



# **Inclusive mobilities for VET students with a disability**

**Research paper on the challenges and  
needs of VET students and VET professionals  
to make mobilities more accessible**

May 2025



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.*

Inclusive Mobility in Vocational Education and Training (IMVET) is a three-year project (2023-KA220-VET-000154977) funded by Erasmus+ under Key Action 220.

The current document is a result of desk research and focus group research conducted by our consortium:

- **ECIO (Expertise centre for Inclusive education in the Netherlands)**
- **Koning Willem I College (VET institution in the Netherlands)**
- **Tartu Vocational College (VET institution in Estonia)**
- **Firda (VET institution in the Netherlands)**
- **DSE Achaia (VET institution in Greece)**
- **CESUR (VET institution in Spain)**
- **SDO Diakonia College of Finland (VET institution in Finland)**

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# Summary

International learning mobilities, such as internships or group trips abroad, offers vocational education students valuable opportunities for personal growth and professional development. However, students with disabilities are often structurally underrepresented in mobility programs, even though this group could greatly benefit from participation.

This research report provides an overview of the challenges and barriers that vocational education students with disabilities face when participating in learning mobility, as well as the challenges experienced by vocational education professionals in organising inclusive learning mobilities. Additionally, we explore solutions to reduce these challenges and thus increase the accessibility of learning mobilities. This overview has been developed through literature research and interviews with vocational education students and professionals in five countries: Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland, and the Netherlands.

The findings reveal that the obstacles are multifaceted: ranging from physical and practical barriers to emotional, cultural, and institutional challenges.

Below, the needs that are identified through the research are summarised:

VET student needs	VET professional needs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timely and accessible information about the mobility opportunities. Experiences from students who have already participated in mobility programs can be helpful.</li> <li>2. The opportunity to participate in a learning mobility through inclusive student selection.</li> <li>3. A diverse range of mobility types (e.g., short-term or group mobilities).</li> <li>4. Adaptable programmes tailored to individual needs: such as a clear time schedule, opportunity to spend some time alone, suitable accommodation, and physical accessibility of activities.</li> <li>5. Clarity on personal financial contribution.</li> <li>6. Pre-mobility guidance and preparation, such as: clear expectations, support with paperwork, and preparatory visits.</li> <li>7. Strong social connections with travel companions (such as the teacher, fellow students, or colleagues in case of an internship).</li> <li>8. A safe environment during the trip, so that students can be themselves and feel accepted.</li> <li>9. Access to (medical or psychological) support during the trip.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early identification of students who need additional support during mobility.</li> <li>2. Knowledge of funding options for additional support to students.</li> <li>3. A strong network of accessible and inclusive (internship) companies.</li> <li>4. Accompanying persons with knowledge and skills to provide appropriate guidance to students with support needs.</li> <li>5. Inclusive school policies and school leaders who encourage inclusive mobility programmes.</li> <li>6. Clear boundaries for responsibility of student wellbeing during group trips.</li> <li>7. Peer knowledge sharing on organising and accompanying mobility programmes.</li> <li>8. Preparedness for emergencies, for example through protocols and appointed contact persons.</li> <li>9. Good collaboration between teachers, care staff, and internationalisation offices.</li> </ol>

The research emphasises that with targeted efforts, international mobility is both valuable and achievable for students with support needs. Based on this report, the IMVET (Inclusive Mobility in VET) Erasmus+ consortium is developing tools for vocational education professionals, to create equal opportunities for students with disabilities.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In this research report we aim to find out which barriers **Vocational Education and Training (VET) students with disability** face to be able to participate in a **learning mobility**. VET students can go abroad during their VET programme, to gain international experience. For students with a disability, it is crucial to receive the right support from VET professionals to gain access to such a learning mobility. Therefore, this research focuses on the challenges and needs of VET students with a disability, as well as the challenges that VET professionals experience to organise learning mobilities for students with disabilities. This research report is part of the project Inclusive Mobility in Vocational Education and Training (IMVET).

Learning mobilities can take different forms. The Erasmus+ Programme defines four categories of VET student learning mobilities.

### Learning mobilities for VET students in the Erasmus+ programme

#### 1. VET Skills Competitions (Duration: 1 to 10 days)

These international events allow students to:

- Showcase professional skills
- Network with international peers
- With continuous support from mentors, experts or staff members

#### 2. Group Mobility (Duration: 2 to 30 days, Minimum two students)

Students learn together at a partner institution abroad, focusing on:

- Collaborative international learning
- Guided educational experiences
- Continuous supervision by educational staff

#### 3. Short-Term Learning Mobility (Duration: 10 to 89 days)

Students gain practical experience by:

- Learning in international VET providers or companies (internship)
- Following a personalised learning programme
- Emphasising work-based learning

à For students with fewer opportunities a minimum 2-day short-term learning mobility is possible with justification.

#### 4. Long-Term Learning Mobility (ErasmusPro) (Duration: 90 to 365 days)

An immersive experience which allows students to:

- Spend a substantial period learning abroad
- Gain deep insights into professional practices in another country

All mobility activities can incorporate virtual learning components alongside physical mobility.

In this research report, we use the term VET professionals to mean those who support students directly or indirectly in participating in an international mobility. They can be teachers or staff, international coordinators and internship supervisors. Additionally, persons with disabilities are defined as:

*"those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"* (UN CRPD, 2006).

This research report presents an overview of the challenges and needs of VET professionals, as well as the challenges and support needs of VET students with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments when they participate in learning mobility programmes.

The report serves as a basis on which a toolkit will be developed, including a self-assessment tool, guidelines for VET professionals, and communication materials. This toolkit aims to support VET professionals in making learning mobilities more inclusive and accessible for VET students with disabilities. The toolkit will address the challenges and needs of students and VET professionals, and should be complimentary to tools that already exist.

Therefore, this research report aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are barriers and challenges that VET students with a disability experience to participate in learning mobility and what support do they need?
2. What are the challenges that VET professionals experience to make learning mobilities accessible to students with a disability and what support do they need?
3. Which tools are available to support VET professionals and to address these challenges?

The report is structured as follows:

- First, we discuss the context of our research in Chapter 2.
- In Chapter 3 and 4, we summarise knowledge from literature regarding research question 1 and 2 respectively. For this research we have used sources from the countries that are part of this consortium: Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland and the Netherlands.
- In Chapter 5, we discuss research question 3 by presenting an inventory of the tools that are readily available to address the challenges and needs of students and VET professionals.
- In Chapter 6, we explain the methodology of the focus groups research.

- Chapter 7, we present the findings of our focus groups with VET professionals from the VET institutions that are in our consortium. This addresses research question 2.
- Chapter 8, we discuss the findings of our focus groups with students from the VET institutions in our consortium. This addresses research question 1.

Regarding the focus of this research, it is important to note that:

1. We do not aim to give a complete overview of all challenges and needs that students may experience, such as cultural differences or geographical barriers. We focus on challenges and needs that arise specifically for students with disabilities. However, we recognise that many students with disabilities may face multiple overlapping barriers of the list below.

### **Erasmus+ definition of students with fewer opportunities**

Students can experience a variety of barriers to participate in a learning mobility.

The Erasmus+ programme defines eight categories for students with 'fewer opportunities':

- Barriers linked to discrimination
- Barriers linked to education and training systems
- Cultural differences
- Disabilities
- Economic barriers
- Geographical barriers
- Health problems
- Social barriers

2. While the focus on challenges and needs may appear to present a somewhat negative framing, we believe it is equally important to highlight students' strengths. VET professionals should not only address difficulties, but also acknowledge students' strengths and promote their autonomy. VET professionals play a crucial role in facilitating inclusive mobility, by anticipating and addressing potential obstacles. At the same time, it is essential to respect and support students' independence, enabling them to take initiative, develop new skills, and build confidence. Recognising that every student is unique, it is important to approach learning mobility in a positive, individualised, and empowering way that emphasises the capabilities of students with disabilities.

# Chapter 2

## VET students with disabilities and learning mobilities

### The importance of a learning mobility

Learning mobility provides individuals with invaluable opportunities to acquire essential knowledge and skills, contributing to their personal, educational, and professional development, as well as their civic engagement and social inclusion. Personal growth is a key motivator for students seeking international experiences, as they aim to develop themselves and explore different countries and cultures (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023). Studying or working abroad helps students develop independence, self-confidence, and resilience (European Commission, 2018). This is especially important for students with disabilities, who may have fewer opportunities to push their boundaries at home.

Studying abroad also provides valuable insights into the international labour market. International experiences enhance career prospects by offering a global perspective, and exposing students to diverse workplace environments (European Commission, 2018). These benefits are particularly crucial for students with disabilities, who often face additional barriers to employment. A learning mobility may also improve cross-cultural communication skills, as well as foreign language skills. The European Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) argues that language skills are not only a means of communication, but also an important economic, educational and cultural driver (NPLD, 2020).

### How many VET students have a disability?

Many students enrolled in vocational education have disabilities (Heirweg et al., 2019; Verhoeff and Favier, 2023). We attempted to compare the proportion of students with disabilities in VET in the countries that are part of the IMVET consortium, through literature and the knowledge of our consortium members. The results are presented below.

#### Results

- In Finland, 11% of the students in VET leading to a qualification received special support, and for initial VET it was 15%. Special support was received by 0.6% of students in further vocational education and 0.1% in specialist vocational education (Official Statistics of Finland, 2022).
- In the Netherlands 28% of VET students has reported that they need extra support because of learning difficulties, disability or illness (JOB-monitor, 2024).
- In Spain, in Basic level VET 6.1% of students have disabilities, compared to 2% in Medium level VET and 0.6% in High level VET, while a higher percentage of students have special education needs: Basic level VET 18.54%, Medium level 6.2% and High level 2.2% (in the school year 2022-2023).
- In Estonia, 8.8% of VET students have special education needs (in the school year 2022-2023).
- In Greece, students with disabilities and/or special education needs make up 6.3% of the total student population.

However, percentages below may therefore not fully represent the true picture the students with disabilities are classified as such varies per country, it may differ from our definition of disability, and it may differ per country how these data are collected.

## **How many VET students (with or without a disability) participate in a mobility?**

The Erasmus+ Annual Report reveals significant disparities in mobility programme participation. VET students participate much less frequently in Erasmus+ mobility programs compared to students in higher education and school education (European Commission, 2022). In Greece for example, 64% of the mobility budget of Erasmus+ (for both student mobilities as well as staff mobilities) was dedicated to higher education in 2022, compared to 25% to VET students (European Commission, 2022). The Education and Training Monitor of 2023 reports that learning mobility in VET is recovering from the pandemic, but that the number of learning mobilities in VET is below target level (European Commission, 2023).

The number of students with disabilities who have participated in a mobility is unknown. However, it is known that only 13% of total learning mobilities across all sectors that were funded by Erasmus+ involved participants with fewer opportunities (European Commission, 2022). The term 'people with fewer opportunities' in Erasmus+ includes individuals facing various obstacles, such as disabilities, economic, social, cultural, or geographical challenges, migrant backgrounds, educational difficulties, or any other reasons that could lead to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Erasmus+ Regulation (EU) 2021/817). As this definition is much broader than that of people with disabilities, it can be assumed that the percentage of people with disabilities participating in learning mobilities is less than 13% of the total number of mobilities. This percentage may also vary across different educational sectors. For instance, in Estonia, vocational education schools make much less use of support measures than higher education institutions (Jurkov & Kivistik, 2023). The participation of students in a learning mobility is often dependent on the enthusiasm of teachers and individual students' decisions (Van Casteren et al., 2023). In VET schools in the Netherlands and Finland, the number of student mobilities is also highly correlated to the course they are enrolled in. In the Netherlands, 45% of the students in Tourism and Recreation go abroad, while for other courses it is much lower (Warps & Lodewick, 2021; Van Casteren et al., 2023). In Finland, VET programmes in the service sector and technology facilitated the highest number of mobilities for students (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022).

Additionally, the number of students who participate in learning mobilities can also be connected to the level of their course. In the Netherlands for example, students enrolled in the highest level of VET programs are more likely to go abroad than students enrolled

in lower levels. Students in the Netherlands are also more likely to participate in a learning mobility when they follow a full-time course (called 'bol') rather than a part-time course which they combine with work (called 'bbl') (Van Casteren et al., 2023).

## **Plans and ambitions of Vocational Education Institutions on inclusive mobility**

The VET schools in the IMVET consortium have ambitions to make learning mobilities more inclusive. In the Netherlands, almost all VET institutions have made plans and formulated ambitions to make internationalisation activities more accessible, ensuring all students can participate if they choose to (Van Casteren et al., 2023). In Estonia, 64% of the total number of Vocational institutions organise student learning mobilities, and over 64% have made plans to enhance internationalisation efforts (Erasmus+ Inclusive Mobility Study from Estonian Education and Youth Board, 2023).

International coordinators in the Netherlands have observed an increase in Erasmus+ grant applications, indicating growing support and enthusiasm for internationalisation within VET institutions (Van Casteren et al., 2023). Firda, a Dutch VET institution part of our consortium, has published a policy document in which internationalisation is mentioned as a way to combat prejudice, discrimination and exclusion and it is a priority to ensure equal offer opportunities to all students. At Firda, the policy prescribes to take an inclusive approach to internationalisation. The policy states that additional support should be provided to students who otherwise may not be able to go abroad, taking into account the different needs of students in different programmes. This gives all students an opportunity to benefit from a unique experience abroad.

In Finland, international skills have been classified by the National Agency of Education as basic skills for everyone. They state that the ability to work with different kinds of people lays the foundation for a polyphonic society that respects everyone. Active global citizenship also requires multicultural understanding (Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), 2022). In 2022, 45% of Finnish VET providers are carrying out 55 Key Action 1 Learning Mobility projects (European Union, 2022).

Many vocational education institutions in Europe are actively working towards making international mobility more inclusive. With increasing support and detailed plans in place, more students are expected to benefit from valuable international experiences.



## Part I: Literature review

# Chapter 3

## Participation of VET students with a disability in mobilities: the challenges and needs of VET students

Participation in mobility programmes is an enriching experience for students. However, VET students with disabilities encounter various challenges that hinder their participation in such programs. This chapter explores what literature tells us about the challenges and barriers faced by VET students with disabilities to participate in a learning mobility and identifies their needs for effective participation.

### Challenges and barriers that hinder participation in a mobility

There is limited research on barriers that VET students with disabilities experience with participation in mobility programs. We found three challenges in the literature specific to students with disabilities:

- **Institutional Policies and Requirements:** Students with disabilities, particularly those with learning difficulties or additional needs, might perceive institutional policies, for example regarding minimum grade, motivation letter, difficult language use in paperwork and language requirements as obstacles to their participation in mobility programs (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023).
- **Insufficient Information and Support:** VET students with disabilities often face challenges due to insufficient information and support, especially regarding financial assistance and obligations at home, such as care responsibilities (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023). They might assume that participating in a mobility is not an option for them, because of challenges they would face. Therefore, it is even more important to provide them with clear information about possibilities for support.
- **Lacking Motivation:** In an Estonian Erasmus+ report (Jurkov & Kivistik, 2023) it is mentioned that students with fewer opportunities may be less motivated to participate in mobilities. However, these students may not be aware of the possibilities. Although information may be provided, this may not be enough to attract the interest of the students.

Although literature on the barriers that hinder students with disabilities to participate in learning mobilities is lacking, more literature was found that discuss the barriers that are experienced by VET students in general (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023; the Erasmus Student Network Survey, 2021; Jurkov & Kivistik, 2023).

The most important barriers of participation are:

- **Information:** VET students often encounter insufficient or untimely information regarding the opportunities for mobility and the available support resources. This hinders their ability to make informed decisions and access necessary assistance.
- **Awareness:** Teachers and staff often lack the knowledge and skills to understand and support the needs of students with disabilities.
- **Accessibility and Support:** The provision of physical, digital, and educational accessibility pose significant challenges for VET students. They might require specific adjustments, personal assistance, and mental health support to ensure their participation in mobility programs.
- **Financial and Logistical Barriers:** Financial constraints and logistical problems pose barriers to the participation of VET students in mobility initiatives. Limited funding and resources for additional support measures, as well as challenges in coordinating with partner institutions, hinder their ability to engage in such programs (Erasmus Student Network Survey, 2021; Rayón, 2022).
- **Cultural, Language, and Emotional Challenges:** Cultural and language barriers, coupled with emotional challenges such as fear of an unfamiliar environment and homesickness, affect the participation of VET students in mobility programs (Estonian Erasmus+ Report). These students require adequate support to overcome these barriers and address their anxieties effectively (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023).

## Identified needs

Based on the research findings, we can identify several needs of VET students (with disabilities), which should be addressed when they participate in mobility programs:

1. **Timely and Clear Information:** Providing timely and clear information is essential to enable students to make informed decisions and plan effectively for their participation in mobility programs (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023).
2. **Financial Support:** Financial support is crucial to overcome the financial barriers associated with participating in mobility initiatives (Erasmus Student Network Survey, 2021; Rayón, 2022).
3. **Flexibility in Institutional Policies:** There is a need for greater flexibility in institutional policies, especially concerning minimum grade and language requirements, to accommodate the diverse needs of VET students with disabilities (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023).
4. **Guidance and Support:** VET students require encouragement, understanding, and guidance throughout the mobility experience, both before and during their time abroad. This includes assistance with administrative matters and emotional support to address any challenges they may encounter (Verhoeff & Favier, 2023; Kurver et al., 2019b; Allinson & Gabriels, 2021).

## Conclusion

The challenges faced by VET students with disabilities in participating in mobility programmes are multifaceted, ranging from informational and logistical barriers to cultural and emotional challenges. Addressing these challenges and barriers requires a comprehensive approach that involves improving awareness, accessibility, financial support, and institutional policies. When these challenges and needs are addressed, VET institutions can enhance the accessibility of mobility programs for students with disabilities. As the existing literature on this particular target group is limited and predominantly focused on the Netherlands, we further explore the specific needs of students with disabilities in our focus groups research (see Chapter 6 onwards).

# Chapter 4

## Organising inclusive mobilities: the challenges and needs of VET professionals

VET professionals play a pivotal role in organising and facilitating mobility experiences. Those who are responsible for the organisation of mobilities should be informed about the challenges and barriers that students face and know about students' needs. However, VET professionals face their own challenges. In this chapter we discuss what is known from the literature about the challenges that VET professionals face. Then we discuss the subsequent needs of VET professionals which are essential to address for organising successful and accessible mobilities.

We first discuss the challenges and needs that are specifically applicable for the organisation of mobilities for students with disabilities. After that, we discuss challenges and needs that are applicable for the organisation of mobilities for all students, including those with disabilities. To address the challenges and needs that VET professionals experience, we discuss relevant recommendations mentioned in the literature.

### Challenges in the organisation of mobilities for students with disabilities

The literature identifies the following challenges that impact the organisation of mobilities for students with disabilities:

- **Awareness of the barriers students with disabilities can experience**

There is a lack of awareness about the barriers that students with disabilities can experience to participate in learning mobilities (Van Hees & Montagnese, 2020).

- **Awareness and availability of financial support for students with disabilities**

Research within VET indicates that coordinators and teachers are often unaware of the opportunities the Erasmus+ programme offers for students with special needs or fewer opportunities. Consequently, when VET professionals lack this awareness, it is unsurprising that students are frequently uninformed about these possibilities (Warps & Lodewick, 2021). Additionally, navigating funding complexities, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, and managing the timeconsuming Erasmus+ grant applications can be particularly challenging (Van Casteren et al, 2023).

- **Providing information about mobility possibilities for students with disabilities**

Information provision and promotion on mobility abroad for students with disabilities is generally lacking and not accessible enough (Van Hees & Montagnese, 2020). This is also connected to the previous two points.

- **Providing appropriate guidance and support for students with disabilities**  
Students with a disability may need extra guidance and support from VET professionals. When VET professionals are not aware of the barriers students can experience, it is likely that they do not provide the appropriate guidance and support that students may need.
- **Finding suitable internships for students with disabilities**  
It can be challenging to find a suitable internship company for students with a disability. The internship company should provide appropriate guidance and support, but not all internship companies are open to accept students with disabilities, and they do not always provide an inclusive and accepting environment (VET4ALL, 2023).

## Needs of VET professionals to support students with disabilities

Following these challenges, the needs that VET professionals may have when they support students with disabilities to participate in mobilities are:

1. Specific **training and awareness programmes** for teachers and staff to better understand and support the needs of students with disabilities (Van Hees & Montagnese, 2020), with the following goals:
  - a. gaining awareness of the barriers students face, and the financial possibilities that are available
  - b. ensuring accessible information is available and adequately disseminated to all students
  - c. gaining skills to be able to provide appropriate guidance and support.
2. A good network of **suitable internship companies** for students with disabilities (if the student wants to do an internship abroad). And perhaps provide training to internship companies to increase their awareness of the needs of students with disabilities (VET4All, 2023).

## Challenges in the organisation of mobilities for all students

Many challenges that VET professionals face in the organisation of mobilities are not specific to students with a disability. Van Casteren et al. (2023) identified the following challenges for all students:

- **Validation of the training abroad**  
Validating the training components and learning outcomes completed abroad can be difficult, as practical exams can have strict requirements regarding the timing and conditions under which an internship is considered valid for the student's qualification. (For some countries this is not a problem, when there are less strict regulations.)
- **Scheduling problems**  
Scheduling a mobility within the curriculum often presents challenges due to conflicts with exams and other mandatory activities for students. Block internships, which are

full-time placements, are generally more suitable for learning mobility abroad than internships that run concurrently with regular classes.

- **Lack of VET professionals' capacity and time**

VET professionals often have many teaching and administrative responsibilities, and may have too little time to provide (individual) support to students before, during and after a mobility experience.

- **Lack of resources and staff at a central level within the institution**

To boost internationalisation, resources and staff at the central level of the institution such as international coordinators are necessary.

- **Individual barriers (other than disabilities) among students and their parents**

These can be financial constraints, language barriers (for instance if the internship requires a good proficiency in English), resistance from parents who do not want to let their child go abroad, or insurance issues. Additionally, the distance from friends, family and pets can be an emotional constraint for students, as well as being away from hobbies and jobs (see Kennisrotonde, 2021).

- **Finding suitable internships for students**

Not only for students with disabilities, but for all students, it can be a challenge to find a suitable internship company. Additionally, in the Netherlands a student normally should receive an internship allowance, however finding a paid workplace abroad can be an extra challenge.

## **Needs of VET professionals to support all students**

Therefore, in addition to the specific needs that VET professionals may have to support students with a disability, they may also experience the following more general needs to support students to participate in mobilities:

3. **Regulations that allow validation** of training components and learning outcomes;
4. A **course curriculum that is flexible** enough to allow students to participate in a mobility;
5. Enough **capacity and time** to ensure appropriate support to students and find suitable internship placements;
6. Enough **resources** at the central level of the institution to coordinate;
7. The **ability to address individual barriers** such as finances, language proficiency and resistance from parents;
8. A **strong network of international organisations** that provides enough options for finding a suitable internship abroad.

## Recommendations to address the challenges and needs of VET professionals

The literature provides some recommendations to address several of these needs.

### 1. Embedding in curricula

Internationalisation should be embedded in curricula to make it accessible to all students. Furthermore, it is recommended to incorporate internationalisation into the design principles for all new and renewed programs (van Casteren et al., 2023).

### 2. Reduce administrative burdens

The capacity and time of VET professionals should be addressed by trying to reduce the administrative burden of mobilities (van Casteren et al., 2023).

### 3. Specific financial support

Financial support should match the needs of students (van Casteren et al., 2023; Kurver et al., 2019; Warps & Lodewick, 2021).

### 4. Work with fixed international partners

Van Casteren et al. (2023) recommend working with fixed international partners, to ensure continuity in international collaboration and exchange. Other literature also mentions the importance of making sure that organisations are suitable for the students' needs.

### 5. Short stays and group trips

Short stays and group trips can increase the accessibility of mobilities (Vet4All, 2023, Kurver et al., 2019; Warps & Lodewick, 2021; Jurkov & Kivistik, 2023)

### 6. Teacher mobilities

Teacher mobilities can help to support students and find suitable organisations for internships, which could increase the accessibility of mobilities for VET students (Kurver et al. 2019; Warps and Lodewick, 2021).

## **7. Organising information sessions for students as early as possible in the program**

It is recommended that information sessions include students who have participated in a mobility so that they can share their experiences with students (Van Casteren et al., 2023). This can give students confidence: when someone who is similar to them can do it, they can do it too. In a survey among Estonian VET institutions it was found that motivational events were organised where participants with fewer opportunities share their experiences, as a strategy to inform students about mobility opportunities. Moreover, these sessions should discuss the benefits of participating in a learning mobility as well as the difficulties that students could face, and it should include possibilities that are available for students with fewer opportunities (Jurkov & Kivistik, 2023). Vocational and general education schools in Estonia acknowledge the importance of information provision in an accessible way, and provide additional support with applying for mobility, as well as counselling during the preparation period.

## **8. Make plans and strategies for (inclusive) internationalisation**

It is recommended to establish a vision and strategy for internationalisation at the VET institution, including designated coordinators or International Offices. Internationalisation should ideally be embedded in policy at the central level within educational institutions, and in team plans. Policy should be developed to make experiences abroad more accessible to underrepresented groups. Furthermore, the importance of internationalisation should be regularly emphasised within the institution (Van Casteren et al., 2023).

## **9. Improve current practices by networking within the institution**

It is recommended to strengthen the internationalisation network within the institution itself, and establish an active internal network of contacts across all programs who share knowledge, networks and tips. Investigate whether internal resources for information, networking, and support are sufficient (Van Casteren et al., 2023).

## **Conclusion**

Regarding the organisation of successful student mobilities, the available literature discusses many challenges and needs that VET professionals face. However, there is not much literature on how VET professionals can best address the needs of VET students with disabilities specifically. Also, many sources are focused on the Netherlands, which means that more research is needed with a broader focus on different educational contexts in Europe.

# Chapter 5

## Available materials for VET professionals to support inclusive mobilities

There are few resources and tools available in Europe to enhance the inclusivity of mobility programs. A few examples of information and tools that we found in our investigation are:

- The [\*\*Make it happen project\*\*](#), which lasted from 2022–2024, focused on promoting and developing inclusive mobilities in Europe for VET students with disabilities. It involved 9 partners from 6 European countries (France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Germany, Portugal and Belgium). The project results include an inspiring practices document and an e-learning course on how to organise inclusive mobilities with learners with disabilities.
- [\*\*Workbook by Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre\*\*](#): Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre has created a practical tool titled “Travelling with a SEN (Special Educational Needs) learner: a practical tool for the accompanying person.” This workbook contains checklists designed to aid in the preparation phase of student mobility, during the mobility period, and upon the student’s return. It includes agreements with students, agreements between accompanying staff, on-site activities, and post-return checklists.
- [\*\*The INTERMOVE+ Toolkit\*\*](#) is a training toolkit consisting of six modules designed to benefit participants in mobility programmes. These tools are integrated into an e-learning platform for easy access and use. Its main objective of INTERMOVE+ is to reduce the economic and linguistic barriers faced by mobile students and improve the quality of their international experience. It does this by providing resources that address skills such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence, environmental sustainability and intercultural awareness.
- The [\*\*Inclusive Mobility Platform\*\*](#) offers a comprehensive self-assessment tool designed to help higher education institutions, ministries of education, and national agencies evaluate and enhance their practices in promoting inclusive mobility. This tool is part of a broader initiative supported by the EPFIME and PLAR-4-SIMP projects. In addition to the self-assessment tool, the platform includes a comprehensive training package with practical advice, tips, and strategies for implementing inclusive mobility practices at both institutional and national levels. The platform also features a toolbox with resources like publications, reports, and videos to further support stakeholders in enhancing their inclusive mobility strategies. However, these materials are not meant for VET professionals.
- Several [\*\*Euroguidance centres\*\*](#) (such as France, the Netherlands and the Nordic-Baltic countries) have developed an e-module on how to support students before, during and after an international experience. Most of these training courses also include a chapter with tips on inclusive internationalisation practices. However, these training courses are only available in local languages.

This overview shows that there are only a few resources and tools available that are specifically aimed at VET professionals in Europe to enhance the inclusivity of mobility programs for students with disabilities. For other target groups more materials are available, such as professionals working in Higher Education, but materials for VET professionals are limited.

The Make It Happen (Erasmus+) project already developed very useful materials on the topic of organising inclusive mobility for VET students with disabilities. These materials can be further supplemented. In the IMVET project, we develop guidelines document for staff, to support students with disabilities before, during and after their mobility and a self-assessment tool. A proposed self-assessment tool for sending organisations and schools should focus on evaluating readiness and capacity to support inclusion and accessibility, covering areas such as hosting accessibility, support services, health and safety protocols, internship support, cultural and social integration, collaboration, and continuous improvement.



## Part II: Focus group research

# Chapter 6

## Methodology of the focus group research

All partners of the IMVET project gathered input from VET students with disabilities as well as VET professionals. The interviews and focus groups took place from March to July 2024. A topic list with questions was formulated and used by all partners (see Annex I).

### VET professionals

We interviewed 39 VET professionals, of whom 31 (79.5%) had experience as an accompanying person on a learning mobility (see Figure 1). Furthermore, 34 (87.2%) provide direct support to students, for example in the role of teacher. Those who do not provide direct support to students work as head of a project department, project specialist or policymaker.

The VET professionals were contacted personally by the project partners for those VET professionals they already collaborate with, while others were reached indirectly via the contact persons of project partners. Three focus groups were conducted with the VET professionals, the rest were interviewed individually. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in the respective native languages of the participating countries.

**VET professionals accompanying experience**

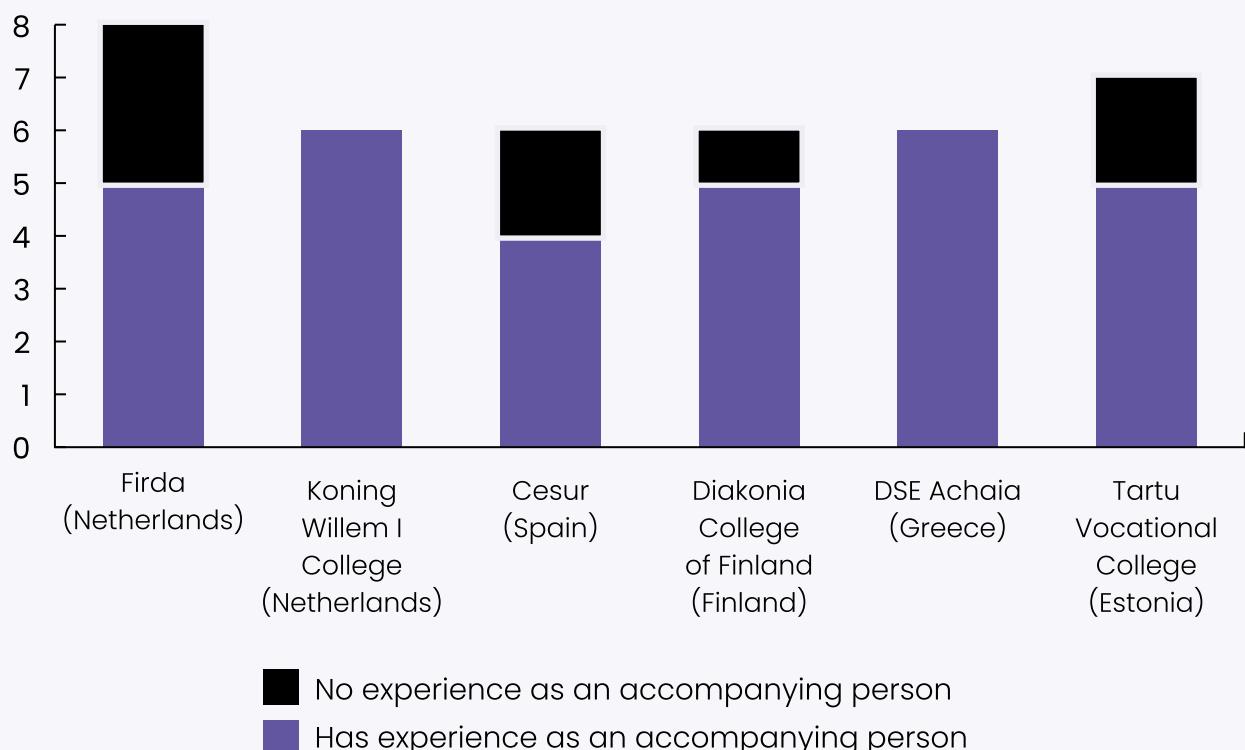


Figure 1. Accompanying experience of the VET professionals (n=39)

## Students

We interviewed 37 VET students with disabilities, of whom 15 (40,5%) had participated in a mobility before (see Figure 2). Students were contacted via teachers, internationalisation officers, via the personal network of project partners, via school social work, deputy heads of VET schools and student mentors. The majority of the students was interviewed individually, because the questions were of a personal nature and individual interviews were more easily organised. Still, three partners managed to organise a group interview. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in the respective native languages of the participating countries.

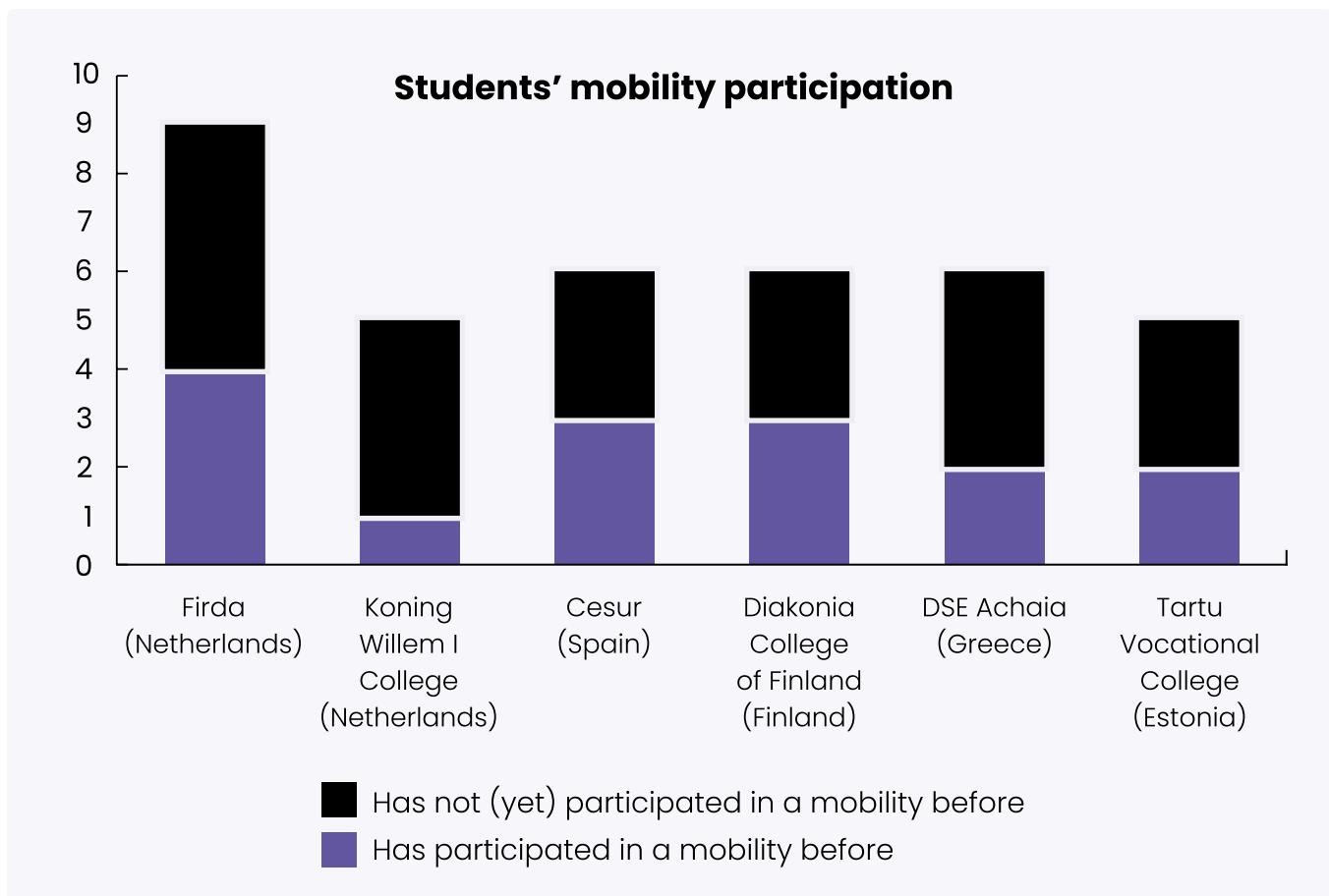


Figure 2. Mobility experience of the VET students (n=37)

# Chapter 7

## Results focus groups VET professionals

### Importance of mobility experiences for every student, including those with disabilities

VET professionals emphasise that participation in mobility programmes leads to significant personal growth, particularly in confidence, social skills, and independence. Students learn to manage in a different environment, and learn skills such as independent travel, language skills, budgeting, and engaging with other cultures. It provides practical, hands-on experience that cannot be replicated at home, such as cooking with foreign ingredients. More importantly, it fosters independence and self-reliance as students navigate living, planning meals, and arranging transportation in a new environment. Some students may have never travelled abroad before, and mobility programmes provide that opportunity.

This experience helps students realise their capability to manage on their own, contributing significantly to their personal growth and confidence. Students overcome fears, such as anxiety and homesickness, fostering empowerment. It broadens students' horizons by exposing them to different professional practices, technologies, work cultures, and educational approaches in foreign countries. These experiences can be life-changing and help strengthen their work skills, CV, self-image and problem-solving skills. Their perception of what they want to do in the future may also be impacted.

A VET professional from SDO Diakonia College of Finland says:

*"Every student should be given a chance to go abroad. It's a great opportunity to become independent, improve language skills and add courage. An exchange period gives new experiences and enriches a student's life in a special way you can't receive in any other way."*

According to the VET professionals, these benefits are applicable for all students. Some students with disabilities may not be able to do everything independently, depending on the severity of the disability. Although VET professionals agree that mobility experiences can be an important way to promote personal development, it is not absolutely necessary to participate. For some students, adjusting to a new environment is very complicated, and some may choose not to go abroad because it would cause too much stress. The students' motivation is very important – if they do not want to go, this should be respected. On the other hand, they may overcome their fears with the right support.

### Impact of a mobility experience for students with disabilities

VET professionals report positive experiences when students with disabilities participate in mobility programmes. It can result in a closer relationship between the teachers and the students and their families. Students often benefit from broadening their horizons and become more open-minded. They can try new things abroad which they may not have

experienced at home, for instance a VET professional from VOCO in Estonia reports that one student got to try out welding during a mobility experience, which they really enjoyed.

A VET professional from KWIC reports positive results when they travelled with a group of students of whom one had a disability. The student gained more confidence as travelling together intensifies the bond in the group – the student really felt included and part of the group. For the other students in this group, it was also a learning experience, as they gained more empathy for the obstacles that the student with a disability faced. A VET professional from Firda in the Netherlands reports a similar effect: because students are constantly together for the duration of the mobility, they get to know each other better, which can foster more acceptance: 'I am allowed to be who I am'.

Furthermore, a VET professional from VOCO in Estonia mentioned that they were inspired by the ways students with disabilities are supported in Denmark. They report that for students with disabilities, there is an opportunity to see how their support needs are addressed in a different country. When a student experiences a difficult moment, but they are supported to overcome this difficult moment during the mobility, this can lead to increased confidence and increase job prospects, as these stories from VET professionals from VOCO illustrate:

*"A post-secondary mechatronics course group participated in a mobility programme in Latvia, including a student suspected of having a mild mental disability, possibly on the autism spectrum. Initially, there were no issues, but in the third week, the student wanted to quit due to difficulty adapting to being far from home. After discussing with the student and parents, the situation was resolved, and the student completed the mobility successfully. The experience positively impacted the student's educational journey, leading to increased confidence and successful completion of further studies in mechatronics and another vocational field."*

*"As a mentor for eight years, I've supported numerous disabled students in mobility programs. Two notable experiences include a student struggling with the new environment who refused to eat, and another dealing with the anxiety of being away from home. With personalised support and communication with their families, these students were able to adapt and complete their programmes successfully. These experiences significantly enhance their independence, confidence, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, participating in mobility programmes helps students stand out in their CVs, demonstrating resilience and adaptability to potential employers. Overall, such programmes have a profoundly positive impact on their educational and personal development."*

To maximise the impact of the mobility, VET professionals have found that it helps students when they celebrate the students' successes and reinforce their achievements. This positive reinforcement, such as acknowledging their accomplishments and praising their adaptability, can enhance their confidence. VET professionals mention that this newfound confidence makes students more competitive in the job market and better prepared for independent work. A VET professional from Spain mentions:

*"The results have been very positive at professional and personal levels, the students have improved their self-confidence and self-esteem. Now it's necessary to confirm the existence of continuity in studies and training."*

Students that have a satisfying experience also become the best ambassadors and mentors for other students that are willing to participate in a mobility programme.

### **Defining of students with disabilities**

We asked VET professionals how they would define students with disabilities. Disabilities include physical and mental disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural issues. Examples are: visual impairments, hearing impairments, motor disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, dyslexia, language development disorders, dyscalculia, ADHD and those who have chronic illness or chronic trauma. VET professionals mention that students with other emotional and behavioural challenges also require support, and that students do not always necessarily need a diagnosis to be eligible for extra support.

In Finland, support is focused on what kind of difficulties students face, not based on only diagnoses. For example, students can need support in resources (i.e. resilience, coping), learning abilities and readiness to work (i.e. reading, writing, math), collaboration skills (i.e. behaviour, interaction skills) or control of everyday life (i.e. taking care of yourself). The functional capacity of each student is assessed and the special educational needs are recognised individually. In SDO, the Ruori-assesment tool is used as a basis of the classification of support categories. This tool recognises special educational needs (based on ICF, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of WHO).

In most countries, students with special support needs are enrolled in regular VET schools. However, in Greece, DSE Achaia is aimed specifically at students with learning difficulties. The teachers of those schools have specific knowledge on how to organise programs to suit the students' needs. This school system ensures small groups (5-10 students per class) and also includes extra services of psychologists, social workers and speech therapists. This is in contrast to VOCO in Estonia, where VET professionals report having very few students with disabilities at their school. At KWIC in the Netherlands, there is a dedicated section of the VET organisation specifically for students with hearing impairments and developmental language disorders.

## **Methods to identify students with disabilities who may benefit from support**

Various methods are used to identify students with a disability. Some are similar for the different countries, and some are specifically used in a particular country and not in others.

The school may gain information about students' disabilities through:

- Direct conversations with students.
- Conversations with the students' parents.
- An intake form when students register for the education programme.
- Those people within the school who know the student well, such as a mentor or teacher.
- The support centre or guidance services of the school, or inclusive education teacher.
- Indications received from previous schools the student has attended.
- Presence of external support for a student from a foundation (Spain).
- Using educational databases such as the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS, Estonia) or Séneca in the region of Andalucía (Spain).
- Evaluations of the students' skill levels carried out by the school (math, reading, study skills, motivation, suitability for training) (Finland).
- A personal evaluation report on the students' disabilities, difficulties and educational needs which is assessed by multiple centres and committees outside the school (Greece).

## **Challenges in identifying students with disabilities and their support needs**

VET professionals of multiple countries report that they find it challenging to identify students with disabilities. There are three main reasons for this:

1. Most disabilities are not immediately obvious to notice.
2. It is important to maintain confidentiality of personal information, and
3. Students sometimes choose not to disclose their need for support.

Concerning point 2, there is European legislation to protect personal information (under the General Data Protection Regulation). Although these rules are the same for all of the EU, there are differences per country how strict privacy law is enforced. In one situation health institutions outside the school can communicate directly to VET professionals within the school about the personal information of the student, while in the other situation VET professionals within a school are prohibited from sharing this personal information even with their colleagues.

For instance, at Koning Willem I College in the Netherlands, students can indicate their need for additional support during the intake process for the school, and then the support centre of the school can speak to the student about their needs. However, the support centre cannot share this personal information directly with those who organise

the mobility, even though they are part of the same school. In contrast, at DSE Achaia in Greece, personal health assessment reports from health organisations outside the school are shared directly with the VET professionals, to inform the support organised by the school.

As for point 3, VET professionals of multiple countries have shared that they find it challenging that students do not always indicate that they need extra support. Some of the VET professionals we interviewed had experienced stressful health emergencies during mobilities, when students had not notified the accompanying teachers about their specific health issues. Students may be hesitant to ask for any special treatment, or to share their personal information with people they do not know well.

## **Support available for students with a disability to participate in mobilities**

VET professionals have limited experience and resources for supporting students with disabilities during international mobility. All VET professionals report that there is not one specific method to help students with a disability in before and during the mobility.

### **Support before the mobility: preparation phase**

In general, preparations are not so different for students with disabilities compared to other students: preparations include language courses and a check on language skills, information sessions on the mobility programme discussing questions and expectations, and discussing cultural differences. At a VET institute in Spain, at least three meetings are organised before traveling abroad, which includes the involvement of the internship companies. At KWIC in the Netherlands, students who want to do an internship abroad have to follow a programme to make them aware of the culture of the country they will visit. This includes gathering information about what to do in case of emergency as well as budgeting. At Firda in the Netherlands, budgeting lessons may also be included in the preparations.

Some VET professionals provide checklists to students, to make sure that students have carried out all necessary preparations. A lack of consistent protocols and preparatory measures can lead to unexpected challenges: one VET professional from VOCO in Estonia recalls that a student forgot his passport, which they only found out at the airport, which could have been prevented with a checklist and protocol.

Often, extra preparatory conversations are necessary for students with disabilities with VET professionals to discuss any difficulties that the student may experience, to talk about any fears and doubts students may have, and what kind of mobility would be suitable for the student. The parents may also be involved in these conversations. A VET professional of DSE Achaia in Greece reports that the preparation of mobilities needs to be highly individualised, and it needs to be a coordinated act between students,

their family, teachers, support staff and receiving organisations. They have a special pedagogical team that is responsible for the selection and preparation of students.

At organisational level, additional preparation is needed for students with disabilities to go abroad. For example, VET professionals need to know about the medication that the student should bring with them and whether there are official medical documents required to take the medication abroad. Furthermore, VET professionals need to know whether special insurance or transportation should be arranged, or whether preparatory coaching meetings with a student are necessary to organise prior to the mobility. School psychologists may also be involved in the preparation phase. At SDO in Finland, coaching meetings for a group trip are organised digitally for practical reasons, as the group of students are based in different campuses. Additionally, peer support is organised at SDO through regular 'campus coffee', where students who consider a mobility have the opportunity to learn and ask questions about the experience of students who already have been in a mobility. Students also make posters and presentations about their mobility experience to inform others.

Some but not all of the VET professionals we interviewed knew of the extra financial support that is available through Erasmus+, such as bringing along an extra person for support for the student, or extra coverage for travel costs, extra luggage, a preparatory visit, a sign language interpreter, et cetera. An online meeting with a host partner can also be organised, so that students can meet them before traveling.

If necessary, extra assistance can be organised to help a student with filling in forms, ordering flight tickets, or accompany the student during travel. However, unfortunately some VET institutions (such as in Finland and in Spain) experience a shortage of staff, which means that they are unable to provide extra support.

For group trips, teachers of KWIC in the Netherlands try to identify in advance whether students have additional guidance needs, and plan for this may also be drawn up. They do not share this plan with the international office, as this is deemed not necessary. For example, a student could not participate in a specific activity in the programme because of their disability, so VET professionals decided to alter the programme so that there was an alternative activity that the student could participate in, and all students were free to choose which activity to go to:

*"During a group trip, not all planned activities were suitable for a student with disabilities who was also participating. A parallel activity was then organised. All students could choose which of the two activities they wanted to participate in. In this way, no one felt like they were 'the exception'."*

Another VET professional from KWIC describes how the preparation of a group mobility is adjusted to a students' needs:

*"In the preparation of a group mobility, we check in advance if there is someone who needs specific guidance. Then there is a conversation with the student, in which we ask what the specific wishes are, and whether adjustments are needed in the mobility program. We can make adjustments, for instance creating opportunities to withdraw and be alone during the day. For one group, the day programme was communicated every morning, in which all activities were described down to the minute, because a student with ASD found peace in that. Departments with high numbers of students with ASD organise their own group trips, which are adapted to the target group."*

### **Support during the mobility: travel phase**

VET professionals who accompany a student with disabilities need to be prepared to handle diverse needs effectively. Students with mental health difficulties may for instance need a separate room to sleep, or extra time for solitude and quiet. Providing sufficient adaptation time for students and ensuring robust support systems abroad is crucial. When necessary and financially possible, deaf students ideally should be able to have an interpreter with them throughout the period, including during social activities.

A designated support teacher or tutor in the school or in the hosting country can also provide extra support. Specific support professionals may be involved in supporting the students' needs, such as school psychologists who can provide therapeutic interventions. At KWIC in the Netherlands, VET professionals report that a care coach ('zorgcoach') is often accompanying the students in a mobility: they already know the student, and they know how to recognise and respond to signals from the student if they do not feel well. However, the teachers of the VET programme on healthcare have a background in healthcare themselves, so that they are able to provide support without the help of a specific care coach. Also, at Firda in the Netherlands, the teachers of the VET programme on pedagogy know how to provide strong guidance themselves.

All VET professionals report that there is no specific protocol for emergencies during the mobility for students with disabilities. They mention some examples that are applicable for all students:

- Contact persons are provided for students in internship placements, both in the host country and their tutor of the school.
- In group trips, students are accompanied at all times by staff who are experienced in solving problems.
- Erasmus+ provides a contact person for emergencies.
- For example at Firda, there are crisis managers, and guidelines that states that students misbehaving, consuming alcohol, or not following the program, may be sent home at their own expense.
- At DSE Achaia, each student is equipped with a special info badge in the local language that will give the necessary information and guidance for resolving an emergency.

## **Collaboration within the school**

VET professionals from multiple countries report that there could be more collaboration between the student with disabilities, the teachers of the VET programme, special needs support staff and the international office (those who do the administration for mobilities for instance for Erasmus+ grants).

VET professionals mention that the teachers of the VET programme do not always collaborate or communicate with the support staff. This can be because a teacher knows the student well enough and has enough support skills to be able to provide support without involving the support staff. Teachers can investigate the needs of the student themselves (for instance in close collaboration with the parents) and are able involve the student in a group trip or find a suitable internship, without the help of support staff or the international office. On the other hand, it can also be the case that the teacher is not aware that there are special needs.

Facilitating more collaboration between the teachers of the VET programme, special needs support staff and the international office could be beneficial according to the VET professionals, for instance when:

- The international office informs the support centre about mobility possibilities, so that they can inform students with special needs about those possibilities;
- The international office informs the teachers of the VET programme on the support possibilities for instance in the Erasmus+ programme (through information sessions or a designated contact person);
- The support centre can be more involved in the initial orientation for a mobility, so that support needs are taken into account in the initial phase of planning;
- Someone from the support centre is needed as an accompanying person to provide specific support during the mobility.

## **Ensuring equal opportunities for disabled students in mobility abroad programs**

All educational institutions of the consortium are committed to provide equal opportunities for all students. However, none of the interviewed VET professionals know of specific policies in their VET institutions to promote mobility participation for students with a disability. Independent of policy, VET professionals mention different ways equal opportunities can be ensured for students with support needs:

- Communication about inclusive mobilities to all students and parents, informing them that mobilities are accessible to all students. This communication may include examples of students with disabilities who have participated in a mobility who act as ambassadors.
- Communicating to departments that additional financial resources are available for students with support needs. A contact person with expertise in internationalisation and special needs could train teaching teams.

- Ensure that in the assessment of the applications for student mobilities, priority is given to those who have not been abroad before or who have fewer opportunities (or a specific number of mobilities could be reserved for students with disabilities).
- Ensure that anyone can apply for a mobility experience, regardless of grade, level or age; and ensure an inclusive selection process.
- Ensure that a variety of mobilities are offered in such a way that there is a suitable possibility for everyone. For instance, mobilities can be short or even super-short, traveling with a group, can take the form of an exchange with a school or carrying out a specific project.
- Ensure partnerships with internship companies who have inclusive policies and infrastructure.
- Ensure a safe learning climate, so that students with support needs feel included in general.
- Ensure that the student has confidence in the support measures and a good bond with the accompanying person.
- Ensure that there are always at least two accompanying persons are traveling with a group of students; and assess the need for extra support staff (one-on-one if necessary) before travelling.
- Ensure that the accompanying persons have a contact person who is an expert on mobilities, who they can call in difficult situations to discuss what to do.

Some of these measures are already implemented in the VET institutions, while some of these are hypothetical ideas of what could be improved but is not yet reality.

### **Challenges in ensuring equal opportunities for students with a disability for mobilities**

The VET professionals report that there is still work to be done to ensure equal opportunities. For instance, a VET professional from VOCO, Estonia, reports that they have not used the extra financial support possibilities of Erasmus+, because not many students with disabilities go on a mobility in general. They report that students with disabilities are less often considered for participation in a mobility, because there is a tendency to choose the higher-achieving students who do not have special needs. However, other VET professionals, such as those from SDO Diakonia in Finland and KWIC in the Netherlands, are confident in their ability to encourage and support students with disabilities and they do not see many challenges or barriers for them to participate equally. A VET professional from KWIC mentions that in his department almost every student has a support need, so that accommodating for fewer opportunities is normal for them.

Below, the challenges that were mentioned by VET professionals are listed:

- VET professionals have too little knowledge on available support measures;
- Not enough funding is available to facilitate mobilities for every student;
- Tendency to select higher-achieving students who do not have special needs, and a competitive nature of selection for mobility programs;

- Challenge to find host organisations that are inclusive, accessible and willing to provide accommodations to the students' needs;
- Challenge to find teachers/staff who are willing to accompany the students for the full period abroad or offer one-on-one support;

*"We tried to plan travel with a student with a disability, but it was impossible to get a support teacher because of the lack of staff, even though they had enough financial means to make it happen."*

– VET professional from Spain.

- Concerns of the accompanying person on the big responsibility for the wellbeing of students with (severe) disability and lack of knowledge and skill on how to provide support;

*"Ensuring the student's well-being in a foreign environment can be daunting, especially if the student has significant special needs, such as severe autism, which requires considerable time to adapt—often more time than the programme allows."*

– VET professional from VOCO, Estonia.

*"Without constant supervision, how can the school relinquish responsibility? Sometimes, interventions that are needed have nothing to do with teaching. Should I as a teacher help someone shower? Teachers are not youth care workers."*

– VET professional from Firda, the Netherlands.

- If the accompanying person does not know the student well, this can be a challenge;
- Challenges navigating obstacles for students with physical disabilities during travel and in the host country, environments that are not adapted to their needs (for instance ensuring wheelchair access);
- Students' own awareness of what they could be capable of, the need to overcome fear and insecurities;
- Parents' awareness of opportunities and their encouragement to let their child participate and become more independent (applicable to all students, but especially for students with special needs).

## Training needs of VET professionals

The majority of the VET professionals we interviewed would appreciate training on how to support students with disabilities to go on a mobility. A training should address the following points:

- How to interact with, and prepare students with disabilities;
- What to be prepared for, what are the risks, and what are possible solutions;
- How to prepare students for being placed in a completely new environment;
- Facilitate exchange of experiences between VET professionals (especially those who are very experienced as an accompanying person should transfer their knowledge to their less-experienced colleagues);
- Share examples from other countries;
- Create awareness that it should become normal for a learner with special support needs to go on a mobility;
- Information on the different support measures that are available;
- Relevant opportunities and policies in host countries;
- Knowledge about specific disabilities;
- Opportunities to bring a school psychologist;
- Practical organisational skills and observation skills.

These training needs can be addressed in different ways, for example:

- Facilitating exchange between colleagues: can be organised by the VET institution.
- Information on available support measures: information days of the National Agency of Erasmus+ are appreciated.
- Knowledge about specific disabilities: may be facilitated by expertise centres (i.e. Kentalis in the Netherlands).
- EU toolkits such as 'make it happen' or the IMVET toolkit.

# Chapter 8

## Results focus groups VET students with disabilities

### Preparation for mobility

Students with disabilities who have participated in a mobility report that they had the opportunity to discuss what support they needed for traveling before they went abroad. For the majority of the students that we interviewed, all the practical arrangements were done by a VET professional and they did not have to do this themselves. One student reports that they found a workplace on their own, but this was the exception. Some students were asked by their teacher to participate in a mobility, while others were self-motivated to ask their teacher about mobility options. When we asked what motivated them to go on a mobility, they said:

- They wanted to discover a new culture.
- They heard great stories from others.
- Because of the enthusiasm of a coach/mentor.
- They wanted to try new foods.
- They wanted to boost their career prospects.

Regarding their support needs, one student at KWIC in the Netherlands recalls that it was arranged that a classmate would push her wheelchair during a group trip. However during the trip it turned out all students wanted to volunteer to do that for her. Another student of KWIC found it helpful to read the programme carefully, so that they knew what to expect. Another student mentions that they may have trouble keeping up with a big group if the roads are bad – so they would prefer not to go on a group mobility with a lot of physical activity.

Before departure, students received guidance through group meetings with teachers and peers, where they learn about their destination and what to expect. Family and friends also play a supportive role. Some students received support in improving their English skills. Others report that they received financial assistance from their parents.

Students mention they prepared for their mobility experience through:

- language skills classes
- attending information sessions with other students and teachers
- finding out information about the target country (traffic, currency, culture and cultural norms)
- watching videos about the destination
- following a packing list
- budgeting
- Europass
- team-building exercises
- participate in WhatsApp groups to stay in touch with fellow travellers and mentors

Students received help from:

- Their parents, for instance with printing, packing luggage and looking at the packing list together;
- A coach who talked with the student to make sure that all the paperwork was in order;
- A teacher who gave tips and advice;
- Coordinator of international relations who gave information; and
- Classmates who already participated in previous mobility provided peer mentoring.

In one case, a student from a Spanish VET institution described that they received only very basic information about their mobility, such as the name of the tutor and the name of the company. Regrettably, they report that they did not receive the guidance that they needed.

## **Experiences during mobility**

We asked students about their experiences during their mobility. Students describe overcoming language barriers and adapting to new cultures and foreign food. Some students shared living spaces with their classmates, and others were living alone. Students emphasise the importance of social interaction and forming new friendships. However, the amount of social interaction varied among students. Some built lasting friendships. Group dynamics played an important role during group mobilities, making new friends through shared activities like sports or outings. One student who did an internship reports that they had a good relationship with other employees at the internship company.

A student from SDO Diakonia College of Finland reports:

*"It was exciting to go abroad. I was a little bit worried about my language skills, but it was great to notice I can survive with it. My self-esteem got better when I noticed I would be fine. I also improved my professional competence."*

Some students struggled with transitioning to a different environment and culture, especially in the beginning of the mobility. A student says that they needed extra support for the first week, but after that they needed less support. For one student, their physical challenges were accommodated with careful packing (which made it easier to carry their luggage) and occasional support from other students they were traveling with. Another student had strong anxiety for being in an unknown environment due to autism, but accompanying persons and classmates helped her.

Fellow travellers are a great support to students with disabilities. Multiple students say that they were able to express their needs to other students, for instance their need for personal space, and they found that other students in the group respected their needs.

For example, one student from Firda discussed her specific needs with the other students, so that they were informed about her reactions in certain situations such as fatigue or sensory overload. Importantly, this student did not discuss this with her teachers, because it was not necessary, but she says she would have been open to discussing it with her teacher if it had been necessary. Another student had the experience that his classmates have unconscious biases towards him because of his physical disability, but says that he usually has no difficulty expressing his needs. One student was happy that he did not experience any bias at all from classmates because of his disability. It helped that more students in the group trip expressed their needs and preferences, so that a group dynamic was created where it was okay to talk openly about these needs.

One student experienced financial issues, as the mobility was more expensive than was planned. They also experienced issues adjusting to a change in the accompanying teachers halfway through the mobility. Another student reports that the group trip had a very packed programme, which left too little time for leisure or rest. Another student found it difficult that the programme not always adhered to the schedule that was communicated beforehand. This student would have liked a clearer overview per day of all the activities.

### **Duration and kind of mobility**

We asked students what their preferences were for the duration of the mobility period and the kind of mobility they would ideally participate in. They report that the duration of the mobility was often determined by the school. Multiple students expressed that they would have liked to stay longer. Others preferred shorter group trips, as they do not want to be away from home for a long time. In group mobilities, the duration and destination are already decided by the school. Students who are going by themselves have more freedom to choose their destination based on personal preference.

Several students we interviewed had not yet participated in a mobility. Some of them were positive about participating in a mobility in the future, if they had the opportunity. Others had no desire to go abroad. One student mentions that they would consider going on a group mobility, but not an internship. Their reason was that the groups mobility seemed nicer, closer to home, and the language barrier would be less problematic. When we asked students whether they had any preferences for the duration of a mobility, the students had highly individual preferences. Some students say that two months would be too short, while for others more than two weeks would be absolutely impossible. Multiple students mention that a first mobility could be short, and then it would be an option to stay longer a next time.

### **Fears and concerns**

Before embarking on a learning mobility, students often had concerns about the language barrier, adapting to a new culture, or being away from home for the first time. It can be scary for students when they do not know what is going to happen, or when

there are a lot of people they do not know. Even with good preparation, students feel that something can easily go wrong. For some students, the most important worry was, whether they would be able to cope with being apart from their family and friends. Others were concerned about what was going to happen if they would need medical support during their mobility. However, another student reports that they experienced no fears or barriers because everything was discussed well with the coach in preparation of the mobility. Adopting an adventurous mindset, having previous travel experiences, and support from peers (friends, classmates) helped students overcome their fears.

The students who had not participated in a mobility yet, said they had fears or see obstacles about:

- Getting along with others. For example, due to cultural differences.
- How long the learning mobility is (preference for a shorter mobility).
- Whether it would be with a group or individual travel.
- Not wanting to be alone (i.e. needing their friends or classmates to travel with them).
- The need to have alone time (in the programme and their own room in housing).
- Not being able to speak English and not having enough language skills to communicate.
- Not wanting to go to a country where the language spoken is not English.
- The fact that they have no idea what it might look like, fear of the unknown.
- Foreseeing social problems, being in a group with a lot of people.
- Not knowing if they have to organise a lot themselves: not wanting to deal with airplane tickets, arranging suitable housing.
- Missing a flight or missing something.
- Being in yet another new country (when the country of the school is also still new).
- Not having family quickly accessible in case of a health emergency.
- Homesickness and not being able to return quickly to a familiar place.
- Having to walk long distances.
- Encountering bumpy roads with a wheelchair.
- Not knowing how everything works in a foreign country.
- Insecurities whether they are able to take care of everything themselves.
- Safety, feeling extra vulnerable to criminals.
- Being able to familiarise themselves with a new environment, finding their way in the house and the route to the workplace.
- Difficulty finding peace in a new environment.
- Possible problems with the internship company.
- Needing an accompanying person that they could rely on.
- Having commitments at home.
- If they have to spend money on the mobility, not being able to do that.
- Having to depend on others when traveling by public transportation.

A visually impaired student from the Netherlands explains:

*"For me the length of the stay is currently a deciding factor. With a short-term stay, I would have no problem walking on the arm of a fellow student all the time, but if it were longer, it would make the experience less interesting for me. The dependence then does not outweigh the experience of being abroad."*

Another student from Estonia expresses their need for quiet time:

*"If I go with others, my social battery is sometimes empty and I would like to be able to count on it that I will not be poked in my 'bubble'. For example, if I'm having a bad day where I'm out of glue [expression means: I don't feel well], I wouldn't want to be forced to do any tasks or be the centre of attention. I don't want the strain of being judged. I don't want to be seen to be crashing."*

Importantly, some students with disabilities do not experience direct obstacles, barriers or fears, and have confidence that they could manage. Some students express that they are excited to learn more about how it would work to go on mobility, and find it exciting to travel or live on their own.

### **Awareness and use of support options**

Some students who had participated in a mobility were aware of the financial support that Erasmus+ provided, while others indicated they were unaware of additional support, or had heard of Erasmus+ but did not know what it meant. Most students who had not participated in a mobility before had no idea about the support possibilities available while participating in a mobility programme.

One student said that they would have liked to use the extra support for a preparatory visit. One student had a problem with buying suitable clothing for the weather conditions in the host country, but they discovered during the mobility that the programme could cover this exceptional cost during mobility. Many students with disabilities that had participated in a mobility report that no specific support was needed for their special needs during their mobility.

## Support needs

We asked students who have not participated in a mobility what kind of support they would wish to receive when considering or participating in a mobility program. They mentioned the following support needs:

- Knowing if there is financial support or not.
- Knowing what a mobility could look like.
- Help overcoming the fear of not being able to cope.
- Extra help with English from an English teacher in order to feel more comfortable on communication.
- A person that is there for you abroad.
- Support from classmates or friends who are also going.
- Regular contact with a support person they already know so that they can quickly reach out if they have questions, and have the feeling that someone is there to help.
- Support and encouragement by the teachers, for instance with finding housing and an internship company.
- If a group trip: wanting to get to know the other participants before travelling.
- Knowing what expectations are (from the school or host organisation).
- Support if there is any problem with the host company.
- Receiving important knowledge on the culture, rules, and customs and how money works in the host country.
- Paperwork support during the travel.

Some needs like financial support, a person that is there for the students, and English practice are common support needs. These are also common needs that any student would have, not only students with disabilities. Other needs can be highly individual to the student, for example some students expressed the need for:

- Support with transport, for instance being able to travel to the internship location with a cab.
- Support with basic networking and building social connections if surrounded by unfamiliar people.
- Someone at the internship site who knows about their medical situation and would be willing to provide support with this if needed.
- Needing to have an accompanying teacher with them at all times.

Everything depends on good preparation, and trust in the circumstances abroad, also in case extra help is needed. Students from VOCO Estonia explain:

*"Definitely that arrangements are made beforehand so that there is no stress. So that you don't have to think about accommodation and everything is paid for. And if you are staying with somebody, you know beforehand, so you don't go to a stranger's house. If you are going together, you should make sure that you get on well with each other."*

*"I would like a mentor to come along. Someone to help go around and help with language differences. And to have someone to turn to. If a situation comes up where I can't get along with someone, I could still communicate with them. No other contact with the school would be needed."*

## **Future mobility experiences and possibilities for improvement**

Most students who did not participate in a mobility yet did not know about mobility options, and what would be possible. Clear communication is therefore crucial. Students who did know a bit about the options, were either informed by a teacher, an information session held by the coordinator of international relations, or through knowing classmates who had participated in a mobility.

Most students who had participated in a mobility were open to go on a mobility again, because they had a good experience. Some of them loved the autonomy, some liked living in a very different place than home, and some loved seeing different ways to do the same work in other countries. Students would also like to go again because their fears and barriers are diminished now that they have some experience with going on a mobility. They know they have learned to be more self-dependent now. When students would go on a mobility again, they would take into account if it were a nice group or if they could go together with a friend.

The students who experienced some organisational and financial issues during their first experience with a group trip, are understandably reluctant to go on a group trip again. They would like the organisation to improve logistical planning, particularly with payment methods and meal arrangements. One student has a lactose intolerance which was often overlooked. They also would like improved coordination of transportation.

A student from KWIC in the Netherlands compliments the attention to inclusion in their school:

*"At my friend's school, who is also blind, he gets a few days off when his classmates go abroad because the school finds it too complicated to take him along. I think it's fantastic that my school actually asks us to help finding ways to make international experiences accessible for us."*

Students who have been on a mobility before would appreciate the following improvements:

- Better inform students of mobility opportunities both at the beginning of the study and further down the road
- For instance, improve information dissemination through school channels and mentorship, ensuring clarity and follow-through on agreements.
- Clear communication with the school regarding funding/budget details and personal contributions to the funding.
- Make sure that the schedule is not completely packed with only learning activities, so that there is room for resting, and also have leisure time to see more of a country.
- Guidance for finding internships and housing.
- For instance, provide an overview of internship companies (and contacts) abroad that already have experience with students with support needs.
- Ensuring medical support abroad.

# Annex I

## Definition of Terms on Inclusive Mobilities

<b>Accompanying Person</b>	A person who accompanies participants (learners, staff, young people or youth workers) in a mobility activity in order to ensure their safety, provide support and assistance, as well as assist with the participant's effective learning during the mobility experience. In individual activities, an accompanying person may accompany participants with a disability or minors and youngsters with little experience outside their own country. In case of group activities in the field of education and training, qualified education staff must accompany the group to facilitate the learning process
<b>Accessibility</b>	Accessibility is a wide concept that we can apply to everybody. Therefore, within the IMVET perspective we consider it as "The quality or characteristic of something that ensures to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas". (CRPD, Article 9, New York, 2006)
<b>Communication</b>	It includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology. (CRPD, Article 2, New York, 2006)
<b>Digital Accessibility</b>	It refers to the design and content programming that allows all people to perceive, understand, navigate and interact with that content.
<b>Disability</b>	"Long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments or learning difficulties." (2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD,))
<b>Discrimination on the Basis of Disability</b>	"It means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation". (CRPD, Article 2, New York, 2006)

<b>Human Convention on Right of Persons with Disabilities</b>	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights treaty adopted in 2006 that reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (European Disability Forum)
<b>Impairment</b>	<p>Impairment is an absence of or significant difference in a person's body structure or function or mental functioning. Impairment can be structural or functional, permanent or temporary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structural impairments are significant problems with an internal or external component of the body. Examples of these include a type of nerve damage that can result in multiple sclerosis external icon, or a complete loss of a body component, as when a limb has been amputated.</li> <li>- Functional impairments include the complete or partial loss of function of a body part. Examples of these include pain that doesn't go away or joints that no longer move easily. (Adapted from Centres of Disease Control and Prevention)</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusion</b>	Collective responsibility that aims at transforming or creating an environment that accommodates the diversity of all people, allowing them to be equally respected and have access to equal opportunities in all areas of professional and personal life, social, cultural, educational, and any other areas of societal life.
<b>Inclusive Communication</b>	Inclusive communication is a communication that takes into consideration the needs and characteristics of the recipient of the message. It includes different means and formats of communication such as languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes including communication technology.
<b>Inclusive Education</b>	According to UNESCO, inclusive education is seen as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education."
<b>Inclusive Mobility</b>	<p>In the light of the IMVET project "Inclusive Mobility" refers to the creation and securing of adequate environmental and personal conditions to learn, work, or volunteer abroad for learners with disabilities, by addressing their diverse support needs.</p> <p>In a wider sense, this term refers to the creation and guaranteeing of the adequate conditions to assure access to mobilities to all.</p>

<b>Inclusive Principles</b>	<p>Inclusive mobility for learners with disabilities must respect the following principles stipulated in the Human Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 3, New York, 13 December 2006:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;</li> <li>2. Non-discrimination;</li> <li>3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;</li> <li>4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;</li> <li>5. Equality of opportunity;</li> <li>6. Accessibility;</li> </ol>
<b>Intellectual Disability</b>	<p>A disability that affects the acquisition of knowledge and skills, in particular any of various neurodevelopmental conditions affecting intellectual processes, educational attainment, and the acquisition of skills needed for independent living and social functioning. (Oxford Languages Dictionary).</p>
<b>Learning Agreement</b>	<p>The home and host institution, together with the learner, must have agreed on the activities to be undertaken by the learner - in a 'Learning Agreement' prior to the start of the mobility period. These agreements define the target learning outcomes for the learning period abroad, specify the formal recognition provisions and list the rights and obligations of each party.</p>
<b>Language</b>	<p>It includes spoken and signed languages and other forms of non-spoken languages. (CRPD, Article 2, New York, 2006)</p>
<b>Learning difficulties</b>	<p>Learning difficulties, also known as learning disabilities, are neurodevelopmental disorders that affect an individual's ability to perceive, process, or retain information efficiently. According to academic sources, these difficulties manifest as significant challenges in acquiring academic skills, notably in areas such as reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), or mathematics (dyscalculia). They are intrinsic to the individual, typically stemming from genetic and neurobiological factors, and are not primarily the result of external factors such as inadequate education or socio-economic disadvantages. These difficulties necessitate specialised instructional strategies and interventions to support the affected individuals in achieving their academic potential.</p>

<b>Neurodiversity</b>	<p>"Neurodiversity describes differences in brain function from person to person that affect daily mental functions". (Armstrong T., 2011)</p> <p>It embraces differences in brain function and behaviour as a natural manifestation of humanity's variety, rather than viewing them as wrong or problematic.</p> <p>Neurodiversity: Definition and Impact (Neurodiversity: Definition and Impact (verywellmind.com))</p>
<b>Tutor/ In the Hosting Organisation (Company, Association...)</b>	The tutor in the hosting organisation is the person designated in the Learning Agreement as the contact person to follow up the progress and the learning outcomes achieved, during the learner's internship. This person can also be called coach or mentor.
<b>Mobility Coordinator</b>	Person in charge of the general coordination of mobility programmes in a sending or coordination organisation
<b>Physical accessibility</b>	This refers to the quality or characteristic of something that ensures to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment or to transportation.
<b>Physical disability</b>	A physical disability is a condition that significantly impairs an individual's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity, or stamina. This impairment can be congenital (present at birth) or acquired due to injury, illness, or degenerative conditions. Physical disabilities can affect various bodily systems, including the musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular, or respiratory systems, and can manifest in a wide range of severities. Individuals with physical disabilities may require assistive devices, adaptive technologies, or modifications in their environment to perform daily activities and participate fully in society. This definition encompasses both permanent and temporary impairments and recognises the diverse nature of physical disabilities and their impact on a person's ability to engage in typical life activities.
<b>Receiving Organisation</b>	In charge of receiving students/staff from abroad and offering them a study/traineeship programme or a programme of training activities, or benefiting from a teaching activity. These responsibilities also include grant payments (to those participants coming from third countries not associated to the Programme). (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2023)

<b>Sending Organisation</b>	In charge of selecting students/staff and sending them abroad. These responsibilities also include grant payments (for those participants in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme), preparation, monitoring and automatic recognition related to the mobility period. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2023)
<b>Students with fewer opportunities</b>	Students who experience hinder from one or a combination of the following barriers: disabilities, health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social barriers, economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination or geographical barriers (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2023)
<b>Intermediary Organisation</b>	This is an organisation active in the labour market or in the fields of education, training and youth work in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme. It may be a member in a mobility consortium, but is not a sending organisation. Its role may be to share and facilitate the administrative procedures of the sending higher education institutions and to better match student profiles with the needs of enterprises in case of traineeships and to jointly prepare participants.
<b>Coordinator/ Coordinating Organisation</b>	A participating organisation applying for an Erasmus+ grant on behalf of a consortium of partner organisations. The coordinator has special obligations foreseen in the grant agreement. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2023)
<b>Preparatory Visit</b>	A visit to a prospective hosting organisation by staff from the sending organisation with the purpose of better preparing a learner or staff mobility activity. Each preparatory visit must have a clear reasoning and must serve to improve inclusiveness, scope and quality of mobility activities. Learners who will take part in long-term learning mobility and participants with fewer opportunities in any type of activity can take part in preparatory visits for their activities. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2023)
<b>Reasonable Accommodation</b>	It means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (CRPD, Article 2, New York, 2006)

<b>Sensory disabilities</b>	<p>A sensory disability is a condition that significantly impairs one or more of an individual's sensory systems, which can include vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. These impairments can be congenital (present at birth) or acquired due to injury, illness, or degenerative conditions. Sensory disabilities affect the body's ability to receive and process sensory information from the environment, leading to challenges in perceiving and interacting with the world. Examples include blindness, low vision, deafness, hearing loss, and disorders affecting taste, smell, or touch. Individuals with sensory disabilities may require assistive devices, adaptations, or specialised training to enhance their ability to perform daily activities and fully participate in society.</p>
<b>Universal Design</b>	<p>It means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. (CRPD, Article 2, New York, 2006)</p>

# Annex II

## Focus groups questions

### VET professionals

1. How are disabled students defined within the context of vocational education and support services?
2. What methods are used to identify disabled students who might benefit from targeted support programs?
3. What forms of support are available for disabled students participating in mobility abroad programs?
4. How do educational institutions ensure equal opportunities for disabled students in mobility abroad programs?
5. Why is participating in a study abroad programmes considered important or necessary for every student, including those with disabilities?
6. What are your experiences supporting disabled students within mobility programs, and how do these impact their educational journey?
7. How does your educational institution facilitate collaboration between students with disabilities and special needs support staff, especially in the context of mobility abroad programs?
8. What support does your institution offer to disabled students undertaking mobility abroad programs before going abroad?
9. What protocols are in place to address problems or emergencies encountered by disabled students during mobility abroad programs?
10. How did you become aware of the support possibilities and programs available to these students, such as Erasmus or school-specific support, before and during their mobility?
11. What (personal) barriers do you face that withhold you for supporting a mobility for students with a disability? What personal barriers might prevent disabled students from accessing support services, and how can these be overcome?
12. Are you aware of specific policy or strategy concerning disabled students going on a mobility? How is policy or strategy developed within your educational institution to better support disabled students, particularly in relation to mobility abroad programs?
13. What are the potential outcomes and benefits of mobility abroad programs for disabled students, and how can these be maximised?
14. Do you consider it helpful or even necessary that educational staff receives training in supporting or accompanying this target group? What training would be useful?

## **Students with mobility experience**

1. Preparation for mobility: How did you prepare for your mobility abroad experience?
2. Experiences during mobility: What experiences have you had during your stay abroad? Think of language, social engagement, food, living, school life, etc.)
3. (Educational) support before mobility: What kind of (educational) support have you received before your stay abroad? Think of school, teachers, parents, friends..
4. Duration and choice of mobility: How did you choose the length and destination of your mobility abroad? Was the length of stay a factor in choosing the mobility?
5. Awareness and use of Erasmus programmes and support: How aware were you of the Erasmus programmes and the support it offers, and how did you make use of it?
6. Awareness and use of school and internship support: How did you find out about and use the support systems from your school or internship while abroad?
7. Social life during mobility: What was your social life like during your mobility?
8. Awareness and use of necessary support for students with special needs: How did you become aware of and use the available support for your special needs while studying abroad?
9. Educational support during mobility: What kind of educational support could you expect while studying abroad? Of what support did you make use of?
10. Fears and strengths: What fears/barriers did you face before going abroad and what strengths helped you overcome them?
11. Difficulties discussing needs and prejudices: What difficulties did you face when discussing your needs and confronting prejudices abroad?
12. Motivation for mobility:
  - a. Would you go again?
  - b. Yes or no? Why?
  - c. What should happen that you would go again?
13. What motivated you to do a mobility abroad, and would you do it again? Why or why not?
14. What would need to happen or change for you to consider another study abroad program?

## **Students without experience (willing or not willing to go on a mobility)**

1. Willingness to go on a mobility: How willing are you to participate in a mobility program? Can you elaborate on that? If you are willing to, can you explain? If not, please elaborate.
2. Concerns and fears about mobility: What concerns or fears do you have about going on a mobility program?
3. Knowledge about mobility possibilities: What do you know about the mobility opportunities available to you?
4. Barriers to mobility: What barriers do you believe could prevent you from participating in a mobility program?
5. Desired support: What kind of support do you wish to receive while considering or participating in a mobility program?
6. General experience with traveling abroad: What has been your general experience with traveling abroad?
7. Concerns about the duration of mobility: Do you have any concerns about the length of time you would be spending abroad in a mobility program? Would the length of stay be a no-go?
8. Ideal conditions for a mobility: What would be the ideal conditions for you to participate in a mobility program? What would be your wished, model mobility?
9. Knowledge about school- and Erasmus programmes and support: What do you know about school programs and support and about the Erasmus programmes and the support it provides?
10. Contact with school/coach and the need for it: How important is it for you to have contact with your school or a coach during your mobility program? Can you elaborate on that?
11. Knowledge about support possibilities: What do you know about the support possibilities available to you while participating in a mobility program?
12. Personal benefits of a mobility: What personal benefits do you expect to gain from participating in a mobility program?

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