

Overarching obstacles

- **European Outlook:** A fundamental problem for (teacher) mobility among students and teachers is the lack of a European perspective. The attractiveness and advantages of an international career are not part of the educational framework and are not seen as necessary or desirable, depending on the study subject (language teachers are more likely to study abroad than e.g., mathematics teachers). A (prospective) teacher who knows that they want to work in their home country may not consider a stay abroad because it is not perceived to offer any advantages but is rather associated with bureaucratic effort.
- **Language skills:** Insufficient language skills and a lack of courses in English can prevent (prospective) teachers from mobility offers or a long-term career outside their home country. Another potential barrier relates to insufficient language skills of the partners and/or children.

- **Bureaucracy & Visa:** In addition to the application process, which in most cases is already associated with bureaucratic work, working abroad involves complicated administrative obligations such as taxes and social security. Further, while relocating within the Schengen area is unproblematic thanks to the Schengen Convention, visas must be applied for and approved for countries outside this area. Such processes involve lengthy and often costly procedures.
- **Recognition:** Diplomas as well as university classes are often not recognised or only accredited after lengthy processes. Furthermore, there is often a lack of mechanisms in place to promote the mobility (in terms of conceptual or monetary value or status) as a benefit for teachers' careers and future employment opportunities.
 - University classes/ credits: Depending on the university and faculty and due to a lack of flexibility, not all credits gained at the host university may be recognised at the home university. A stay abroad would therefore only extend the period of study, which is often associated with costs such as tuition fees or semester fees.
 - Diplomas: Due to the principle of subsidiarity, the classification of teaching as a regulated profession and differences in national requirements and curricula, the recognition of qualifications in the teaching profession creates challenges. The process of recognition often goes hand in hand with (sometimes years of) further training and the acquisition of additional qualifications.
- **Teaching culture:** Different cultures are also reflected in different teaching methods (e.g., interactive teaching vs. frontal teaching) and can have a significant impact on the teacher's well-being and experience abroad.
- **Lack of information:** (Prospective) teachers often have no clear points of contact or information that would facilitate access to mobility programmes. There is also often a lack of exchanges between schools and universities that could organise bilateral teacher and student exchanges.

Short term experiences

- **Different academic calendars:** Due to non-standardised university and school calendars, teaching and vacation periods can differ so much that a short mobility stay cannot be considered.
- **Financial Barriers:** Differences in the cost of living, relocation costs and possible tuition fees or extended studies due to different academic calendars are especially challenging for students.

Long term experiences

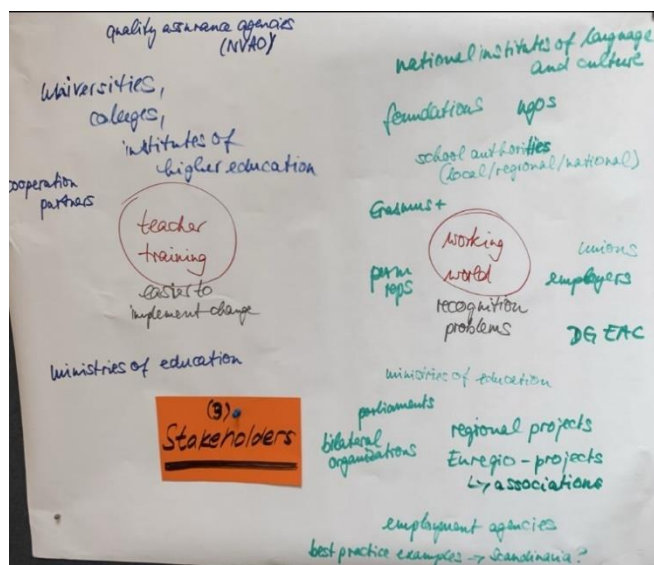
- **Employment conditions:** Employment conditions, such as number of teaching hours, length of teaching hours, salary and vacation time can vary greatly depending on the country and can act as push or pull factors. This can lead to insufficient matchmaking, resulting in some destinations being regarded as more attractive and others as less popular.
- **No substitute teachers:** Even if teachers would like to work for some time abroad, schools often do not give their consent due to the lack of staff and substitute teacher. Schools can often simply not afford to “lose” another teacher, regardless of the benefits for the teacher and his or her broadened horizon.
- **Family and Partners:** As mentioned above, a long term stay in a foreign country is often only considered if potential partners and/or children have a possibility to integrate by

going to school or finding a job. Furthermore, relocations and high living costs may also pose a burden.

(b) Stakeholders

Which organisations and stakeholders should be involved to facilitate cross-border mobility of foreign language teachers?

Table coach: Anja Pohler, Representative Educational and Linguistic Cooperation, Goethe-Institut Brussels



Teacher Training

Organisations and stakeholders that play a key role at the teacher training level include:

- Ministries
- Higher Education Institutions
- Colleges.

World of Work

Organisations and stakeholders needed to support cross-border mobility of teachers in the work environment include:

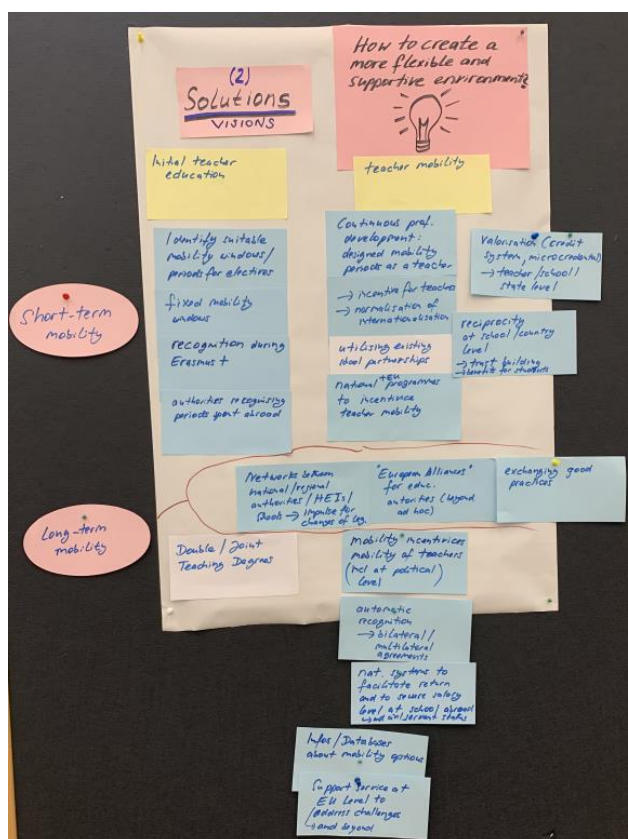
- Ministries of education and school authorities at local, regional, or national levels
- Trade unions and other employers in case teachers are not directly employed by the state
- Parliament may have some say, depending on the political level concerned
- Erasmus+ and regional projects
- European Commission (DG EAC)
- Permanent Representations of the national states to the EU
- Employment agencies at a national and at a European level
- Foundations and NGOs
- National Institutes of Language and Culture
- Bilateral Organisations

- Best Practice Examples (e.g., Scandinavia) Providing models of successful cross-border mobility endeavours.

(c) Solutions and visions

How to create a more flexible and supportive environment for cross-border mobility of foreign language teachers in European?

Table coach: Tanja Kreetz, DAAD Brussels Office



Due to the principle of subsidiarity and the classification of teaching as a regulated profession, quick fixes and game-changing solutions were deemed unlikely at a broad level and in a short timeframe. However, workshop participants identified several practical measures to facilitate mobility in the following, closely intertwined fields: (i) learning mobility during initial teacher training, (ii) learning or teaching mobility as part of the continuous professional development of teachers, and (iii) mobility of teachers intending to work abroad.

Initial teacher training

- **Curriculum integration:** Identifying suitable periods for electives and incorporate mobility windows in the curriculum can contribute to normalising and facilitating the update of mobility activities.
- **Credit recognition:** Ensuring that credits gained during mobility activities are recognised upon the students’ return can help to enhance the attractiveness of the mobility and to avoid an extension of the study duration.
- **Joint programmes:** Implementing double or joint degrees was mentioned as a facilitator for the planning, organisation, and recognition of the stay abroad.

- **Quality assurance:** Promoting quality assurance in correspondence with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) can help to build trust in other HEIs and other countries' curricula.

Continuous professional development

- **Mobility windows:** Allocating specific times during the school year for mobility activities can enhance the feasibility, internal acceptance, and organisation of outgoing and incoming flows in schools.
- **Reciprocal mobility:** Reciprocal mobility agreements can help schools to manage teacher vacancies and reduce the fear of teacher shortages because of outgoing mobility flows.
- **Partnerships:** Fostering existing or emerging partnerships supports more structured collaborations and the organisation of regular mobility flows.
- **Recognition:** Valorisation and recognition of the mobility period can incentivise the participation of teachers in a mobility.
- **Benefits:** Regular mobility enhances trust between schools and students benefit from interculturally competent incoming and returning teachers.

Cross-border mobility of teachers

- **Leveraging existing agreements:** Using existing bilateral or multilateral agreements (e.g., between Nordic countries or between France and Germany) as a model for other regions or expanding them can bring cross-border mobility of teachers on another level.
- **Degree recognition:** While automatic recognition was mentioned as unlikely in the short run and on a wider basis, it was mentioned that starting with bilateral agreements can enable schools to gain experience with other schools' and education systems and enhance mutual trust.
- **National policies:** Leveraging good practices including regional or national policies and programmes securing the teachers' salary level during the mobility period and the civil servant status upon the teachers' return was identified as another supportive practice.

Facilitators across the three levels

Moreover, several ideas were mentioned as driving factors applicable to all three mobility fields:

- **Creating incentives:** Encouraging mobility at different stages of a (prospective) teacher's career is crucial as previous mobility experiences may incentivise future mobility. Short-term internships can be an eye opener to further, including longer, mobility options.
- **Information sharing:** Establishing central, including EU-wide, information points was identified as supportive for collecting good practices and offering advice, increasing awareness, and overcoming challenges related to cross-border mobility.
- **Financial Support:** The provision of financial support for internationally mobile students and teachers through national and EU programmes also helps to overcome barriers.
- **Networks and Trust:** It is recommended to engage in networks as it fosters mutual trust in educational systems and school practices across Europe. Initiatives like Erasmus+ European Alliances and Teacher Academies could be leveraged as a model for sustainable collaboration structures also between national authorities. This could give impulses for changes also at legislative level.