

EUROGUIDANCE

The term mobility has many different interpretations, but in the context of education, it refers to the mobility of knowledge. This happens through student mobility in education within and between countries, the mobility between disciplines and sectors in education and the mobility of education programme delivery. In some countries it is known as learning mobility, mobility in learning or mobility education. Euroguidance Ireland, hosted by NCGE, is part of the Euroguidance network which promotes educational mobility, helping guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand the opportunities available to European citizens throughout Europe.



Educational Mobility



Why is educational mobility important in Europe?

Educational mobility is on the increase across Europe and more students are travelling to study on short-term exchanges, for semester or year-long periods or even do to their full degree or masters abroad. The European Commission actively promotes the development of student mobility and this has been a key political goal since the start of the Bologna process in 2009.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en

Such educational mobility is seen as ‘fostering desirable competences, including the further development of students’ personalities, the promotion of their linguistic capabilities and the generation of intercultural sensitivity and professional competences’.

http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/IB_Short_term_mobility_091211.pdf

‘The EU already has an excellent track record of actively promoting mobility, starting with university students but also including post primary level pupils, vocational students and young professionals as well as teachers, thanks to the Erasmus+ programme. Most recently, the Commission launched the European Solidarity Corps, which offers new opportunities for volunteering, traineeships and jobs for EU young people between the ages of 18 and 30. In 2017,

the project Move2Learn Learn2Move has given the chance to young Europeans to discover and learn about Europe.’

https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20171411-strengthening-european-identity-through-education-and-culture_en

This drive to encourage students to study abroad is evident in the way the European Commission set a target of ‘20% of graduates from Higher Education institutions in Europe to have experience of studying or training abroad by 2020’. This target was part of the Bologna agreement in 2009 and since then, all EU countries have been intensively promoting the educational mobility process to their students, primarily through Erasmus programmes, where students registered in an EU educational institution can apply for a study placement in another EU institution for a period of time. Other students do shorter college study placements, school exchanges, or voluntary or internship placements.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en

What are the benefits of educational mobility?

- **Increased employability**

Many European employers have reported that they have difficulties in finding people with the skills they need to grow and innovate. Educational mobility creates

adaptable and flexible workers who are attractive to employers who need workers who can adjust quickly to the workplace and bring their varied experience with them.

The European Commission continues to promote mobility for a number of valid reasons.

‘Greater labour force mobility, both between jobs (occupational mobility) and within and between countries (geographic mobility), is believed to contribute to economic and social progress, a high level of employment, and to balanced and sustainable development. It also enables the European economy, employment and labour force to adapt to changing circumstances more smoothly and efficiently, and to provide the impetus for change in a competitive global economy. A greater degree of mobility between Member States will also foster closer political integration in the EU’.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/job-mobility>



- **Transferability of qualifications**

In the past, it was difficult to secure recognition of qualifications between European countries, but a lot of work has been done in this area under the European Commission. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a credit system designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their ECTS credits from one

university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training.

ECTS helps to make learning more student-centred. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to make national systems more compatible. Greater transparency of learning achievements simplifies the recognition of studies done in other countries. ECTS also makes it possible to merge different types of learning, such as university and work-based learning, within the same programme of study or in a lifelong learning perspective.

This is good news for students wishing to study abroad today, as it is far easier to combine study periods spent abroad with study in their home country. There are options of dual degrees and especially an increase in dual masters degrees organised and delivered between two (and sometimes three) European countries. These are becoming more popular with students and colleges.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en.htm



- **Personal development**

There are many benefits of studying abroad and ways to grow both professionally and personally. Students who have studied abroad develop an expertise in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication which may become an asset when working on any multi-cultural team in the professional world. Studying abroad also shows employers that students are able to adapt to new settings, and are not afraid of change.

Educational Mobility for Irish Students



What are Irish students doing?

More than one in four students enrolled in Irish higher education institutions intend to study abroad at some point in their academic careers. This figure is according to the Eurostudent Survey VI – Report on the Social and Living Conditions of Higher Education Students in Ireland (2016) published by the Higher Education Authority and launched Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) in January 2018.

The report states that 6% of those surveyed had already engaged in a learning period abroad while 26% indicate that they plan to undertake such a visit. Law students are the most likely to go abroad (43%) followed by Humanities and Arts at 41%. 60% of the respondents stated that their mobility was organised through the Erasmus programme. Interestingly, 21% organised their own mobility and 19% were supported by another programme.

The top five destinations for students from Ireland according to the Eurostudent survey were France, the UK, the USA, Germany and Spain.

 <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/01/HEA-Eurostudent-Survey.pdf>

 <http://eurieland.ie/2018/02/07/1-in-4-students-at-irish-heis-wants-to-study-abroad-at-some-stage/>

There is clear evidence that Irish educational mobility is on the increase and this is reinforced by the targets set by the Irish government’s Department of Education and Skills in order to extend this further.

What targets are set for Educational Mobility in Ireland?

In the *Action Plan for Education 2018* launched in February 2018, the target for Irish students enrolled in Irish higher education institutions to spend part of their course abroad is 20%.

 <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018.pdf>

In an earlier report, Languages Connect – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026, the following targets were included:

- to increase the number of participants in Erasmus+ by at least 50% and
- to increase the proportion of Higher Education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity as part of their course to 20%

 https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_strategy.pdf

These Irish targets compare well with other European countries. The Steeplechase report (2012), a study investigating plans for and obstacles to temporary enrolment abroad in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland, found that:

‘In Austria and Germany the goal is for around half of all graduates to have had a study-related experience abroad by 2020. In Switzerland the goal is 20% and in The Netherlands it is 25%’.

 <http://www.eurostudent.eu/about/associated/steeplechase>

How can these targets be achieved?

A key part of promoting educational mobility is to begin informing students at post-primary level. Following on from the Mobility Guidance Counselling CPD provided by NCGE for Guidance Counsellors in 2017 to help them to encourage and motivate students to consider studying abroad, a programme for post-primary Transition Year students, Euro-Quest, is currently being piloted and will be launched in schools in 2019.

Euro-Quest is designed to give students an opportunity to explore the idea of studying abroad for a semester, an academic year, or for an entire degree. It begins with an overview of Europe, the European Union and the Erasmus+ programme. It examines practical issues and challenges a student may face while living and studying in a new country. Students are presented with resources and tools to research options for studying across Europe.

It is expected that when Transition Year students have completed the Euro-Quest programme before they make decisions about which further and higher education courses that they will apply for, that they will be more informed about their options of studying abroad and will have the knowledge and confidence to choose courses which have the option of studying abroad and courses with a language component. They will be aware that there are a variety of routes to choose from, whether it is complete immersion in a foreign culture and language in a degree course delivered in another language, or partial immersion where the course is delivered through English or a term or year abroad within a course they are studying in their own country.

The Euro-Quest programme aims to lead students forward towards the European Commission’s vision for education in 2025 where:

‘A vision for 2025 would be a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one’s mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm, a continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe’s cultural heritage and its diversity’.

 https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20171411-strengthening-european-identity-through-education-and-culture_en

