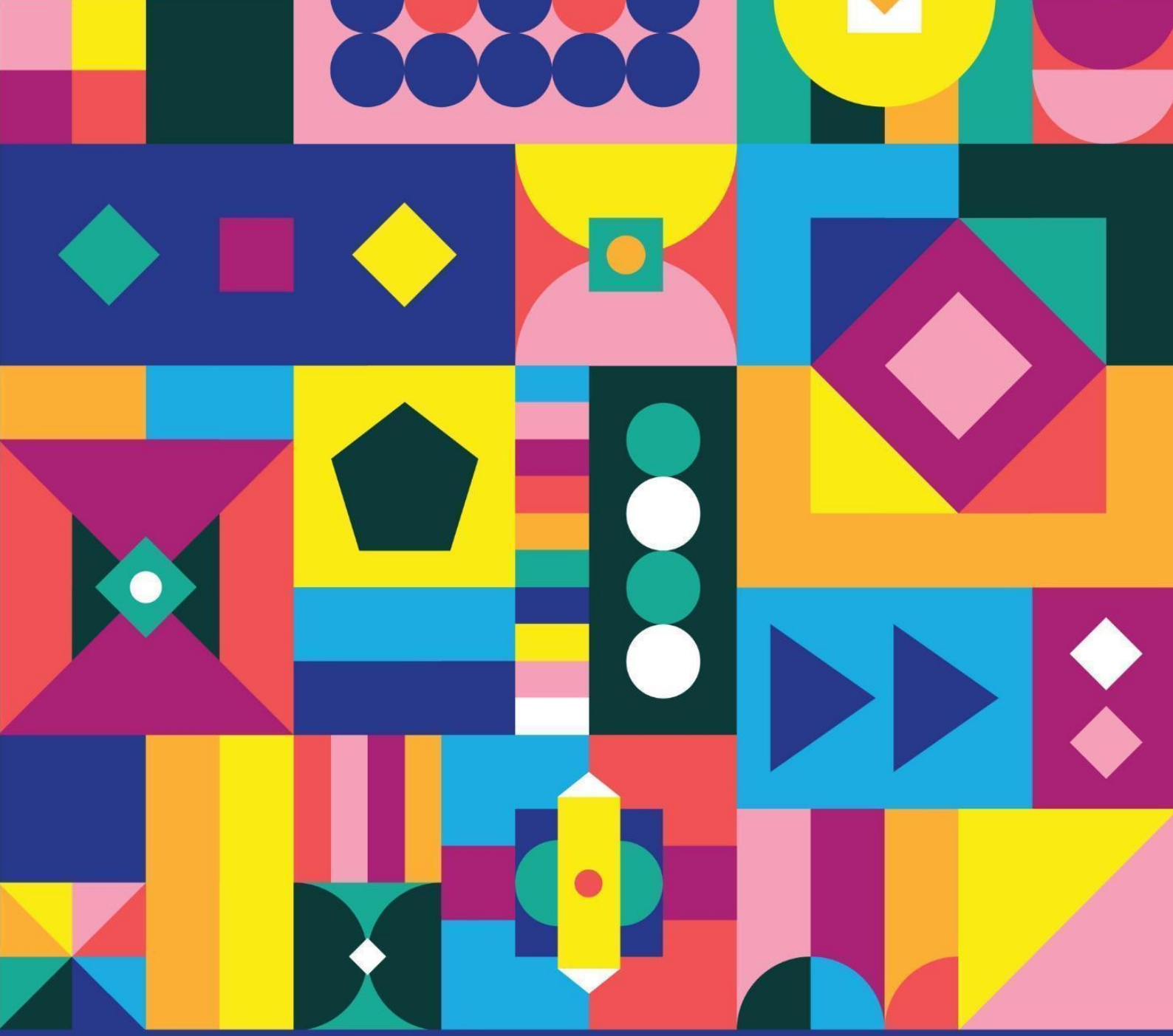


Study on the Effects and Perceived Impact of Erasmus+ Staff Mobility in Higher Education

Research report
Tallinn 2026

Republic of Estonia
Education and Youth Board

erasmus+ and
european solidarity
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STORIES FOR IMPACT

This report was compiled by Stories For Impact OÜ on behalf of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency as part of the 'Study on the Effects and Perceived Impact of Erasmus+ Staff Mobility in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education'.

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Executive summary

The survey results show that **satisfaction among those who have participated in learning mobility is very high**, and there are only a few experiences perceived as negative. Satisfaction is not merely reflected in the overall assessment, but is clearly linked to participants' assessments of their increased motivation, opportunities for personal development and the expansion of their professional network.

Both academic and non-academic educational staff actively participate in learning mobility, the majority of whom work full-time. Whilst there is a fairly even distribution of people with different lengths of service among the participants, the largest group among non-participants consists of those who have been in their current post for less than five years.

Repeated participation in learning mobility is common. Indeed, more than half of the respondents had taken part in learning mobility 2–5 times over the past four years. Furthermore, the experience of those who had participated in learning mobility was predominantly recent – in just over three-quarters of cases, the most recent learning mobility took place less than a year ago.

The development of participants' **competences** is reflected in multiple ways. For academic staff, the development resulting from learning mobility is most closely linked to improvements in teaching practice (methods that engage learners, more informed planning of the learning process, updating course content, and the use of international examples). For non-academic staff, this development is primarily reflected in an increase in knowledge and practical skills within their field of work, as well as improvements in their day-to-day work (e.g. streamlining processes, implementing ideas for communication and service design). In this regard, staff at universities of applied sciences perceive their development to be slightly greater in almost all aspects compared to staff at universities.

Changes in day-to-day work manifest themselves in three main areas. Firstly, changes in teaching practice and the organisation of studies (e.g. active learning methods, diversification of assessment methods, more practical assignments, innovations in course structure, greater integration of the intercultural dimension). Secondly, changes in work organisation and collaboration (establishing new channels of collaboration, work plans with partners, and team-based learning). Thirdly, practical support for the drive towards internationalisation (developing external relations and networks, and better understanding the international opportunities available to students and staff).



There is a difference in the perceived impact on work **depending on staff type**: academic staff see an impact on teaching and curriculum development, whilst for non-academic staff, changes in the improvement of work processes, services and support functions are important.

The expansion of international networks and closer cooperation are perceived as one of the greatest impacts of learning mobility: participating educational staff highly value the establishment of contacts and the strengthening of partnerships (including joint projects and long-term partnerships). At the same time, there is a perceived increase in the ability to take cultural diversity into account, as well as improvements in foreign-language communication and greater self-confidence, which supports both teaching in an international learning environment and cooperation. Furthermore, the interviews highlighted that a large proportion of information and opportunities related to international opportunities is disseminated precisely through networks and direct communication.

The impact on educational institutions participating in learning mobility was most evident in the strengthening of internationalisation and cooperation networks, and in increased collaboration with external partners. At the same time, perceptions of the implementation of management innovations are more mixed. Compared to participants, non-participants perceive less impact at the institutional level. Often, they are not even aware of whether and how results are disseminated, or what changes have taken place within the institution.

The wider sectoral impact is primarily evident through networks and projects focusing on cross-organisational issues: participants describe an expansion of international cooperation and, in some cases, the initiation or consideration of broader projects.

A mixed picture emerges regarding **blended mobility**: those participants whose learning mobility already included a virtual component generally consider it relevant; at the same time, those whose learning mobility did not include it do not generally see it as necessarily adding value. However, the survey revealed that the virtual component can play a positive or even essential role, both in terms of organisation and content, before, during and after the learning mobility. Most educational staff who had experienced blended mobility were able to provide relevant practical examples, as were some of those who had felt the absence of it.

Most participants in learning mobility confirmed that **their institution recognised** their **learning mobility as part of their work**, for example in performance appraisals, when calculating their workload, or as professional development. The study revealed that such recognition is important to most staff, but the importance of recognition, as well as the understanding and implementation of opportunities, vary significantly across both institutions and job roles.



Furthermore, it was noted in the focus groups that the term 'recogn*ition*' may remain unclear to some staff members. This was also confirmed by some of the survey responses.

Barriers to participating in learning mobility fall into several categories. Non-participating educational staff perceive the difficulty in identifying a suitable opportunity as the most significant barrier: a suitable professional development opportunity has not been found, or they have not even begun to look for one. Less significant, but still worthy of attention, are barriers related to work organisation and finding cover: it is difficult to reconcile learning mobility with teaching duties (and sometimes the workload of multiple roles) and family commitments.

The majority of non-participants (mostly) wish to take part in learning mobility in the future. At the same time, only a very small proportion of non-participants have not heard of learning mobility being organised at their educational institution or do not see the need to participate in learning mobility. Both the survey and the interviews revealed that the greatest demand is for support in taking the first steps towards finding a suitable learning mobility opportunity and, in particular, in overcoming the obstacles faced by the individual (e.g. work arrangements and workload, family circumstances). In addition, some staff members need the opportunity to take part in learning mobility in groups as a source of encouragement.

Introduction

The overall objective of the Erasmus+ staff mobility for teaching and learning measure[1] in higher education is to contribute to the creation of a European Education Area with a global reach and to strengthen the interconnection between higher education and research.

As part of professional development, **the aim of learning mobility for higher education staff** is to offer them the opportunity to teach or take part in training abroad in order to:

- share expertise;
- gain experience in new teaching environments;
- acquire new, innovative pedagogical and curriculum development skills, as well as digital skills;
- network with colleagues abroad to plan joint activities aimed at achieving the programme's objectives;
- exchange best practice and foster cooperation between higher education institutions;
- better prepare students for working life.

In addition, the aim is to encourage the development of cross-national and interdisciplinary curricula and the development of innovative learning and teaching methods (including online collaboration, inquiry-based learning and problem-based approaches focused on specific societal challenges).

Between 2021 and 2025, there were just over 6,800 staff mobilities in higher education, and following the easing of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of such placements has increased significantly. Whilst there were 266 staff mobilities from Estonia to foreign countries in higher education in 2021, the figures rose to 1,081 in 2022, 1,515 in 2023, 1,828 in 2024 and 2,114 in 2025.

Broken down by activity, in 2025 there were 1,771 staff mobilities in higher education for training purposes, whilst 343 involved teaching abroad.

Although Erasmus+ learning mobility has been taking place in Estonian higher education for over two decades, **there has so far been no comprehensive overview at national level of** the results and impact of educational staff's learning mobility **during this programme period**,

[1] Erasmus+ Programme Guide (Version 2: February 2025): https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/documents-and-guidelines/erasmus-programme-guide-2025-version-2

either at the individual or institutional level. Nor were the factors influencing the effectiveness of learning mobility known in detail.

For this reason, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency commissioned a study in 2025–2026 entitled 'The Effects and Perceived Impact of Erasmus+ Staff Mobility in School Education, Vocational Educational and Training, and Higher Education', as part of which the institutions and individuals involved in the learning mobility of higher education staff were also examined.

In line with the objective, the following research questions were formulated

1. What is the level of satisfaction among educational staff with learning mobility, both as participants and as staff members of institutions participating in learning mobility, regardless of their own experience of participation?
2. How does Erasmus+ learning mobility support the development of educational staff's professional and key competences (including digital skills)?
3. What changes have educational staff implemented in their day-to-day work (including academic staff in their teaching practice) resulting from participating in learning mobility?
4. What is the perceived impact of learning mobility at the level of the educational institution?
5. What is the perceived impact of learning mobility on the sector more broadly?
6. What are the factors within the educational institution that influence the manifestation of the impact of learning mobility?
7. What is the attitude of staff at higher education institutions towards learning mobility?
8. How is learning mobility integrated into the work of educational staff, and what is its perceived relevance?
9. What are the practices regarding the recognition of learning mobility in higher education institutions?
10. What is the extent to which the outcomes of learning mobility are disseminated within higher education institutions?
11. What are the factors hindering educational staff's participation in learning mobility, and how might these be overcome?

Methodology

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Survey

Data were collected via an online questionnaire, the content of which was tailored to the experience and profile of the various respondents, i.e. educational staff who had and had not participated in learning mobility, academic and non-academic educational staff who had participated in learning mobility, and staff at universities and universities of applied sciences.

The questionnaire covered nine main topics

1. Satisfaction with learning mobility
2. Competences developed resulting from learning mobility (including digital skills)
3. Changes at work resulting from learning mobility
4. Impact of learning mobility at institutional level
5. Valuing learning mobility in educational institutions
6. Blended mobility
7. Recognition of learning mobility
8. Dissemination of learning mobility outcomes
9. Factors hindering participation in learning mobility

For educational staff who had participated in learning mobility, the study examined the development of both professional competences and selected key competences (digital, multilingual and cultural competences). With regard to academic staff, the focus was on their professional competences (e.g. planning the learning process and selecting teaching methods). The educational staff members who took part in the survey described the changes made to their work resulting from learning mobility and, depending on the objectives of the measure, provided a quantitative assessment of the extent to which the listed expected changes had been implemented in their institution. The dissemination activities undertaken and their sufficiency were also assessed. In addition, educational staff assessed the value placed on learning mobility within educational institutions and its recognition as professional development. Staff who had participated in blended mobility assessed its relevance.

Educational staff who had not participated in learning mobility assessed the factors that had prevented their participation. Furthermore, like the participants, they assessed the value placed on learning mobility and how its expected impact was reflected within their own



educational institution. The survey also identified the dissemination activities in which they had participated and sought their assessment of the adequacy of these activities.

An Estonian-language questionnaire was sent to all universities and universities of applied sciences (18 in total) that received funding for Erasmus+ higher education staff mobility projects for the period 2021–2025. The commissioning body forwarded the link to the survey to the mobility coordinator at each institution, who in turn shared it with the staff. Responses were collected between 20 May and 11 September 2025.

A total of 216 educational staff members began the survey, of whom 157 had participated in learning mobility and 59 had not. Of those who began the survey, 180 responded to it in full. The average completion rate for the survey was therefore 79% (including 83% among participants and 70% among non-participants). In agreement with the client, the analysis took into account all questionnaires that had been started and contained substantive responses. Consequently, the number of respondents varies across the questions, as the number of respondents typically decreased with each subsequent question.

In addition, educational staff were given the opportunity to complete an English-language questionnaire, which was identical in structure and content to the Estonian version. Responses to this were collected between 29 August and 11 September 2025, and 24 people began the questionnaire. Of these, 22 had participated in learning mobility and 2 had not. Of those who started the questionnaire, 19 responded to it in full. Due to the small sample size and uncertainty regarding possible systematic differences compared with the Estonian-language sample, the Estonian- and English-language samples were not combined. However, the differences between the results of the two samples were examined. It emerged that the results were similar both in terms of numerical ratings and the typology of the qualitative data. In the analysis, the open-ended responses from the English-language questionnaire were taken into account to supplement the qualitative part of the study.

The questionnaire contained scale-based, multiple-choice and open-ended questions. For the most part, the Likert scale was used for scaled questions: 1 – completely disagree, 2 – rather disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – rather agree, 5 – completely agree. In terms of the scale used, questions concerning the overall satisfaction with learning mobility and the importance of continuing learning mobility differed.

Satisfaction with learning mobility was assessed using the following response options: very satisfied, satisfied, more or less, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. The question regarding how important respondents considered the continuation of learning mobility to be could be answered with the following options: very important, rather important, rather not important and not important. Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the results, and for

scaled questions, the results were expressed as the proportion of positive responses (the proportion of response options 4 and 5).

For the analysis of data from open-ended questions, an inductive approach and a three-stage thematic analysis were used. First, literal units of meaning were identified in the text and grouped into codes based on their content. The codes were then combined into broader themes.

Interviews

The qualitative part of the study examined the role and broader impact of learning mobility in higher education, as well as the dissemination of experiences gained through learning mobility, the planning of learning mobility and the selection of participants, barriers to participation and ways of overcoming them, and opportunities for amplifying the impact of learning mobility within educational institutions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between 14 October 2025 and 13 January 2026. Participants were identified through contacts provided by the client, with an emphasis on diversity in participant profiles (including types of institutions and experience of learning mobility).

Four group interviews were attended by 7 coordinators and 3 members of senior management from universities of applied sciences, and 6 and 4 respectively from universities. In addition, individual interviews were held with the heads of two universities. A total of 22 people took part in the interviews.

The analysis of the qualitative section was based on summaries derived from the transcripts of the individual and group interviews, and the responses were grouped under key themes according to the research questions. The analysis compared the perspectives of different target groups to highlight patterns and differences between groups in how they described the role and impact of learning mobility, the dissemination of experiences, the selection of participants, the main obstacles, and ways to enhance the impact of learning mobility.



Respondents' background

A total of 216 higher education staff members responded to the survey: 157 had participated in learning mobility and 59 had not. Of the respondents, 125 were academic staff and 91 were non-academic staff.

Of those who had participated in learning mobility, 62% were academic staff and 38% were non-academic staff (see Figure 1). Among those who had not participated in learning mobility, the proportions of academic and non-academic staff were almost equal – 48% and 52% respectively (see Figure 2). As the absolute number of those not participating in learning mobility is relatively small (59), the report does not distinguish between specific subgroups of non-participants.

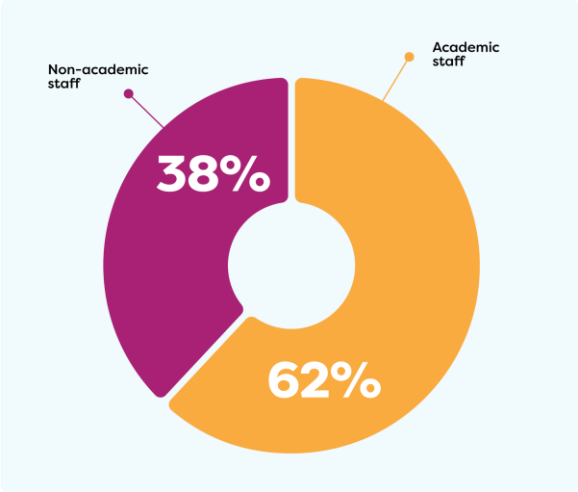


Figure 1. Distribution of educational staff who have participated in learning mobility (n = 157)

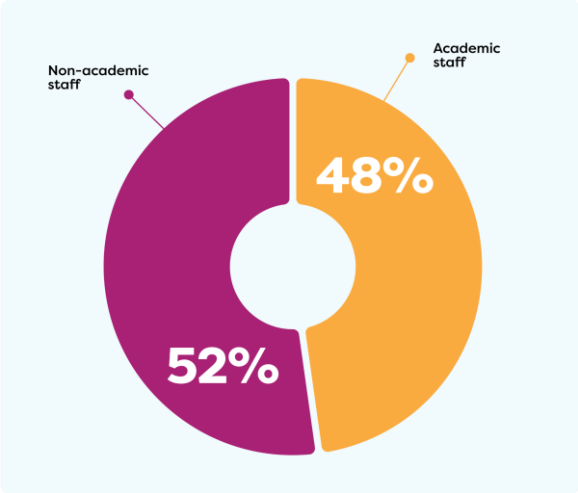


Figure 2. Distribution of educational staff who did not participate in learning mobility (n = 59)

Of all respondents, 125 work at a university and 91 at a university of applied sciences. Among those who participated in learning mobility, two-thirds (67%) work at a university and 33% at a university of applied sciences. Of those who have not participated in learning mobility, 32% work at a university and 68% at a university of applied sciences.

Among non-academic staff, the most frequently mentioned areas of work (related to international cooperation) were coordination, academic administration and student support, project and programme management, and the management of units and departments; specialist roles were also mentioned.

A more detailed distribution of educational staff who participated in learning mobility, by type of educational institution and main job category, is shown in Figure 3.

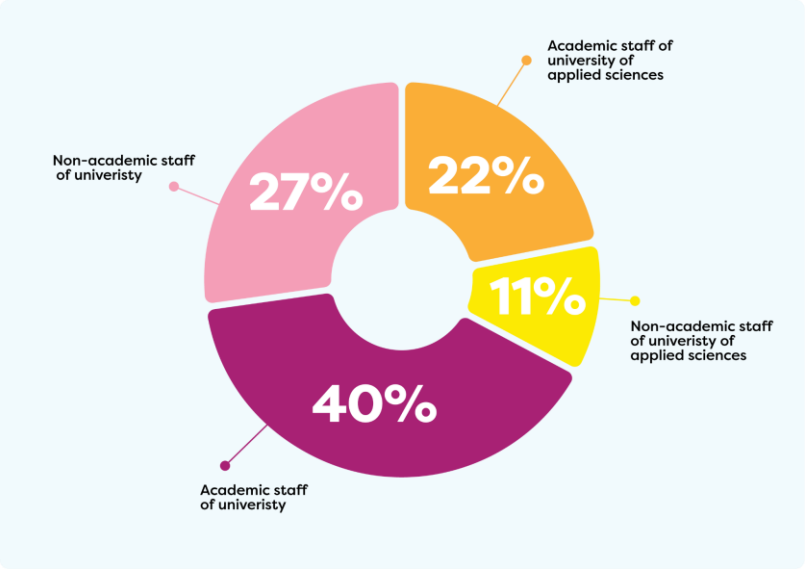


Figure 3. Proportion of educational staff who participated in learning mobility, by position and type of educational institution (n = 160)

Of the educational staff who took part in learning mobility, the largest proportion worked at institutions with 1,000–5,000 students (48%), 32% in institutions with 5,000 or more students, 13% in institutions with 500–1,000 students, and 7% in institutions with up to 500 students. The distribution of educational institutions where staff not participating in learning mobility were employed followed the same pattern in terms of student numbers.

Of these, 27 respondents had taught abroad, 101 had taken part in learning mobility for training purposes, and 26 had done both.

Distribution of staff who have and have not participated in learning mobility, by workload

82% of those who had participated in learning mobility and 75% of those who had not worked full-time. 12% and 9%, respectively, work more than half-time but less than full-time, whilst 6% and 16% work half-time or less.

Distribution of staff who participated in and did not participate in learning mobility by length of service

Figure 4 shows that the respondents who had participated in learning mobility were fairly evenly distributed across different lengths of service (excluding those who had worked for more than 25 years). Among those who had not participated in learning mobility, the differences in length of service were greater: the largest group (54%) had worked for less than

5 years, 20% had worked for 5–15 years, 16% for 15–25 years and 10% for more than 25 years.

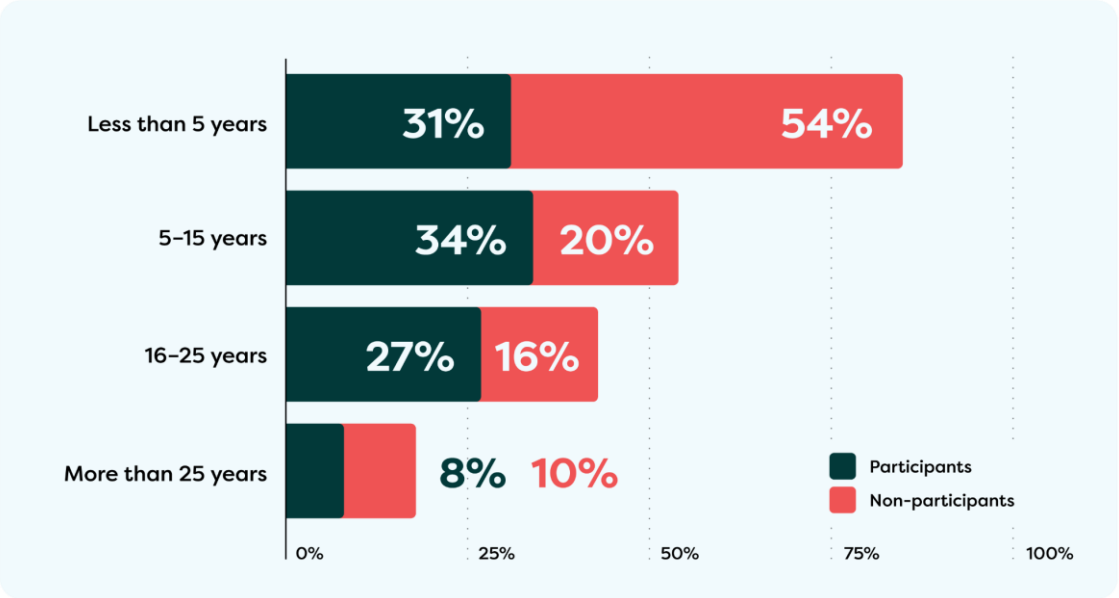


Figure 4. Distribution of staff who had participated in learning mobility (n = 158) and those who had not (n = 61) by length of service

Frequency of participation in learning mobility

Figure 5 shows the distribution of participants in learning mobility by frequency of participation.

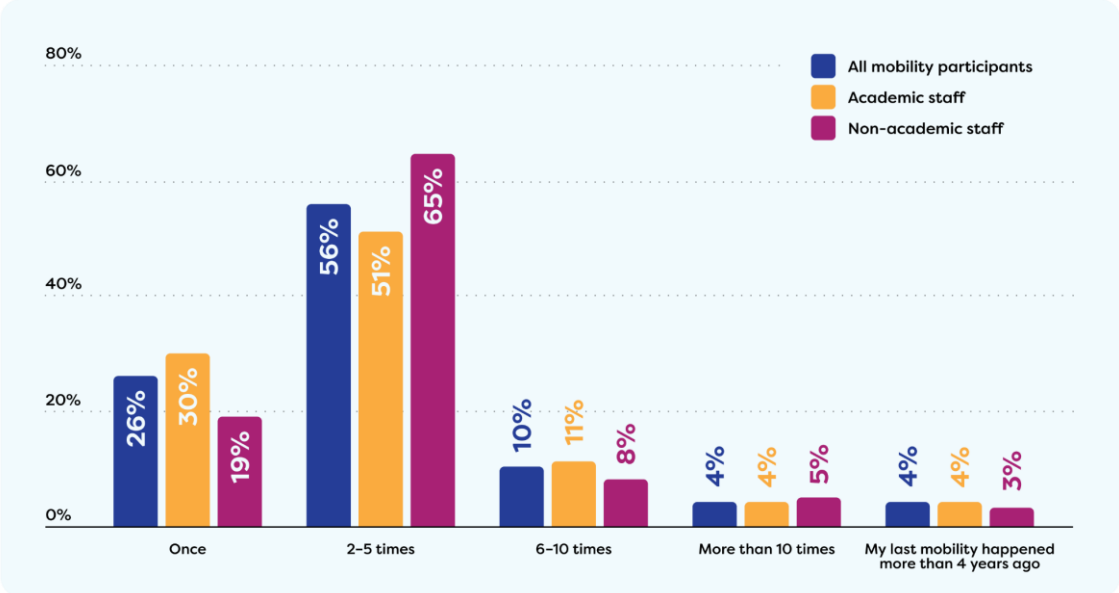


Figure 5. Frequency of participation in learning mobility (n = 164)

More than half of the respondents (56%) have taken part in learning mobility 2–5 times over the last four years. Non-academic staff have participated more frequently: 65% took part 2–5 times, whilst 51% of academic staff participated the same number of times. Furthermore, a higher proportion of staff from universities of applied sciences (64%) had taken part 2–5 times than those from universities (52%).

In total, repeat participants account for just over 70% of those who have taken part in learning mobility; in other words, once someone has participated once, they are highly likely to do so again.

Of the respondents, 26% had taken part in learning mobility once, 10% had taken part 6–10 times, and 4% had taken part more than 10 times. 4% stated that their most recent learning mobility took place more than four years ago.

Timing of the most recent learning mobility among educational staff

Just over three-quarters of respondents had taken part in their most recent learning mobility less than a year ago; 17% had taken part between one and two years ago, and 6% more than two years ago (see Figure 6). There were no significant differences between academic and non-academic staff.

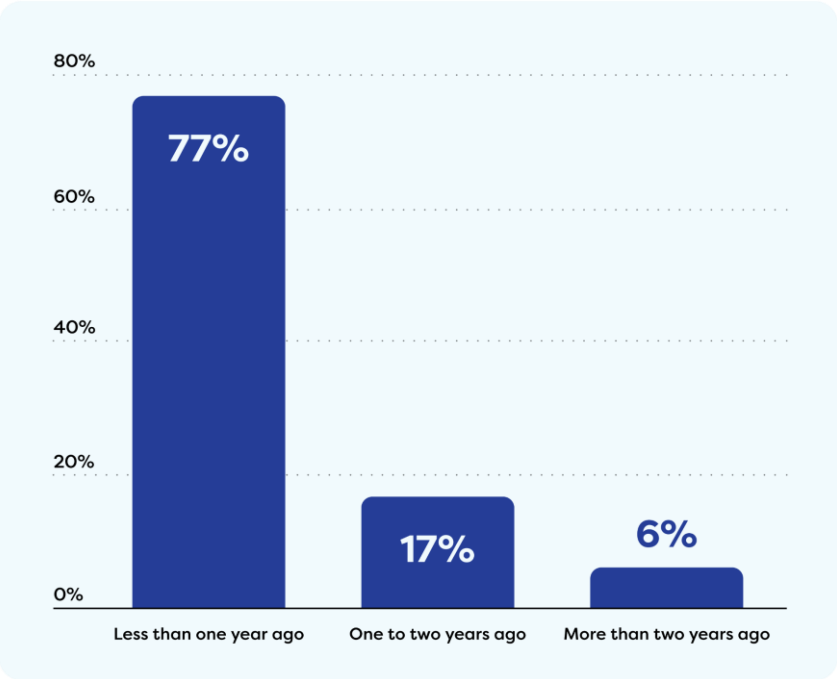


Figure 6. Distribution of participants by the timing of their most recent learning mobility (n = 157)

Results of the research

General satisfaction with learning mobility

Satisfaction with learning mobility was very high: 98% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied, including 79% who were very satisfied. Satisfaction was similar among academic and non-academic staff, staff at universities of applied sciences and universities, as well as among first-time and repeat participants. The high level of satisfaction among participants in learning mobility was also confirmed by the heads of universities of institutions and mobility coordinators who took part in the interviews. Based on their experience, staff returning from learning mobility have a noticeably more positive outlook and greater motivation. According to those interviewed, this high level of satisfaction stems not only from the experience gained but also from the fact that learning mobility offers staff a rare opportunity to focus on something other than their usual working life.

Development of competences

Key competences

Academic staff assessed the impact of learning mobility on the development of their ability to take cultural diversity into account and their foreign language skills (see Figure 7).

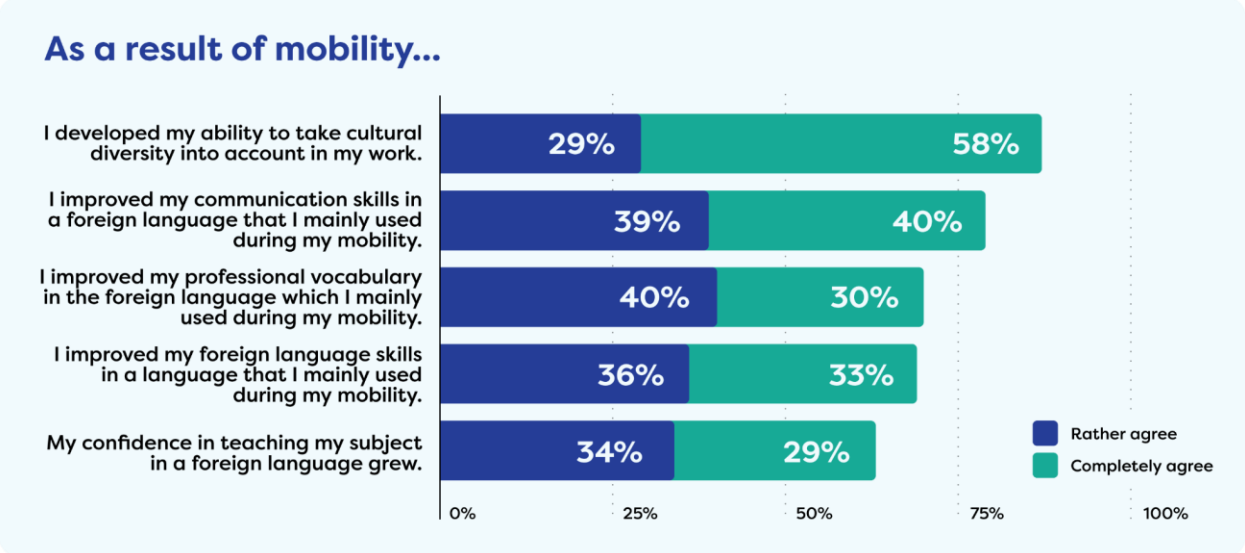


Figure 7. Academic staff's assessments of how learning mobility influenced the development of foreign language skills and the ability to take cultural diversity into account (n = 97)

The ability to take cultural diversity into account at work was rated most highly – 87% of respondents either completely or rather agreed that this skill had improved. As a result of learning mobility, the improvement in foreign language communication skills was greater among academic staff at universities of applied sciences compared with academic staff at universities (the average rating for the option 'I completely agree' was 45% for universities of applied sciences, compared with 34% for universities). The lowest rating (63%) was given to increased confidence in teaching one's subject in a foreign language.

'As a result of the staff mobility, I have incorporated topics on intercultural communication into my lessons and feel more confident in formal written and oral self-expression.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Compared with academic staff, non-academic staff rated their own development in foreign language proficiency and in taking cultural diversity into account more highly (see Figure 8). Among them, 73–88% of respondents completely or rather agreed with the statements presented. The greatest perceived development was in foreign language skills used in learning mobility and the ability to take cultural diversity into account. Across the board, non-academic staff at universities of applied sciences perceived a greater change compared with non-academic staff at universities (the average rating for the response option 'I completely agree' across all statements was 66% compared with 44%, respectively).

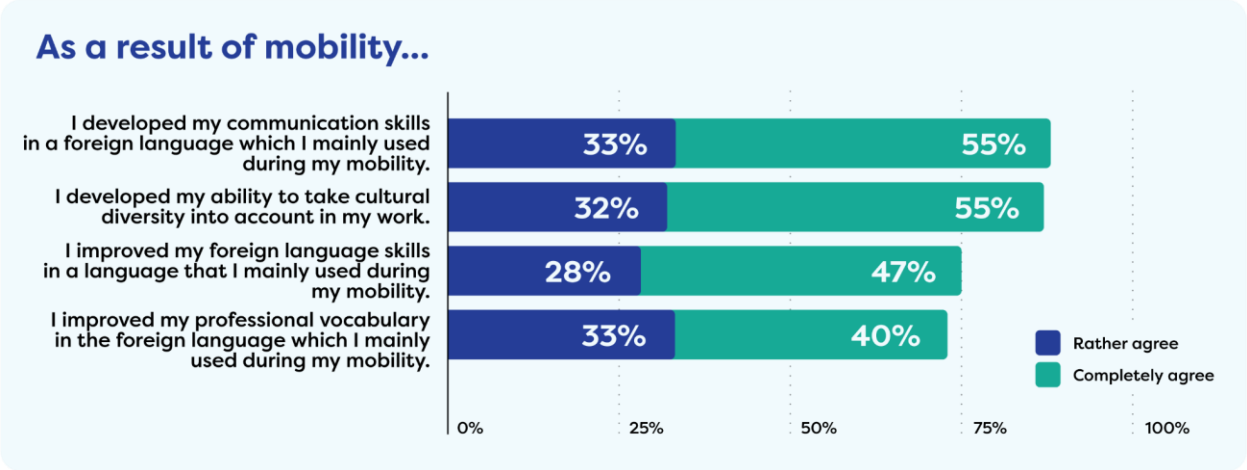


Figure 8. Non-academic staff's assessments of the impact of learning mobility on the development of foreign language skills and the ability to take cultural diversity into account (n = 59)

'Thanks to my growing awareness of multiculturalism and diversity, I have started to pay more attention to the adaptation of international students and academic staff.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'I have improved my communication skills in an international environment and now use English with greater confidence in my day-to-day work, particularly when communicating with international visitors.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

The development of digital skills was assessed by those academic staff members (18% of all academic staff who participated in learning mobility; 16 people) for whom the development of digital competences was one of the learning outcomes of their learning mobility (see Figure 9). 84% of them either completely agreed or rather agreed that, as a result of the learning mobility, they had developed digital skills relevant to their professional work. The least frequently mentioned development was the ability to deliver e-learning using appropriate e-learning environments, tools or methods.

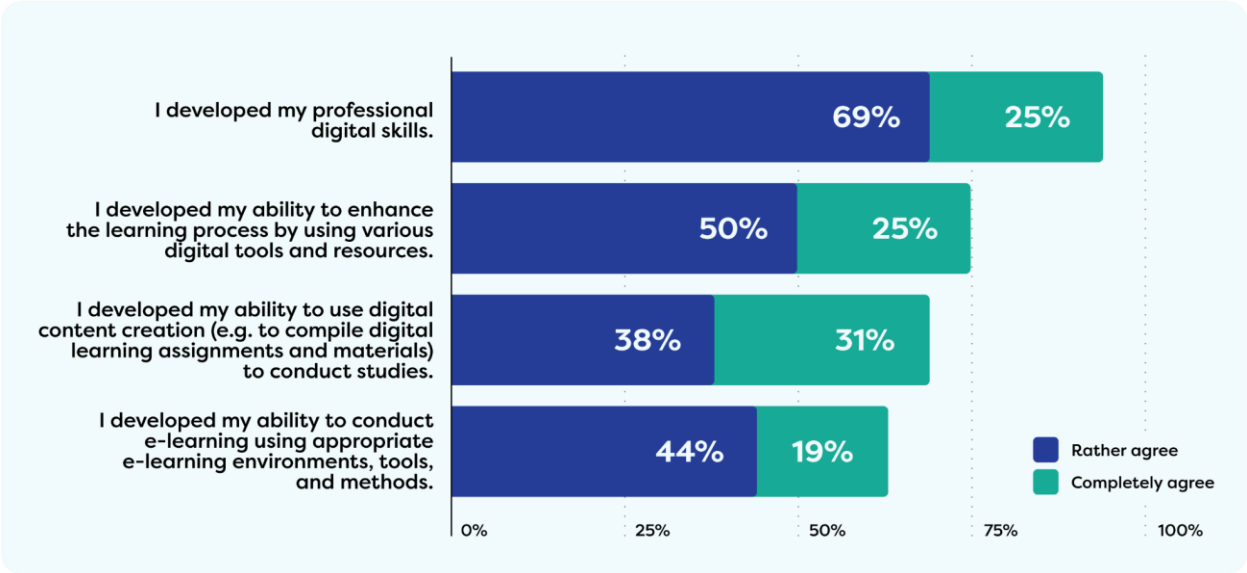


Figure 9. Academic staff's assessments of the impact of learning mobility on the development of digital skills (n = 16)

'After completing the course, I now have more skills relevant to my professional requirements. I have used Google Classroom, Jamboard and InShot to create videos.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Among non-academic staff, the development of digital skills was a specific learning outcome of learning mobility for 25% of respondents (15 people). Compared with academic staff, non-academic staff perceived the development of digital skills resulting from learning mobility to a lesser extent: 54–74% of respondents rather or completely agreed with various statements (see Figure 10). The most commonly perceived development was that of digital skills related to their professional work. The lowest rating was given to the development of digital content creation skills at work.

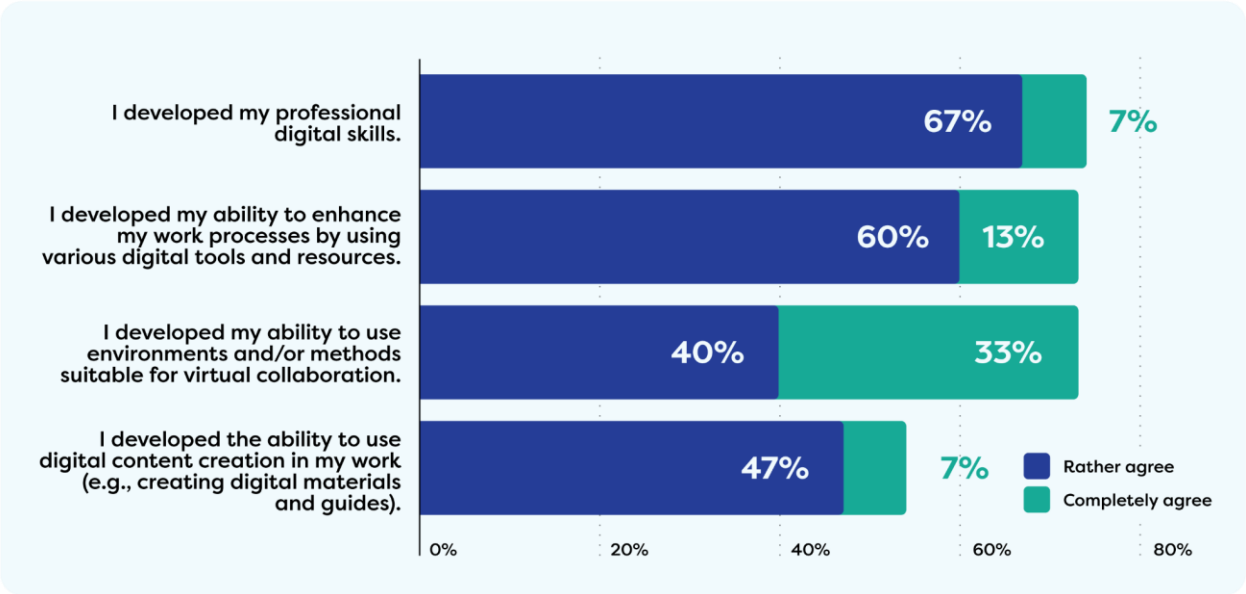


Figure 10. Non-academic staff's assessments of the impact of learning mobility on the development of digital skills (n = 15)

'I have started to use AI solutions more in my day-to-day work. We also began communicating with /–––/ a Finnish university. We have been able to use the software they have developed within the university's learning management system, Moodle. I have familiarised myself with new software used by the universities I visited, such as Slack for communication, and also JIRA.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Professional competences

The development of academic staff's professional competences resulting from learning mobility was rated as very good across five aspects. Over 82% of respondents rather or completely agreed with the relevant statements (see Figure 11). For example, 93% felt that they had enhanced their knowledge and skills to improve their teaching, and 88% noted that they had developed the ability to implement teaching methods that support collaborative learning and engage learners.

Among the statements with lower scores, the following stand out: 'I developed the ability to draw up a syllabus, guidelines and instructions' (60%), 'I developed the ability to apply digital tools and opportunities in teaching' (64%), 'I developed my ability to create (or improve) research-based, methodologically diverse teaching materials' (72%), 'I developed the ability to use feedback (from colleagues and students) to improve my teaching' (72%).

Respondents also had the option to indicate if a particular aspect was not the aim of their learning mobility, and this was the case for 10–18% of respondents. For most aspects, the

ratings given by academic staff at universities of applied sciences were slightly higher than those given by academic staff at universities (the average rating for the option 'I completely agree' was 43%, compared with 40% at universities).

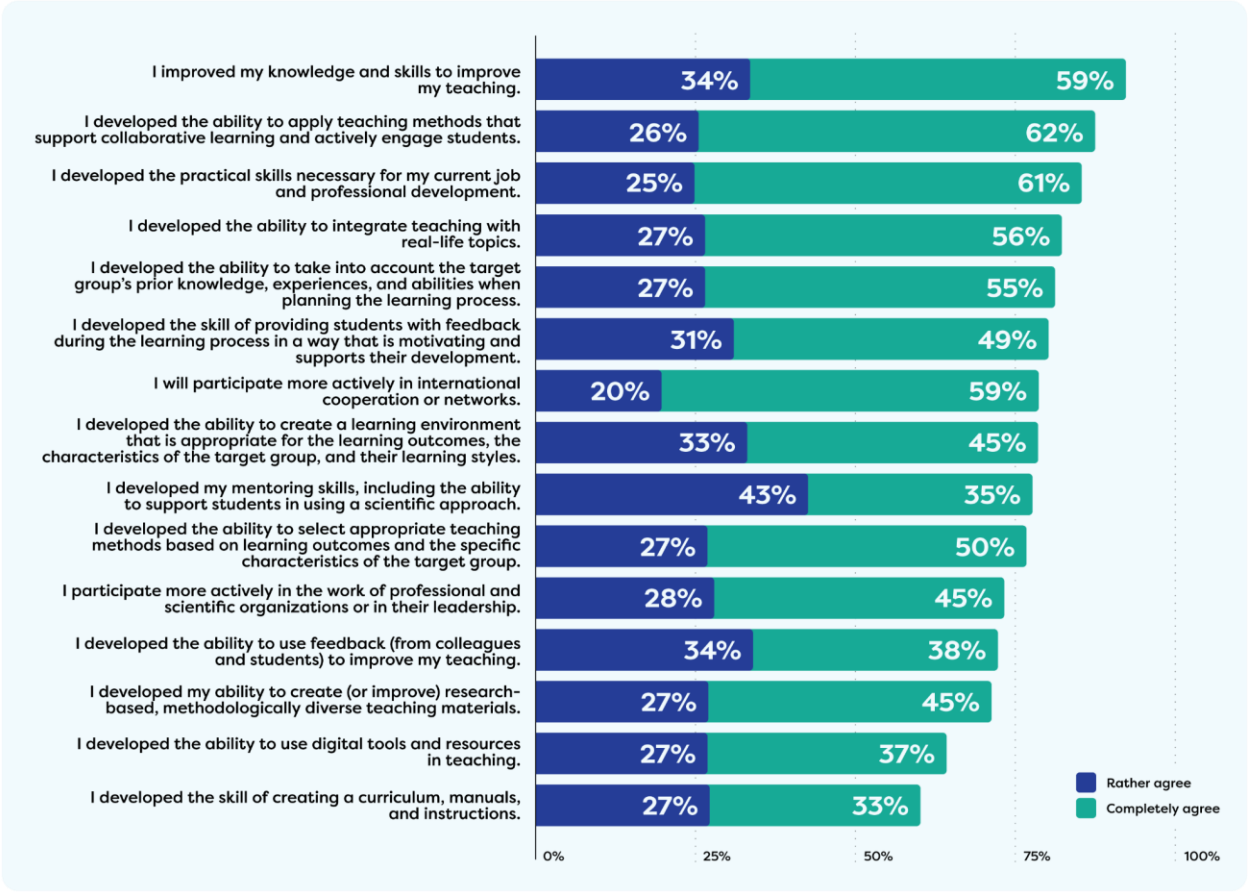


Figure 11. Academic staff's assessments of the impact of learning mobility on the development of professional competences (n = 91)

'My world view has broadened; I can now draw on examples from other languages and cultures, and my repertoire of methodological approaches has expanded.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'I have revised the syllabus for one course and improved the teaching materials. I have requested that we acquire models similar to those I saw during my learning mobility for use in our teaching.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Non-academic staff who took part in learning mobility highly valued the following changes: updating their knowledge in their own field of work (93%), gaining ideas for implementing innovations relevant to their field of work (87%), developing the practical skills needed for their current work and professional development (86%), and improving their performance in their day-to-day work (82%) (see Figure 12). There were no significant differences between

the weighted averages of the assessments made by staff at universities and universities of applied sciences.

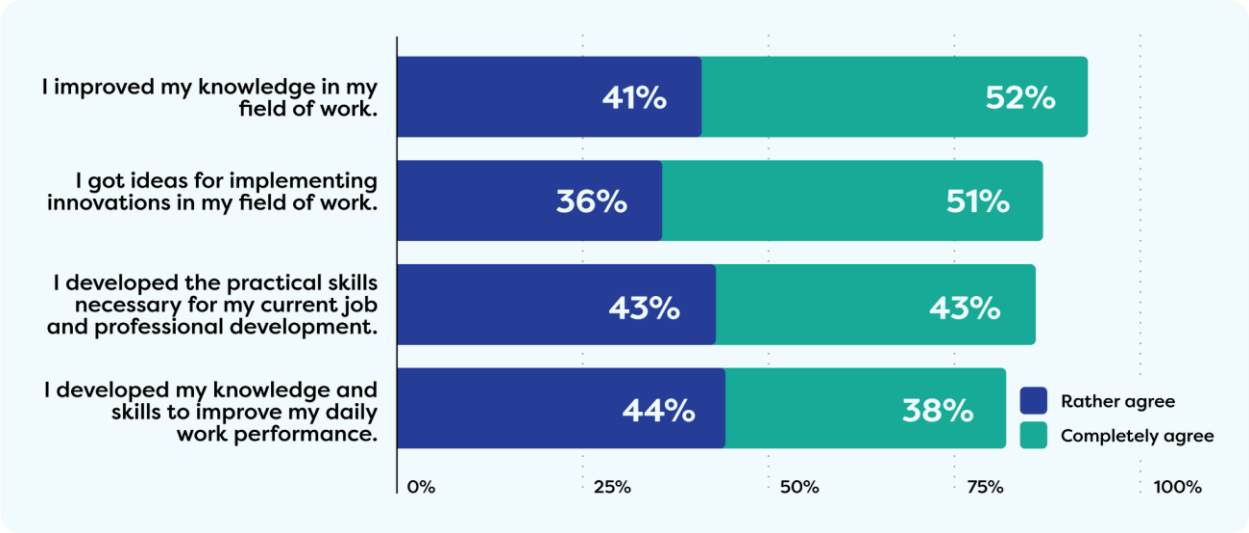


Figure 12. Non-academic staff's assessments of the impact of learning mobility on the development of professional competences (n = 56)

'I have used the knowledge I gained to consciously improve my interpersonal skills and workplace communication.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Meeting people in similar positions to my own gave me ideas for improving my day-to-day work, but I haven't (yet) managed to put anything specific into practice.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Thanks to my colleagues abroad, I have learnt to be a better leader. In some ways, job *shadowing is actually one of the best ways to learn.'* – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Motivation and self-directed competences

Figure 13 shows how academic and non-academic staff assessed their motivation and the development of their personal competences. Academic staff rated their perceived development highly – between 86 and 93% of respondents rather or completely agreed with the statements presented on various aspects. As a result of staff mobility, motivation to continuously develop professional skills increased the most.

Non-academic staff also reported high levels of increased motivation and development of personal competences as a result of learning mobility – 85–93% of respondents rather or

completely agreed with the statements presented. The most significant perceived outcome for them was the expansion of their professional supporting network.

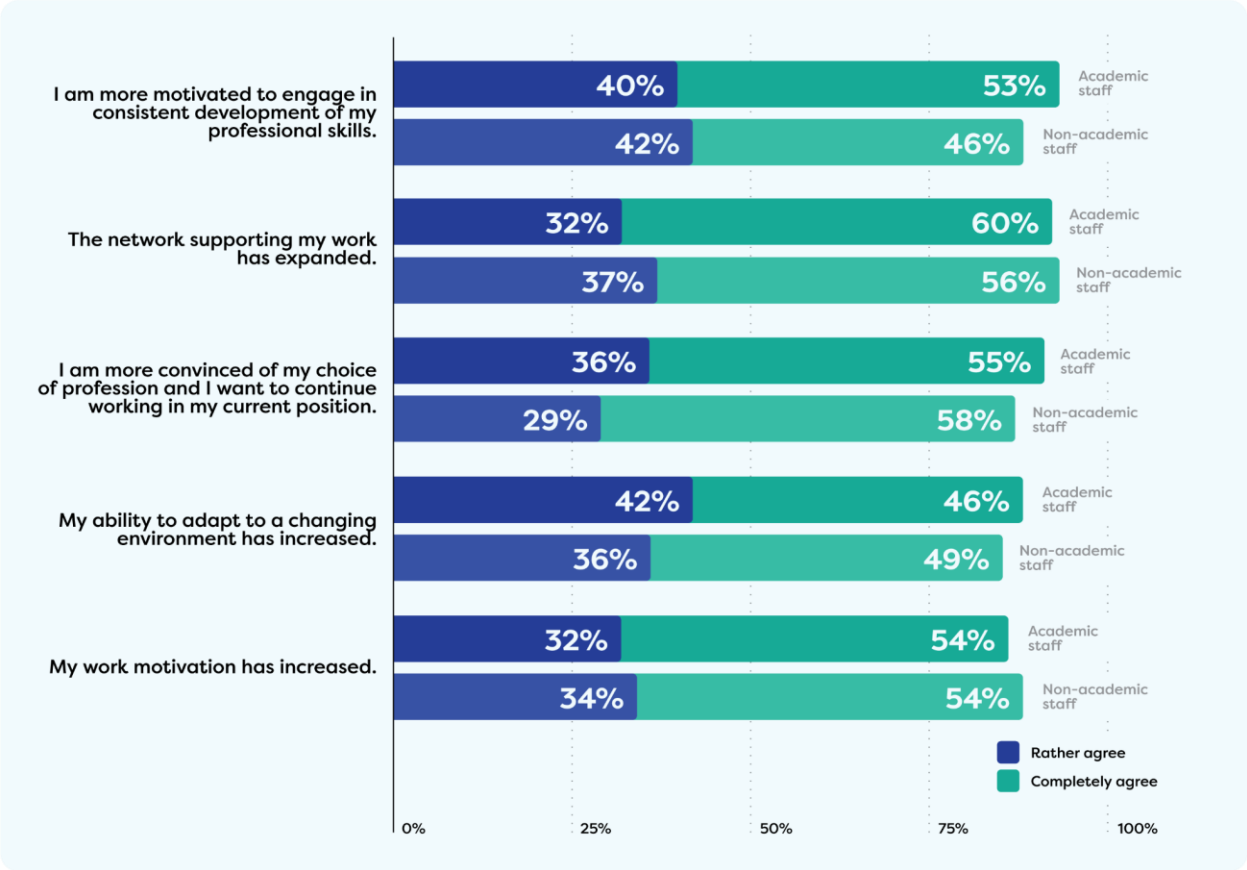


Figure 13. Assessments by academic (n = 91) and non-academic (n = 59) staff of the development of personal competences and increased motivation

In the interviews, the organisation's managers also highlighted that, for non-academic staff, an additional motivating factor is the opportunity to meet people in similar roles, to see how support functions are organised in other institutions, and to feel that their role is valued and forms part of a wider international community. Managers emphasised that **involving support staff is just as important to achieving objectives as involving academic staff.**

'Although support staff do not take part in teaching, it is also important to support their motivation. The opportunity to interact and exchange experiences with other staff in similar roles helps them feel valued. This is important because support staff contribute significantly to the success of teaching and should not feel sidelined.' – head of a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

Impact of learning mobility on teaching and work practices

The majority of academic staff who had participated in learning mobility were able to describe specific changes that their participation had brought about in their day-to-day work. **Three main categories of change emerged from the responses:** diversification of teaching methods, development of the curriculum and teaching materials, and partnerships and internationalisation (see Figure 14).



Figure 14. Changes in work resulting from learning mobility, based on questionnaire responses

For non-academic staff, however, five categories of change emerged: the improvement of processes and systems; the diversification of teaching and working methods; internationalisation and the creation of networks; the expanded use of digital tools and artificial intelligence; and improvements in communication and presentation skills.

International and multicultural examples began to be used more frequently in teaching, and teaching methods became significantly more diverse – group discussions, case-based, problem-based and project-based learning were introduced. In addition, lesson design became more varied, and the structure of practical courses, as well as the use of equipment and methods, improved.

'The Erasmus+ programme provided both me and my colleagues with valuable practical knowledge, as well as tools and methods that we have started to use in our day-to-day work.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

At the same time, the curriculum, syllabus and teaching materials were developed: more tasks related to everyday life were added, the balance between theory and practice was adjusted, and links with businesses were strengthened.

'Changes have been made to the content of the curriculum and the balance between theory and practical activities. I have also changed the methodology for theoretical studies and, as a result, the teaching materials designed for independent study.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

In addition, networks and partnerships were strengthened, and **the organisation of Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) gained momentum.** Cooperation with partners increased, the number of guest lectures and joint projects grew, and broader international opportunities opened up for students.

'As a result, we have already organised two BIP projects based on our curriculum and involved students from new partner universities in them.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Around three-quarters of non-academic staff were able to describe specific changes that participation in staff mobility had brought about in their day-to-day work. Five main categories of change emerged from the responses.

Firstly, **improvements to processes and systems** were highlighted. As part of this, work organisation was streamlined and documentation was standardised. In addition, new programmes, units and services were established, and support for incoming students was developed.



Secondly, **the teaching and working methods used,** as well as the topics covered, **became more varied**: the methodologies studied (e.g. project-based learning and inclusive teaching methods) were put into practice, and workshops, group discussions, mini-projects as part of practical training, and didactic guidance were introduced. In addition, greater emphasis was placed on environmentally friendly learning mobility than before.

'I have started using different methodologies in my teaching. I have introduced them to teaching staff and have also applied them myself in workshops designed for teaching staff.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Thirdly, **internationalisation and networking were strengthened**. As a result, new contacts were established with foreign universities and work placement opportunities were secured. Mutual visits were also organised, and BIPs were initiated and implemented, involving international experts.

Fourthly**, the use of digital tools, information systems and artificial intelligence was expanded**. In the process, new platforms and software solutions were adopted, and best practices from foreign universities' information systems were adapted to suit our own needs.

'The latest change involved the restructuring of data services and changes to the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the software development department, which were inspired by other universities.' – a non-academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Fifthly, **communication and presentation skills improved**, a point also highlighted in relation to skills development. Respondents described how staff acquired new communication techniques, and there was also a more active focus on marketing staff mobility.

'I have applied the knowledge I have gained to consciously develop and improve my interpersonal and professional communication skills.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

The most frequently described aspects in the focus group interviews were developments in teaching methodology and the content of teaching. Teaching staff adopted practical methods, simulation-based teaching and new principles for curriculum design from partner institutions. It was noted that changes may not be immediately apparent – **several interviewees emphasised that ideas 'settle in' gradually and may not even be directly linked to a specific learning mobility later on**.

'When our teaching staff visit partner institutions, the practical aspect is particularly important, including simulation and practical teaching methods. We learn a great deal from



our partners through laboratories and simulations, and good practices are exchanged and adopted.' – a coordinator from a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

Less frequently, but nonetheless significantly, **changes in the work of support staff and administrative processes** were highlighted. Visits to partner institutions gave support staff the opportunity to compare their systems with those of others and to implement process improvements. Sometimes, however, the comparison actually confirmed that their own solutions were better than others'. In a few cases, it was mentioned that learning mobility had provided a direct impetus for launching an entirely new specialisation, and in several interviews, increased work motivation and commitment to the institution also emerged as an indirect but important outcome of learning mobility.

'Learning mobility for non-academic staff is quite structured and clearly goal-oriented at our university. Participants familiarise themselves with the IT solutions and library practices used at other universities in order to optimise their own processes. This covers key areas where we wish to learn from others.' – a university leader who took part in the interview

Impact of learning mobility at institutional level

Staff who took part in learning mobility perceived the changes in their work brought about by the mobility to varying degrees (see Figure 15).

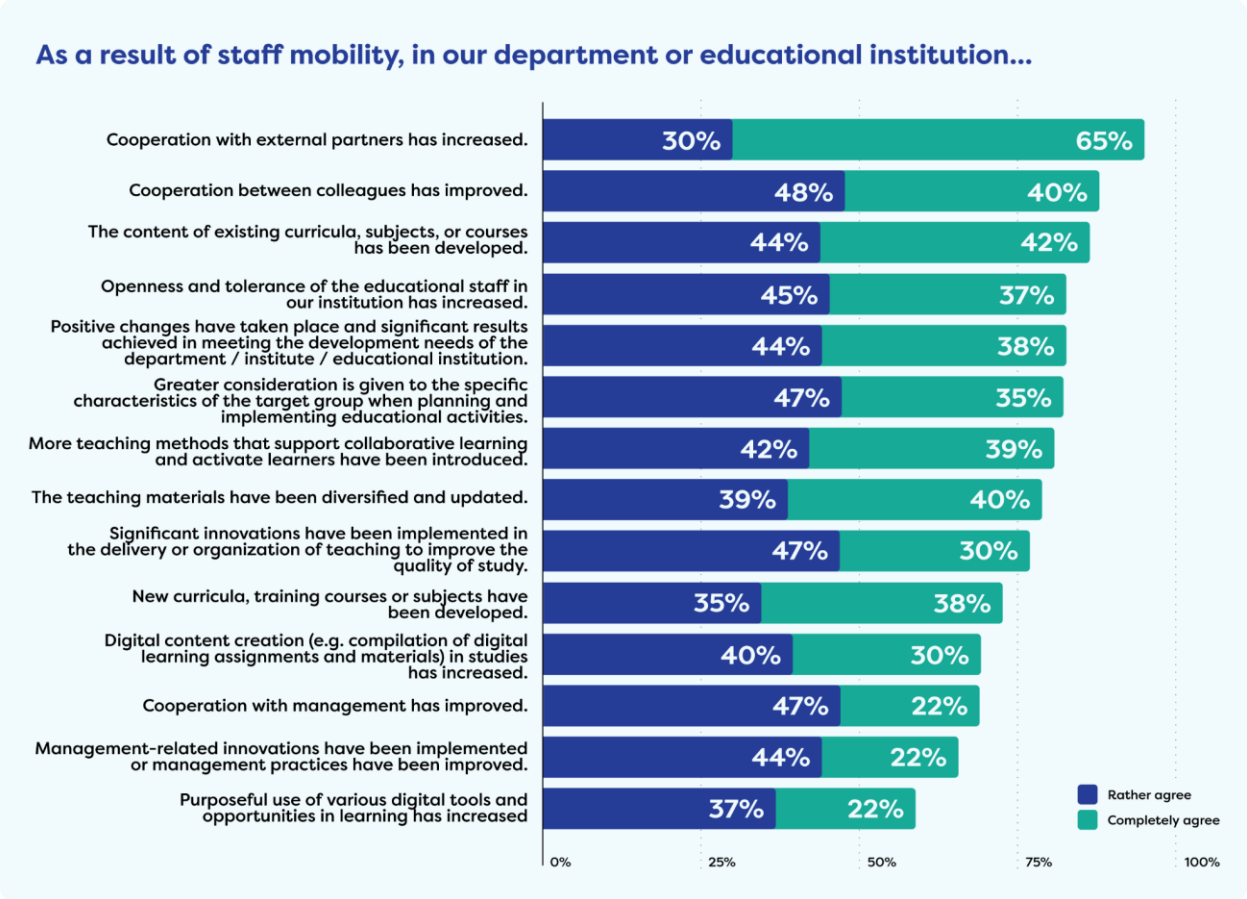


Figure 15. Proportion of positive responses from educational staff who participated in learning mobility (i.e. those who were able to answer) regarding the impact of learning mobility at institutional level (n = 139)

The highest rating was given to the **increased cooperation between the educational institution and external partners** – 95% of respondents either rather or completely agreed with this. In addition, 88% perceived an improvement in cooperation between colleagues. The lowest rating (59%) was given to the increased targeted use of digital tools and opportunities in teaching. For these statements, between 9% and 33% of respondents were unable to assess the change, depending on the aspect (for example, a third were unable to say whether management reforms had been implemented or management practices improved).

Staff who had not participated in learning mobility, however, rated the impact of learning mobility at institutional level significantly lower: 27–78% of respondents rather or completely agreed with the statements presented (see Figure 16). The highest ratings were given to increased cooperation between the educational institution and external partners, whilst the lowest ratings were given to improved cooperation with management and among colleagues. An important observation is that, **for these statements, 40–67% of non-participants were unable to assess the change**.

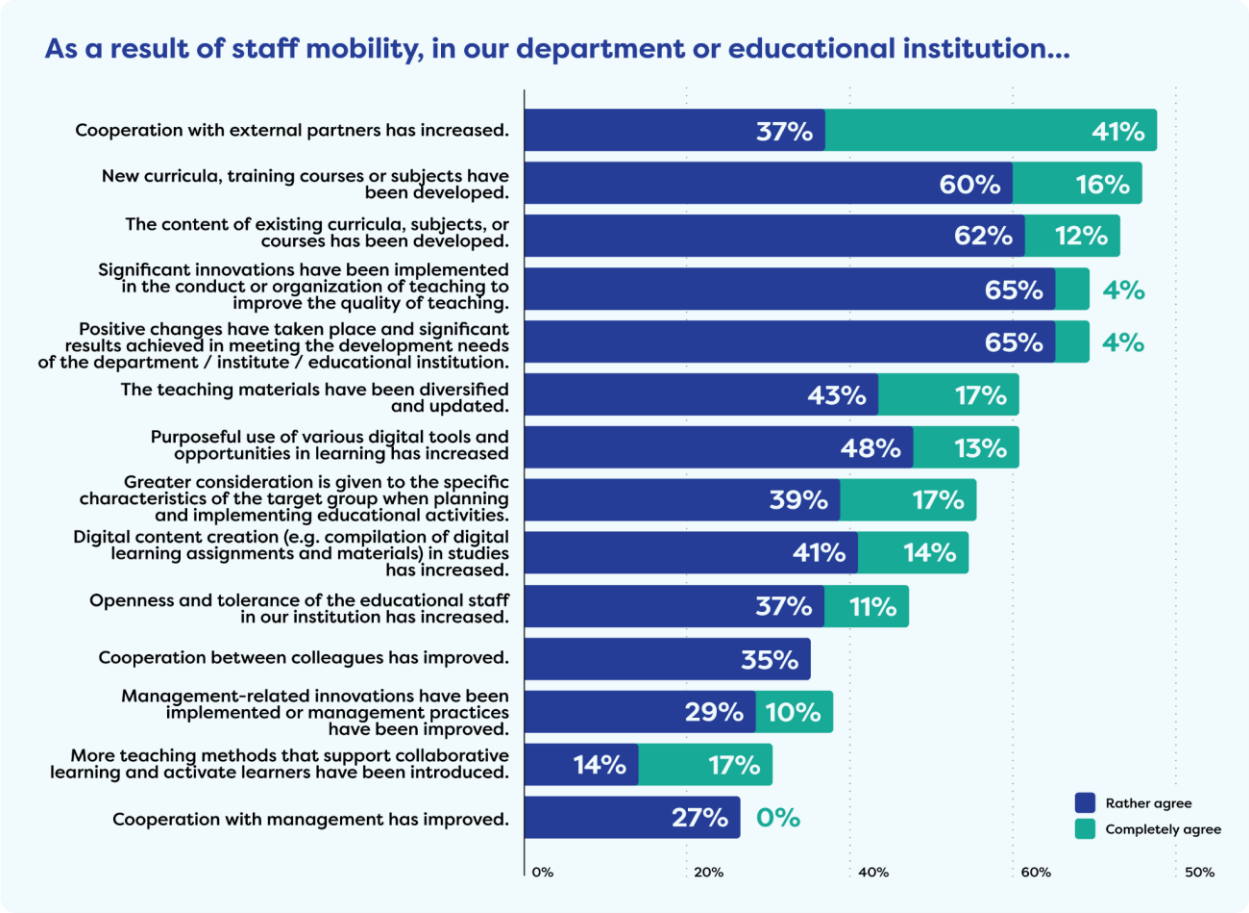


Figure 16. Proportion of positive responses from educational staff who did not participate in learning mobility (among those who were able to respond) regarding the impact of learning mobility at institutional level (n = 45)

Both educational staff who had participated in learning mobility and those who had not generally rated additional statements regarding the impact of learning mobility at institutional level highly (see Figure 17).

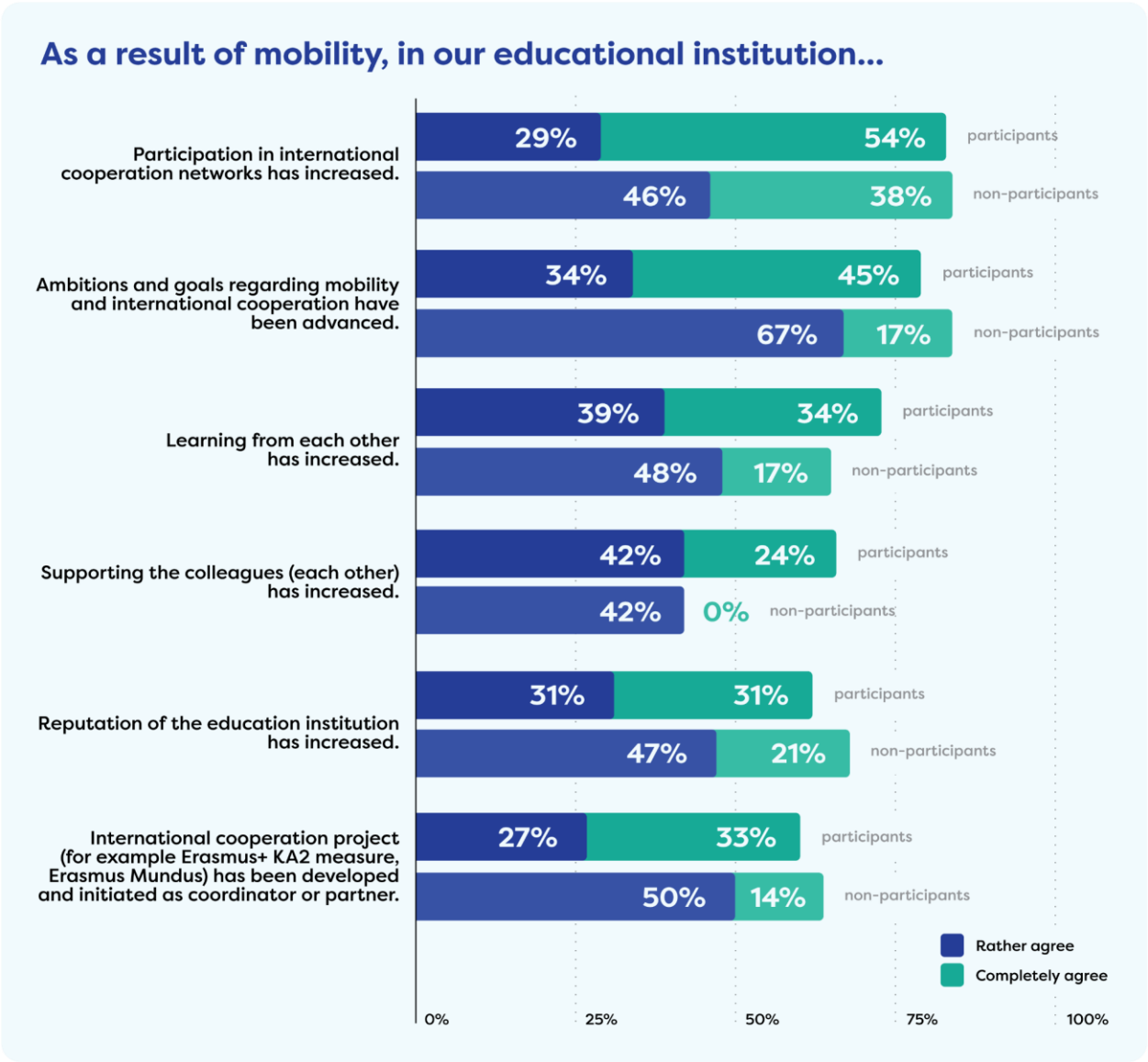


Figure 17. Proportion of positive responses (i.e. response options 5 – 'I completely agree' and 4 – 'I rather agree') from educational staff who had and had not participated in learning mobility regarding additional statements on the impact of learning mobility at institutional level (n = 184)

Educational staff who had participated in learning mobility perceived the greatest impact to be the expansion of international cooperation networks (83%). Similarly, the enhancement of the educational institution's ambitions and objectives related to learning mobility and international cooperation was also rated highly.

The networks formed through learning mobility subsequently contribute to the broader development of academic fields, as professional contacts create a platform for the dissemination of knowledge and practices between countries and institutions. In many cases,

it was emphasised that international networks have been established through learning mobility at an earlier stage of one's career, and their impact extends to the level of the higher education institution as a whole. As a result, the impact of learning mobility acts as a multiplier: one person's contacts develop into a cooperation network that benefits several study programmes and partner institutions.

'Thanks to staff mobility, our department has seen an increase in international cooperation, an expansion of our network of contacts, and the launch of a number of new learning projects that enrich teaching and support internationalisation.' – an academic staff member who participated in learning mobility and responded to the questionnaire

'Stronger international partnerships, an improved working culture – learning mobility has increased staff awareness and fostered an open-minded attitude towards educational practices, which in turn supports cooperation and innovation within the organisation.' – a non-academic educational staff member who took part in a mobility for staff and responded to the questionnaire

'Staff mobilities are incorporated into the curriculum. There are many blended mobility programmes and intensive workshops organised in collaboration with partner institutions.' – a non-academic educational staff member who took part in a mobility for staff and responded to the questionnaire

Fewer respondents mentioned that international cooperation or research projects had been initiated, that they had participated in such projects, or that they had considered initiating or participating in them (e.g. the Erasmus+ KA2 action; Erasmus Mundus and capacity-building projects).

Educational staff who had not participated in learning mobility assessed the additional statements regarding the impact of learning mobility at institutional level in a similar way to those who had participated: the proportion of positive responses ranged from 42 to 84%. The greatest improvement was perceived in the educational institution's ambitions and objectives related to learning mobility and international cooperation. The lowest rating (i.e. 42% of respondents) was given to the increase in support among colleagues resulting from learning mobility. It is noteworthy that, regarding these statements, 42–58% of respondents were unable to assess the change.

When educational staff who had not participated in learning mobility were asked to name the most significant changes they had noticed in their educational institution, half of the respondents were unable to do so. Those who did respond mainly highlighted an increase in international cooperation (including the implementation of follow-up projects) and the development of teaching methods and materials.



'Colleagues return with positive feelings. It seems that the nature of the project itself is restorative to job satisfaction, as it offers a change of pace, new acquaintances, opportunities for interaction and self-improvement in every area (public speaking, communication, honing language skills, building self-confidence and courage, etc.).' – an educational staff member who did not participate in learning mobility but responded to the questionnaire

'There is now a more serious focus on problem-based learning, which I believe is a major step forward.' – an educational staff member who did not participate in learning mobility and responded to the questionnaire

Managers who took part in the interviews highlighted, at institutional level, **the adoption of practical methods and simulations from partner universities, the creation of new courses with the support of international contacts, and long-term joint projects that have grown out of existing relationships**. A university leader described how joining an international network had led to the establishment of summer schools and an increase in student mobility. In addition, some interviewees pointed out that mobility experiences sometimes reveal that their own institution's solutions are actually better than those at the host institution.

'The aim of learning mobilities is to develop one's own activities, but at the same time it often provides an opportunity to realise that we ourselves have a great deal of value to share with others. On returning, one can see that our own practices can also be successful, even if we hadn't realised it before. Learning mobility thus helps us to better understand how our organisation operates and to identify both our strengths and areas for improvement.' – a university leader who took part in the interview

Wider external impact of learning mobility

The focus group interviews provided a comprehensive overview of the wider impact of learning mobility. According to the interviewees, **the impact of Erasmus+ learning mobility clearly extends far beyond the boundaries of individual higher education institutions and is reflected in the formation of international cooperation networks, the establishment of partnerships that drive development in the sector, and the growing international visibility of Estonian higher education**. It was also emphasised that the impact is often indirect and manifests itself in the long term.

'The impact of staff mobility is not always direct and we cannot measure it, but we know it exists.' – a university coordinator who took part in the interview



As already mentioned, staff mobility often serves initially as a catalyst for international cooperation, resulting in the development of lasting partnerships and joint development activities between several higher education institutions.

Staff mobility also supports the international visibility and reputation of Estonian higher education institutions, which in turn attracts new cooperation proposals and interest from foreign partners. Interviewees highlighted that the interest of foreign partners in visiting Estonian higher education institutions and making cooperation proposals has grown precisely as a result of previous staff mobility.

'For example, we tend to receive positive feedback from abroad regarding the institution's reputation, and it seems that staff mobility contributes to this. We are well known to our partners at an international level and receive many new requests for collaboration.' – a coordinator from a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

Greater visibility has helped to promote Estonia as an active participant in international educational cooperation: among other things, the contacts established through staff mobility have brought visiting lecturers and experts to Estonia, whose contributions support the broader development of the relevant subject areas.

'We regularly host Erasmus lecturers who teach highly specialised knowledge in the subjects within our expanded range of optional modules.' – a university leader who took part in the interview

In several instances, the indirect impact of staff mobility on students' interest in international opportunities and the attractiveness of higher education institutions was also mentioned. International contacts and the visibility of lecturers abroad have also sparked interest among international students in Estonian higher education institutions.

'Foreign lecturers come here to run masterclasses, and next year we will be welcoming international students who are coming specifically because of these lecturers.' – a university coordinator who took part in the interview

Valuing learning mobility in educational institutions

The assessments of participants and non-participants in learning mobility regarding the value placed on learning mobility in higher education institutions are presented in Figure 18.



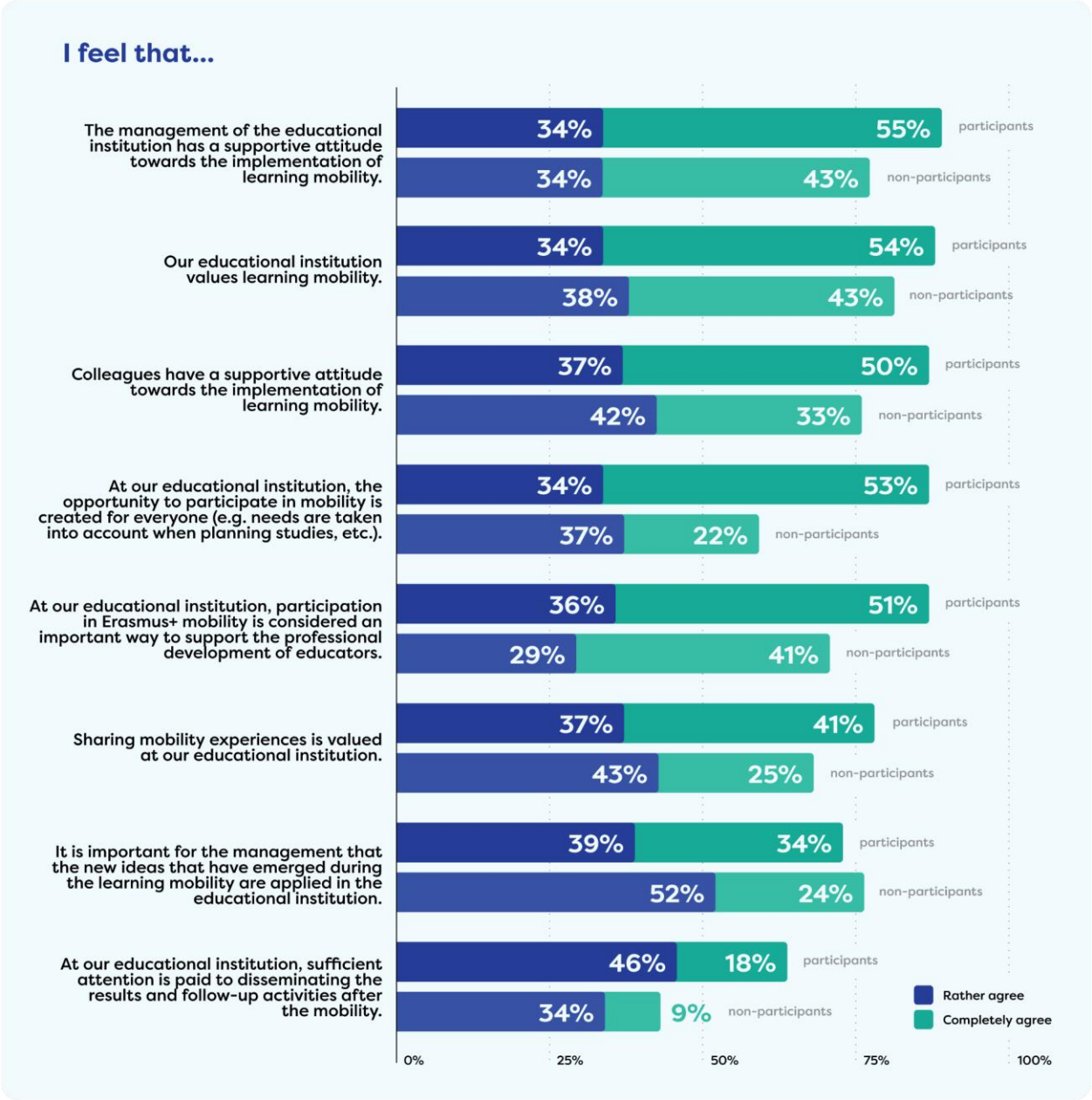


Figure 18. Proportion of positive assessments (response options 5 – 'I completely agree' and 4 – 'I rather agree') regarding the value placed on staff mobility within the educational institution among those who have participated in staff mobility (n = 137) and those who have not (n = 45)

Those who have participated in learning mobility generally rate the value placed on learning mobility and the support provided by their institution highly. The supportive attitude of the educational institution's management towards the implementation of learning mobility (89%) and the value placed on learning mobility within the institution as a whole (88%) were rated most highly. Almost as high a rating (87%) was also given to several other areas, such as colleagues' supportive attitude towards the implementation of learning mobility, the creation

of opportunities for those recommended to participate, and the view that participation in learning mobility is a means of supporting professional development.

The lowest ratings were given to the extent to which the educational institution pays attention to disseminating the results of learning mobility and to post-mobility activities (64%), and to the importance attached by the institution's management to implementing new ideas arising from learning mobility (73%).

The ratings given by those who did not participate in learning mobility are significantly lower than those of participants. However, the same statements were rated similarly: the two aspects rated highest by non-participants were also the value placed on learning mobility by the educational institution as a whole (81%) and the supportive attitude of the institution's management towards the implementation of learning mobility (77%). Like the participants, non-participants also gave the lowest rating to the extent to which the educational institution paid attention to publicising the outcomes of learning mobility and to post-mobility activities (43%).

Both staff who had participated in learning mobility and those who had not considered the implementation and continuation of learning mobility to be an important activity in supporting the development of the organisation and its staff (see Figure 19). Only 3 out of 182 respondents considered it to be of little or very little importance (all of whom had not participated in learning mobility).

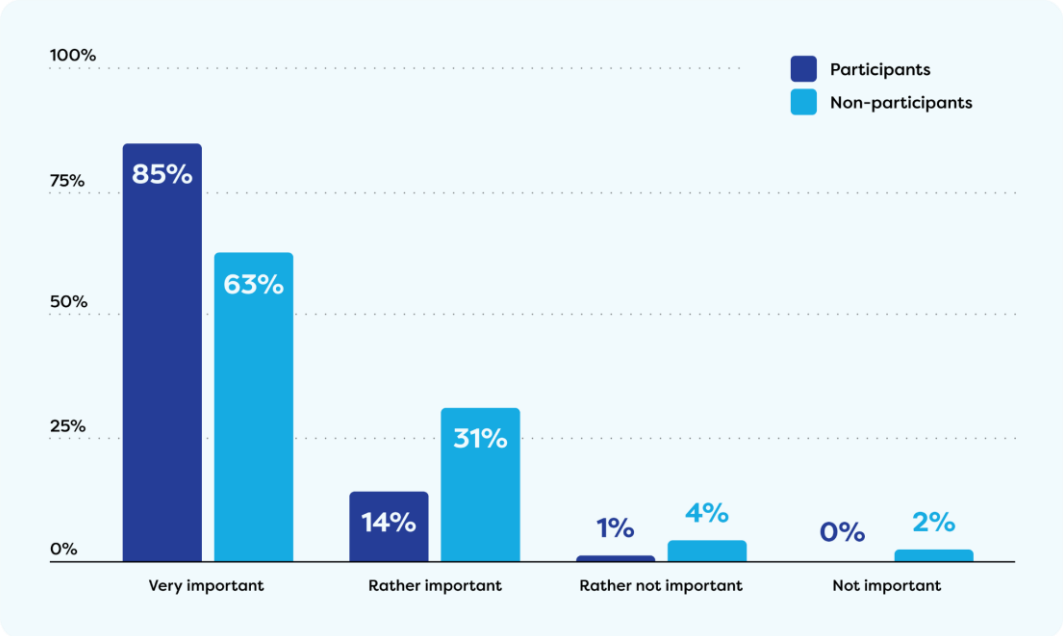


Figure 19. Assessment of the importance of continuing learning mobility by participants (n = 137) and non-participants (n = 45)

Those who had participated in learning mobility saw a variety of benefits in continuing with it. Four main themes emerged from the responses.

With regard to internationalisation, the expansion of networks, new partners and joint activities, as well as the institution's growing visibility, were highlighted.

'The contacts formed during learning mobility open up new opportunities for collaboration in both teaching and research projects. This strengthens the educational institution's international visibility and credibility.' – a non-academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'For me personally, it is important that Estonian universities are visible on the international stage. Estonia is a small country and, regardless of whether we are at a university or another higher education institution, we must promote our country, share our ideas and consistently seek out new international connections and contacts.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

From the perspective of strategic competitiveness, the relevance of an institution's development directions and its good reputation, knowledge transfer, and the opening up of new opportunities for cooperation are considered important. In the area of teaching quality and curriculum development, emphasis was placed on acquiring new methodologies, adopting best practices, integrating experience into teaching, and gaining a comparative perspective from other higher education institutions.

'What we experience and see abroad helps us to reflect on and analyse what is going well at our institution and what needs improving. Meeting other colleagues (abroad) does the same. You also learn the nuances of the work and encounter ideas that you might not come across whilst stuck in your own bubble.' – a non-academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Staff mobility is not merely an opportunity for individual development – it is a strategic investment in the future of the entire educational institution. It helps to keep the organisation up to date, competitive and values-based in both a national and international context.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

In terms of professional development and motivation, respondents highlighted the broadening of horizons, a break from routine, the opportunity for self-reflection and the 'fresh energy' that learning mobility brings. In addition, respondents described an increase in confidence when using a foreign language, greater cultural sensitivity and smoother collaboration in an international environment.

'/- – –/ it helps you break out of your routine. After a learning mobility period, you are a better and more motivated lecturer whom students find interesting to listen to, because you've seen a bit of the world.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

As regards the benefits for students, respondents noted higher-quality teaching and supervision, an increase in international projects and work placement opportunities, and the use of more diverse examples in teaching.

Disseminating the results of learning mobility

Of those who had participated in learning mobility, 19% completely agreed and 54% rather agreed (see Figure 20) with the statement that they had done enough to disseminate the results of their learning mobility.

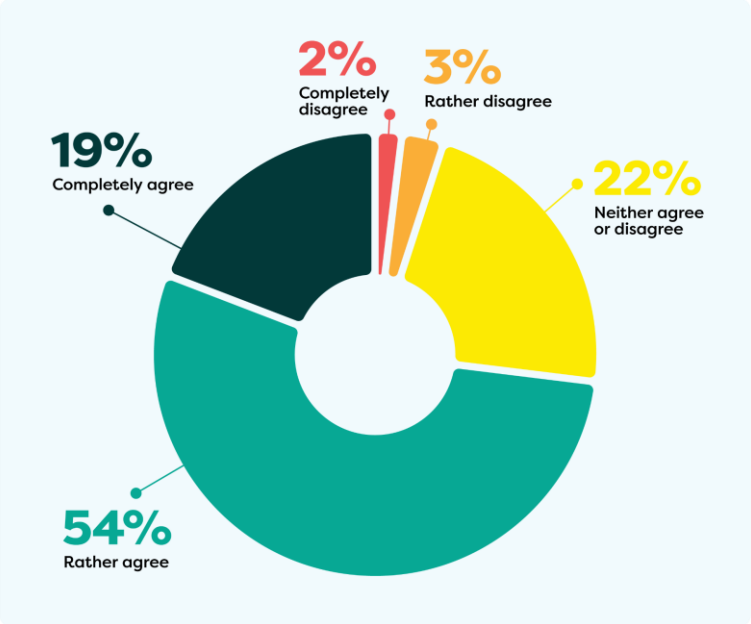


Figure 20. Educational staff who participated in learning mobility assess the adequacy of their dissemination activities (n = 139)

Participants in learning mobility were asked to indicate the dissemination activities they had carried out (see Figure 21). 88% of respondents stated that they had shared their learning mobility experiences, new ideas, methods and/or materials with colleagues. 3% admitted that they had not shared the outcomes of their learning mobility. Of the respondents, 63% stated that they had shared their learning mobility experiences with students, 58% had encouraged colleagues to use new ideas or methods in their work, and 55% had involved more external partners.

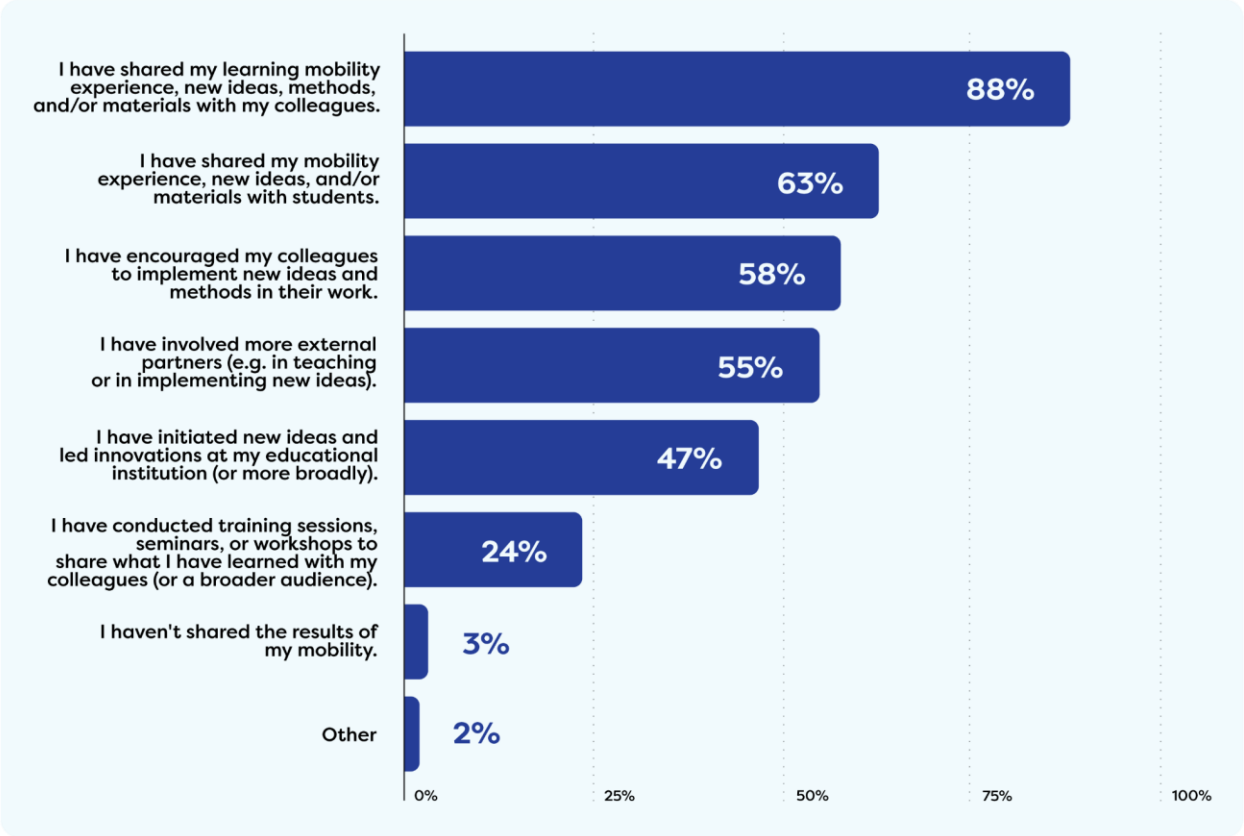


Figure 21. Application and dissemination of results by participants in learning mobility (n = 139)

To enhance the dissemination of the results of staff mobility**, it was found that more systematic internal communication at institutional level, such as regular sharing seminars and a cross-departmental format**, **would support dissemination**. In addition, ideas were put forward for activities aimed at students (including introducing mobility opportunities) and opportunities for external communication (e.g. an article on the website, social media posts, a presentation at a conference or workshop).

'I could have paid more attention to sharing my experience with colleagues. I could also have better linked the knowledge gained from learning mobility to our team's work or training plans, so that the impact would be more long-term.' – a non-academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'In addition, one could write an article for the weekly newsletter or create a PowerPoint presentation, followed by a discussion with students on the pros and cons of learning mobility.' – an academic educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

It was repeatedly emphasised that participants in staff mobility do not have sufficient time for dissemination activities. Furthermore, a quarter of respondents were unable to suggest any additional ideas for this.

'There isn't even time to think about additional activities alongside teaching.' – an academic staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Unfortunately, visiting schools in other countries has become routine. That is why it is difficult to come up with anything innovative – a brief update is the most practical approach.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

40% of staff who had not participated in learning mobility were unaware that their institution organised any sharing of experiences (see Figure 22). At the same time, however, roughly the same proportion of them – 38% – had taken part in experience-sharing sessions organised by colleagues who had participated in learning mobility, and nearly a quarter had also taken part in dissemination activities organised by students. Only 8% had no interest in taking part in experience-sharing.

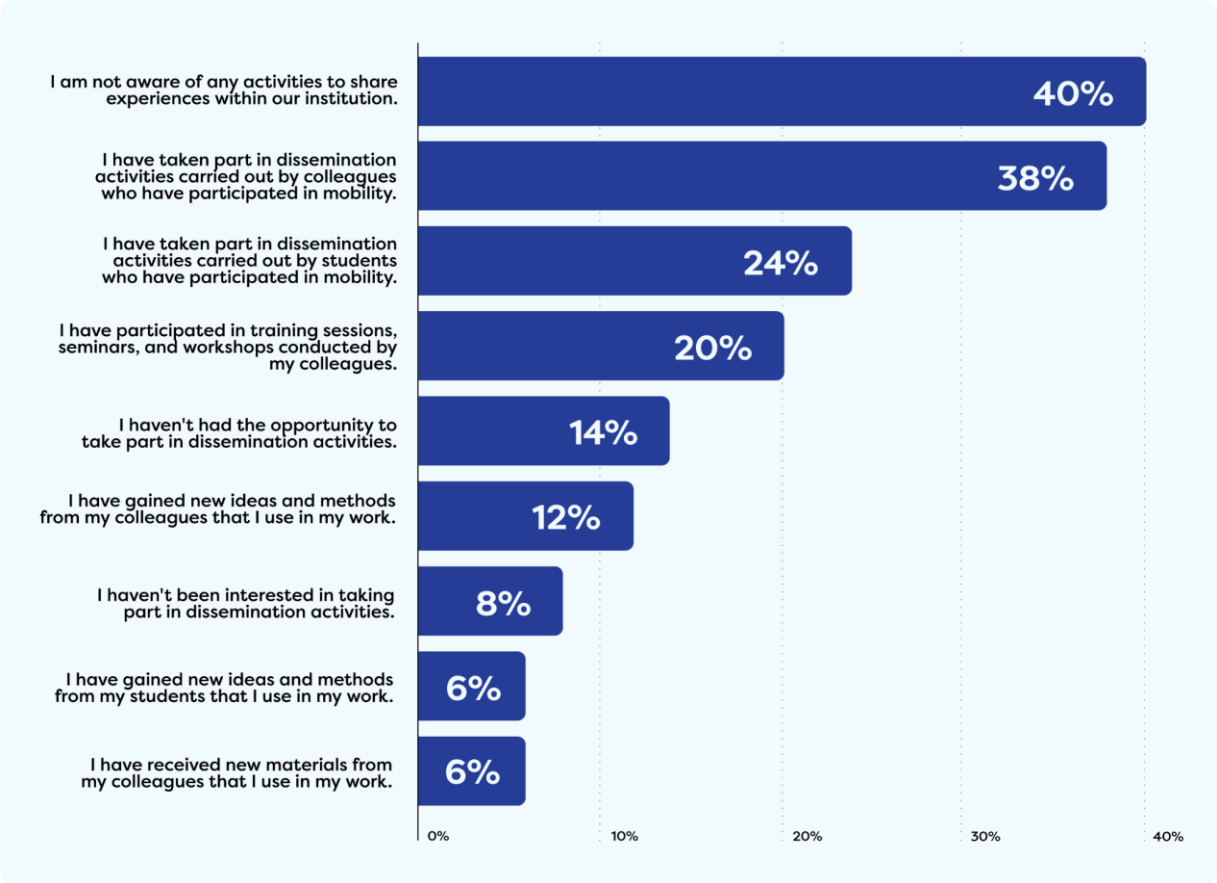


Figure 22. Assessments of dissemination by those who have not participated in learning mobility (n = 50)

The direct impact of dissemination on non-participants is very limited: only 12% of respondents have obtained new ideas or methods from colleagues for use in their work, and 6% have obtained new materials.

It was noted in the interviews that dissemination is dominated by informal, word-of-mouth sharing. It was also pointed out that **sharing within smaller, sector- or discipline-specific groups is more effective than cross-organisational seminars**, as the nature of work in different sectors varies so greatly that it is difficult to find a common language and context within a wider circle.

Four main approaches were identified in the focus groups and interviews as the most effective dissemination activities. Firstly, **internal departmental meetings and smaller discussions**, where those who have been on learning mobility share their experiences directly with their team colleagues, were considered effective. Secondly, regular **discipline-specific events for sharing experiences** work well (e.g. open presentations organised twice a year across the institution, where both support and academic staff can talk about their learning mobilities). Thirdly, **digital communication platforms** are used (e.g. the Slack channel 'Trips and Training'), where brief summaries are posted after each learning mobility. Fourthly, experiences are disseminated **via newsletters**, which combine personal accounts with information on the Erasmus programme.

'Summaries of learning mobilities are published on the website and are also shared in faculty newsletters, ensuring wide reach. We have also trialled centralised formats, such as coffee mornings for sharing experiences, but these tend to lack focus. Subject specialists prefer to discuss matters among themselves, which is entirely understandable.' – university coordinator who took part in the interview

'The communication platform has a separate channel for training sessions and work placements, where summaries, key observations and references are shared. In addition, discussions take place at departmental meetings and within smaller teams, where topics are explored in greater depth. Support staff also share their experiences and lessons learnt at team meetings.' – head of a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

Blended mobility

Blended mobility is a type of learning mobility that also utilises a virtual component (e.g. learning in a virtual environment before or after the mobility period, or meeting with a representative or representatives of the host organisation). Of those who took part in learning mobility, 36% had participated in blended mobility (including 16% more academic staff than non-academic staff), and 80% of them considered it relevant and to have created



added value. However, 76% of those who had not participated in blended mobility felt that a virtual component would not have been beneficial to their learning mobility.



The greatest benefit of the virtual component was seen in preparing for the smooth and successful implementation of the mobility activity. The virtual component was most commonly organised before the mobility period. Preparatory work and getting to know the partners in advance enabled more efficient organisation of work on site, accelerated the start of activities and reduced the time spent on orientation. Coordination via Zoom and Teams also ensured a clearer division of roles and helped to establish ongoing contact with partners. Virtual learning, in the form of both pre- and post-mobility sessions, made the experience more in-depth and meaningful for educational staff.

The use of shared tools (e.g. Padlet), shared folders and WhatsApp facilitated smoother work organisation, and several of these remained in use even after the learning mobility. Follow-up summaries and reflection helped to consolidate what had been learnt and led to the implementation of ideas for collaboration.

'Introductory meetings, sharing background information and discussing ideas – thanks to the virtual preparation, the on-site activities have been more effective.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'The aim of the virtual component was to foster a sense of unity among the participants, and this was achieved brilliantly.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'The virtual part of the learning mobility consisted of Zoom meetings, which enabled effective pre- and post-mobility communication, better planning of collaboration, and maintaining contacts even after the physical mobility.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Those who did not take part in the blended mobility highlighted how the virtual component could have been organised. They described how preliminary meetings could have been held to get to know the other participants beforehand and avoid back-and-forth correspondence. It was also mentioned that mini-lectures could have been held before the

learning mobility to help participants familiarise themselves better with the topic. A follow-up meeting for reflection and feedback would also have been desirable.

Recognition of staff mobility

In 81% of cases, the institution recognised the learning mobility as part of work (e.g. for performance appraisals, when calculating workload or as professional development). Learning mobilities were recognised equally for academic and non-academic staff.

In the case of universities of applied sciences, it was not recognised as part of work for only around 5% of respondents, whilst at universities, learning mobility was not recognised for a quarter of participants.

'The management at our institution takes a dismissive view of learning mobility and believes that by participating in it, staff are wasting time that they should be using for the benefit of the institution. Learning mobility is tolerated because it helps us look better in accreditation processes.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Recognition is not as important for non-academic staff as it is for academic staff.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Recognition of learning mobility was considered very important: 91% of respondents said that it was important to them for the institution to regard participation in learning mobility as part of their work. At universities of applied sciences, 100% of respondents considered this important, whilst at universities, a few academic staff members highlighted it as unimportant. At the same time, both the focus group interviews and the survey responses revealed that the phrase 'recognition of learning mobility' may be interpreted in different ways and may therefore influence the results (including through the number of respondents who answered 'yes' to the question on whether it was taken into account).

'Actually, I don't know whether staff mobility was taken into account.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'I was paid for it. You're usually paid for the work you do.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Learning mobility is recognised as part of work in various ways. For example, it was noted that it is treated as a business trip (salary is maintained, it is recorded in the timesheet, and a replacement is arranged). In addition, it was mentioned that learning mobility is recognised as professional development or further training, as well as teaching credit (i.e. earning credits for teaching during the learning mobility period). Learning mobility is taken into account in



performance appraisals and is reflected in reports (business trip reports, annual reports). In terms of recognition, the treatment of the learning mobility as a topic in development discussions was highlighted.

'Learning mobility was classified under continuing professional development hours, but is not counted as part of working hours.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'For academic staff, secondments abroad are taken into account as a positive criterion during performance appraisals. For non-academic staff, there is no such assessment, but the general attitude towards learning mobility is supportive and favourable.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'Whether it is taken into account depends on the procedure, but it is considered when assessing workload, as part of professional development, and during performance appraisals.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'My learning mobility was treated as part of my work at the institution. It was coordinated with the management and linked to my job responsibilities. The objectives and content of the learning mobility were related to my field of work, and I made use of the experience and knowledge gained later on.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

Factors hindering participation in learning mobility

Fifty-nine educational staff members who had not yet participated in learning mobility responded to the questionnaire. Among them, there is a fairly even split between academic and non-academic staff, but two-thirds of the respondents are from universities of applied sciences. It is noteworthy that **just over half of those who have not participated have less than five years' work experience in their current role**. In terms of workload, *approximately* 75% of non-participants work full-time. Among those who have not participated in learning mobility, 86% either definitely or rather wish to take part in Erasmus+ learning mobility in the future.

Figure 23 presents assessments of the barriers to participation in learning mobility. The main barrier preventing educational staff from participating is the lack of a suitable opportunity: 52% stated that they had not found a suitable professional development opportunity, and 40% had not yet sought information on learning mobility themselves. Furthermore, 45% of those who (rather) agree with the statement that they have not found a suitable professional development opportunity in the form of learning mobility also (rather) agree with the statement that they have not yet sought information on learning mobility themselves. Furthermore, 27% perceived the inability to participate for reasons related to study or work

arrangements as a barrier. At the same time, it is noteworthy that only 8% of non-participants see no reason at all to take part in learning mobility.

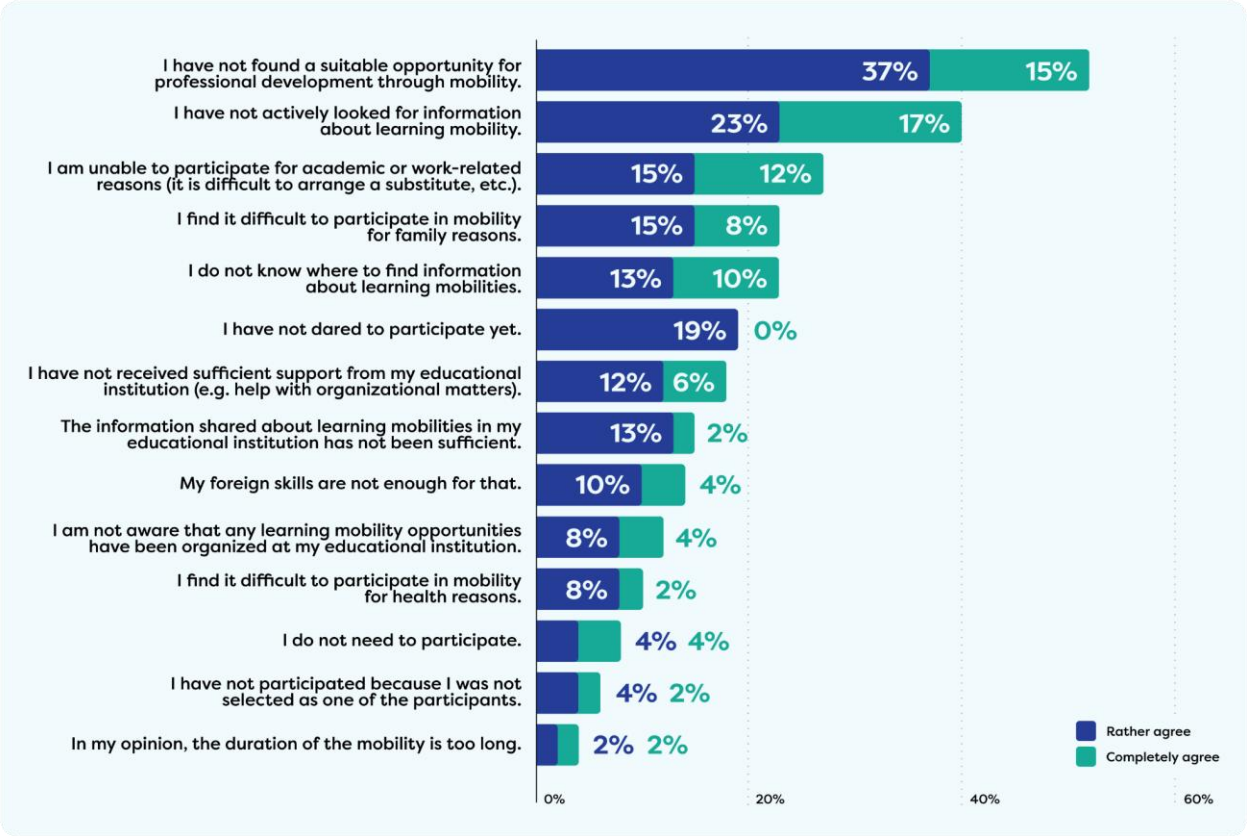


Figure 23. Factors hindering participation in learning mobility: proportion of positive responses (response options 5 – 'I completely agree' and 4 – 'I rather agree') (n = 52)

The least significant barriers were considered to be the excessive duration of learning mobility (4%), failure to be selected as a participant (6%) or health-related reasons (8%). 12% had not heard of mobilities for staff being organised at their educational institution, and 14% did not consider their foreign language skills to be sufficient.

'It's more down to the workload. In academia, more is expected of you than you can manage. A learning mobility would take up even more time.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'The nature of my work relates to all areas of the higher education institution, but as my field of work is apparently considered to be nationally focused rather than international, there are no learning mobility opportunities available. Rather, no one has taken a broader view of the need arising from the specific nature of this work and the necessity of familiarising oneself with other practices for exactly the same purpose as in other fields.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'It would be great if we could take our families along for that money. Rather, such initiatives are aimed at people who have no family responsibilities, or those who don't care about their families and want to shift all the responsibility onto the other party.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

In all the interviews, language skills perceived as inadequate, family commitments and a lack of time (including holding down multiple jobs) were highlighted as the main obstacles. Some also fear the associated logistics and the prospect of going alone. Where most staff participate in mobility, non-participation tends to be due to staff not considering it sufficiently important. At the same time, as mentioned, 86% of questionnaire respondents expressed a desire to participate in the future. A limited budget has increasingly become an obstacle.

'It's very much a question of attitude. Often, these obstacles are used as an excuse for entirely different fears.' – head of a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

In their survey responses, educational staff who had not participated also described the kind of support they would need from their educational institution to overcome these obstacles. In particular, they highlighted that **support is expected in relation to specific information, work organisation and administrative procedures.** In addition, finding suitable learning mobility opportunities and participating together were mentioned. Some felt that the existing support was already sufficient.

'There could be something like a matching portal where you could find partners or opportunities for learning mobility and where you could, for example, register your interest.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

'I would like targeted information on projects – that is, call for proposals and initiatives – that are related to learning mobility and, at the same time, to specific fields of study.' – an educational staff member who responded to the questionnaire

The following solutions were put forward in the interviews: **enabling staff to participate in learning mobility as a group, practising language skills by delivering lectures in a foreign language in Estonia, and taking language courses.** In addition, the university leader mentioned that if there is a reason related to an external factor (e.g. children or language proficiency), a tailored solution could be found. The university leader of applied sciences, however, also highlighted that others' experiences should be shared to boost confidence.

'First-time participants may also experience uncertainty about travelling, which can be alleviated by the opportunity to take part in a mobility for staff as part of a group.' – head of a university of applied sciences who took part in the interview

'For some people, the only way to overcome their reluctance is to go with a friend or colleague who has been on such a programme before. Such an experience provides confidence, and next time they will be bolder about taking part independently.' – university head who took part in the interview



Proposals and recommendations

Expanding the pool of participants

Higher education institutions should make a conscious effort to broaden the range of participants in learning mobility, so that this opportunity is not limited to repeat participants or staff with more than five years' service. The opportunity to take part in learning mobility should be actively offered at all times to first-time participants, staff with shorter service, and representatives of various roles and positions.

For example, the qualitative part of the study revealed that international networks formed at an early stage of one's career have a positive impact on the future development of the entire educational institution. Consequently, first-time participants with less than five years' experience in their current role could be the most important target groups for mobilities for staff at educational institutions.

The open-ended responses to the survey revealed that, compared with academic staff, non-academic staff may have an even greater impact on the educational institution as a whole when applying the outcomes of their learning mobility, as the changes they initiate are more likely to influence the institution's overall culture, systems and practices. Therefore, the participation of non-academic staff in learning mobility must continue to be prioritised.

More generally, non-participants are characterised by the fact that they have not shown an active interest in learning mobility themselves and, partly for this reason, have not identified opportunities suitable for them. This means that institutions must identify staff who have not yet participated and take a more personalised approach to introducing them to the opportunities available, as without a conscious effort, they may continue to miss out on the potential benefits of participating in learning mobility.

Encouraging participation in learning mobility for all target groups

Participation in learning mobility and the dissemination of its outcomes are hindered by several common barriers related to study and work arrangements and family circumstances, affecting both potential and experienced participants. Managers should therefore play an even greater role than before in shaping work arrangements that support learning mobility, so that it is more accessible to a wider range of staff. This primarily concerns the adjustment of work arrangements and workloads so that educational staff can take part in learning



mobility and devote sufficient time to carrying out preparatory and follow-up activities that support its effectiveness.

As part of its communication on learning mobility, the Agency could collect and disseminate good examples of how changes to work organisation and other supporting measures have helped institutions to facilitate staff participation in learning mobility.

Increasing the visibility and impact of learning mobility through dissemination

The sharing of learning mobility outcomes must be visible and practically useful to staff (particularly those not participating). Practical formats should be prioritised in dissemination (e.g. workshops, joint trial sessions, consultations and guidance materials for colleagues).

Above all, dissemination should specifically involve those people for whom the experiences and outcomes are relevant (based on their specialism or role).

However, if the aim is to inspire staff to participate more widely in learning mobility, opportunities for reflection must be created for staff involved in the dissemination process, so that, based on what they have heard or experienced, they can identify opportunities for learning mobility within their own specialism or field.

Treating participation in learning mobility as part of the job

Learning mobility should consistently be treated as part of the job, so that it is reflected in work plans and development discussions, as well as in criteria for secondments, professional development and/or performance appraisals. This helps to avoid situations where participation is not officially recognised and/or results in an additional workload for staff later on due to the need to catch up on teaching duties.

For its part, the Agency can explain to both the heads of higher education institutions and staff what 'recognition' of learning mobility means in the context of Erasmus, and what its value is as a tool for managing professional development.

