



European  
Commission

# Mobility Scoreboard

## *Higher Education Background Report 2018/19*

*Eurydice Report*



Education and  
Training





# Mobility Scoreboard

## Higher Education

### Background Report

## 2018/19

Eurydice Report

Education and  
Training

This document is published by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA, Education and Youth Policy Analysis).

**Please cite this publication as:**

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Printed version	EC-03-20-007-EN-C	ISBN 978-92-9484-175-9	doi:10.2797/971
PDF	EC-03-20-007-EN-N	ISBN 978-92-9484-171-1	doi: 10.2797/81807

Text completed in December 2019.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

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## CODES, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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### Country codes

<b>EU/EU-28</b>	European Union	<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>BE</b>	Belgium	<b>LV</b>	Latvia	<b>UK-ENG</b>	England
<b>BE fr</b>	Belgium – French Community	<b>LT</b>	Lithuania	<b>UK-WLS</b>	Wales
<b>BE de</b>	Belgium – German-speaking Community	<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg	<b>UK-NIR</b>	Northern Ireland
<b>BE nl</b>	Belgium – Flemish Community	<b>HU</b>	Hungary	<b>UK-SCT</b>	Scotland
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria	<b>MT</b>	Malta		<b>EEA and candidate countries</b>
<b>CZ</b>	Czechia	<b>NL</b>	Netherlands	<b>AL</b>	Albania
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	<b>AT</b>	Austria	<b>BA</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>DE</b>	Germany	<b>PL</b>	Poland	<b>CH</b>	Switzerland
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	<b>PT</b>	Portugal	<b>IS</b>	Iceland
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	<b>RO</b>	Romania	<b>LI</b>	Liechtenstein
<b>EL</b>	Greece	<b>SI</b>	Slovenia	<b>ME</b>	Montenegro
<b>ES</b>	Spain	<b>SK</b>	Slovakia	<b>MK</b>	North Macedonia
<b>FR</b>	France	<b>FI</b>	Finland	<b>NO</b>	Norway
<b>HR</b>	Croatia	<b>SE</b>	Sweden	<b>RS</b>	Serbia
<b>IT</b>	Italy			<b>TR</b>	Turkey

### Statistics

(:) Data not available                      (–) Not applicable

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>EHEA</b>	European Higher Education Area
<b>ENIC</b>	European Network of Information Centres in the European Region
<b>ESG</b>	European Standards and Guidelines
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>LRC</b>	Lisbon Recognition Convention
<b>NARIC</b>	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
<b>UOE</b>	UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat
<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and training



## INTRODUCTION

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Experiencing transnational mobility during education and training is a major boost in the life of many young people. It helps them grow personally and academically, it broadens their social networks and develops their intercultural and language skills, all of which have positive effects on their employability (European Commission, 2014). Learner mobility also impacts on education systems and individual educational institutions, causing them to have a more international outlook, widening their reach, and improving their overall quality.

Despite the added value that learner mobility brings and the increasing opportunities available, the path towards the free movement of students, researchers and trainees is still hampered by a number of obstacles. For example, students cannot always use their domestic grants and loans to study abroad (they are not fully portable); the recognition of qualifications and credits is not always a straightforward process; and information and guidance on studying abroad is not always readily accessible. On top of all this, students must have the necessary foreign language skills to study at tertiary level. These continuing challenges call for systemic reform to remove the barriers to learning mobility and enable more students to benefit from these learning experiences.

For this reason, in 2011, the Council of the European Union recommended <sup>(1)</sup> Member States to implement structural reforms to create a positive environment to support learning mobility. The ‘Youth on the Move’ Recommendation also provides the policy framework for the Mobility Scoreboard, a tool for monitoring the progress made by European countries in facilitating learning mobility in both higher education and initial vocational education and training.

After feasibility studies conducted both in higher education and initial vocational education and training, the Mobility Scoreboard was first published in 2016 on a joint online platform <sup>(2)</sup>. In addition, the scoreboard indicators on higher education were published in a detailed Eurydice background report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016).

This report is the second edition of the background report and, in line with the Council Recommendation, it provides updated information on six higher education indicators:

1. Information and guidance
2. Foreign language preparation
3. Portability of grants and loans
4. Support for disadvantaged learners
5. Recognition of learning outcomes through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
6. Recognition of qualifications.

Since the primary aim of the Mobility Scoreboard is to monitor policy progress over time, the indicators have been kept as close as possible to those of the 2016 edition. However, taking into account the evolution of the policy framework, some of the indicators have changed focus slightly in order to better reflect the different dimensions of the Recommendation. In addition, given that some of the indicators also form part of the Bologna scorecard (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018b), changes made to that monitoring framework have also been taken into account in order to ensure consistency between the two monitoring tools.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on ‘Youth on the move’ – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

<sup>(2)</sup> Mobility Scoreboard platform: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard>

As might be expected, the information in this report focuses largely on policies related to tertiary education. The only exception is the chapter on language preparation, where it examines language learning provision from pre-primary to the end of the upper secondary level, including the vocational paths that give direct access to higher education. Most indicators are not restricted to a particular cycle of tertiary education. However, some elements, especially those related to financial support (portability, targeted support, etc.) and ECTS, have a more limited scope and concentrate primarily on the first and second cycles.

The reference year is the 2018/19 academic year, and all 28 EU Member States are covered as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

### **Structure of the report**

The report has six chapters covering each of the higher education indicators listed above. Each chapter is divided into two main sections. The section ‘Scoreboard data’ examines the various elements that make up each indicator, highlighting the different approaches taken by different education systems. Maps show the situation across Europe – revealing differences between education systems and sometimes regions as well. Charts and tables provide additional detail at a glance.

In the section that follows, the individual elements are aggregated into a composite ‘Scoreboard indicator’. Each scoreboard indicator consists of five colour-coded categories, each containing relevant criteria or descriptors. An education system that meets all the expected criteria is allocated to the dark green category, while a system that meets none is allocated to the red category. Three additional categories: light green, yellow, and orange are used depending on the number of criteria met. For each indicator, a colour-coded map shows the situation across Europe. A colour-coded table at the end of the section presents the relevant criteria by category.

The report also contains three annexes. The first two discuss the broader policy framework surrounding learning mobility in European countries, notably national mobility strategies and targets (Annex I) and national mobility grants (Annex II). While these elements do not form part of the Mobility Scoreboard, they provide valuable information on the broader policy framework of higher education mobility in Europe.

Annex III provides an overview on current trends in credit and degree mobility based on available data. The indicators have been computed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) on the basis of UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) data (see Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo, 2018). The reference year is 2017.

## CHAPTER 1: INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

---

### 1.1. Introduction

For the individual learner, engaging in a transnational mobility experience involves a complex decision-making and organisational process. Deciding which country and higher education institution to go to depends on a number of factors such as languages spoken, the curriculum and how it is taught. Looking further ahead, participants need to consider how the experience and learning outcomes will be recognised and valued in the national, European or international context. In addition, participants need information on very practical issues, such as what organisational steps need to be taken, how to contact the student support services at the host institution, what kinds of advice they give, what accommodation is available etc. Given the diversity of systems and environments across Europe, as well as the procedures and opportunities provided at national and institutional level, the accessibility, transparency and quality of information and guidance becomes crucial (King, Findlay and Ahrens, 2010).

It is not surprising, therefore, that information and guidance on learning mobility is one of the pillars of the Council Recommendation on this issue <sup>(1)</sup>. Member States are recommended to make information easily accessible and tailored to the needs of specific groups of learners and individuals. Maximising the involvement of existing networks as well as exploring new, creative and interactive ways to disseminate, communicate and exchange information with young people and all other stakeholders are also encouraged <sup>(2)</sup>.

The Council Recommendation also recognises the positive role of multipliers in enhancing the accessibility of information, as well as the value of peer-to-peer guidance. Member States are advised to use 'teachers, trainers, families, youth workers and young people' who have participated in learning mobility experiences to inspire and motivate young people to do likewise <sup>(3)</sup>.

Taking into account the spirit of the recommendation and the specific measures proposed, Scoreboard indicator 1 examines the extent to which top-level authorities have taken steps to deliver accessible, transparent and tailored information and guidance on learning mobility opportunities.

### 1.2. Scoreboard data

The analysis that follows focuses on four key aspects related to the recommendation. It examines whether, with respect to information and guidance to students on outward learning mobility:

1. a strategic approach towards information and guidance has been adopted by top-level authorities;
2. central web portals have been set up that specifically deal with information and guidance;
3. personalised services are being delivered, evaluated and monitored;
4. multipliers are being involved in publicly funded large-scale initiatives.

All four items focus exclusively on outward mobility, assessing support in this area to mobile and potentially mobile students.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibid.

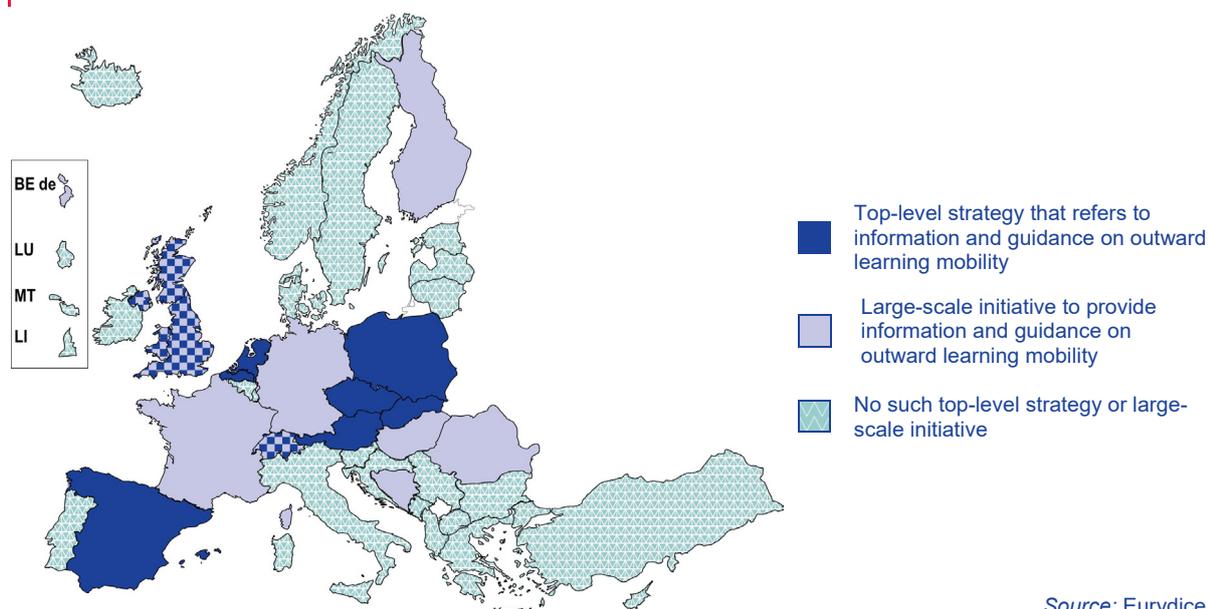
## Strategies, large-scale initiatives and delegated bodies

Top-level authorities may take different approaches to planning and delivering a coherent set of policies that specifically focus on facilitating students' access to information on outward learning. In some cases, they issue strategic policy documents that include objectives related to information and guidance, signalling the political importance of the matter at this level. A second approach is to implement large-scale initiatives either at national or regional level. Examples of these large scale initiatives might be major publicity campaigns or the setting up of national/regional information networks. The third approach is where top-level authorities delegate the responsibility for the planning and delivery of services in this area to a specific body. Whatever the option chosen, the ultimate aim is generally to ensure that appropriate information and guidance is made available to students so that they can make informed choices before, during and after their transnational learning mobility experience. This section examines all three options.

### Strategies and large-scale initiatives

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the education systems that have either adopted top-level strategies covering information and guidance or developed large-scale initiatives in this area. Top-level strategies are understood as official documents developed by the top-level authorities in an effort to achieve successfully an overall goal. The strategies may comprise a vision, identify objectives, name responsible bodies and indicate the funding resources available – they do not necessarily specify what practical measures are to be taken. Initiatives, on the other hand, are intended to implement practical measures identified as necessary by top-level authorities. In some cases, initiatives are a means by which elements of a strategy are implemented.

**Figure 1.1: Existence of top-level strategies and large-scale initiatives that refer to information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2018/19**



Most countries have top-level strategies that provide strategic direction for policies related to outward learning mobility (see Annex I, Figure I.1); however, information and guidance for students is usually a minor aspect of these strategies, or in some cases it is not covered at all. As Figure 1.1 shows, about a quarter of the education systems participating in this report have a top-level strategy that makes explicit reference to information and guidance for students in the area of outward learning mobility.

In six systems (Austria, the United Kingdom – all four systems, and Switzerland), information and guidance on outward learning mobility is referred to in strategies on learning mobility. The United Kingdom is the only country whose strategy focusses specifically on outward mobility. The strategy, which was introduced in 2015/16, has been updated for the period 2017-2020 <sup>(4)</sup>.

In a further five education systems (the Flemish Community of Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Finland), information and guidance on outward learning mobility is addressed in strategies on the internationalisation of higher education. Although these strategies refer to information on outward mobility, their main focus is on making their national higher education systems more attractive to other countries. Finally, in Czechia and Slovakia, outward mobility and information and guidance for students are addressed within broader education strategies.

In about a quarter of the education systems, large-scale initiatives on information and guidance for outward learning mobility have been put in place by top-level authorities. In some countries, these complement the top-level strategies (the United Kingdom and Switzerland), in others they stand alone (the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Germany, France, Hungary, Romania, Finland and Bosnia and Herzegovina). These large-scale initiatives mainly take the form of communication campaigns to promote outward mobility among students in higher education institutions (for example, in Germany, Romania and the United Kingdom). In France, an information network of local and regional authorities has been set up which carries out major actions throughout the country to increase awareness of the opportunities for outward learning mobility and to disseminate information to students and stakeholders.

Since 2015/16, there has been little change regarding strategies and large-scale initiatives across Europe. Austria adopted the Higher Education Mobility Strategy in 2016, which also addresses the need for better information provision for students before they undertake outward learning mobility experiences. Hungary has large-scale information campaigns on outward learning mobility in the context of the Campus Mundi programme, which was adopted in 2016. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the large-scale initiatives reported in 2016 have not been renewed; the Flemish Community of Belgium, nevertheless, is currently developing a new learning mobility strategy, which, once adopted, may have an associated information campaign.

### **Delegation of information and guidance to external bodies**

Many countries delegate the provision of information and guidance on outward learning mobility to a central, yet independent and external body. This approach may be in addition to strategies and initiatives or it can be the only approach adopted.

All countries have a national agency entrusted with the management of programmes such as Erasmus+ or other European funded initiatives. Such agencies are excluded from this analysis when:

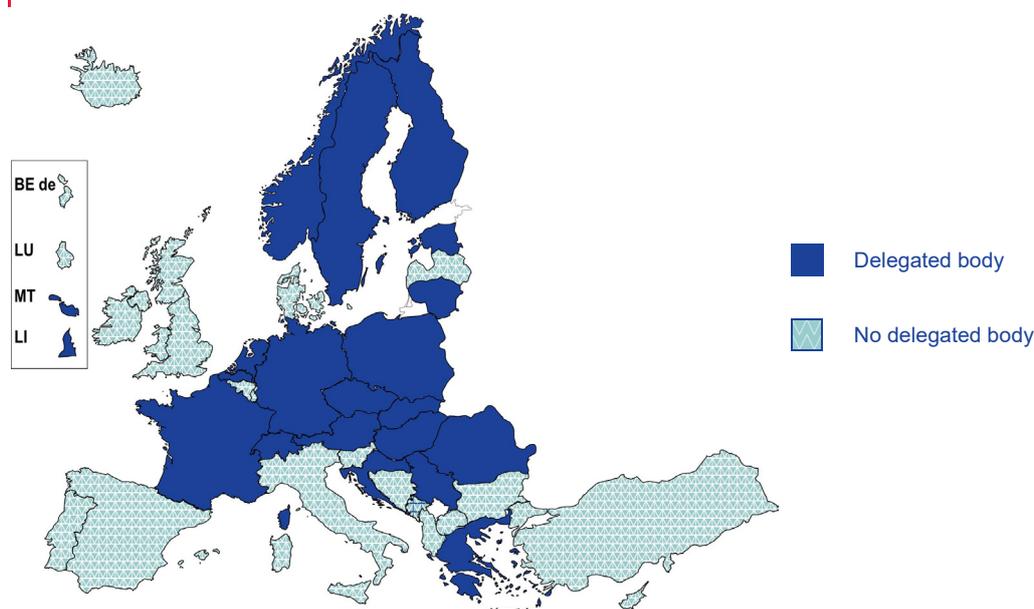
- their main focus is the management of these programmes,
- the information they provide is partial (e.g. limited to the European Union funding that is available),
- the information is predominantly directed at organisations rather than individuals,
- the guidance element to students is missing,
- their role is limited to incoming students.

---

<sup>(4)</sup> UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/UK-Strategy-for-Outward-Student-Mobility-2017-2020.aspx>

As shown in Figure 1.2, 21 education systems have a delegated body that provides information and guidance to students on outward learning mobility, although their mandate is always broader than this specific area. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Finland and Liechtenstein, the delegated body has a key role in implementing or coordinating policy on internationalisation in higher education. In Estonia, Greece, Romania and Finland, this body also manages various types of scholarships to support studies in the home country and abroad. In France, Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Switzerland, Norway and Serbia, the delegated body manages European and/or worldwide learning mobility schemes, and their student information and guidance duties have evolved mainly in this context.

**Figure 1.2: Existence of a delegated body responsible for providing information and guidance services for individuals on outward learning mobility, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Some countries report changes since the last report was published in 2016. In Poland, the Polish Agency for Academic Exchange was established in 2017 to support academic exchanges and international cooperation. One of the Agency's tasks is to provide information and guidance to students on learning mobility. In Serbia, an information and guidance service on outward learning mobility was officially delegated to the Foundation Tempus in May 2019 (the Foundation had been providing this service since September 2017). At the same time, in the United Kingdom, Universities UK (International), the body that previously addressed students directly, has altered its focus to supporting higher education institutions in promoting learning mobility and no longer provides guidance to individual learners.

### Web portals

The use of the Internet as a key route for providing information and guidance to learners is explicitly mentioned in the Council Recommendation. The availability of information on the Internet, however, does not inevitably mean that it is more accessible, clearer, or more comprehensive. For example, information might be dispersed across higher education institutions' websites and might not be easily located, or it might be directed at organisations rather than individuals and/or limited to European Union initiatives. Furthermore, the approach and content may vary depending on the policy of the individual institution, for example, the information provided may only be of a very general nature, limited to descriptions of education systems, costs of living in other countries, listings of higher education institutions, etc.

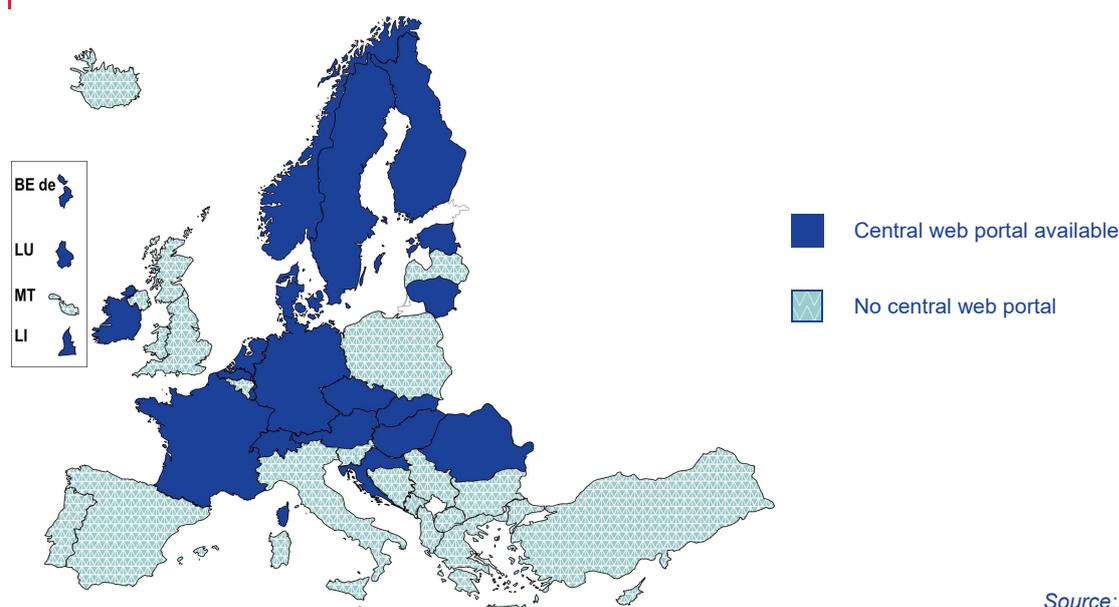
Consequently, as there is a wealth of information on learning mobility available on the Internet, it has been necessary to establish several qualifying factors for this indicator. Web portals must:

- be mainly dedicated to learning mobility with specific information on outward mobility;
- provide information on the opportunities available (including but not limited to European programmes). They must cover the countries where mobility opportunities are available, duration, eligibility of candidates, level of studies, etc.
- offer guidance on the application process and contact points for further information;
- provide a central point where all the essential information can be obtained, thereby avoiding the need for end-users to browse through other websites to understand what is available to them.

Portals may also provide additional information, specifically tailored for potential applicants, for example, on accommodation available, recognition of credits and qualifications, language courses, etc. in the destination country. Although this information raises the quality of the information and guidance, it is not considered a requirement for the indicator.

Figure 1.3 shows that central web portals meeting the above criteria are available in 21 European education systems.

**Figure 1.3: Existence of a central web portal providing key information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

In Croatia <sup>(5)</sup>, Hungary <sup>(6)</sup>, Austria <sup>(7)</sup> and Slovakia <sup>(8)</sup>, the portal allows the information to be filtered. The filters include the level of study, country of destination and duration of the mobility experience and associated funding. In Denmark <sup>(9)</sup> and Finland <sup>(10)</sup>, the portal also includes multimedia content, for example, videos explaining certain types of learning mobility opportunity and students' recounting their experiences.

<sup>(5)</sup> See: [www.stipendije.info](http://www.stipendije.info)

<sup>(6)</sup> See: [www.osztondijkereso.hu](http://www.osztondijkereso.hu)

<sup>(7)</sup> See: [www.grants.at](http://www.grants.at)

<sup>(8)</sup> See: <https://granty.saia.sk>

<sup>(9)</sup> See: [www.gribverden.dk](http://www.gribverden.dk)

<sup>(10)</sup> See: [www.maailmalle.net](http://www.maailmalle.net)

There has been little new development in this area since 2016. In Norway <sup>(11)</sup> and in Lithuania <sup>(12)</sup>, a new portal dedicated to outward mobility opportunities was launched in 2016 and in 2019, respectively. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, centralised web portals that previously targeted students with information and guidance on outward learning mobility no longer exist. In the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), due to a policy change, the new portals aim to support higher education institutions and academics in organising outward mobility experiences rather than individual students. In Scotland, the ‘Scotland goes global’ and ‘Students without borders’ websites have been closed down.

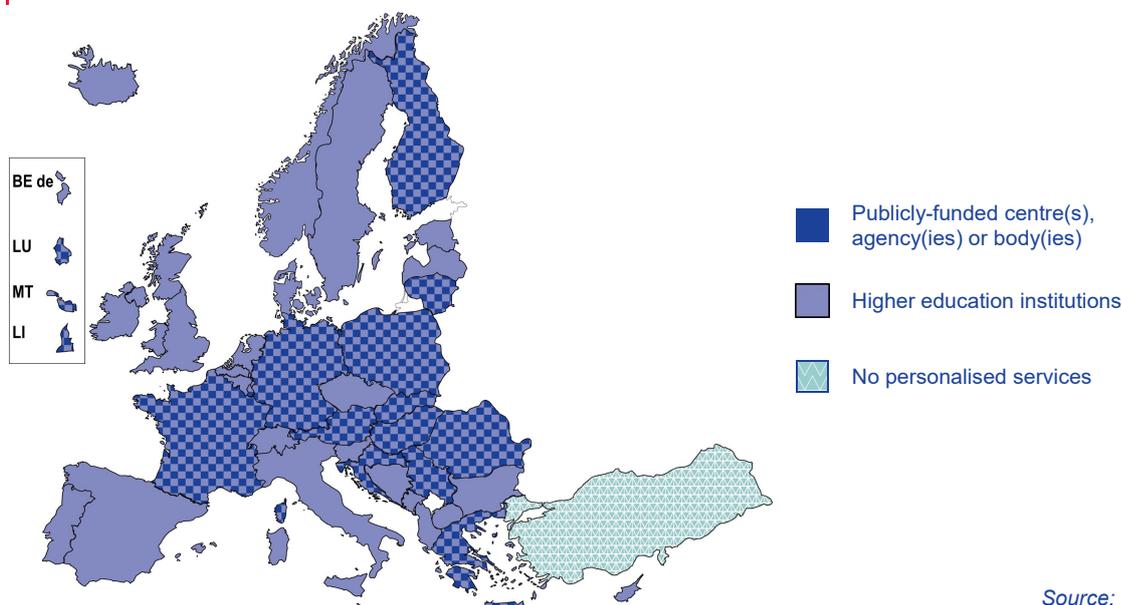
### Provision, monitoring and evaluation of personalised services

The Council Recommendation also explicitly calls for encouraging the provision of guidance to learners on how they can make the best use of learning mobility opportunities in order to develop their knowledge, skills and competences, and in addition, how they can make use of the competences acquired during their stay abroad and help with reintegration after a long stay abroad.

As young people have very different personal circumstances, including different socio-economic conditions, additional needs, disabilities, or family contexts, they often need personalised advice and practical support. Such services can be provided through counselling from professional staff both face-to-face and online. These services can cover a range of areas from help in navigating administrative procedures and managing finances, to individual guidance – for students with disabilities.

All education systems except Turkey provide personalised services to their students (see Figure 1.4).

**Figure 1.4: Provision of personalised services to learners for outward mobility, by type of institution, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

In general, the international offices of higher education institutions provide these services. In addition, in 15 education systems, one or more publicly-funded centres or agencies are also mandated to provide personalised support to individual students. Often, however, such services are limited to the specific learning mobility schemes administered by the public body. Guidance on outward mobility is

<sup>(11)</sup> See: [www.utdanningiverden.no](http://www.utdanningiverden.no)

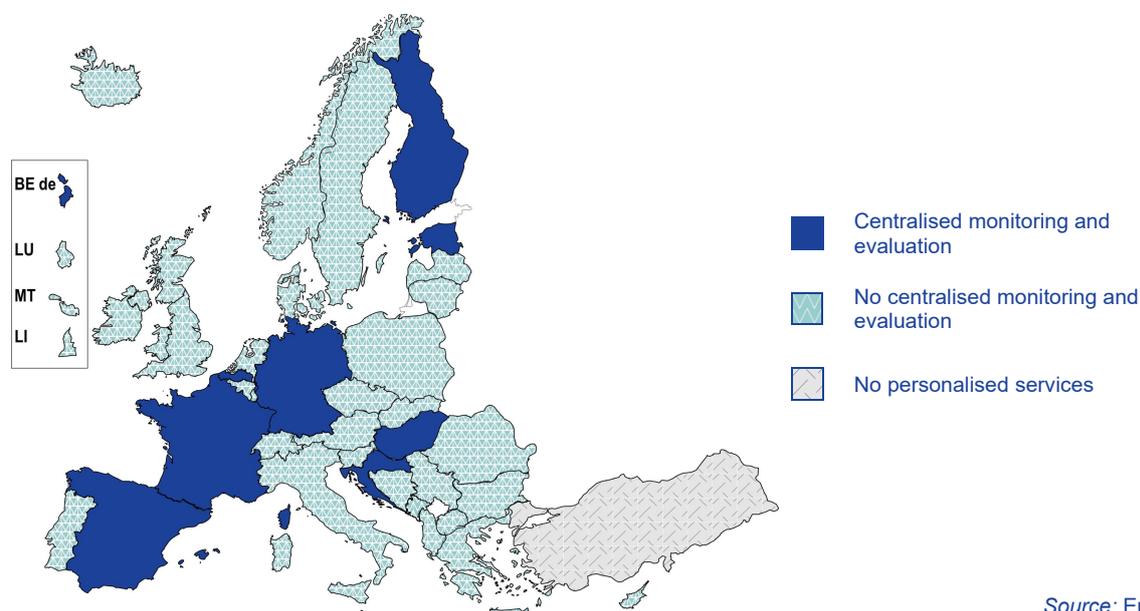
<sup>(12)</sup> See: [www.stipendijos.lt/galimybes/](http://www.stipendijos.lt/galimybes/)

provided as part of broader set of services to individuals in several countries: in France, by youth centres <sup>(13)</sup>, in Malta, by the Euroguidance centre, and in Finland, by guidance centres <sup>(14)</sup>.

Delegating the provision of personalised services to higher education institutions ensures that the service is close to the user and the service provider is more likely to understand their needs. However, this approach may result in a fragmented service leading to unevenness in provision and variable quality standards – better-resourced institutions may offer better services to their students.

This potential risk could be avoided by centralised, regular monitoring and evaluation of the services offered to learners. Figure 1.5 shows that despite the widespread provision of personalised services in higher education institutions, in only nine education systems is the quality of these services monitored systematically.

**Figure 1.5: Centralised monitoring and evaluation of personalised services that cover learning mobility issues, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Two main approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of personalised services can be observed across Europe. In the Flemish and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, Spain, France, Croatia and Finland, this task is performed by external quality assurance agencies, which audit the quality of higher education institutions and/or programmes, and have specific indicators for the quality of personalised services. In Germany, Estonia and Hungary, the delegated body (see Figure 1.2) monitors the quality of their own personalised services and sometimes those offered by higher education institutions. They typically run online satisfaction surveys among students who have participated or are preparing to participate in outward learning mobility experiences, and have used these services.

Croatia, Hungary and Finland report progress since 2015/16 in this area. Croatia and Finland have recently reviewed their external quality assurance framework for higher education institutions and have now formally integrated the evaluation of information and guidance services within their frameworks. In addition, Hungary has introduced student surveys to regularly monitor the quality of their personalised services.

<sup>(13)</sup> See: <https://www.cidj.com/partir-a-l-etranger/etudier-a-l-etranger>

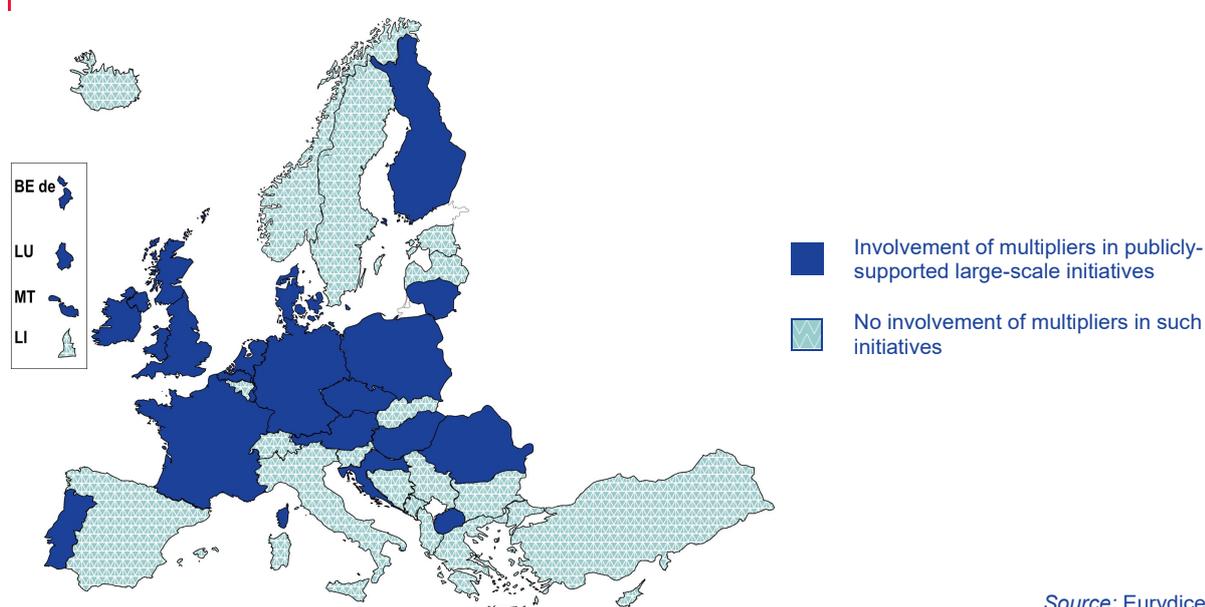
<sup>(14)</sup> See: [www.kohtaamo.info/mista-on-kyse-](http://www.kohtaamo.info/mista-on-kyse-)

## Involvement of multipliers

The role of multipliers – defined here as individuals who have had learning experiences abroad or who have been indirectly involved in the process (teachers, families, etc.) – is central to the development of a learning mobility culture. The influence of peers and role models with indirect experience of learning mobility can motivate students to embark on this experience.

Despite their strong potential, however, only about half of the education systems use multipliers in publicly-supported large-scale initiatives (see Figure 1.6). In most cases, they contribute to national fairs or information days on mobility. In Lithuania and Hungary, for example, former Erasmus+ students participate in the Back to School initiative: they go back to secondary schools in order to raise the awareness of younger students in learning mobility opportunities.

**Figure 1.6: Involvement of multipliers in publicly-supported large-scale initiatives, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Multipliers are also increasingly present in online promotional material. Their testimonials are published on centralised web portals in the form of reports, videos, blogs and articles. They also share their experiences on the social media platforms of public bodies. For example, in Denmark, Hungary, Malta and Finland, videos in which students who formerly participated in learning mobility, teachers and celebrities share their experiences are posted on centralised web portals and on social media.

It is interesting to note that countries mainly report on involving multipliers in the context of the promotion of Erasmus+ learning mobility, and most countries rely on former students to share their experiences. While peers may have the most important influence on students who are considering undertaking learning mobility experiences, those indirectly involved, such as teachers and families, are also sources of influence that could be harnessed to support large-scale public initiatives.

There has been no new development regarding multipliers since 2015/16.

### 1.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 1 (see Figure 1.7) takes into account whether education systems have in place the four elements related to the pillar in the Council Recommendation on information and guidance to students with respect to outward mobility:

1. an overarching strategy issued by the top-level authority that sets the direction for the provision of information and guidance, or publicly supported large-scale initiatives aimed at informing and guiding learners, or a delegated body that has a mandate to provide information and guidance to learners (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2);
2. a centralised publicly-supported web portal largely devoted to learning mobility, but with a focus on outward mobility (see Figure 1.3);
3. publicly-supported personalised services providing counselling, guidance and information, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (see Figures 1.4 and 1.5);
4. multipliers involved in publicly supported large-scale initiatives for information and guidance on learning mobility (see Figure 1.6).

The scoreboard indicator is built on a five-category, colour-coded scheme where dark green indicates that all four elements are in place, and red signifies that none are present. The remaining three categories (light green, yellow, and orange) indicate that one or more element is missing.

**Dark green:** The German-speaking and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Germany, France, Croatia, Hungary and Finland comply with all the criteria.

**Light green:** Six systems fulfil three of the four criteria. Czechia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria and Romania lack a central approach to evaluation and monitoring of personalised services. In Estonia, multipliers are not involved in publicly funded large-scale initiatives, as there are no such initiatives.

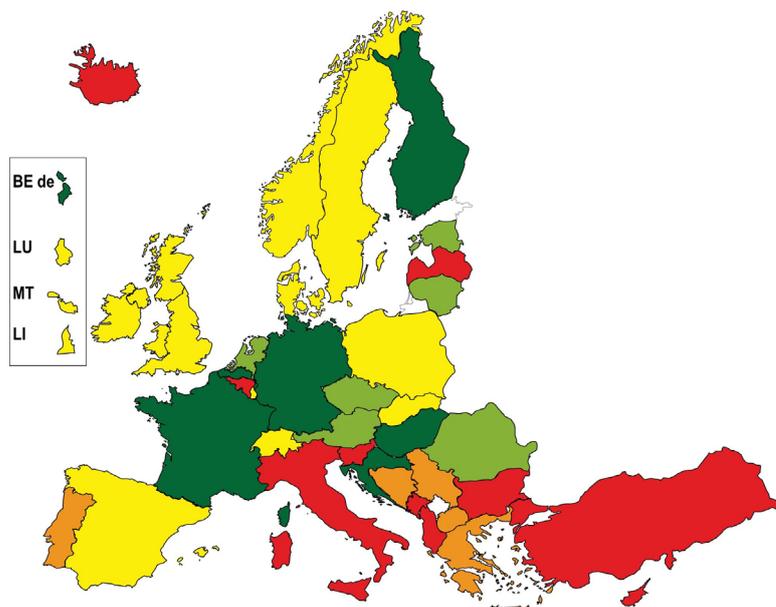
**Yellow:** Fifteen education systems fulfil two of the four criteria. Most of them have a top-level strategy, large-scale initiative or a delegated body, but there is no clear pattern concerning the other criteria. In several systems, a centralised monitoring of personalised services is absent.

**Orange:** In the five systems which meet only one criteria, either a top-level strategy, large-scale initiative or a delegated body is in place or multipliers are involved in publicly supported large-scale initiatives.

**Red:** Ten systems do not meet any of the criteria under scrutiny (the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Slovenia, Albania, Iceland, Montenegro and Turkey).

Some countries have changed category since 2015/16 due to policy changes. Croatia, Hungary and Finland now systematically evaluate personalised services; while in Lithuania and Norway, a new central web portal has been launched. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, there are no longer central web portals directed at students themselves.

**Figure 1.7: Scoreboard indicator 1: Information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	<p>All four of the following elements regarding information and guidance on learning mobility are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an overarching strategy on mobility issued by the central level authority that sets the direction for the provision of information and guidance, <b>OR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ publicly supported large-scale initiatives aimed at informing and guiding learners, <b>OR</b></li> <li>○ a delegated body that has a mandate to provide information and guidance to learners;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• a centralised publicly-supported web portal devoted to learning mobility, but with a focus on outward mobility);</li> <li>• publicly supported personalised services providing counselling, guidance and information, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation;</li> <li>• involvement of multipliers under publicly-supported large-scale initiatives of information and guidance on learning mobility.</li> </ul>
	Three of the four elements are in place.
	Two of the four elements are in place.
	One of the four elements is in place.
	None of the four elements is in place.

**1.4. Conclusion**

Information and guidance on outward learning mobility is crucial in preparing students to engage in and to gain most benefit from their learning mobility experience. It is also an important factor for inclusion – information is key to providing better access to learning mobility for all students. Those with additional or special education needs or those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may particularly value this type of support. Scoreboard indicator 1 of the Mobility Scoreboard shows that top-level authorities in only a third of the education systems implement most of the policy measures examined. Countries in the south of Europe are in most need of development in this area.

Guidance from top-level authorities appears crucial in ensuring adequate information and guidance for outward learning mobility. In education systems where the top-level has not articulated an overarching strategy, initiated a large-scale measure or delegated responsibility to a dedicated body (about one third of education systems), other information and guidance policy measures recommended at EU level – a centralised web portal, personalised services and the involvement of multipliers – are also often lacking.

It is also striking that the potential of centralised web portals is not well exploited in most countries. At a time when young people increasingly 'go digital', the centralisation of information and guidance on learning mobility opportunities online could potentially improve access to information, increase take up of mobility opportunities and reduce costs of information provision.

Finally, one of the scoreboard indicator elements in particular is poorly represented: the monitoring and evaluation of personalised services. While higher education institutions provide personalised services in almost all education systems and in some systems, other public bodies are also involved, only about one in five of these systematically monitor and evaluate the quality of these services. This makes the quality of information and guidance services dependent on the strategy, resources and interest of the individual higher education institutions themselves.



## CHAPTER 2: FOREIGN LANGUAGE PREPARATION

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### 2.1. Introduction

Learning languages is fundamental to transnational mobility experiences. Those benefiting from studying abroad report extensively on the positive impact their experience has had on their foreign language skills (European Commission, 2014). At the same time, in several European countries, a large proportion of students consider that inadequate foreign language skills are a significant obstacle to undertaking a study period abroad (Hauschildt, Vögtle and Gwosć 2018, pp 233-234).

The Council Recommendation acknowledges the importance of language learning ‘starting at early stages of education’, and urges Member States to provide ‘quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility in both general and vocational education’<sup>(1)</sup>. Alongside foreign language skills, the Recommendation also draws attention to other useful skills and competences, including ‘basic digital competences’<sup>(2)</sup>. Acquiring these skills not only allows students to be well prepared for their learning experience abroad, but they also enable them to ‘take advantage of new opportunities for virtual mobility, which complement physical mobility’<sup>(3)</sup>. However, while digital skills certainly play a role in preparing students for learning mobility, foreign language skills remain fundamental to the process. Scoreboard indicator 2 therefore focuses exclusively on foreign language preparation, emphasising its crucial role in equipping students with the skills necessary to gain the most benefit from their study period abroad.

### 2.2. Scoreboard data

This section examines the data on which Scoreboard indicator 2 is based. It looks at national approaches to compulsory foreign language learning in schools, from pre-primary level to the end of upper secondary education. More specifically, it focuses on the *duration* of compulsory foreign language learning available to all pupils in full-time education, including both general and vocational education.

The focus of the indicator is closely linked to the conclusions of the 2002 Barcelona European Council<sup>(4)</sup>, which called for action ‘to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age’. This goal is based on the premise that it is desirable for all pupils to spend as long as possible learning foreign languages. Though many factors influence language proficiency (teaching methods, teachers’ and pupils’ motivation, pupils’ socio-economic background, availability of informal language learning opportunities etc.), the evidence does indeed suggest that starting to learn foreign languages at an early age, as well as learning more than one foreign language are factors associated with higher levels of language proficiency (European Commission 2012, p. 11).

For these reasons, this chapter examines the total number of years during which all pupils must learn:

- at least one compulsory foreign language, and
- at least two different foreign languages simultaneously.

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(1) Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on ‘Youth on the move’ – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/3.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Barcelona European Council 15-16 March 2002, Presidency Conclusions, p. 19.

The total period of compulsory foreign language learning is calculated from the beginning of pre-primary education until the end of upper secondary education. Two caveats should, however, be noted in this respect. First, in all European countries, at least some parts of pre-primary education precede compulsory schooling. Foreign language learning in non-compulsory pre-primary education is considered when two conditions are met: a) all participating pupils have to learn a foreign language; b) educational authorities have committed themselves to guaranteeing a place in a pre-primary setting for all children whose parents request it<sup>(5)</sup>. Second, in most countries, upper secondary education goes beyond the end of compulsory education. In these cases, foreign language learning is nevertheless regarded as ‘compulsory’ if it is required for all participating pupils.

Since the focus of the Scoreboard is on outward mobility in higher education, the indicator concentrates only on educational pathways or tracks *giving direct access to higher education*. Specifically, it examines the minimum requirements on language learning in:

- general education up to the end of upper secondary level, and
- upper secondary vocational programmes allowing direct access to higher education<sup>(6)</sup>.

In vocational education, the indicator is based on information on the most representative programmes. This means that programmes or pathways delivered in institutions dedicated to very specific fields (e.g. fine arts and performing arts) are not considered. Nor are adult education programmes, programmes falling under special needs education, or pathways with a very small number of pupils.

### **Total length of compulsory foreign language teaching in general education**

As explained above, the first important factor to be considered is the total time spent learning foreign languages. This section therefore examines the total number of years of compulsory foreign language teaching from pre-primary to upper secondary level, in the context of general education.

The analysis focuses on the minimum requirements established by education authorities. This means the minimum period of compulsory language learning for all pupils, although some pupils might learn foreign languages for a longer period of time.

It is also important to note that, when comparing countries, teaching languages for the same number of years does not necessarily mean having the same exposure to foreign languages, as teaching hours can vary widely (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019b). Moreover, pupils do not necessarily learn the same language during the whole period of compulsory foreign language learning: they may learn multiple foreign languages for shorter periods of time. Nevertheless, the total number of years of compulsory foreign language teaching – regardless of teaching hours and/or of whether pupils learn the same language for a longer period or several languages for shorter periods – is a good proxy for assessing how early language learning begins in European countries and, to some extent, the degree of continuity in its teaching.

As Figure 2.1 shows, in more than half of the education systems covered in this report (26 systems), all pupils in general education have to learn foreign languages for 10 to 12 years. Learning foreign languages is compulsory for a longer period of time in seven education systems: for 16 years in

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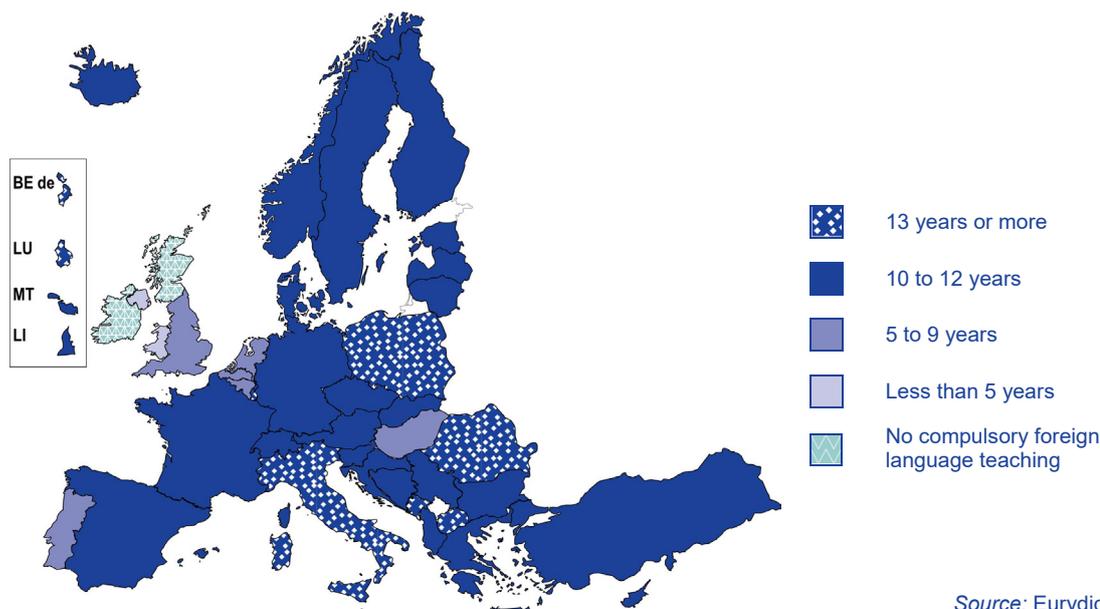
<sup>(5)</sup> For more details on this guarantee and its starting age across Europe, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019a, pp 44-48.

<sup>(6)</sup> Typically, these programmes have the ISCED-P code ‘354’. See the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011 for more details (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

Luxembourg and Poland<sup>(7)</sup>, for 15 years in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, and for 13 years in Italy, Romania, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

Compulsory foreign language teaching lasts between 5 and 9 years in six systems, while it lasts less than 5 years in two (Wales and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom). There is no compulsory foreign language teaching in Ireland – as neither Irish nor English are considered as foreign languages – and the United Kingdom (Scotland), where there is no statutory curriculum.

**Figure 2.1: Total length of compulsory foreign language teaching in general education (ISCED 0 to 3), 2018/19**



### Country-specific notes

**Belgium (BE fr):** In the Region of Brussels-Capital and in the Walloon Communes with specific language status, pupils must start learning the first foreign language as a compulsory subject from age 8. Therefore, the total length of compulsory foreign language teaching is 10 years (in contrast to 8 years in other parts of the French Community of Belgium).

**Estonia, Finland and Sweden:** Schools can decide when to start foreign language teaching between the ages of 7 and 9. The figure is calculated on the latest possible starting age.

**Spain:** The figure presents the most widespread situation across the country. Since 2006, Autonomous Communities can decide to make the learning of a foreign language compulsory for children attending pre-primary education. This occurs in four Autonomous Communities (Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León and Comunidad Valenciana).

**Netherlands:** It is compulsory to learn a foreign language during primary education. In practice, this occurs between the ages of 10 and 12, but schools can organise this provision at an earlier stage.

**United Kingdom (SCT):** There is no statutory curriculum in Scotland. Scottish local authorities have the autonomy to devise their own curricular models based around the central tenets of the *Curriculum for Excellence*, within which the study of at least one modern language until the end of the third year of secondary school (approx. age 15) is an entitlement for all pupils. The Scottish government is currently promoting a language policy model aimed at ensuring that young people learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

### Length of period with at least two compulsory foreign languages in general education

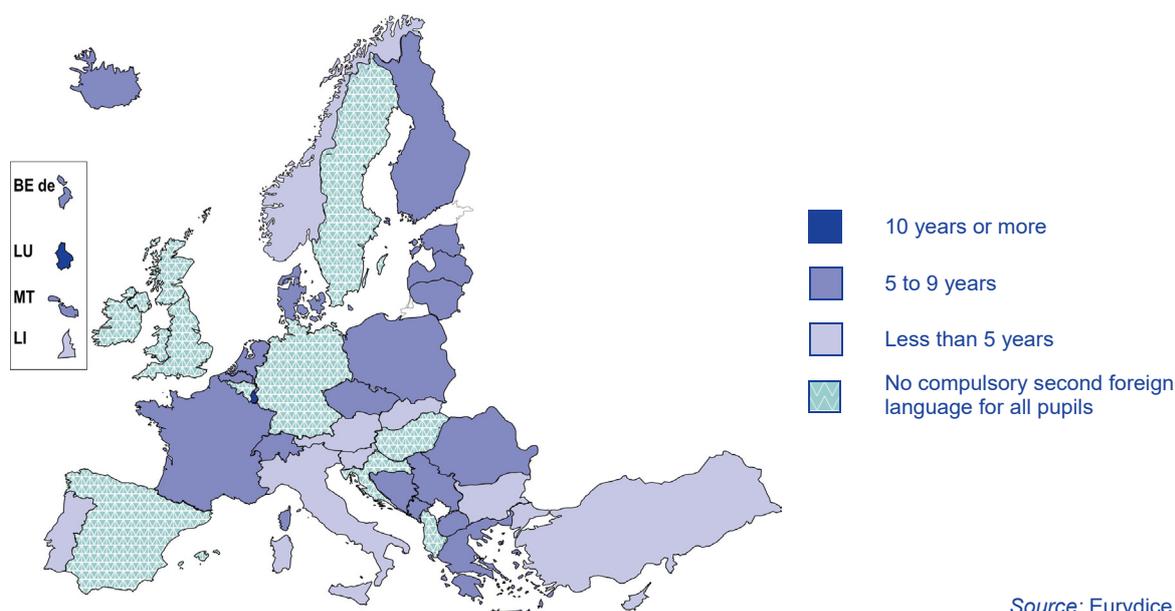
The second important aspect of compulsory foreign language learning is the length of time during which all pupils are required to learn two (or more) foreign languages simultaneously. In general education, this period corresponds to five years or more in 21 education systems (see Figure 2.2). Of these 21, Luxembourg stands out, as pupils in general education have to learn at least two foreign languages simultaneously for 13 years. In an additional 10 education systems, pupils are still required

(7) In both Luxembourg and Poland, all children participating in non-compulsory pre-primary education start learning a foreign language from the age of 3. While compulsory education starts in these two countries at the age of 4 and 6 respectively, a place in publicly subsidised pre-primary settings is guaranteed from the age of 3 (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019a, pp 46-47). Thus, for these two countries, Figure 2.1 considers the age of 3 as the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning.

to learn at least two foreign languages, though the length of the period when these languages are required to be taught at the same time is less than five years. This means that education systems making at least two foreign languages compulsory for pupils in general education are in a clear majority (31 systems).

In addition to Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland), learning two foreign languages simultaneously is not required for all pupils in general education in 10 education systems: the French Community of Belgium, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Albania.

**Figure 2.2: Length of period with at least two compulsory foreign languages in general education (ISCED 0 to 3), 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Country-specific notes

**Estonia:** Schools can decide when to start teaching a second foreign language between the ages of 10 and 12. The figure is calculated on the latest possible starting age.

**Spain:** The figure presents the most widespread situation across the country. In some Autonomous Communities, learning a second foreign language is compulsory. This is the case in Región de Murcia (ages 10-12), in Canarias (ages 11-15), and in Cantabria and Galicia (ages 13 to 15).

**Sweden:** Besides English, all pupils between the ages of 12 and 15 (from the 6th to 9th grade) must choose a subject from the area 'Language choice'. For a vast majority of pupils (more than 80 %), this means that they study a second foreign language. It is however also possible to use 'Language choice' to study a mother tongue other than Swedish, a national minority language, sign language, or more Swedish or English.

### Differences in foreign language teaching requirements between general education and VET

After having examined the situation in general education, Figure 2.3 looks at vocational education and training (VET), providing details on foreign language learning opportunities in the VET programmes that offer access to higher education <sup>(8)</sup>. This should be examined as pupils from both general and vocational pathways may, in principle, enter the same higher education programmes, and therefore should have access to the same opportunities for acquiring the foreign language skills needed to participate in transnational learning mobility. This also reflects the Council Recommendation which draws attention to the importance of 'quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility *in both general and vocational education*' <sup>(9)</sup>.

<sup>(8)</sup> For more details on VET track included in the scope of the analysis, see the introductory part of Section 2.2.

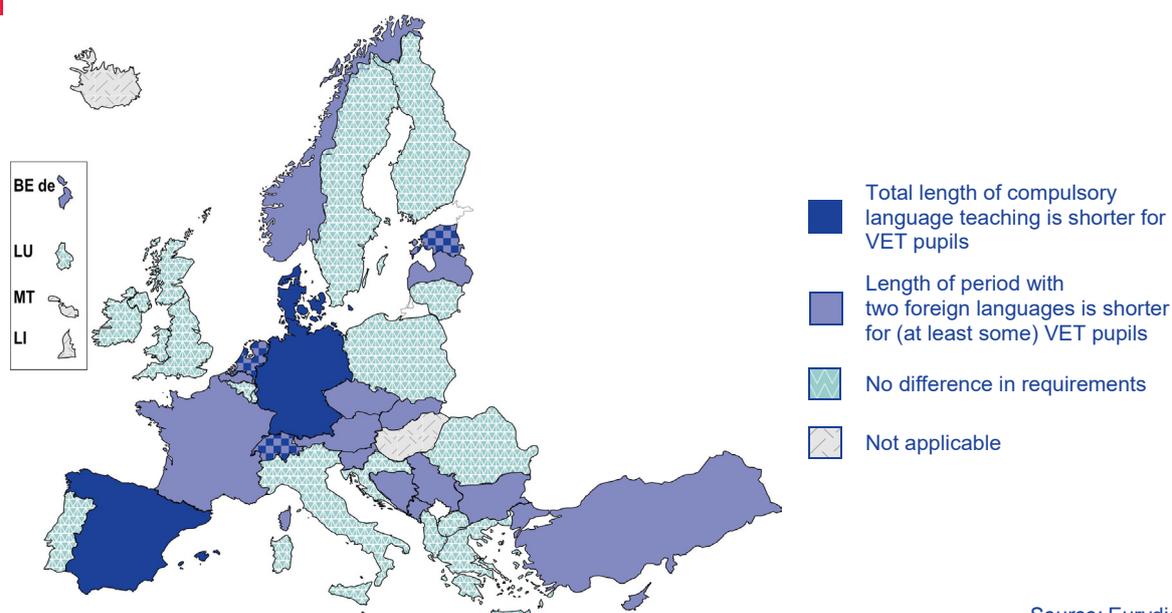
<sup>(9)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/3, emphasis added.

The total length of time dedicated to compulsory foreign language teaching in VET is calculated on the assumption that VET pupils are in general education at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels before entering a vocational pathway at upper secondary level. Thus, differences between general and VET pupils lie in the differences between programmes *at upper secondary level*.

As the figure shows, the total amount of compulsory foreign language teaching (i.e. period with at least one compulsory foreign language) is similar for pupils in VET and in general education. In six education systems (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland), however, the length of time spent on compulsory foreign language teaching is shorter for (at least some) pupils on VET pathways. More specifically, in the Netherlands, there is no national curriculum for VET; and in Denmark, Germany, Spain and Switzerland, foreign languages are not compulsory for all VET pupils. In Estonia, all pupils on VET pathways have to learn a foreign language during the first year of their studies, whereas for pupils in general education, language learning is compulsory throughout the whole of upper secondary education.

It must also be noted that in some countries, due to differences in the official length of general and vocational education programmes, VET pupils are required to learn foreign languages for one year longer (e.g. in Latvia and Poland) or one year less (e.g. in Austria) than pupils in general education. Figure 2.3 does not consider these structural differences.

**Figure 2.3: Differences in compulsory foreign language teaching for pupils on general and VET pathways, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory notes**

Differences are calculated for the whole period of foreign language learning. For VET pupils, both the total length of compulsory foreign language learning and the length of period learning two compulsory foreign languages are calculated on the assumption that they are in general education at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels, and enter a vocational pathway at upper secondary level. The figure only considers VET pathways giving direct access to higher education and fulfilling all the selection criteria described in the introductory part of Section 2.2.

The figure only considers the overlapping years of general and vocational education. Therefore, differences stemming from programmes of different lengths are not taken into account (e.g. when VET pathways are one year longer or shorter than the general pathway).

### **Country-specific notes**

**Hungary, Malta and Iceland:** No VET pathways according to definition.

**Liechtenstein:** The large majority of VET pupils attend vocational schools in Switzerland.

**Norway:** All upper secondary VET programmes give access to levels ISCED 4 and ISCED 5. However, to gain direct access to universities and university colleges (ISCED 6), VET graduates need to follow a one-year supplementary general education course. Since 2017, all VET graduates who so wish are legally entitled to take the supplementary course.

Regarding the period during which (at least) two compulsory foreign languages are taught, the difference between pupils in general education and on VET pathways is again calculated for the whole period of foreign language learning from pre-primary to upper secondary level. As the figure shows, more countries have different requirements for general education and VET when it comes to the period of time teaching two compulsory languages simultaneously than for the total length of compulsory language teaching. More specifically, in 18 education systems, at least some of the pupils on VET pathways learn two languages simultaneously for a shorter period of time than their peers in general education (two to four years less, depending on the length of upper secondary education), or not at all. The latter situation is observed in Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Norway and Turkey, where at least some VET pupils are never required to learn two languages simultaneously. In Belgium (Flemish and German-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, France, Cyprus, Latvia, the Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Montenegro and Serbia, pupils are required to learn two foreign languages for a period of up to five years, *before* upper secondary education. However, once in upper secondary education, learning two foreign languages simultaneously is no longer compulsory for all VET pupils (though some may continue learning two foreign languages), whereas it is still compulsory in general education.

There are no differences between requirements for foreign language instruction in general and vocational education in slightly less than half of the education systems (18 systems). These systems share some similarities in the way that foreign language teaching is structured. Five different patterns are apparent:

- at least two foreign languages are simultaneously compulsory at the upper secondary level in both general and vocational education (Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Finland and North Macedonia);
- the teaching of two foreign languages is compulsory at the same time for all pupils only at lower levels of education, while at upper secondary level, the compulsory minimum for all pupils is to learn one foreign language (Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Portugal);
- pupils are never required to study two compulsory foreign languages simultaneously, and at upper secondary level, the compulsory minimum for all pupils is to learn one foreign language (French Community of Belgium, Croatia, Sweden and Albania);
- pupils are never required to study two compulsory foreign languages simultaneously, and neither pupils in general nor those in vocational education have to learn foreign languages at upper secondary level (the United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland); and finally
- there is no compulsory foreign language teaching at all (Ireland and the United Kingdom – Scotland).

### **2.3. Scoreboard indicator**

Scoreboard indicator 2 is based on a five-category colour-coded scheme, where dark green represents the optimum preparation for learning mobility in terms of compulsory foreign language teaching and red signifies that there is no compulsory foreign language teaching at all. The descriptors in each category are based on the three dimensions explored above:

- total length of compulsory foreign language teaching from pre-primary to upper secondary level;
- length of the period when two foreign languages are compulsory simultaneously;
- differences in requirements for pupils in general education and in VET.

Since the total number of years of compulsory foreign language learning is similar for pupils in general education and VET, the scoreboard does not distinguish between the different pathways in this respect. Consequently, an education system can be placed in the highest possible category if the overall length of compulsory language teaching is 10 years or more in *both* general education and VET.

With respect to the number of years when studying two foreign languages simultaneously is compulsory, the scoreboard does take into account the differences between pupils in general and vocational education (see the category descriptors related to the scoreboard indicator).

For the education systems that do not have VET pathways according to the definition applied in this chapter (Hungary, Malta and Iceland) and for Liechtenstein, only the situation in general education is considered.

When all the dimensions are considered, Scoreboard indicator 2 (see Figure 2.4) shows that the majority of education systems find themselves in the first four categories (dark green to orange) with a relatively even distribution (9-13 education systems in each category):

**Dark green:** Nine education systems in which all pupils (in both general and vocational education) have to learn foreign languages for 10 years or more, and all pupils must study at least two compulsory languages at the same time for five years or more (Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Finland, Iceland and North Macedonia).

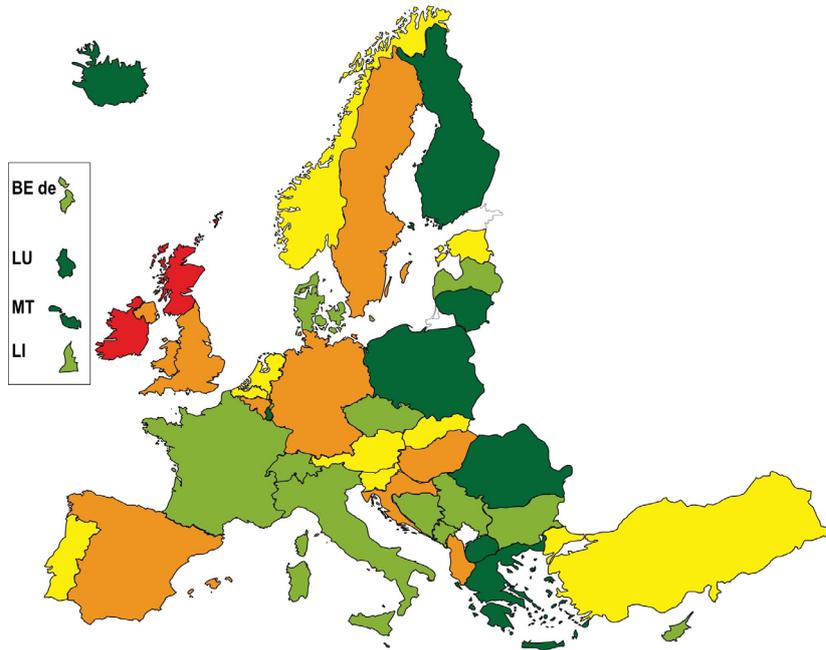
**Light green:** 13 education systems in which two languages are compulsory for all pupils for at least a short period of time. Most education systems in this group make foreign language learning compulsory for all pupils for 10 years or more, but the period when two compulsory foreign languages are being learned simultaneously is less than five years either for all pupils (Bulgaria, Italy, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), or for at least some pupils (these are found either in vocational education: German-speaking Community of Belgium, Czechia, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Montenegro and Serbia, or in general education: Liechtenstein). In Denmark and Switzerland, on the other hand, while not all pupils are required to learn foreign languages for 10 years or more – due to the fact that language learning is not compulsory in all VET pathways – the length of the period when pupils have to learn two foreign languages at the same time is five years.

**Yellow:** Nine education systems in which the overall length of foreign language teaching is less than 10 years and all pupils learn two foreign languages for at least a short period of time (Flemish Community of Belgium, Estonia, the Netherlands and Portugal), or the total period of compulsory language teaching is 10 years or longer for all, but at least some VET pupils never have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously (Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Norway and Turkey).

**Orange:** 10 education systems in which learning two foreign languages at the same time is not a requirement for all pupils (French Community of Belgium, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Sweden, the United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Albania).

**Red:** Two education systems in which there is no compulsory foreign language teaching (Ireland and the United Kingdom – Scotland).

**Figure 2.4: Scoreboard indicator 2: Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility – foreign language skills, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously for at least 5 years.
	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously, but at least some of the pupils have to do so for less than 5 years. <b>OR</b> Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for less than 10 years for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously for at least 5 years.
	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils on general pathways have to learn at least two foreign languages, but at least some VET pupils never have to learn two foreign languages at the same time. <b>OR</b> Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for less than 10 years for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously, but at least some of the pupils have to do so for less than 5 years.
	Only one foreign language is compulsory for all pupils.
	No compulsory foreign language teaching.

Overall, the picture depicted on the scoreboard indicator is comparable to the one presented in the previous Mobility Scoreboard report (reference year: 2015/16). However, while staying in the same category, some countries (e.g. Greece, France, Luxembourg, Poland and Montenegro) have implemented reforms in foreign language learning since the previous report <sup>(10)</sup>. Most of these reforms have lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning, which implies that pupils' overall exposure to foreign languages has been extended.

<sup>(10)</sup> More specifically: **Greece** has lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning from 8 to 6 (based on a 2017 decree); **France** has lowered the starting age of the second compulsory foreign language from 13 to 12 (since 2016/17); **Luxembourg** has lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning from 6 to 3 (based on 2017 legislation); in **Poland**, since 2017/18, foreign language learning has been part of non-compulsory pre-primary education from the age of 3 (previous starting age of compulsory foreign language learning: 6 years); **Montenegro** has lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning from 9 to 6 (based on 2017 legislation).

## 2.4. Conclusion

Mastering foreign languages is an important pre-condition for learning mobility. The findings of this chapter demonstrate that learning one foreign language is compulsory for at least a short period of time in nearly all European education systems. Learning two foreign languages at the same time is compulsory for all pupils in fewer systems and, when such a requirement is in place, it often applies only to a few school years.

The chapter also identifies differences in compulsory foreign language learning between general education and vocational education programmes. More specifically, although in most countries pupils in both general and VET pathways benefit from comparable requirements where one foreign language is concerned, two foreign languages as compulsory subjects are more common in general education than in VET. This might be a source of concern, given that pupils from both groups are potentially able to enter the same higher education programmes, and therefore should have the same opportunities for learning languages so that they are equally able to participate successfully in transnational learning mobility.



## CHAPTER 3: PORTABILITY OF GRANTS AND LOANS

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### 3.1. Introduction

A lack of funding is one of the main obstacles to learning mobility (Hauschildt, Vögtle and Gwosć 2018, p. 219). At European level, the issue is addressed through the provision of financial support delivered mainly through the Erasmus+ programme. In parallel to this direct support from the EU budget, Member States are invited to examine their domestic support <sup>(1)</sup>, looking, in particular, at ‘the portability of grants, loans and appropriate access to relevant benefits, in order to facilitate the learning mobility of young people’ <sup>(2)</sup>.

With respect to higher education, the issue is whether students can use their domestic grant or loan for studying at home or abroad under the same conditions (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015, p. 250). Scoreboard indicator 3 therefore examines the extent to which this is possible across Europe.

### 3.2. Scoreboard data

This section examines the data on which Scoreboard indicator 3 is based. It focuses on the portability of domestic support within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), i.e. the possibility for students to take domestic grants and/or loans to another EHEA system. Beyond portability, the section also looks at the provision of domestic support, in terms of the proportion of students receiving public grants and/or loans. This is a key factor because if only a small proportion of students in a country receive public support, this might not contribute significantly to promoting transnational learning mobility, even though the grants/loans that are provided are fully portable.

In order to provide a more complete picture of the financial support for learning mobility in European countries, Annex II examines the dedicated funding for learning mobility, i.e. support that is given on top of the normal public grants and/or loans, specifically for the purpose of studying abroad.

#### Grants

The provision of public grants is the most widespread form of public support. Figure 3.1 indicates the proportion of students receiving a grant, meaning public financial support that does not need to be paid back.

The highest proportion of grant beneficiaries – 85 % or more – is found in Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden, followed by Finland (60 %) and Wales and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom (62 % and 56 % respectively). However, while the Nordic countries and Luxembourg register a high proportion of grant beneficiaries in both the first and second cycles of higher education, public grants in Malta and the United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland) are targeted at first cycle students only, and there is no standard support package in the second cycle.

In almost half of the systems analysed, between 15 % and half of all students benefit from public grants. Nevertheless, some systems appear in this group only in relation to the first cycle. This applies, for instance, to the United Kingdom (Scotland) with 36 % of students benefiting from public grants in the first cycle, but no standard support package for second-cycle students. The Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland, Spain and Albania also exceed 15 % only in relation to the first cycle,

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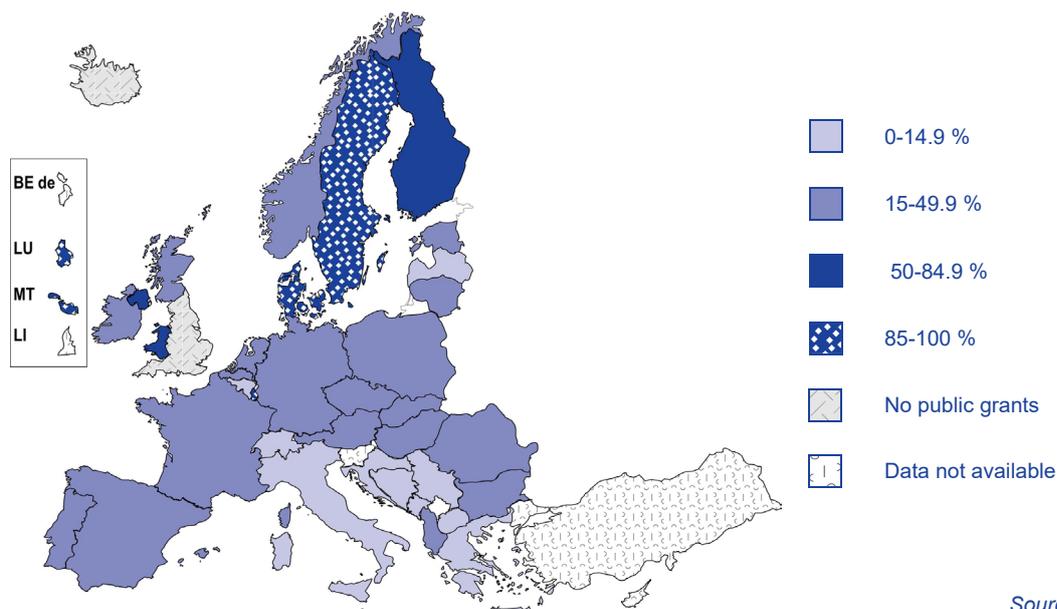
<sup>(1)</sup> The term 'domestic support' refers to financial support issued by authorities in the home country. For further details on higher education support schemes in Europe, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018a.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

whereas in the second cycle, the proportion of grant beneficiaries is lower. Moreover, the figure considers grants and combined grants/loans schemes on an equal footing, meaning, for instance, that Germany is represented by its grants/loans scheme 'BAföG', taken by approximately 22 % of students, whereas only around 5 % of students benefit from full (merit-based) grants.

Finally, 10 higher education systems – most of which are situated in south-eastern Europe – provide public grants to less than 15 % of their first- and second-cycle students. The United Kingdom (England) and Iceland have no public grant schemes, and therefore fall into a separate category.

**Figure 3.1: Proportion of students receiving a public grant, first and second cycle, 2017/18**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory notes**

Public grants refer to public financial support provided directly to students which does not need to be paid back. Grants for study abroad (mobility grants) are not considered here (for more details on mobility grants, see Annex II).

In most cases, the figure presents aggregated data for the first and the second cycle. Countries where the first and the second cycle differ substantially in terms of the proportion of grant beneficiaries are represented by the first cycle. Countries with several grant schemes that were not able to provide aggregated data for all schemes, are represented by the scheme with the highest proportion of beneficiaries. Combined grants/loans systems are treated on an equal footing with grants.

### **Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE fr) and Netherlands:** Reference academic year: 2016/17.

**Belgium (BE nl), Ireland and Malta:** Data refer to first-cycle students. The proportion of grant beneficiaries in the second cycle is lower.

**Bulgaria and Hungary:** Reference academic year: 2018/19.

**Czechia:** Data refer to the grant for accommodation. Other types of grants (need-based and merit-based) have a lower proportion of beneficiaries. Reference year: 2017.

**Denmark:** Data refer to first-cycle students. The proportion of grant beneficiaries in the second cycle is lower. Reference year: 2018.

**Germany:** Data refer to the combined grant/loan scheme 'BAföG' (*Bericht der Bundesregierung*). Reference year: 2016.

**Estonia and Poland:** Data refer to need-based grants. Merit-based grants have a lower proportion of beneficiaries.

**Greece:** Data are estimates.

**Spain:** Data refer to first-cycle students. The proportion of grant beneficiaries in the second cycle is lower. Reference academic year: 2018/19.

**Croatia:** Data refer to state-funded need-based grants only. No data are available on other public grants.

**Lithuania and Slovakia:** Data refer to merit-based grants. Need-based grants have a lower proportion of beneficiaries.

**United Kingdom (WLS/NIR):** Data refer to first-cycle students (no standard public grants in the second cycle). Moreover, the statistics on grant awards refer to 'applicants' and not to 'beneficiaries'. The percentage of applicants is likely to be similar in the broadest terms to the percentage of grant beneficiaries.

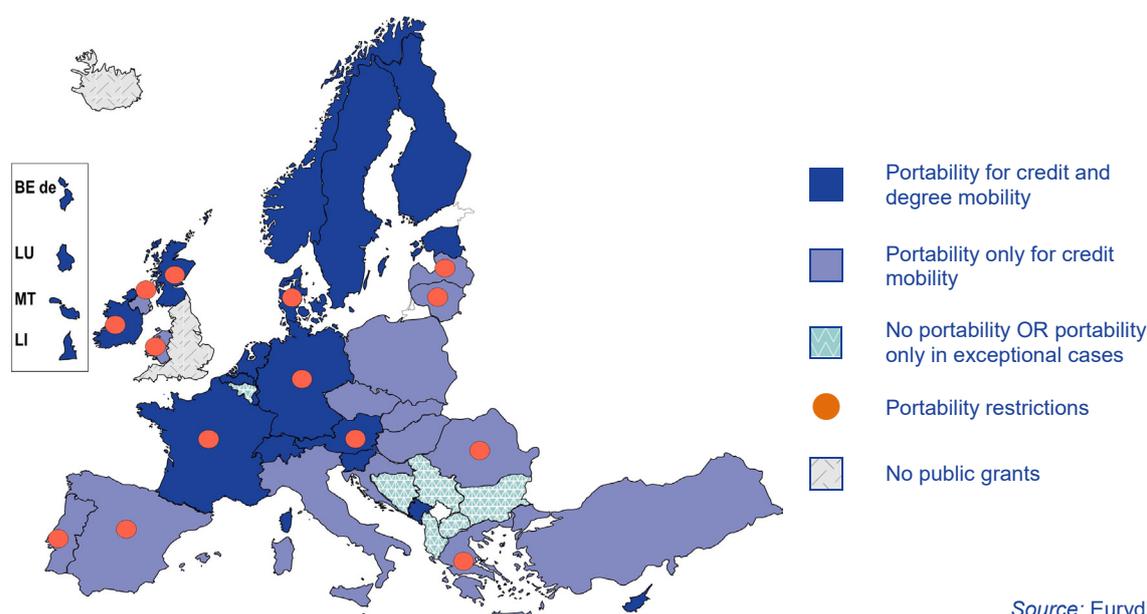
**United Kingdom (SCT) and North Macedonia:** Data refer to first-cycle students (no standard public grants in the second cycle).

**Albania and Montenegro:** Data refer to first-cycle students (no standard public grants in the second cycle). Reference academic year: 2018/19.

**Norway:** Data refer to first-cycle students. The proportion of grant beneficiaries in the second cycle is higher.

Figure 3.2 moves to the core topic of this chapter, showing the main characteristics of transnational portability in the case of grants. It distinguishes between portability for short-term study visits which lead to credits in the framework of a home country programme (credit mobility) and portability for an entire degree course (degree mobility). Moreover, the figure provides details on portability restrictions, meaning additional requirements that students and/or the chosen study programme abroad need to fulfil for the grant to be portable. These include, for example, specifying the countries to which students can take their grants (e.g. portability within the European Economic Area only) or placing limits on the time spent abroad. The most severe restriction is when students can only take their grants abroad to study if no equivalent programme is available in the home country. Since this means that portability is allowed only in exceptional cases, countries applying this condition are depicted in the same way as those having 'no portability'.

**Figure 3.2: Portability of public grants, first and second cycle, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory notes**

The figure focuses on the portability of grants within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Where several grant schemes are available with different conditions attached with respect to portability, the grant scheme with the highest percentage of beneficiaries is shown.

When the category 'portability for credit and degree mobility' is combined with 'portability restrictions', it means that there are restrictions related either to both types of portability (i.e. credit **and** degree) or to one type only (i.e. credit **or** degree).

### **Country-specific note**

**Estonia:** The predominant grant scheme is a need-based study allowance, which targets students in difficult economic circumstances. This allowance is portable for credit as well as degree mobility (as depicted on the map). However, some other types of grants – including merit-based grants and stipends for studying in specific (priority) fields – are available only for credit mobility.

The figure shows that several countries situated in south-eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia) apply the most restrictive policies in terms of grant portability. In general, students from these countries cannot use their domestic grants when studying abroad, be it for a short period of time (credit mobility) or a longer period (degree mobility). The French Community of Belgium also appears in the same category, as grants are portable only if there is no equivalent programme available in the Community.

For around one third of all higher education systems considered, grant portability is limited to credit mobility. Some higher education systems apply portability restrictions, limiting, in particular, the

portability of grants to programme exchanges within recognised schemes such as Erasmus+ (e.g. Greece, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and the United Kingdom – Wales and Northern Ireland <sup>(3)</sup>).

Finally, there are countries where grants are portable for both credit and degree mobility purposes. This category encompasses different types of higher education systems, ranging from small systems where students commonly follow their studies abroad (e.g. the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein), to large systems, such as Germany and France. Most of the countries offering grants that are portable for credit as well as degree mobility are situated in northern and north-western Europe. However, as the figure shows, some of these countries apply portability restrictions. For example, Germany limits degree portability to EU countries and to Switzerland, whereas the United Kingdom (Scotland) applies even stricter criteria, limiting its pilot degree portability scheme to a small number of selected higher education institutions in the EU. Ireland provides a further example of portability restrictions, limiting credit portability to mobility explicitly required by home country programmes, and portability for degree purposes to EU countries only.

Regarding portability for degree study abroad, Austria represents a specific case: students can receive a degree mobility grant under the same conditions as domestic grants for studying within the country, if they intend to study in countries of the European Economic Area or Switzerland. Therefore, the situation in Austria is comparable to countries where grants are portable for credit as well as degree mobility, yet, with some restrictions related to geography (i.e. studying only in certain EHEA countries).

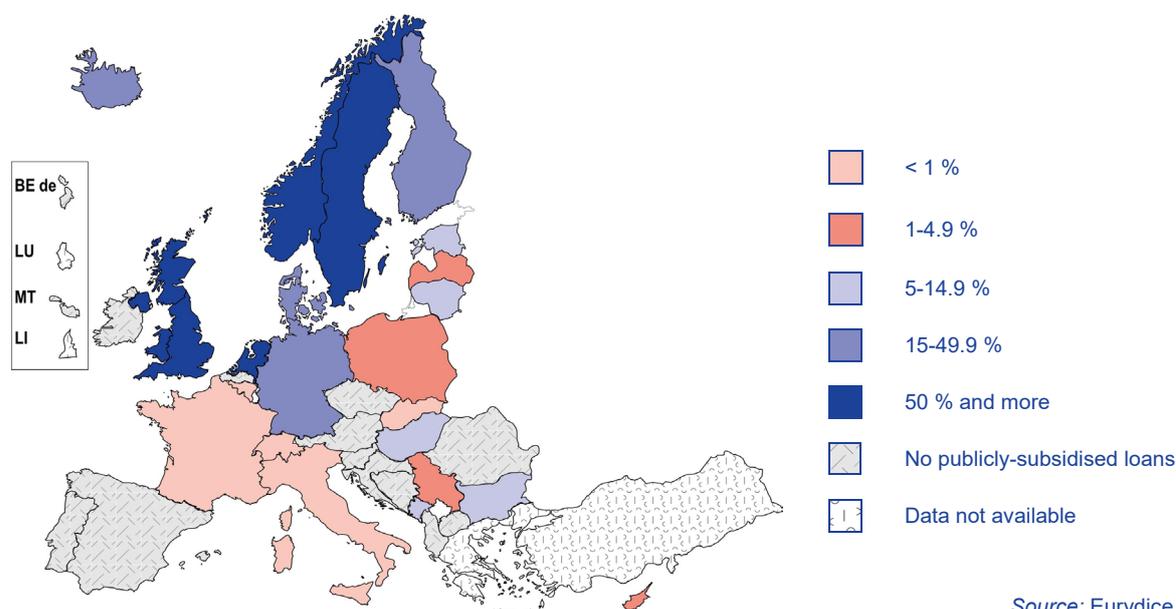
## Loans

Some countries offer publicly-subsidised loans in addition to or instead of grants. However, the data shows that compared to public grants, which exist in virtually all higher education systems, loans are much less common. They are offered by around two-thirds of all the higher education systems studied. Moreover, in several systems offering publicly-subsidised loans, the proportion of beneficiaries is small, sometimes almost nil (up to 1 % in the French Community of Belgium, France, Italy, Slovakia and Switzerland; between 1 % and 4.9 % in Cyprus, Latvia, Poland and Serbia).

The proportion of beneficiaries reaches at least 5 % in only 16 of the systems offering loans (where data is available). Most of these systems are in the northern part of Europe. The highest proportion of loan beneficiaries is recorded in the United Kingdom, where, depending on the system (i.e. England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland), between 69 % and 95 % of first-cycle students take out loans (no standard loan package in the second cycle). A further three countries – Norway (66 % in the first cycle and 71 % in the second cycle), Sweden (54 %) and the Netherlands (50 %) – also record high proportions of loan beneficiaries. They are followed by Iceland (around 40 %), Finland (28 %), Denmark (26 %), Germany (22 % for the combined grant/loan scheme BAföG), Montenegro (14.5 %), Hungary (5.7 %), Estonia and Lithuania (both around 5 %).

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<sup>(3)</sup> The same restrictions also apply to Scotland. However, this higher education system is not reported among those limiting portability of grants to credit mobility as it is conducting a degree portability pilot with a small group of selected institutions in the EU.

**Figure 3.3: Proportion of students taking out publicly-subsidised loans, first and second cycle, 2017/18**

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory notes**

Publicly-subsidised loans refer to repayable financial aid where the government bears a part of the costs. This can take the form of a government guarantee which covers the risk of default and loss. Private loans with no public guarantee are not considered.

In most cases, the figure presents aggregated data for the first and the second cycle. Countries where the first and the second cycle differ substantially in terms of the proportion of loan beneficiaries are represented by the first cycle. Combined grants/loans systems are treated on an equal footing with loans.

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE fr), Cyprus, Lithuania and Iceland:** Data are estimates.

**Belgium (BE de):** The German-speaking Community of Belgium does not provide publicly-subsidised loans (i.e. no loans depicted on the figure). However, students studying in the German-speaking Community can apply for loans managed by the Province of Liège of the French Community of Belgium.

**Bulgaria:** Reference academic year: 2018/19.

**Denmark, Finland and Montenegro:** Reference year: 2018.

**Germany:** The figure refers to the combined grant/loan scheme 'BAföG' (*Bericht der Bundesregierung*). Reference academic year: 2016/17.

**Greece:** The legal basis for a loan for first cycle studies is available, but the conditions have yet to be developed. In the second cycle (depicted on the figure), loans are in place, but no data are available on the proportion of student beneficiaries.

**France:** Data are estimates referring to all tertiary students, including third-cycle students.

**Latvia:** Data are estimates. Reference academic year: 2018/19.

**Hungary:** Data refer to first-cycle students. The proportion of loan beneficiaries in the second cycle is lower.

**Netherlands and United Kingdom (ENG):** Reference academic year: 2016/17.

**Poland:** Data are estimates referring to first-year first-cycle students.

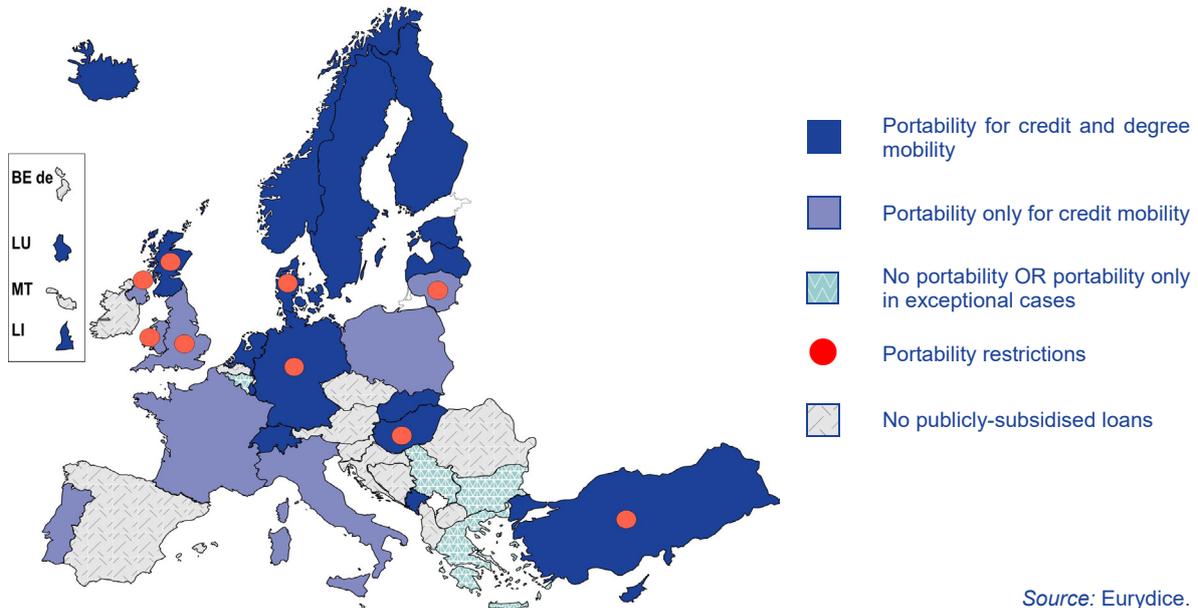
**Portugal:** The loans system was suspended for several academic years – including 2017/18 – and reintroduced in 2018/19. No data are available on the proportion of beneficiaries during the latter academic year.

**Sweden:** Reference year: 2017.

Figure 3.4 examines whether publicly-subsidised loans are portable and, if so, whether there are any specific restrictions on portability. The information is structured similarly to Figure 3.2 on grants, in that it distinguishes between portability for credit and degree mobility, and identifies countries with portability restrictions.

In general, countries that offer publicly-subsidised loans allow at least a certain level of portability. Exceptions to this pattern are Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, where students cannot benefit from their loans if they study abroad, be it for credit or degree purposes. As with grants, the French Community of Belgium allows portability only in exceptional cases, when there is no equivalent programme within the Community.

**Figure 3.4: Portability of publicly-subsidised loans, first and second cycle, 2018/19**



**Explanatory notes**

The figure focuses on portability within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Where several loan schemes are available with different conditions attached with respect to portability, the loan scheme with the highest percentage of beneficiaries is shown.

When the category ‘portability for credit and degree mobility’ is combined with ‘portability restrictions’, it means that there are restrictions related either to both types of portability (i.e. credit **and** degree) or to one type only (i.e. credit **or** degree).

Among systems where loans are portable, some limit portability to credit mobility, and, among these systems, some apply even stricter limitations. For example, in Lithuania and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), loans are only portable if the mobility experience falls under recognised exchange schemes such as Erasmus+.

Most systems that offer publicly-subsidised loans allow portability for both credit and degree mobility. While the overall geographical pattern is very similar to the portability of grants, some countries with limited grant portability – in particular Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey – are more flexible when it comes to the portability of publicly-subsidised loans (i.e. loans are portable – with or without restrictions – for credit as well as degree mobility, whereas grants are only portable for credit mobility). However, as Figure 3.3 shows, the proportion of loan beneficiaries in these countries is relatively low (where data is available). Iceland is another noteworthy case, as although there is no standard grant package, publicly-subsidised loans are portable with no restrictions.

### 3.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 3 brings together some of the elements presented in the previous section and puts countries' existing schemes into pre-defined categories. The indicator concentrates on the portability of domestic grants and loans. It does not include information on the actual amount of portable financial support or the proportion of student beneficiaries <sup>(4)</sup>.

The indicator is based on a five-category colour-coded scheme where dark green represents full portability of all available domestic student support (this means that equivalent conditions apply to the awarding of public grants and/or provision of loans regardless of whether students intend to study in the home country or abroad). At the other end of the scale, the red category signifies no portability, or portability that is only permitted if no equivalent programme is available in the home country, i.e. domestic support is only portable in exceptional circumstances. There are three transitional categories between dark green and red. The first of them – light green – refers to systems where domestic support can be taken abroad for credit and degree mobility. However, some restrictions apply, e.g. portability only applies to certain defined countries or there are limits on the time spent abroad. The two other categories – yellow and orange – cover systems that limit the portability of all or most forms of domestic support to credit mobility, the distinguishing feature between the two categories being the presence or absence of portability restrictions.

In accordance with these criteria, countries are distributed as follows:

**Dark green:** Fourteen education systems in which domestic support is fully portable for both forms of study abroad – credit as well as degree mobility. These include four Nordic systems (Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway), the Flemish and the German-speaking Communities of Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Montenegro. However, it should be recalled that while offering fully portable domestic support, these systems differ substantially with respect to the proportion of beneficiaries (see Figures 3.1 and 3.3). Some provide support to a substantial proportion of students (e.g. Luxembourg, Malta, Finland and Sweden), whereas in other instances, the proportion of beneficiaries is more limited. Moreover, the systems in question differ in terms of the type of support that is offered to students: some provide grants as well as loans; other focus only on one means of support (see the two above-mentioned figures). In this respect, Iceland has a rather unique position, providing no standard grant package, yet offering fully portable loans.

**Light green:** In six education systems (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Austria and the United Kingdom – Scotland), domestic support is portable for credit and degree mobility purposes but with various restrictions. As discussed previously, these are mainly related to geography (i.e. to specified countries) and time spent abroad.

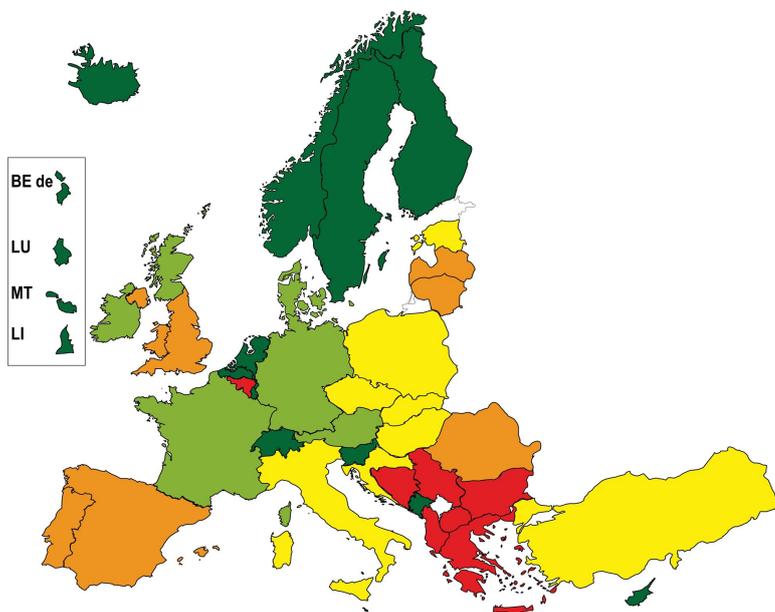
**Yellow:** Eight systems (Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey) limit the portability of their domestic support to credit mobility only, generally with no restrictions. It is noteworthy that three of these systems – Hungary, Slovakia and Turkey – provide publicly-subsidised loans that are portable for both credit as well as degree mobility. However, grants are only portable for credit mobility experiences. The flexibility is even higher in Estonia, where loans as well as two grant schemes (need-based study allowance and scholarships for students with special needs) are fully portable, but the portability of other grants is limited to credit mobility.

<sup>(4)</sup> While the indicator does not take into account the proportion of student beneficiaries, it still excludes financial support measures (domestic grants or loans) with less than 1 % of beneficiaries.

**Orange:** Eight education systems (Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and most parts of the United Kingdom) allow portability for credit mobility but various restrictions apply. Among these systems, Latvia offers fully portable loans, but grants are portable only for credit mobility with restrictions.

**Red:** In seven higher education systems (the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia), domestic support is either not portable, or is portable only in exceptional circumstances, such as when there is no equivalent programme in the home system. Greece has a unique position in this group, as grants are portable for credit mobility (with restrictions), but loans, which are only available in the second cycle, are not.

**Figure 3.5: Scoreboard indicator 3: Portability of domestic public grants and publicly-subsidised loans, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	Full portability across the EHEA of all available domestic student support measures – grants and/or loans – for credit and degree mobility. Equivalent requirements for public grants and/or loans if students study in the home country or abroad.
	Portability of available domestic student support measures – grants and/or loans – for credit and degree mobility, but with some restrictions related to geography (country limitations), and/or types of programme, and/or field of study or time.
	Portability for credit mobility, without restrictions. No portability for degree mobility OR not all major support measures are portable for degree mobility.
	Portability for credit mobility but with some restrictions related to geography (country limitations), and/or types of programme, and/or field of study or time. No portability for degree mobility OR not all major support measures are portable for degree mobility.
	No portability: public grants and/or loans are only provided if students study in the home country or in exceptional cases (no equivalent programme is available in the home country).

The above picture is similar to that presented in the previous Mobility Scoreboard (reference year: 2015/16). Malta and Romania are the only countries reporting regulatory changes that have enhanced the portability of domestic grants.

### 3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the portability of domestic financial support as a key condition for learner mobility. Indeed, students considering studying abroad – be it for a short period of time (credit mobility) or to complete a full degree (degree mobility) – may base their decision on whether the financial support available for studying in their home country can be used elsewhere.

The data shows that only fourteen higher education systems offer unrestricted or ‘full’ portability of all types of domestic support for both credit as well as degree mobility, whereby students can benefit from available domestic support regardless of the type of learning mobility (short- or long-term) and the EHEA country in which they study. However, quite close to this group is a set of six systems which have full portability in the sense that all types of domestic support are covered as are both types of learner mobility, but there are some restrictions with respect to countries, programmes or time period. These two groups of countries are mainly situated in northern and north-western Europe. At the other end of the spectrum are seven higher education systems, situated mainly in south-eastern Europe, where domestic support is either not portable or portable only in exceptional circumstances.

Between these extremes, sixteen systems allow portability for credit mobility purposes, either without restrictions (eight systems mainly in central Europe) or with restrictions (eight systems situated in different parts of Europe). The relatively high number of systems falling within these two categories could indicate that it is easier to organise portability for credit mobility than for degree mobility. Another noteworthy aspect is the tendency to offer more portability in the case of loans than in the case of grants. Indeed, in some systems, loans are portable for credit as well as degree mobility, whereas the portability of grants is limited to credit mobility.

Overall the analysis suggests that, in around half of all European higher education systems, domestic financial support is portable for credit as well as degree mobility (though some restrictions may apply). Moreover, the data points to a rather clear geographical pattern, in particular a contrast between northern and north-western Europe with a high degree of portability, and south-eastern Europe with low to non-existent portability.



## CHAPTER 4: SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING MOBILITY

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### 4.1. Introduction

Not all students have equal access to learning mobility opportunities. Evidence shows that students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with disabilities are less likely to participate in such programmes (Hauschildt, Vögtle and Gwosć, 2018; European Commission, 2019). Disadvantaged students therefore miss out on the benefits conferred by these experiences, further deepening the divide with their peers.

In order to improve the current situation, the Council Recommendation encourages Member States to 'provide disadvantaged learners, who may be deprived of opportunities for learning mobility, with targeted information on available programmes and support tailored to their specific needs' <sup>(1)</sup>. Scoreboard indicator 4 therefore looks at whether such support is available in European countries.

### 4.2. Scoreboard data

The definition of what constitutes a 'disadvantaged learner' varies widely across Europe. For this reason the earlier edition of the Mobility Scoreboard (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016) focused on only one group – students from low socio-economic backgrounds – and it was left to the national level to define what this meant in their own context.

However, this restriction has proved to be an important limitation on this scoreboard indicator, as it implied a lack of attention to other disadvantaged groups, most notably students with disabilities. In addition, the Bologna Process Implementation Report has since taken a broader approach, covering a wider range of under-represented groups in its equivalent scorecard indicator (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018b, p. 273). The Bologna indicator was also modified to include a fourth element. This was designed to gather information on measures taken by top-level authorities to encourage higher education institutions to take steps to increase the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility.

Therefore, in order to ensure consistency between the two monitoring tools, this updated indicator of the Mobility Scoreboard is taking the approach developed in the Bologna Process Implementation Report. Consequently, there have been two important changes in comparison to the 2016 Mobility Scoreboard. First, the new edition takes into account support provided to two main groups of disadvantaged students – those from low socio-economic backgrounds and those with disabilities. Second, it includes the additional element relating to top-level recommendations or incentives provided to higher education institutions.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

As a result, this indicator is built on four main actions to be carried out by top-level authorities with respect to the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility:

1. setting long-term quantitative objectives for the participation of disadvantaged learners;
2. establishing a system to monitor their participation;
3. offering financial support to disadvantaged students in the form of public grants;
4. recommending or incentivising higher education institutions to introduce targeted measures to encourage the participation of disadvantaged learners.

These aspects are discussed in turn.

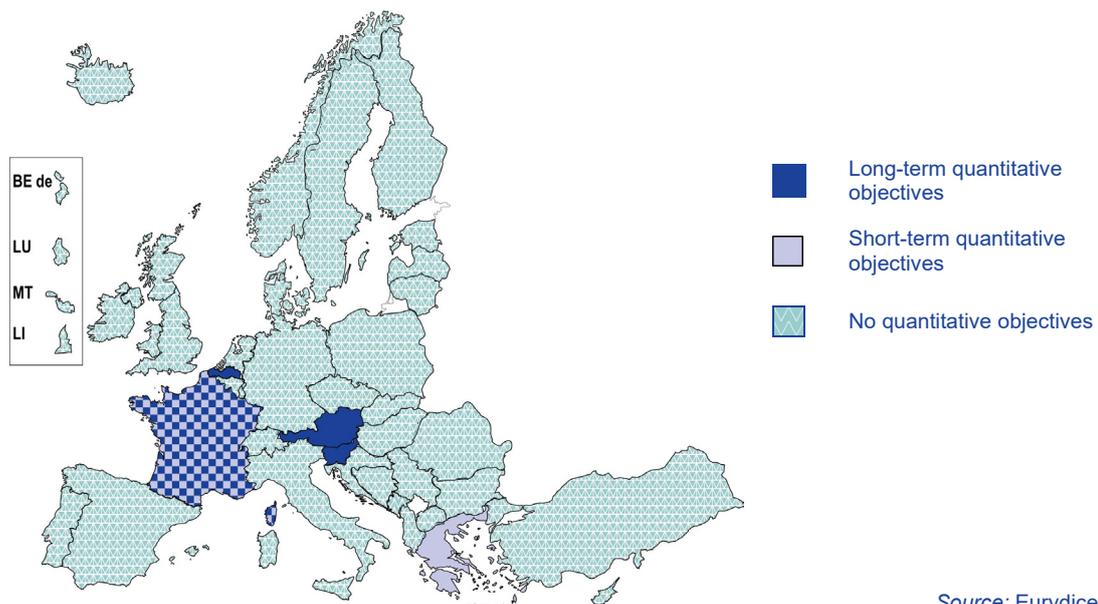
### Quantitative objectives

The quantitative objectives referred to in this section are numerical targets set by top-level authorities for the proportion of disadvantaged students participating in learning mobility. The setting of such objectives signals a strong political commitment towards increasing the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility programmes.

While still only a handful of education systems define top-level targets on the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes (see Figure 4.1), most of these have been introduced since 2015/16. Prior to this, only the Flemish Community of Belgium had quantitative objectives; but, Greece, France, Austria and Slovenia have since set new targets.

Figure 4.1 distinguishes between two types of quantitative objective for the participation of disadvantaged learners. First, long-term objectives (over one year) are usually set as part of top-level strategies on higher education or learning mobility. These exist in the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Austria and Slovenia (see table below Figure 4.1). Second, year-on-year targets are typically set by national Erasmus+ agencies. Examples of short-term objectives can be found in Greece (in 2019, 5.5 % of Erasmus+ students should be students with special needs) and France (in 2018, 30 % of Erasmus+ students should have come from low socio-economic backgrounds).

**Figure 4.1: Quantitative objectives on the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Education system	Long-term quantitative objective	Target date
Flemish Community of Belgium	33 % of participants in learning mobility programmes should come from the following under-represented groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students receiving a grant (linked to low socio-economic status)</li> <li>• students with a (part-time) job</li> <li>• students with a disability <sup>(2)</sup></li> </ul>	2020
France	Participation in learning mobility programmes should be doubled, including the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, helped by, in particular, a specific learning mobility grant for disadvantaged students <sup>(3)</sup>	2025
Austria	Participation in learning mobility programmes by students whose parents do not have higher education qualifications should increase to at least 18 % <sup>(4)</sup>	2025
Slovenia	10-15 % of all Erasmus+ students should come from a disadvantaged background <sup>(5)</sup>	2020

### Monitoring participation

In order to be able to provide the right support for disadvantaged students, policy-makers need to gather information on the extent to which different groups participate in learning mobility. Such information can be obtained through monitoring relevant characteristics of the participating student population.

All countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme are required to monitor participation in this specific programme. For this reason, this section concentrates on practices *going beyond* this obligation, and takes a wider look at the monitoring of participation rates of disadvantaged students across all major mobility programmes.

Figure 4.2, therefore, depicts comprehensive monitoring practices – those seeking to provide a comprehensive picture of the participation of disadvantaged students across all major mobility programmes. Ten education systems have comprehensive monitoring systems (the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Austria and the four education systems of the United Kingdom), which were all in place already in 2015/16. However, they vary in the way information is collected:

- in the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium <sup>(6)</sup> and France, data on students participating in mobility programmes are collected by the ministries of education;
- in Germany and Austria, student surveys are conducted every three to four years <sup>(7)</sup>;
- in Italy and the United Kingdom, information on these students is included in the annual data collection of statistical offices <sup>(8)</sup>.

<sup>(2)</sup> Brains on the Move! Action plan for mobility 2013: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/brains-on-the-move-action-plan-for-mobility-2013-1>

<sup>(3)</sup> Stratégie nationale de l'enseignement supérieur (StraNES), 2015: <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid92442/pour-une-societe-apprenante-propositions-pour-une-strategie-nationale-de-l-enseignement-superieur.html>

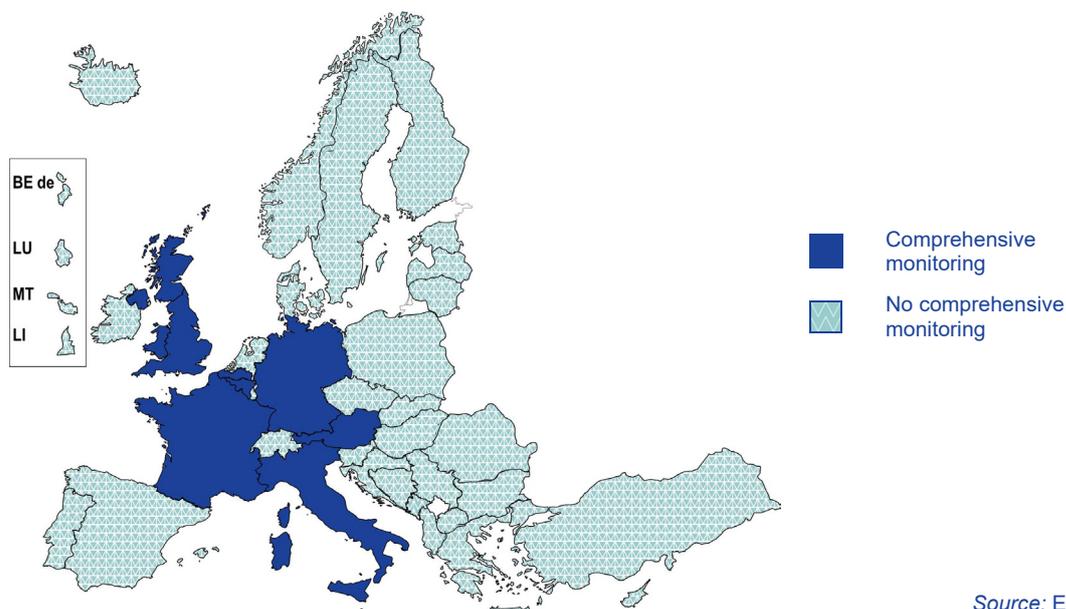
<sup>(4)</sup> Nationale Strategie zur sozialen Dimension in der Hochschulbildung, 2017: [http://www.sozialerhebung.at/sozdim/strategiepapier/Strategie\\_2017.pdf](http://www.sozialerhebung.at/sozdim/strategiepapier/Strategie_2017.pdf)

<sup>(5)</sup> Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education 2016-2020 (<https://www.uni-lj.si/study/news/strategy/>) and Action plan strategy for the internationalisation of Slovenian higher education 2016-2018 ([https://eng.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Akcijski-nact-2016-2018\\_ANG-WEB.pdf](https://eng.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Akcijski-nact-2016-2018_ANG-WEB.pdf))

<sup>(6)</sup> In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Ministry of Education and Training has a central database for higher education which contains all data on mobility, including information on students' socio-economic background or disability.

<sup>(7)</sup> See the Social Survey website <http://www.sozialerhebung.de/sozialerhebung/documents/englisch> for Germany, and the survey results at <http://www.sozialerhebung.at/index.php/en/> for Austria.

<sup>(8)</sup> In Italy, the statistical office collects data on the mobility of students, distinguishing between grant holders and non-grant holders. Given that grants are awarded on need-based criteria, this provides information on students by socio-economic background. In the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Statistics Agency collects data on students participating in learning mobility by ethnicity, socio-economic background and gender. For details, see the 'Go International' website: <http://go.international.ac.uk/student-profiles-and-identities>.

**Figure 4.2: Monitoring the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2018/19**


Source: Eurydice.

## Financial support

Financial support is essential if disadvantaged students are to participate in international mobility. Given the financial difficulties of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, or the extra financial burden facing students with disabilities, the learning mobility support considered here is restricted to non-repayable forms of public support: *public grants* <sup>(9)</sup>. Two main models of this type of provision exist in Europe.

In the first model, disadvantaged students receive *targeted support* that is available only to them. This can take the form of either specific learning mobility grants, or need-based domestic grants that are portable, at least for credit mobility. Specific mobility grants are provided specifically for learning mobility purposes, in addition to domestic support <sup>(10)</sup>, and are defined, controlled and operated by national top-level authorities and funded or co-funded from national public sources (see also Annex II). This means that basic Erasmus+ mobility grants are not within the scope of this indicator. Nevertheless, national top-up grants targeting disadvantaged learners are taken into account.

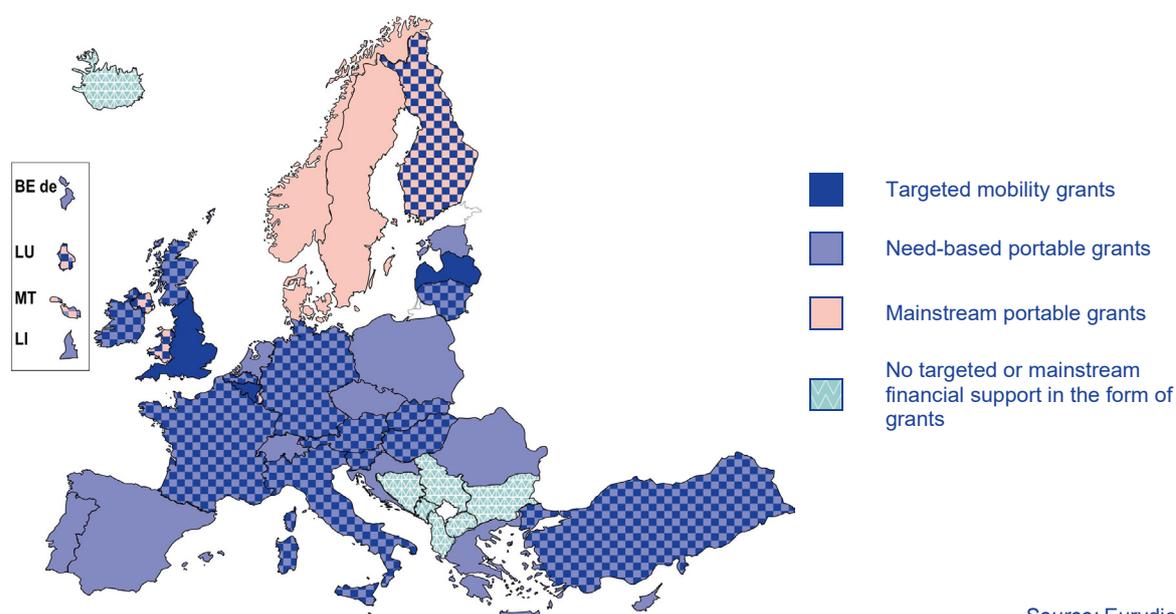
The second model is based on the so-called *mainstreaming approach*. According to this model, countries provide portable grants to the majority (more than 50 %) of students (see Figure 3.1 for the proportion of students receiving grants). In this case, disadvantaged students are not targeted specifically (though the amount awarded might be determined on need-based criteria), but their support is ensured by the holistic approach towards grant provision. In other words, the logic behind this approach is that if all (or at least the majority of) students receive grants, grant provision is ‘mainstream’ and, consequently, the support of those in need is ensured without them being specifically targeted by education authorities.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the prevalence of these different forms of financial support in European education systems. In most cases, countries follow similar approaches in the first and second cycles; however, where these differ, the figure represents the financial support provided to first-cycle students.

<sup>(9)</sup> For more details on financial support, see Chapter 3, as well as European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2018a).

<sup>(10)</sup> The term ‘domestic support’ refers to financial support issued by authorities in the home country.

**Figure 4.3: Financial support in the form of public grants provided to disadvantaged students for learning mobility purposes, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

As the figure shows, providing targeted support to students from low socio-economic backgrounds is far more widespread than the mainstreaming approach. In addition, of the two forms of targeted financial support, need-based portable grants are more common: they exist in 27 education systems. In 13 education systems, students from low socio-economic backgrounds or students with disabilities receive specific learning mobility support on top of their domestic need-based portable grants. In three education systems (the French Community of Belgium, Latvia and the United Kingdom – England), disadvantaged students are primarily supported through targeted mobility grants.

Three Nordic countries – Denmark, Sweden and Norway <sup>(11)</sup> – take only the mainstreaming approach. Malta provides a combination of mainstream and need-based portable grants, while Luxembourg, Finland and the United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland) make targeted mobility grants available on top of their mainstream portable grants.

Non-repayable financial support for learning mobility purposes is not available to students in seven education systems, predominantly in south-eastern Europe. These countries have neither targeted mobility grants, nor portable need-based grants. This latter implies that either their domestic grants are portable, but are primarily merit-based (as is the case of Montenegro), or their grants are not portable, irrespective of the awarding criteria (see also Chapter 3). There are no public grants in Iceland.

A limited number of education systems have reported changes in the area of financial support since 2015/16. Some education systems have changed position due to the broader focus of the indicator: targeted learning mobility grants exist for students with disabilities in Ireland, Finland and Turkey. Regarding regulatory changes, Romania introduced new legislation in 2017 making the portability of need-based grants possible for credit mobility (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, additional need-based mobility grants have also been introduced on top of Erasmus+ grants in Latvia and Slovenia. In the United Kingdom, public grants no longer exist in England.

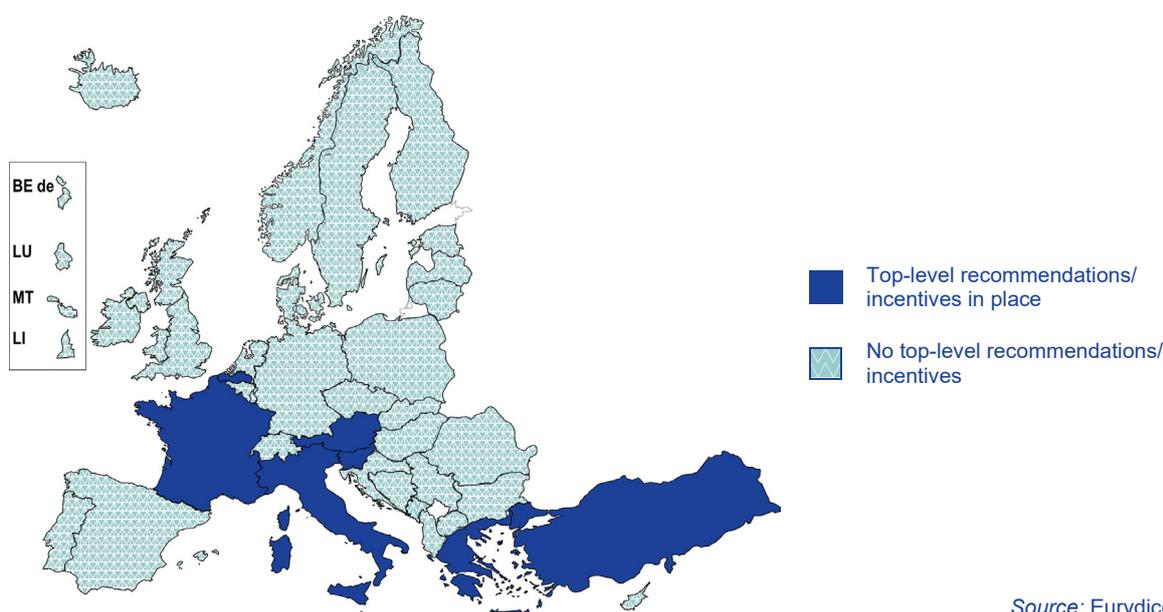
<sup>(11)</sup> In Norway, while only 49 % of students receive grants in the first cycle, 55 % do so in the second. Therefore, on the basis of information provided for the two cycles, the country is included in the group providing mainstream grants.

## Top-level recommendations/incentives to higher education institutions

A new element of the scoreboard indicator – introduced following the Bologna Process Implementation Report – is the presence of top-level recommendations or incentives for higher education institutions (HEIs) to introduce targeted measures to encourage more disadvantaged students to participate in learning mobility programmes. For example, top-level authorities may introduce performance-based funding (or other financial incentives) linked to the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility programmes.

As Figure 4.4 shows, these kinds of top-level recommendations or incentives exist in seven education systems: the Flemish Community of Belgium, Greece, France, Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Turkey.

**Figure 4.4: Top-level recommendations/incentives to HEIs to introduce targeted measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Some of these recommendations concern only the participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes. Three education systems have prepared handbooks or guidelines for higher education institutions on the special provisions made for students with disabilities with regard to learning mobility applications. For example, the 2015 Handbook of the Flemish Community of Belgium on study and internships abroad includes one chapter dedicated to students with disabilities. A similar Handbook was also prepared by the Turkish National Agency in 2018, outlining the preferential treatment to be given to students with disabilities applying for places on learning mobility programmes. In Greece, the National Erasmus+ Agency instructs higher education institutions to give priority to students with special needs as long as they fulfil the selection criteria, and it has published leaflets in braille for distribution to Greek higher education institutions.

A more general approach towards improving the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes is taken in other education systems. Conferences and publicity campaigns are used (in the Flemish Community of Belgium), as are ministry circulars (in France). Two education systems (Austria and Slovenia) include specific provisions in learning mobility strategies. In Austria, the 2016 Higher Education Mobility Strategy includes recommendations on the development and implementation of targeted measures for improving the participation of under-represented groups in

learning mobility. This is also supported by the 2017 National Strategy on the social dimension in higher education. In Slovenia, the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education includes provisions for promoting the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes.

Finally, financial incentives exist in Italy, where the proportion of disadvantaged students and students participating in learning mobility programmes are taken into account in the funding awarded to higher education institutions.

### 4.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 4 also applies the five-category colour-coded scheme. A country should have all the four elements previously discussed to support the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility in order to be placed in the dark green category:

1. long-term top-level quantitative objectives (see Figure 4.1);
2. comprehensive monitoring of participation rates (see Figure 4.2);
3. financial support, based on either the targeting or the mainstreaming model (see Figure 4.3);
4. recommendations and/or incentives to higher education institutions to implement targeted measures (see Figure 4.4).

Education systems with only three of the elements are placed in the light green category; those with two elements in the yellow, and with one element in the orange category. Education systems with none of the measures for disadvantaged learners identified by this indicator are in the red category.

Most elements of the scoreboard indicator require a specific focus on disadvantaged learners. While general policy measures may also enhance the participation of these groups of students in learning mobility (hence the inclusion of mainstream grants among financial support measures), given the vulnerable position of students from under-represented groups, this indicator aims to capture the presence of targeted policies in the education systems under analysis.

Regarding financial support, the proportion of students receiving support was only taken into account with respect to the mainstreaming model which required at least 50 % of students to be receiving support. However, in the case of the targeted model, given the diverse economic and social situation of European countries, neither the proportion of students receiving support nor the amount given has been taken into account. Consequently, education systems with very different types of approach (from limited support given to a restricted number of students to widespread and generous levels of learning mobility support) are treated equally with respect to category placement (see Figure 3.1).

As Figure 4.5 shows, a complete range of measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility is very rare. The majority of education systems are placed in the bottom categories, which highlights the need for improvement in this policy area.

**Dark green:** Only three education systems fall into this category, the Flemish Community of Belgium, France and Austria.

**Light green:** Only two education systems fall into this category: Italy and Slovenia. Both countries undertake three of the four measures. In Italy, quantitative objectives are lacking, while Slovenia does not have a comprehensive monitoring system in place.

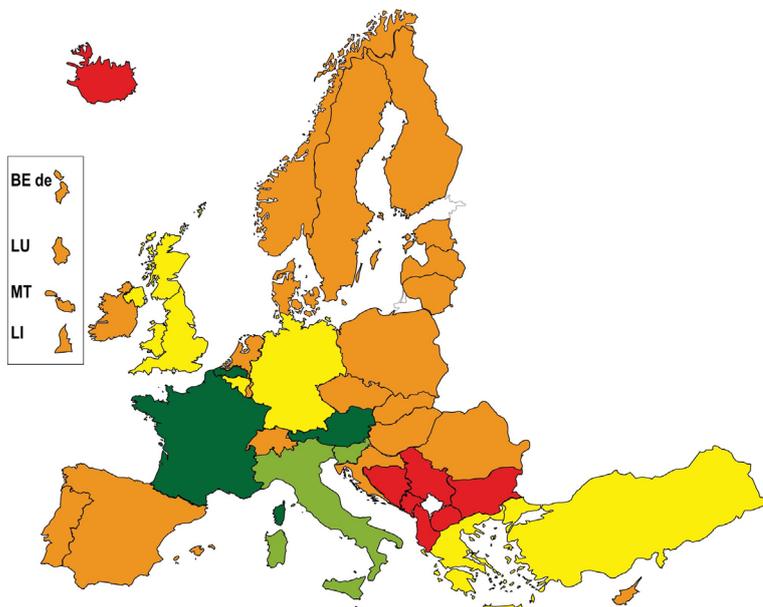
**Yellow:** Eight education systems (the French Community of Belgium, Germany, Greece, the four education systems of the United Kingdom and Turkey) undertake two of the four measures. In the

French Community of Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom, in addition to targeted financial support, comprehensive monitoring systems have been established; while in Greece and Turkey, financial support is complemented by top-level recommendations to higher education institutions.

**Orange:** Slightly more than half (23) of all participating education systems fall into this category. They provide financial learning mobility support to disadvantaged students, but they neither monitor the effect of this financial support on the participation of disadvantaged learners nor take any steps to encourage higher education institutions to promote the participation of students from under-represented groups in learning mobility programmes.

**Red:** Seven education systems do not support the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility by any of the means described above.

**Figure 4.5: Scoreboard indicator 4: Measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	<p>The following measures are undertaken to increase the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term quantitative objectives on the participation of disadvantaged learners;</li> <li>• Comprehensive monitoring of the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes;</li> <li>• Financial support in the form of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Targeted specific mobility grants <b>OR</b></li> <li>○ Portable need-based grants <b>OR</b></li> <li>○ Mainstream portable grants provided to more than 50 % of students;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Top-level recommendations/incentives to HEIs to implement targeted measures supporting the participation of disadvantaged students in mobility programmes.</li> </ul>
	Three of the four types of measure are undertaken.
	Two of the four types of measure are undertaken.
	One of the four types of measure is undertaken.
	None of the four types of measure are undertaken.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Disadvantaged students are less likely to participate in learning mobility programmes than their peers. Therefore, countries need to make specific efforts to facilitate the participation of these students. Indicator 4 of the Mobility Scoreboard shows that financial support for learning mobility purposes is available to disadvantaged students in the large majority of education systems, mainly in the form of portable need-based grants. In a few countries mainstream grants are portable, while targeted grants specifically provided for learning mobility purposes are available in around a third of the education systems covered. At the same time, there are seven education systems – predominantly in south-eastern Europe – where disadvantaged students receive no financial support for learning mobility.

In addition, only a handful of countries (ten education systems in six countries) systematically monitor the personal characteristics or background of students participating in learning mobility programmes. This means that the majority of countries do not have information on whether disadvantaged students are participating proportionally in relation to the general student population. Similarly, while general learning mobility targets are widely adopted, only four education systems have set longer-term quantitative targets for the participation of disadvantaged students. Top-level recommendations or incentives provided to higher education institutions are similarly rare. This signals a lack of clear political commitment in most European countries towards facilitating the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility.



## CHAPTER 5: RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

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### 5.1. Introduction

Students planning or undertaking learning mobility experiences abroad need to be secure in the knowledge that the learning outcomes acquired during their study period abroad will be recognised back in their home country and elsewhere. Recognition is therefore a practice that must become automatic and fully effective if learning mobility and academic exchange are to become the cornerstones of European higher education. Failure to meet these recognition objectives will mean that all credit mobility, including Erasmus+ exchanges, will be undermined.

For these reasons, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was launched in 1989, within the Erasmus programme. It is intended to support the recognition of credits earned by students during their studies abroad so that they count towards their degree in their home institution. The ECTS is a credit system based on learning outcomes and student workload. Thanks to this approach, the ECTS has a central role in designing, measuring and evaluating learning outcomes, and it is now used not only for transferring credits between higher education institutions – in different countries or within the home country – but also for accumulating credits over time within institutions' degree programmes.

The ECTS is widely used around Europe, but not always in a consistent way. There is considerable variation in how workload and learning outcomes are combined (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018b, p. 54). The automatic recognition of credits, including within Erasmus+ credit mobility, is further hampered by administrative issues, for example, related to the use of ECTS documents or grading systems.

As part of the efforts to ensure a more consistent use of ECTS, a new Users' Guide was published by the European Commission in 2015 (European Commission, 2015). It was adopted by the ministers responsible for higher education in Europe at the Yerevan Conference in May 2015 <sup>(1)</sup>, where the ministers and stakeholders in higher education recognised ECTS as a tool of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and are therefore committed to using the system correctly. In 2018, EU ministers responsible for education also promised that by 2025, 'outcomes from learning periods abroad at higher education level in one Member State are automatically and fully recognised in the others, as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the ECTS' <sup>(2)</sup>.

The 2015 ECTS Users' Guide outlines the key features of ECTS and provides comprehensive conceptual and practical guidance on best practice to ensure that authorities, higher education institutions and other stakeholders implement ECTS consistently and effectively. This report focuses on the key elements identified in the Guide that are specifically related to the transfer of credits achieved during periods of study abroad.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2018/C 444/01).

## 5.2. Scoreboard data

ECTS is a system whose success depends on ensuring that there is a shared understanding of how it is applied in practice. However, this depends, to a great extent, on the actions of autonomous higher education institutions. There is therefore a potential risk that ECTS may be understood and applied in slightly different ways by different higher education institutions – and even in different parts of the same institution.

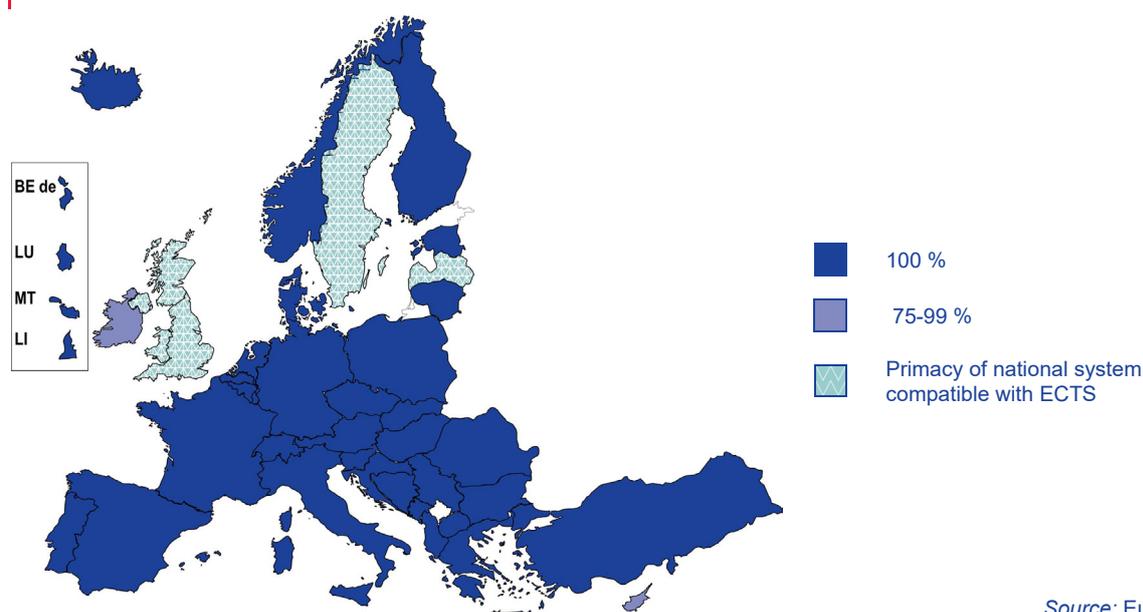
Top-level authorities have, however, the responsibility for encouraging and supporting institutions to use ECTS correctly. Legislative frameworks, training, guidance and other incentives are all commonly used for this purpose, but top-level evaluation and monitoring within an education system can also contribute to improving the quality of the implementation of ECTS. This type of monitoring is usually carried out by external quality assurance agencies for higher education. These agencies can assess to what extent ECTS is being used correctly and consistently across higher education institutions, and can identify any problems that need to be addressed. On this basis, advice for improvement can be given to the institutions concerned.

For this reason, Scoreboard indicator 5 examines whether external quality assurance agencies in higher education systematically evaluate the implementation of ECTS in the context of international credit mobility. As the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS is the focus, the Scoreboard indicator is limited to monitoring five key elements referred to in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4) which are specifically relevant for the transfer of credits during the international credit mobility process.

Shortly after the adoption of the ECTS Users' Guide in 2015, the 2016 Mobility Scoreboard (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016) first reported on whether ECTS was typically monitored during external quality assurance procedures. However, for this edition of the Scoreboard, four years after the endorsement of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, it can be expected that top-level authorities have undertaken the responsibility for steering quality assurance practices and requiring explicitly that external quality assurance agencies monitor ECTS implementation. Therefore, the indicator has been reviewed to show whether the five key elements identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide are required to be considered during external higher education quality assurance procedures as the basis to assess ECTS implementation in higher education institutions in the context of international credit mobility. In this way, Scoreboard indicator 5 is fully in line with the approach developed for the Bologna scorecard indicator 1 published in the 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018b, p. 65.)

### Current use of ECTS in higher education institutions

Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS in the first and second cycles of higher education. With the exception of Ireland, in the countries that use ECTS, all higher education institutions report to use it in relation to first- and second-cycle programmes. There are, however, a few countries (Latvia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) where ECTS is used in conjunction with a national credit system. In these cases, it is assumed that the national system has priority, for example, in national legislation or in guidance for quality assurance agencies. Although these national and European systems may be sufficiently similar for credits to be converted easily, there may be aspects of the use of national credits which differ from the agreements on how ECTS should operate, and each of these systems will have differing degrees of ECTS compatibility.

**Figure 5.1: Percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS, first- and second-cycle programmes, 2018/19**

### Monitoring the implementation of ECTS

As mentioned above, the figures that follow examine the existence of top-level monitoring of the implementation of ECTS through external quality assurance evaluations. If external quality assurance agencies are explicitly required to refer to key principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, this implies that all higher education institutions across the country will be evaluated consistently and given the correct advice.

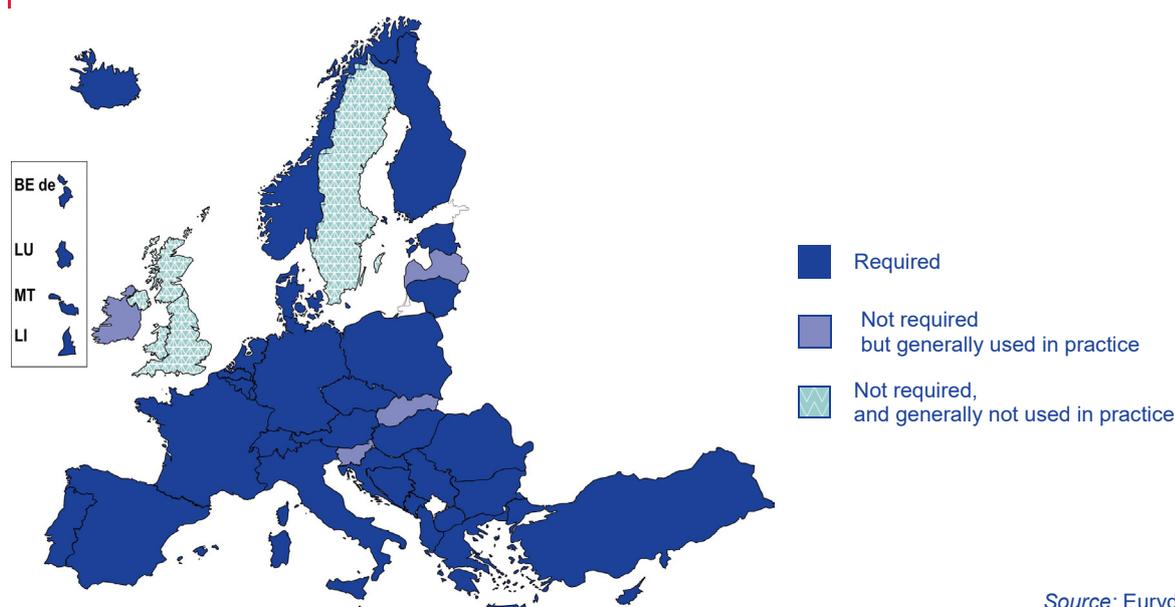
This approach applies equally to the different types of quality assurance systems in European higher education – whether they focus on institutional or programme level quality assurance or combine the two. Institutional audits are increasingly used in national quality assurance systems. They evaluate the quality of how a higher education institution as a whole functions, and assess the extent to which the higher education institution's internal quality assurance system monitors key policy areas. External quality assurance that relies on programme level evaluation checks the quality of individual higher education programmes and their delivery within higher education institutions.

Therefore, in systems with institutional audits, it is expected that the institutions' internal quality assurance mechanisms take full account of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. That is, external quality assurance would not monitor ECTS implementation directly, but would check that the institution's internal quality assurance framework is sufficiently robust to ensure coherent implementation. However, in systems based on programme evaluation, external quality assurance would have a more direct role in monitoring the use of ECTS.

Figure 5.2 shows that in the majority of countries, the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles are required to be used by external quality assurance agencies when assessing the quality of ECTS implementation. In some cases (e.g. in France, Italy, Montenegro and Norway), ECTS is monitored in the context of institutional audits, with external quality assurance standards or guidelines explicitly referring to the correct use of ECTS. In other cases (e.g. in Greece, Hungary, Malta and Austria), ECTS is monitored as part of programme level evaluation, and programme accreditation criteria explicitly refer to (at least some) ECTS key principles. This latter approach may carry certain risks. For

example, programme accreditation may consider only the key elements of ECTS related to programme design, delivery and evaluation, and may neglect the specific issues of credit recognition, i.e. transferring credits from one higher education institution to another (within the home country or across national borders) as these elements are not considered a criterion in the programme accreditation process.

**Figure 5.2: Requirement for external quality assurance agencies to refer to the key principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide when assessing ECTS implementation, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

In four countries (Ireland, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia), reference to the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles is not a requirement in external quality assurance, but the principles are generally used in practice. In some cases, this may mean that external quality assurance has not been aligned to the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide; it may also suggest that top-level authorities are less specific in directing their quality assurance systems to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide principles. While ECTS may still be evaluated in practice, these countries may miss an opportunity for gathering information on the current state of ECTS in higher education and effectively ensuring its appropriate use in their system. The lack of requirement to monitor ECTS in external quality assurance processes may also be due to the fact that ECTS is not used as a national credit system, and external quality assurance is required to monitor the use of this national credit system. This is the case in Latvia. Nevertheless, the ECTS may be used in practice for international credit transfer and recognition.

Finally, two countries (Sweden and the United Kingdom) report that the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide is not required to be used and is generally not used by external quality assurance agencies. In Sweden and the United Kingdom, this is related to the fact that they operate their own national credit system. While a uniform situation is presented on this indicator for the United Kingdom, in reality there are significant differences between the education systems in the United Kingdom. For example, Scotland has a particular credit system integrated into its national qualifications framework (the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework). This system is quality assured and fulfils all the functions of ECTS – despite not actually being ECTS. In England, the use of credits is less widespread. Nevertheless higher education institutions have mechanisms to ensure that ECTS is correctly applied in relation to credit transfer.

## Monitoring the key elements of ECTS in higher education learning mobility

ECTS is a credit transfer and accumulation system. It has a specific role in programme design and delivery, in credit recognition as well as in the recognition of prior learning and experience. External quality assurance procedures may be used to monitor these various dimensions of ECTS. Figures 5.3 and 5.4, however, focus on five of the key elements related to international credit mobility identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. Countries reported whether external quality assurance agencies are required to monitor these key elements:

1. ECTS credits are allocated on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload:

A common approach agreed in the EHEA is to link ECTS credits to both the learning outcomes (expected to be) achieved by the student by the end of the study period and the typical associated student workload<sup>(3)</sup>. The achievement of learning outcomes must be assessed. In order to make the transfer of credits possible and trusted, all higher education institutions participating in credit mobility need to use this common language of ECTS credits. Different approaches to credit allocation – namely allocating credits based only on learning outcomes, or on student-teacher contact hours – may lead to unfair recognition practises, lengthy and resource-intensive procedures or eventually a deadlock for credit recognition.

2. ECTS supporting documents<sup>(4)</sup> (Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate) are used appropriately:

ECTS supporting documents help facilitate credit recognition. They provide common templates for communicating about the educational components to be taken during credit mobility, and explain how student achievement will be translated into credits and recognised. The Learning Agreement, in addition, provides a prior guarantee to students that the credits they achieve abroad will be recognised in their degree. The appropriate use of these common templates contributes to transparency, quality and trust in the procedures of credit recognition.

3. All credits gained during a period of study abroad – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – are transferred without delay and count towards the student's degree without any additional work by or assessment of the student:

It is fair for a student to expect that all credits identified and agreed prior to the mobility experience, and which the student have successfully achieved and documented, will be automatically recognised and accumulated towards their home degree.

4. The higher education institution has an appropriate appeals procedure to deal with problems of credit recognition:

Student appeals procedures give students their rightful voice in the credit recognition process, and provide an opportunity to clarify any issues or remedy mistakes. This is an element of quality assurance in the credit recognition process.

<sup>(3)</sup> The 2015 ECTS Users' Guide specifies that 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and the associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent.

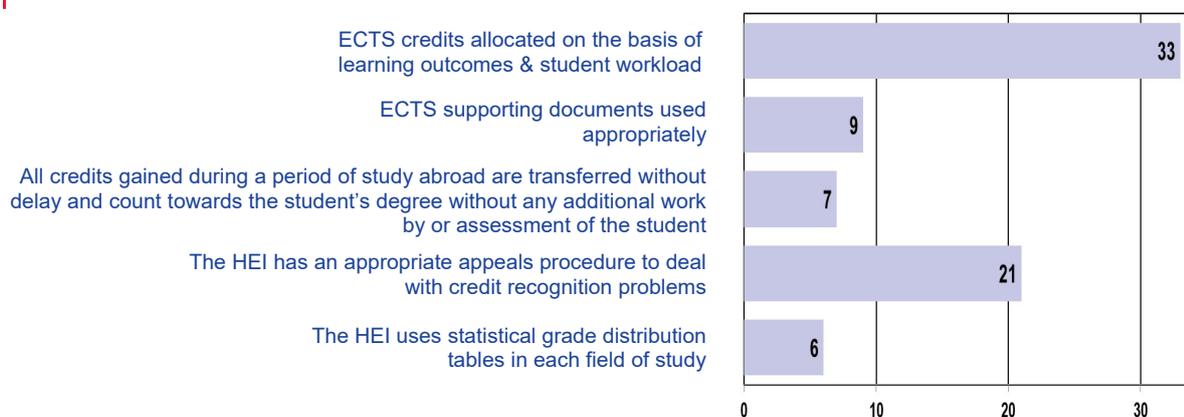
<sup>(4)</sup> See definitions in the Glossary.

5. The higher education institution uses statistical grade distribution tables in each field of study:

Due to different cultural and academic traditions, different grading systems have been developed in European higher education systems and they are also used differently. Statistical grade distribution tables show how the national or institutional grading scale is used in the institution and allow for comparison with those of another institution. Using these tables guarantees that students are treated fairly and provides clarity on their grades when transferring credits. Transparency about grades is particularly important for students in countries where grades are taken into account for further studies and employment prospects.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 only show the responses from the 34 higher education systems reporting that external quality assurance agencies are required to monitor ECTS implementation; they appear as the dark blue category in Figure 5.2. As Figure 5.3 shows, only the first element (ECTS credits are awarded on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload) is monitored by external quality assurance in the majority of higher education systems. This is of strategic importance because learning outcomes and student workload serve as the basis of ECTS. It is an essential first step in the systematic monitoring of ECTS use. It is a requirement in almost all of the education systems where at least one key aspect of ECTS is monitored. The fourth element dealing with appeals procedures is monitored in less than two-thirds of the 34 systems. The remaining three elements are somewhat neglected in external quality assurance procedures across Europe: the use of ECTS supporting documents is monitored by nine countries, automatic credit transfer by seven and the use of grade distribution tables by six.

**Figure 5.3: Requirement to monitor the key elements of ECTS related to international learning mobility by external quality assurance agencies, by number of education systems, 2018/19**

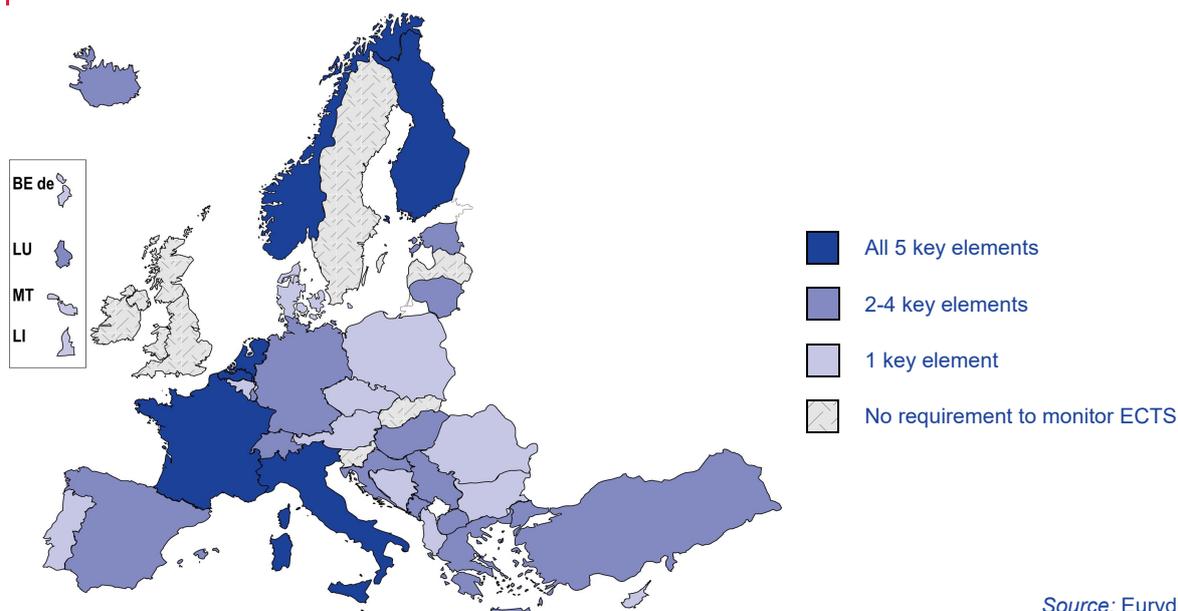


Source: Eurydice.

Interestingly, some countries report that although external quality assurance agencies do not monitor credit transfer processes – such as the use of ECTS supporting documents, grade distribution tables or timely recognition of credits, the national agencies responsible for the management of Erasmus+ do systematically check these in relation to credit mobility within Erasmus+.

Figure 5.4 shows that relatively few higher education systems monitor all five elements during external quality assurance procedures – only the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway. Fourteen systems monitor two to four key elements. In a further 14 systems, only one element is monitored. As mentioned above, this element is credit allocation on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload, except in Albania, where student appeals procedures are required to be monitored.

**Figure 5.4: Requirement to monitor the key elements of ECTS related to international learning mobility by external quality assurance agencies, by number of principles, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

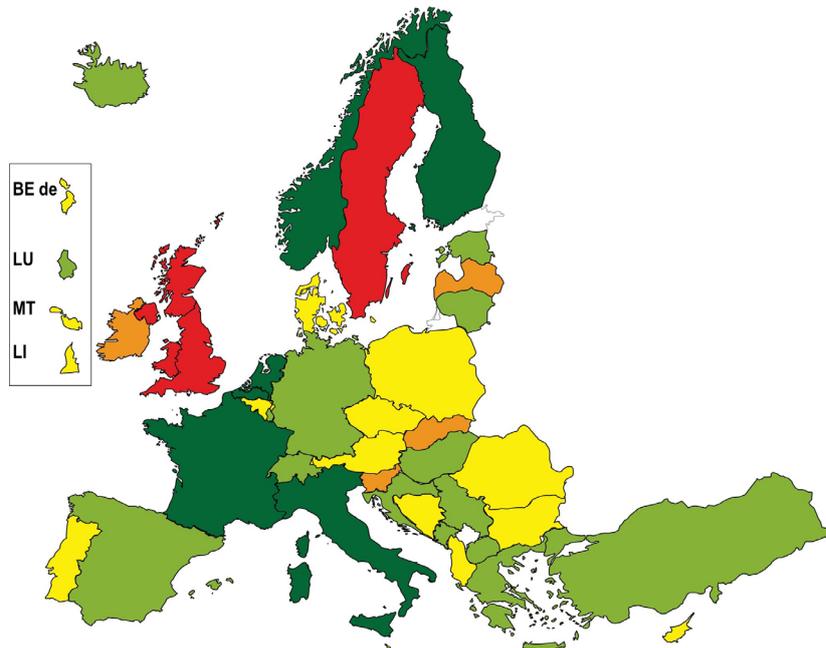
### 5.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 5 depicted on Figure 5.5 takes into account whether:

- 1) external quality assurance agencies are required to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's key principles when monitoring ECTS implementation (see Figure 5.2);
- 2) there is a requirement to monitor all or some of elements of related to international learning mobility in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide (see Figure 5.4).

The indicator is built on a five-category, colour-coded scheme where the first three categories (dark green, light green and yellow) indicate the education systems that require the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide to be used by external quality assurance agencies as the basis for assessing the implementation of ECTS in all higher education institutions. The last two categories (orange and red) refer to education systems where there are no requirements to use the principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, but orange signals that the ECTS principles are, nevertheless, generally used in practice; and red indicates that ECTS principles are neither required, nor used in practice.

**Figure 5.5: Scoreboard indicator 5: Recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS in higher education, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	<p>The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS in higher education institutions in the context of international credit mobility.</p> <p>All five elements are monitored specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECTS credits are allocated on the basis of learning outcomes &amp; student workload.</li> <li>• ECTS supporting documents (Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate) are used appropriately.</li> <li>• All credits gained during a period of study abroad – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – are transferred without delay and count towards the student's degree without any additional work by or assessment of the student.</li> <li>• The HEI has an appropriate appeals procedure to deal with problems of credit recognition.</li> <li>• The HEI uses statistical grade distribution tables in each field of study.</li> </ul>
	Between two and four of the five elements are monitored specifically.
	One of the five elements is monitored specifically.
	The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are NOT required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS, BUT they are generally used in practice.
	The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are NOT required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS, AND they are generally NOT used in practice.

Thirty-four higher education systems are in the first three categories: dark green, light green and yellow. In these systems, external quality assurance agencies are required to refer to some or all of the elements in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide to monitor the use of ECTS in higher education. Top-level bodies in these systems take action to streamline the use of ECTS across the system, and gather evidence through the monitoring system to show how well the system is performing and what issues need to be addressed. The picture is rather patchy, however, when looking at the number of key elements monitored.

**Dark green:** Only the six systems in dark green (the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway) monitor all five elements.

**Light green:** 14 systems monitor two to four key elements.

**Yellow:** Fourteen countries are beginning to monitor ECTS implementation for international mobility. They currently consider only one key aspect, which is usually credit allocation on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload.

**Orange:** In four countries, external quality assurance agencies are not required to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles to assess how well ECTS is used in higher education institutions; however, they are generally used in practice. Some of these systems are less specific in directing their quality assurance systems to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. Rather, they leave more autonomy to their higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to determine what to assess. Alternatively, some countries in this category base their credits on a national credit system to which external quality assurance refers. These systems are all compatible with ECTS but do not follow the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide as the main reference.

**Red:** In five higher education systems, external quality assurance agencies are not required to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide principles to assess the implementation of ECTS in higher education institutions and they are generally not used in practice. This reflects the dual reality that systems may not be using ECTS as a primary credit system, or they do not consider it a high enough priority to require it to be evaluated during the quality assurance process.

## 5.4. Conclusion

The recognition of the learning outcomes achieved during periods of study abroad is essential for students participating in any short- or long-term mobility experience. ECTS was established to facilitate the transfer and recognition of credits from one country to another. Since its launch, ECTS has expanded across Europe, and it has contributed to improving transparency and simplifying the administration of the credit transfer process. The ambition is, however, that credit transfer under ECTS should become automatic throughout Europe. For this to happen, all higher education institutions in Europe should consistently apply learning outcomes and student workload as the basis of allocating and awarding credits, and they should universally make use of ECTS documentation and grade distribution tables. This ambition has not yet been achieved and students still face obstacles in gaining credit recognition, often due to the variations in its use across higher education institutions in Europe.

External quality assurance agencies are well-placed to assess the extent to which ECTS is being applied appropriately and effectively. It is for this reason that this chapter reports on requirements in this area. A positive development is that now, four years after the adoption of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, three-quarters of the European higher education systems require at least one of the key elements of ECTS identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide to be assessed. It should, however, be noted that only six systems require all five key elements to be assessed, and most systems consider far fewer.

Almost all higher education systems with monitoring requirements address whether credit allocation is based on both learning outcomes and student workload in higher education institutions. This is important from the point of view of achieving the systemic implementation of ECTS. In contrast, the requirement for monitoring higher education institutions' grade distribution tables or the timeliness of the credit transfer process is rare in Europe. This suggests that automatic and fair credit recognition is not yet the focus of attention among top-level authorities.



## CHAPTER 6: RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

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### 6.1. Introduction

One of the expectations of the Bologna Process when it was launched in 1999 was that, by establishing convergent degree structures across Europe, learning mobility would become much easier and students would have access to higher education studies in other systems. A necessary condition for this to happen is not only that programmes and degrees are easily understandable, but also that qualifications are easily recognised. Recognition can potentially serve two purposes. The first is to enable access to the labour market, and in a European Union based on the free movement of goods, capital, services and people, this is essential.

The second purpose is to enable access to higher education in another country. The goal is for the qualification level to be automatically recognised allowing students to access the next level of programmes in all European countries. Thus, a first-cycle or bachelor's qualification should be recognised as a bachelor's degree everywhere without the need for separate recognition procedures, while a second-cycle master's programme that is acknowledged in one country should be treated as a master's programme elsewhere. It is this second concept which is relevant in the context of the Mobility Scoreboard.

After working over a number of years to establish and develop a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), higher education ministers in participating countries began to realise that, despite many positive developments, the process for the recognition of academic qualifications was still often lengthy and onerous. This is the reason why, in 2012 in Bucharest, the ministers of higher education across the EHEA committed themselves to the long-term objective of 'automatic recognition' of comparable academic degrees <sup>(1)</sup>. Within the European Union, the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 seeks to promote the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications as well as the recognition of learning outcomes during study periods abroad <sup>(2)</sup>, strengthening the 2012 commitment. The Recommendation envisages achieving the automatic recognition of qualifications by 2025 throughout the EU, providing further impetus to all the countries in the Bologna Process.

The automatic mutual recognition of a qualification is the right for the holder of a qualification of a certain level issued by one country to be considered for entry to a higher education programme at the next level in another, without having to go through any separate recognition procedure. This does not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities to set specific evaluation and admission criteria for a specific programme. Neither does it prejudice the right to check if the qualification is authentic, or if it meets the requirements for accessing a specific higher education programme in the receiving country <sup>(3)</sup>.

This definition makes it quite clear that automatic recognition does not imply automatic admission to any specific programme, but rather that the holders of a qualification giving a right of access to a programme of study at the next level should be considered for entry. In addition, one important clarification that follows from the legitimate right to verify the authenticity of a qualification is that automatic recognition does not imply an instantaneous outcome. Rather it means that the same process would apply to holders of national qualifications as well as to those holding qualifications from

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<sup>(1)</sup> Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bucharest, 26-27 April 2012.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibid.

other countries. As such, automatic recognition is a necessary pre-condition for large-scale degree mobility. Scoreboard indicator 6 therefore looks at the steps taken by European countries towards automatic recognition.

## 6.2. Scoreboard data

The scoreboard indicator on automatic recognition examines two main aspects of qualification recognition within the European Higher Education Area:

1. to what extent there is automatic recognition of qualifications;
2. whether separate recognition procedures are in place and under what conditions they operate.

These aspects are discussed in turn.

### Automatic recognition

In education systems operating system-level automatic recognition, all higher education qualifications issued in all other EHEA countries are recognised on an equal basis with home country qualifications. This means that there are no separate recognition procedures in place for holders of foreign qualifications from other EHEA countries. Nevertheless, as described above, automatic recognition does not equate to immediate recognition. Normal procedure would be to check that a qualification is genuine and classified at the correct level. These checks should in theory be relatively straightforward as ENIC/NARIC offices <sup>(4)</sup> should be able to answer questions on specific qualifications very quickly.

A partial application of this system is when automatic recognition applies to a subset of European countries only, and separate recognition procedures are in place for other countries. Finally, there is no automatic recognition where separate recognition procedures are in place for all higher education qualifications issued in other countries. This means that in these systems, the holder of, for example, a first-cycle degree qualification from one European country cannot assume that the qualification will be recognised as a first-cycle degree in the destination country, and will have to wait for the outcome of the recognition procedure.

There are, however, a number of situations where the boundaries of what can and cannot be conceived as automatic are blurred, and further developmental work is needed to address and clarify the issues. One of the widely acknowledged reasons for a lack of clarity is that decisions on recognition are most often left to the discretion of the higher education institution to which the learner is applying. As institutional practices vary, it is often difficult to determine whether the recognition practice is in fact 'automatic'. One of the difficulties lies in the fact that although higher education institutions are responsible for making recognition decisions, generally they have little interest in recognition per se. Rather their main interest is in admission decisions, i.e., whether or not a student will be admitted to a particular programme. This means that recognition and admission processes are often conflated in these institutions.

Figure 6.1 identifies ten education systems (Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Malta, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Turkey) which report that they operate on the basis of automatic recognition of degrees issued in all other EHEA countries. While automatic recognition was already in place in

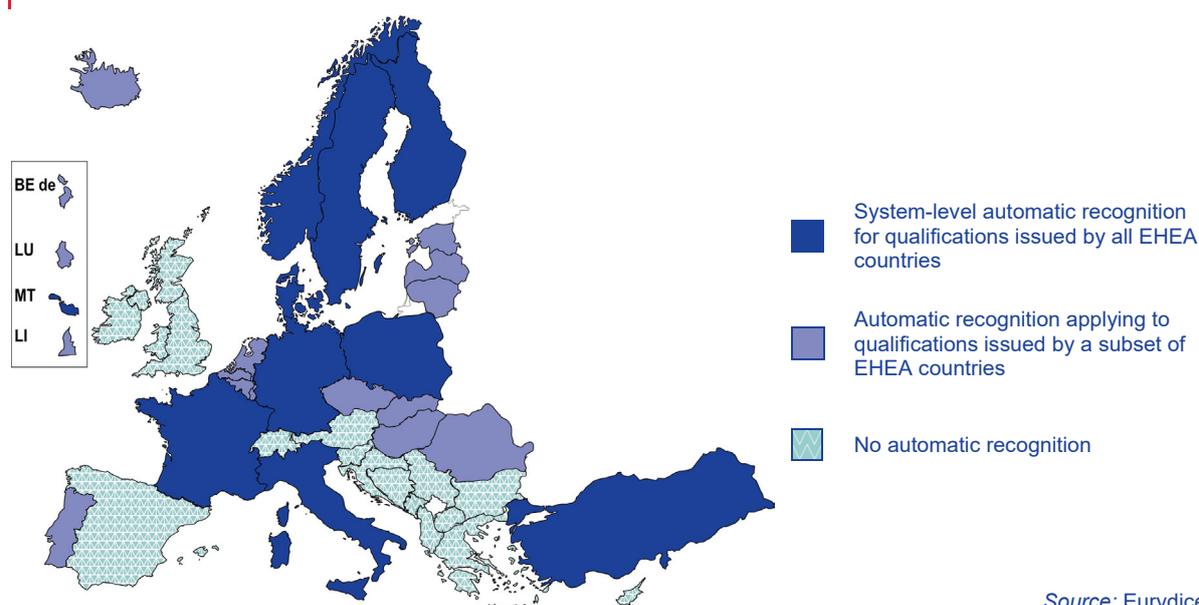
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<sup>(4)</sup> ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region; NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union. For more details on ENIC/NARIC, see <https://www.enic-naric.net/welcome-to-the-enic-naric-website.aspx>.

2015/16 in most of these countries, Turkey's new regulation on the recognition and equivalence of foreign higher education has been in force since 2017.

However, among this group, Denmark is the only country where higher education institutions have no responsibility for recognition decisions. In all the other countries, while the system is designed to ensure automatic recognition, as the top-level authority devolves responsibility for the implementation of recognition to higher education institutions, problems may still arise from difficulties at the institutional level. Such challenges were identified during the FAIR project <sup>(5)</sup>, illustrating that even when the legal framework is in place, automatic recognition cannot be assumed.

**Figure 6.1: Automatic recognition of higher education qualifications from other EHEA countries, 2018/19**



While not yet having full system-level recognition for all EHEA countries, a further 15 systems report that they have automatic recognition for some of these countries. This is usually based on regional, bilateral or multilateral agreements on the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. In addition, Portugal and Romania operate an automatic recognition system that does not (yet) cover all EHEA countries. In Portugal, the list of countries whose qualifications fall under the automatic recognition procedure are continuously expanding. In Romania, automatic recognition applies to degrees from all EU countries as well as to degrees issued by selected higher education institutions from EHEA and non-EHEA countries.

Regional bilateral and multilateral agreements represent the main direction of change in this policy area. Such agreements can be regarded as important steps towards the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. However, a potential disadvantage of such agreements is that in the absence of system-level automatic recognition, bilateral or multilateral agreements can quickly become obsolete and in need of renegotiation if the system of degrees and qualifications changes in a partner country. For example, several bilateral agreements in force today were signed before the Bologna degree structure was implemented in signatory countries, which limits the applicability of these agreements and hampers automatic recognition.

<sup>(5)</sup> See: <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/fair-focus-on-automatic-institutional-recognition/>

Among the recent multilateral agreements is the Benelux agreement – between the three Communities of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – which was signed in 2015. Shortly after, in 2016, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway signed the Nordic Declaration on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education. Most recently, in 2018, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also signed an intergovernmental agreement on the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, which entered into force in the 2018/19 academic year. Hungary also signed a bilateral agreement with Russia in the same year.

In 18 education systems, there is no automatic recognition and separate procedures apply to the qualifications issued by all EHEA countries.

### Steps towards automatic recognition

To improve progress towards automatic recognition, a ‘Pathfinder Group’ was set up within the framework of the Bologna Process. Its report sets out the steps that need to be taken to help move systems forward on the path to automatic recognition (see EHEA Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition, 2014). These steps relate mostly to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region<sup>(6)</sup>, more commonly known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This Council of Europe/UNESCO convention provides a common and binding legal basis for recognition across European countries. With the exception of Greece, it has been ratified by all countries covered in this report.

The set of measures outlined by the Pathfinder Group are intended to guide countries down the path towards automatic recognition by ensuring that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is fully implemented. The measures proposed are:

- national legislation has been reviewed and, if necessary, modified to ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) are respected;
- higher education institutions (HEIs) or other recognition bodies receive clear guidance on properly implementing the principles of the LRC;
- recognition decisions are taken within a four month limit;
- appeals procedures are in place, and decided within a clear and reasonable time limit;
- recognition practice in higher education institutions is monitored by external quality assurance, in line with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015<sup>(7)</sup>.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the steps taken by European countries towards the automatic recognition of qualifications. Consequently, the ten countries with system-level automatic recognition already in place are not taken into account in this figure.

Of the 33 education systems covered by the figure, i.e., those without system-level automatic recognition for all EHEA qualifications, the majority has implemented the first four of the listed measures. Setting the appropriate time limit and putting appeals procedures in place are the most common. Regarding the time limit, recognition decisions are often taken within four months in practice, without this being a legal requirement (e.g. in Iceland). This means that the number of education

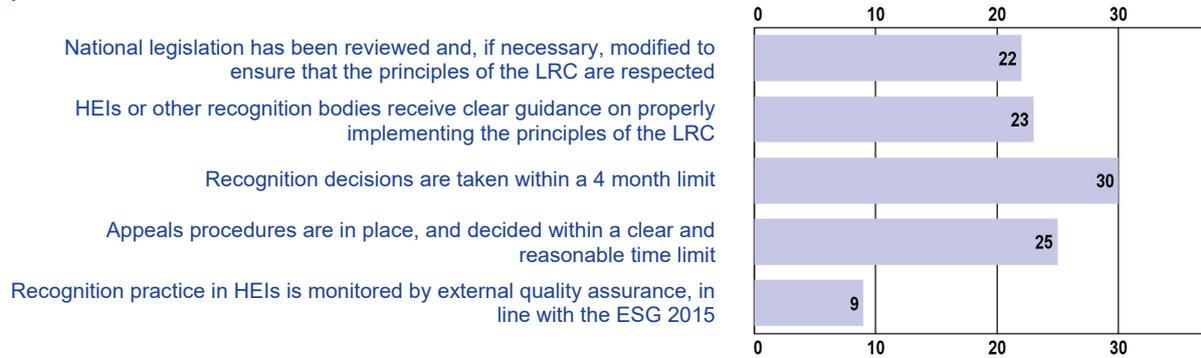
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<sup>(6)</sup> Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, ETS No. 165, available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>

<sup>(7)</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015. Available at: [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) [Accessed 12 September 2019].

systems informally meeting this requirement is even higher, which makes this condition almost entirely fulfilled across European countries.

**Figure 6.2: Steps taken towards the automatic recognition of qualifications in higher education, by number of education systems, 2018/19**

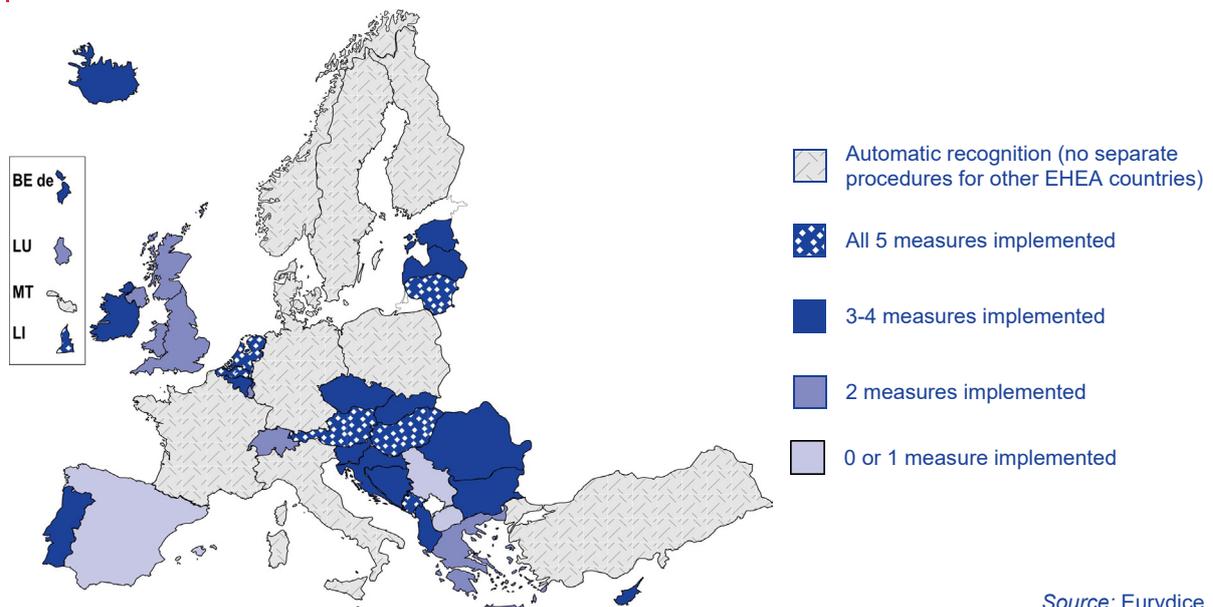


Source: Eurydice.

However, the fifth measure referring to the external monitoring of recognition practices within higher education institutions during quality assurance procedures is implemented by only 9 education systems. This is particularly problematic given that higher education institutions often have the legal responsibility for recognition. Without this external monitoring process, there is a lack of accountability, and education authorities do not have access to information on how the recognition process is working.

The number of measures implemented by education systems ranges from none to all five (see Figure 6.3). Seven education systems report to have implemented all of the identified measures; the legal framework for recognition is therefore well advanced in these systems. A further sixteen systems have implemented three or four measures. Another seven education systems have two of the five measures in place. At most one measure has been formally implemented in three education systems (Spain, North Macedonia and Serbia).

**Figure 6.3: Implementation of policy measures towards automatic recognition in higher education, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Some education systems report recent changes in legislation in order to implement some of the measures identified by the Pathfinder Group. Since the publication of the 2016 Mobility Scoreboard, Portugal has introduced a clear and reasonable time limit for appeals procedures. In the United Kingdom, recognition decisions also take less than four months. Croatia has strengthened the remit of the quality assurance agency to examine whether institutional recognition practices are aligned with the 2015 ESG. In Romania, the National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas (CNRED) has launched yearly training sessions for higher education institutions to help them comply with the principles of the LRC. Finally, Slovakia has introduced a 15-day time limit for the recognition of diplomas from EHEA countries.

### 6.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 6 monitors progress towards the automatic recognition of qualifications based on Figures 6.1 and 6.3. Firstly, a distinction is made between the higher education systems based on whether they have implemented a system-level automatic recognition of qualifications, and if they have, whether such automatic recognition covers all EHEA countries. Secondly, in the absence of automatic recognition with all EHEA countries, the indicator takes into account the conditions under which recognition procedures operate and the number of steps taken on the path towards automatic recognition.

In the first three categories, there is some automatic recognition of qualifications but there are differences either between the EHEA countries covered or the number of implemented policy measures steering the countries towards automatic recognition. The last two categories (orange and red) have no automatic recognition of qualifications but again they each differ in the number of steps taken towards this goal.

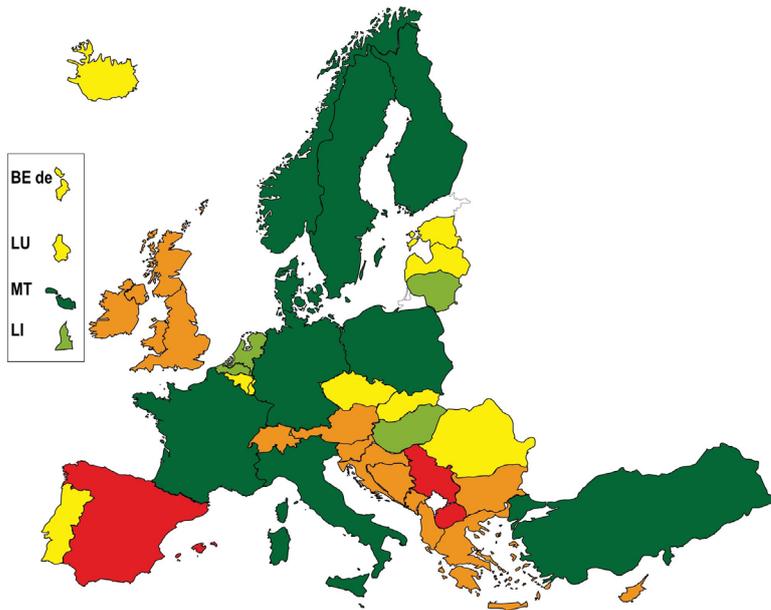
The indicator depicted on Figure 6.4 reveals that Europe is still far from achieving widespread automatic recognition, though progress has been made since 2015/16. The distribution of education systems along the main categories is as follows:

**Dark green:** There are 10 systems (Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Malta, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Turkey) that practice automatic recognition for all EHEA countries. The number of systems in this category has been relatively stable since 2015/16, with Turkey being the only country newly introducing automatic recognition in this period.

**Light green and yellow:** In a further 15 systems, automatic recognition applies to some EHEA countries. Moreover, the number of education systems in this category increased due to the Baltic intergovernmental agreement which has entered into force this academic year.

**Orange and red:** 18 systems are still in the orange and red zones indicating that recognition is not (fully) automatic in their system. More positively, of the countries not operating automatic recognition, the vast majority (15) have implemented at least two of the key measures of good practice in recognition. This also means that fewer education systems are in the red category than in 2015/16.

Figure 6.4: Scoreboard indicator 6: Recognition of qualifications for learner mobility, 2018/19



Source: Eurydice.

**Scoreboard indicator categories:**

	Automatic recognition is in place, meaning that all higher education qualifications issued in other EHEA countries are recognised at system level on an equal level with comparable <sup>(8)</sup> academic qualifications in the home country and give the right to be considered for entry to a programme of further study at the next level.
	Automatic recognition is in place for a subset of EHEA countries, meaning that all higher education qualifications issued in these countries are recognised at system level on an equal level with comparable academic qualifications in the home country and give the right to be considered for entry to a programme of further study at the next level.  All of the following conditions apply to recognition practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National legislation has been reviewed and, if necessary, modified to ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) are respected.</li> <li>• Higher education institutions or recognition bodies receive clear guidance on properly implementing the principles of the LRC.</li> <li>• Recognition decisions are taken within a four month limit.</li> <li>• Appeals procedures are in place, and decided within a clear and reasonable time limit.</li> <li>• Recognition practice in HEIs is monitored by external quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015.</li> </ul>
	Automatic Recognition at system level takes place with a subset of European countries. For qualifications from other countries some but not all of the conditions apply to recognition practice.
	There is no automatic recognition. At least two of the conditions apply to recognition practice.
	There is no automatic recognition. Less than two of the conditions apply to recognition practice.

<sup>(8)</sup> The term 'comparable' implies that foreign qualifications are treated in the same way as national degrees (e.g. a first-cycle degree from an EHEA country vs. a national first-cycle degree) for the purpose of further study at the next level without additional recognition procedures.

## **6.4. Conclusion**

Higher education cooperation in Europe has focused for several years on improving and simplifying recognition practices. European higher education policy has worked towards easier recognition, while protecting the value of learning outcomes and ensuring that qualifications are easily understood and communicated. The Bologna Process and European Commission programmes emphasise the importance of recognition, and have promoted progress in this area. However, despite the number of policies and the overarching legal framework established by the Lisbon Recognition Convention, there are still obstacles to overcome and further action is required.

The recognition of qualifications has been addressed through an examination of the European policy priority of 'automatic recognition'. Slightly over half of the education systems covered in this report currently recognise the qualifications of other EHEA countries automatically, and only ten do so for all EHEA countries. While it is encouraging to note that several countries report recent policy developments extending automatic recognition, in the majority of systems, improvements still need to be made to allow learners unrestricted access to higher education in other countries.

## CONCLUSION

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Following the 2011 Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on learning mobility for young people <sup>(1)</sup>, the European Commission – in close cooperation with the Member States – set up a framework to monitor the progress made in developing and implementing policies favourable to learning mobility and in removing the obstacles hindering participation. This report is part of this monitoring framework. It provides the second mapping of the policy environment surrounding international mobility for higher education students after the first edition published three years ago (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016) <sup>(2)</sup>. The higher education Mobility Scoreboard includes six indicators, corresponding to the six main chapters of the report: information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, participation of disadvantaged learners, recognition of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications. Each scoreboard indicator is made up of five colour-coded categories reflecting performance in each policy area.

The scoreboard indicators reveal the wide range of situations facing higher education students across Europe when they embark upon international mobility experiences. This is apparent from the varied distribution of countries between the coloured-coded categories, from the top category – dark green – indicating that all the desired policy criteria are in place, to the bottom category – red – indicating that none of them are (see Figure A).

Education systems fare relatively well on the indicators on foreign language preparation and the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS. For these two indicators, around three quarters of systems are in the top three (dark green, light green and yellow) categories, while the number of systems in the last two (red and orange) categories is the lowest among all indicators.

A more even distribution can be observed along the five colour-coded categories for three indicators. For the indicator on portability of student support, while the highest number of systems can be found in the top, dark green category, indicating full compliance with all policy criteria, there are a similar numbers of education systems in each of the other four categories. Indicators on information and guidance and the automatic recognition of qualifications also show a varied picture.

The indicator on supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners reveals the greatest need for progress among the six indicators. For this indicator, the large majority of education systems are in the orange and red categories.

There are issues to consider and areas to improve in all countries as no education system complies fully with all criteria in every indicator. However, some countries perform better than others. France, for example, is consistently placed within the two highest categories, and the Flemish Community of Belgium and Finland are also placed in the dark green category for four and five of the six indicators respectively. In addition, the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Liechtenstein and Norway all perform well overall. These systems are distinguished by the fact that they are placed in the dark green category for at least one indicator, never in the red category, and in the orange for one indicator at most.

At the other end of the spectrum, the overall performance of three systems – Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia – suggests a significant need for further policy development. Though each system performs relatively well on one or two indicators, they are currently in the lowest (red) category for three indicators.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

<sup>(2)</sup> The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) has undertaken complementary activities, namely the monitoring of measures promoting mobility in initial vocational education and training (VET).

**Figure A: Mobility Scoreboard indicators in higher education, 2018/19**

Countries	Indicator 1: Information and guidance on learning mobility	Indicator 2: Foreign language preparation	Indicator 3: Portability of public grants and loans	Indicator 4: Supporting disadvantaged learners	Indicator 5: Recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS	Indicator 6: Recognition of qualifications for learner mobility
Belgium (BE fr)	Red	Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Belgium (BE de)	Red	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Belgium (BE nl)	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bulgaria	Red	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Orange
Czech Republic	Green	Green	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Denmark	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow	Green
Germany	Green	Orange	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Estonia	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Green	Yellow
Ireland	Yellow	Red	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange
Greece	Orange	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange
Spain	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Red
France	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Croatia	Green	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Green	Orange
Italy	Red	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Cyprus	Red	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow	Orange
Latvia	Red	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Lithuania	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Green	Yellow
Luxembourg	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Yellow
Hungary	Green	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Green	Green
Malta	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Green
Netherlands	Green	Yellow	Green	Orange	Green	Green
Austria	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Orange
Poland	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Green
Portugal	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Romania	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange
Slovenia	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Orange
Slovakia	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Finland	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Green
Sweden	Yellow	Orange	Green	Orange	Red	Green
United Kingdom (ENG)	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Red	Orange
United Kingdom (WLS)	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Red	Orange
United Kingdom (NIR)	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Red	Orange
United Kingdom (SCT)	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow	Red	Orange
Albania	Red	Orange	Red	Red	Yellow	Orange
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Orange
Switzerland	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Orange
Iceland	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Yellow
Liechtenstein	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow	Green
Montenegro	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Orange
North Macedonia	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Norway	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Orange	Green	Green
Serbia	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Turkey	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green

Source: Eurydice.

There are no clear divisions apparent across all indicators on the basis of geography. Nevertheless, in several areas – information and guidance, the portability of grants and loans, and supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners – south-eastern European countries fare worse than those in other parts of Europe. Eastern and south-eastern European countries, however, perform well overall on foreign language preparation.

Given that this report is the second edition of the Mobility Scoreboard, conclusions can be drawn on the progress made since 2015/16. The discussion below starts with indicators showing the most progress between 2015/16 and 2018/19, and finishes with areas with fewer or less substantial policy reforms.

A number of education systems have made progress regarding the automatic recognition of qualifications. Turkey has introduced new legislation introducing automatic recognition for all EHEA countries. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have also improved their position due to the signing and entry into force of the Baltic multilateral agreement on the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. In addition, given that recognition decisions are now taken within a four-month limit in the United Kingdom, its four education systems are now placed in the orange instead of the red category.

For the indicator on disadvantaged learners, while the changing definition of this indicator does not allow for a direct comparison between the two editions of the Mobility Scoreboard, several education systems have introduced new measures to support the participation of these learners in learning mobility programmes. Three systems (France, Austria, and Slovenia) have defined new quantitative objectives, Latvia has introduced new targeted mobility grants, and Romania has made the portability of need-based grants possible since 2015/16.

Similarly, the indicator on the recognition of learning outcomes has changed its focus since 2015/16, which does not allow for a direct comparison between the two reference years. However, several countries now require external quality assurance agencies to monitor systematically the use of ECTS based on the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, which signifies important developments during the last three years.

The changes are more mixed for the indicator on information and guidance. On the one hand, five education systems have introduced new measures and have therefore improved their category placement. Croatia, Hungary and Finland now systematically evaluate personalised services; while in Lithuania and Norway, new central web portals have been launched. On the other hand, the four education systems of the United Kingdom have fewer measures in place than in 2015/16. Centralised web portals directed at students themselves are no longer available in any of the UK systems.

As for the portability of grants and loans, most education systems are placed in the same category as they were for the first edition of the Mobility Scoreboard. Malta and Romania are the only countries reporting regulatory changes that have enhanced the portability of domestic grants.

Finally, there have been no significant changes in the indicator on foreign language preparation. However, while staying in the same category, some countries have implemented reforms in foreign language learning since 2015/16. Most of these reforms have lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning, which implies that pupils' overall exposure to foreign languages has been extended.

Overall, while visible progress has been made in several areas of the Mobility Scoreboard, top-level authorities could still make better use of common European legal instruments, tools and agreements such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, qualifications frameworks or ECTS supporting documents to improve transparency and develop trust between education systems. In addition, in several areas of the Scoreboard, while higher education institutions have substantial autonomy in policy implementation, systematic top-level monitoring – of personalised information and guidance services, the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility, ECTS implementation, or higher education institutions' recognition practices – is often lacking in European education systems. Improved monitoring could provide the valuable information required by policy-makers to tackle the obstacles students face concerning learning mobility.



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## GLOSSARY

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**Automatic recognition of qualifications:** the right of holders of a qualification of a certain level issued by one country to be considered for entry to a higher education programme at the next level in another country, without having to go through any separate recognition procedure. This does not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities to set specific evaluation and admission criteria for a specific programme. Neither does it prejudice the right to check, if the qualification is authentic <sup>(1)</sup>.

**Compulsory foreign language learning:** a foreign language is compulsory when it is taught as one of the compulsory subjects in the curriculum laid down by top-level education authorities. All pupils must study this subject. The total length of compulsory foreign language teaching is calculated from the beginning of pre-primary education until the end of upper secondary education (ISCED 0 to 3). In most countries, this period goes beyond the end of compulsory education. In these cases, foreign language teaching is nevertheless regarded as 'compulsory' if it is required for all participating pupils.

**Course Catalogue:** 'the Course Catalogue includes detailed, user-friendly and up-to-date information on the institution's learning environment (general information on the institution, its resources and services, as well as academic information on its programmes and individual education components) that should be available to students before entering and throughout their studies to help them to make the right choices and use their time most efficiently. The Course Catalogue should be published on the institution's website, indicating the course/subject titles in the national language (or regional language, if relevant) and in English, so that all interested parties can easily access it. The institution is free to decide the format of the Catalogue, as well as the sequencing of the information, but it should be published sufficiently in advance for prospective students to make their choices' (European Commission 2015, p. 67).

**Credit mobility:** a short period of tertiary education and/or study-related traineeship abroad, within the framework of a tertiary education programme at a 'home institution', usually for gaining academic credits (i.e. credits that will be recognised in the home institution).

**Credit transfer:** 'the process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) recognised in another formal context for the purpose of obtaining a qualification. Credits awarded to students in one programme may be transferred from an institution to be accumulated in another programme offered by the same or another institution. Credit transfer is the key to successful mobility. Institutions, faculties, departments may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits' (European Commission 2015, p. 68).

**Degree mobility:** whole-programme mobility where the student physically moves abroad for an entire degree course leading to a tertiary-level qualification.

**Disadvantaged learners:** learners who have hindrances to learning or performing well at school because of unfavourable circumstances beyond their control. These include financial and social hardships as well as difficulties arising from disabilities. These groups are often under-represented in higher education.

**Domestic student support:** financial support (grants and loans) provided to students by authorities in the home country.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

**European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS):** ‘a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer, based on the principle of transparency of the learning, teaching and assessment processes. Its objective is to facilitate the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and student mobility by recognising learning achievements and qualifications and periods of learning’ (European Commission 2015, p. 69).

**ECTS supporting documents:** ‘the use of ECTS credits is facilitated and quality enhanced by the supporting documents. These are the Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate’ (European Commission 2015, p. 12).

**European Higher Education Area (EHEA):** officially launched during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference in 2010 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration, the EHEA was the culmination of a decade of work to implement the Bologna Process. This process was intended to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. It currently covers 48 states. For more information, visit: <http://www.ehea.info/>.

**European Standards and Guidelines:** refers to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area in May 2015. Available at: [http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG\\_2015\\_616002.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG_2015_616002.pdf).

**External quality assurance:** the process of evaluation or audit of a higher education programme or institution undertaken by a specialised body outside the institution. Typically the body may be a quality assurance or accreditation agency, or an ad hoc panel of experts and peers constituted by the responsible Ministry. The evaluation will involve the collection of data, information and evidence for assessment against agreed standards.

**Foreign language:** a language designated as ‘foreign’ (or ‘modern’) in the curriculum laid down by the central (or top-level) education authorities. This definition is an educationally based one and unrelated to the political status of languages. Thus certain languages regarded as regional or minority languages from a political perspective may be included in the curriculum as foreign languages. In the same way, certain ancient languages may be considered foreign languages in certain curricula.

**Grade distribution tables:** ‘show how the existing national or institutional scale is being used in the institution – whether in open access or selective systems – and allow for comparison with the statistical distribution of grades in a parallel reference group of another institution. They represent the statistical distribution of positive grades (pass and above) awarded in each field of study in a specific institution’ (European Commission 2015, p. 71).

**Grant:** public financial support that does not need to be paid back.

**Higher education institution:** any institution providing services in the field of higher education, as defined by national law. This includes private and public higher education institutions, irrespective of the composition of funding and management bodies.

**Initiative:** concrete policy measure, adopted by the top-level authority, to implement a strategy or explore a policy domain.

**Inward mobility:** refers to the process whereby students move into another country in order to study.

**International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED):** the ISCED classification has been developed to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The coverage of ISCED extends to all organised and sustained learning opportunities for children, young people and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organisations providing them or the form in which they are delivered. The first statistical data collection based on the new classification (ISCED 2011) took place in 2014 (text and definitions adopted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

#### ISCED 0: Early childhood education

ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component. These programmes aim to develop socio-emotional skills necessary for participation in school and society. They also develop some of the skills needed for academic readiness and prepare children for entry into primary education.

#### ISCED 1: Primary education

Primary education provides learning and educational activities typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy). It provides basic learning with little specialisation, if any.

#### ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

In lower secondary education, the educational aim usually is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development that prepares students for further educational opportunities. Programmes at this level are usually organised around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects.

#### ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at upper secondary education are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary or higher education, or to provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programmes at this level offer students more subject-based, specialist and in-depth programmes. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available.

#### ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Post-secondary non-tertiary programmes build on secondary education to provide learning and educational activities to prepare students for entry into the labour market and/or tertiary education. It typically targets students who have completed ISCED level 3 but who want to improve their skills and increase the opportunities available to them. Programmes are often not significantly more advanced than those at upper secondary level and they are therefore pitched below the higher level of complexity characteristic of tertiary education.

#### ISCED 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Short-cycle tertiary education is often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competences. Typically, they are practice-based and occupation-specific, preparing students to enter the labour market. However, these programmes may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes. Academic tertiary education programmes below the level of a Bachelor's programme or equivalent are also classified as ISCED level 5.

### ISCED 6: Bachelor's or equivalent level

Bachelor's or equivalent level programmes are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competences, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theory-based but may include practical elements; they are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. ISCED 6 programmes are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions.

### ISCED 7: Master's or equivalent level

Master's or equivalent level programmes are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competences, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level may have a substantial research component but do not lead to the award of a doctoral qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theory-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

### ISCED 8: Doctoral or equivalent level

Doctoral or equivalent level programmes are designed primarily to lead to an advanced research qualification. Programmes at this ISCED level are devoted to advanced study and original research and are typically offered only by research-oriented tertiary educational institutions such as universities. Doctoral programmes exist in both academic and professional fields.

**Joint degree:** a single document officially recognised by the appropriate (national or, if applicable, regional) authorities of at least two countries.

**Joint programme:** usually inter-institutional arrangements among higher education institutions leading to a joint degree. Parts of joint programmes undertaken by students at partner institutions are recognised automatically by the other partner institutions. The same is true for joint degrees (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018b).

**Large-scale initiatives/schemes:** initiatives/schemes that operate throughout the whole education system or a significant geographical area rather than being restricted to a particular institution or a geographical location (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018b).

**Learning Agreement:** 'a formalised agreement of the three parties involved in mobility – the student, the sending institution and the receiving institution or organisation/enterprise – to facilitate the organisation of credit mobility and its recognition. The agreement is to be signed by the three parties before the start of the mobility period and it is intended to give the student the confirmation that the credits he/she successfully achieves during the mobility period will be recognised' (European Commission 2015, p. 72).

**Learning mobility:** the physical crossing of national borders between a country of origin and a country of destination and subsequent participation in activities related to tertiary education.

**Learning outcomes:** 'statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes as a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification' (European Commission 2015, p. 72).

**Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC):** the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted in 1997 in Lisbon. It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from one European country can have that qualification recognised in another. For more information, visit: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC_en.asp).

**Loan:** repayable financial aid. Student loan models differ greatly between countries such as in their repayment plans, the level of subsidy, the expenses covered, eligibility rules, etc. A student loan is subsidised when the government bears a part of the costs. This subsidy can take the form of a government guarantee which covers the risk of default and loss. Private loans with no public guarantee are not considered in this report.

**Monitoring:** the process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of information by top-level authorities to inform policy. Systematic monitoring must include mechanisms of cross-institutional data gathering and allow cross-institutional data comparability.

**Multipliers:** individuals who have had a learning experience abroad or who have been indirectly involved in one (teachers, families, etc.) and can inspire and motivate other individuals to also undertake such experiences.

**Outward mobility:** the process whereby students move out of their home country in order to study abroad.

**Portability:** the possibility to take abroad the support available to students in their home country (within EHEA) for credit or degree mobility.

**Portability restrictions:** additional requirements implying that grants and loans are portable only under certain conditions such as:

- within certain countries (e.g. portability within the European Economic Area only – not the whole EHEA);
- within a specific time limit;
- for certain study programmes (e.g. only programmes not available in the home system);
- for specific exchange programmes (e.g. portability limited to recognised schemes such as Erasmus+).

**Quantitative objectives/targets:** numerical targets set by top-level authorities for the proportion of students (or certain categories of students) participating in learning mobility programmes.

**Socio-economic background:** determined by measuring an individual's or a family's economic and social position relative to others, usually based on income, education, or occupation. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are often disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education.

**Specific mobility support:** financial support (grant or loan) provided solely for mobility purposes.

**Top-level authority:** the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, the *Communautés*, *Länder*, *Comunidades Autónomas* and the devolved administrations respectively are either wholly responsible or share responsibilities with the state level for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, while for those areas for which they share the responsibility with the national (state) level, both are considered to be top-level authorities.

**Top-level strategy/action plan:** official policy documents on an important policy area usually issued by top-level authorities. They set out the specific objectives to be met and/or the detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given timeframe in order to reach a desired goal.

**Transcript of Records:** an up-to-date record of the students' progress in their studies: the educational components they have taken, the number of ECTS points they have achieved and the grades they have been awarded. It is a vital document for recording progress and for recognising learning achievements, including for student mobility. Most institutions produce the Transcript of Records from their institutional databases (European Commission 2015, p. 76).

**Work placement certificate:** 'a document issued by the receiving organisation/enterprise upon the trainee's completion of the work placement; it can be complemented by other documents, such as letters of recommendation. It aims to provide transparency and bring out the value of the experience of the student's work placement' (European Commission 2015, p. 77).

### ANNEX I: LEARNING MOBILITY STRATEGIES AND TARGETS

Building on the agreements made in the context of the Bologna Process in 2009 <sup>(1)</sup>, the Council of the European Union adopted a European benchmark on higher education learning mobility in 2011 <sup>(2)</sup>. The benchmark states that ‘by 2020, an EU average of at least 20 % of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of three months’. While EU Member States have committed themselves to achieving the European benchmark, individual Member States can decide how they will contribute to making progress towards the common benchmark. Nevertheless, countries both in the EU and in the EHEA <sup>(3)</sup> are encouraged to adopt learning mobility and/or internationalisation strategies as well as national level targets.

Annex I therefore provides information on these strategies and quantitative targets in order to provide the broader national policy context for the qualitative indicators presented in the Scoreboard.

#### Learning mobility strategies

Learning mobility is a complex policy area covering issues relating to the provision of information and guidance to students, the learning of foreign languages, the provision of student financial support, the recognition of learning outcomes, the issuing of visas, accommodation, staffing arrangements as well as the myriad of legal issues associated with higher education and its institutions. In order to ensure that policies are effective, good planning and coordination is necessary. Strategies and strategic action plans help provide direction by ensuring that all stakeholders understand the policy objectives and targets as well as the measures needed to deliver them. Strategies can also include provisions to ensure that progress is monitored and deadlines met.

Most education systems have a strategy covering learning mobility, although a significant minority (13) do not. Figure I.1 looks at the types of strategy adopted by European countries: dedicated learning mobility strategies, internationalisation strategies that cover learning mobility, and broader education strategies that also include learning mobility.

Seven education systems (the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and all four United Kingdom systems) have specific strategies dealing with learning mobility. About a quarter of all systems have an internationalisation strategy in which mobility is regarded as an important dimension (the other dimensions generally include the internationalisation of curricula, digital learning, and building strategic international partnerships and capacity). In the remaining 14 systems, mainly in Eastern Europe, learning mobility is a priority area integrated into broader education strategies – usually on higher education but sometimes wider education strategies.

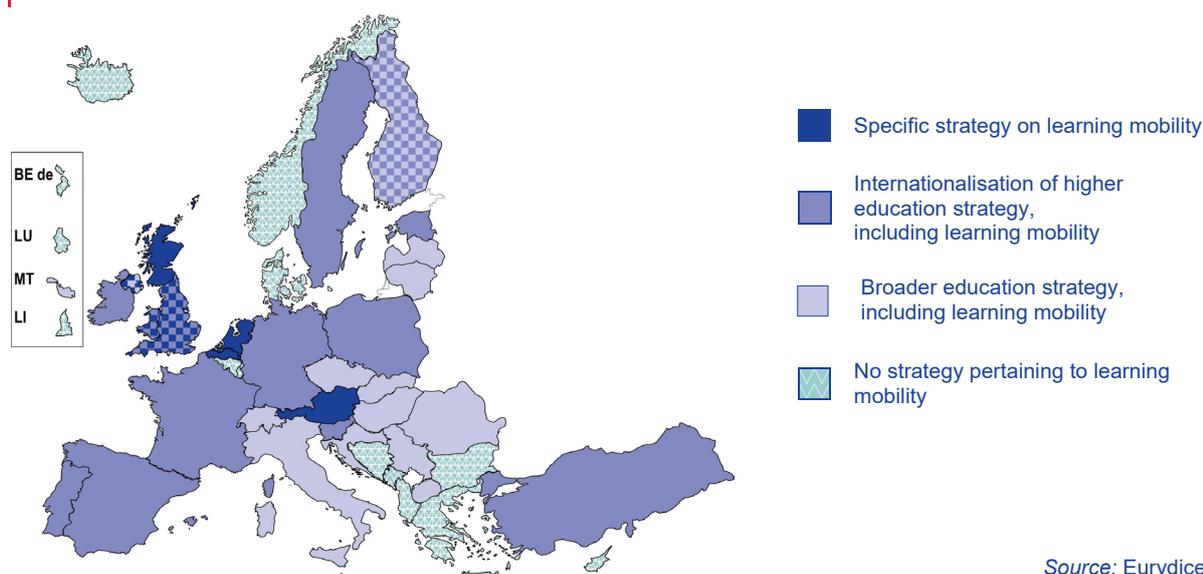
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<sup>(1)</sup> The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council conclusions of 20 December 2011 on a benchmark for learning mobility. OJ. C372, 20.12.2011.

<sup>(3)</sup> Mobility for Better Learning: Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area. (EHEA). 2012. p. 1.

**Figure I.1: Top-level strategies on learning mobility, 2018/19**



Most countries address both inward and outward mobility in their strategy, with the exception of Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom (Scotland). Portugal addresses only inward mobility, while Romania and the United Kingdom (Scotland) set objectives only for outward mobility.

The content of the national strategies for outward mobility generally reflect the priority areas of intervention highlighted in the 2011 Council Recommendation<sup>(4)</sup>: information and guidance on outward mobility, financial support, as well as the recognition of credits and qualifications. In addition, several countries (Czechia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and Serbia) also point to joint programmes that they develop and implement as an important tool to promote mobility – both outward and inward. Finally, Spain, Hungary and the Netherlands refer to incorporating ‘mobility windows’<sup>(5)</sup> into their higher education programmes as a means of promoting mobility.

Where learning mobility is part of an internationalisation strategy, more emphasis tends to be placed on inward mobility and the strategic development needed to attract foreign students into home country institutions. Some of the commonly mentioned features of these strategies are:

- improving the quality of welcoming/reception of foreign students (e.g. the Flemish Community of Belgium, Spain, France and Slovakia);
- marketing the higher education system and institutions abroad, including through alumni abroad or other networks (e.g. Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden);
- adapting the curriculum to the needs of foreign students, making it more international (e.g. the Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland, Spain and Poland);
- providing host country language learning opportunities (e.g. Spain, France, Slovenia and Slovakia);
- offering scholarships to foreign students (e.g. the Flemish Community of Belgium, France and Portugal); and
- simplifying the legislative framework for entry and residence (e.g. Spain, France and Serbia).

<sup>(4)</sup> Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C-199, 7.7.2011, C-199/4.

<sup>(5)</sup> A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is imbedded into the curriculum of a study programme. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018b).

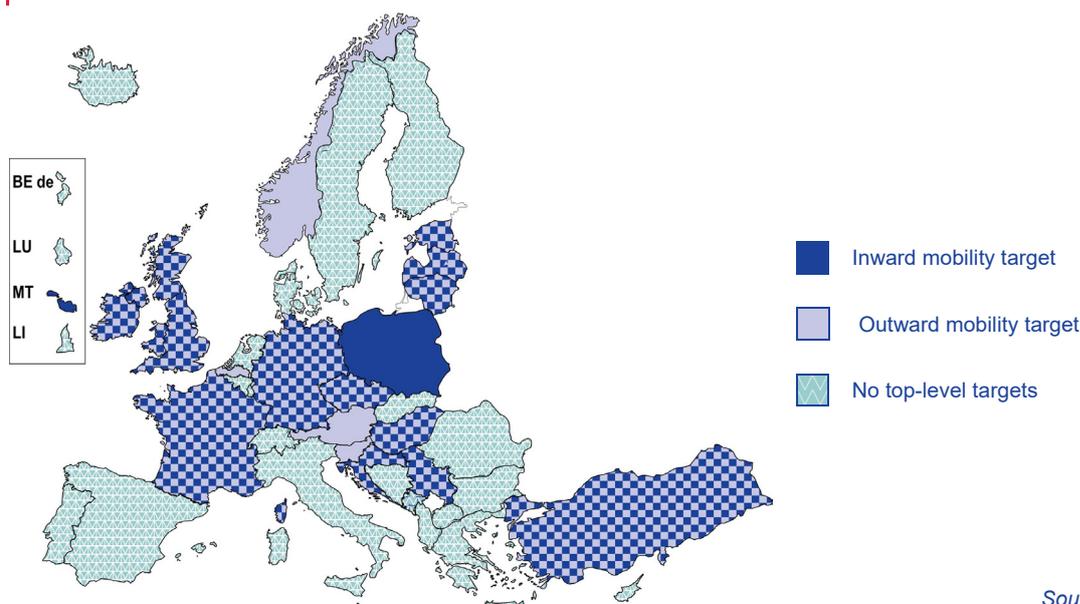
## Quantitative learning mobility targets

The setting of quantitative national learning mobility targets shows a commitment by top-level authorities to increase student participation in international mobility. The focus of these targets may vary. For example, they might refer to the type of mobility (credit or degree mobility) or the direction of travel (inward or outward). The target population may differ – they may refer to all students or specific target groups, for example, disadvantaged students. At a more technical level, national targets may be defined in terms of students or graduates who have participated in a learning mobility experience. The figures may also be stated either in absolute terms (total numbers) or in relative terms (percentages). All these different types of targets are taken into account in this section with the exception of those relating to disadvantaged students, as such national targets are discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, only long-term targets are considered here; the annual plans for credit mobility within the Erasmus+ national work programmes are not taken into account in this Annex.

Figure I.2 shows that top-level authorities have defined measurable national targets in less than half of the higher education systems. In 14 of these systems, the targets are set for both outward and inward mobility. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, Austria, Slovenia and Norway, quantitative targets have been set only for outward credit mobility, while in Malta and Poland they are only for inward mobility.

No measurable target is set in 22 systems. This might signal a lack of political priority in this area but it might also indicate that mobility flows are already high. For example, Luxembourg does not have a quantitative mobility target but all its bachelor programmes include a mandatory semester abroad. In the Netherlands, there is currently no national target as the previous outward mobility target was met in 2018. Romania does not have long-term learning mobility targets, but top-level authorities plan annually the number of foreign students to be hosted in its higher education institutions.

**Figure I.2: Quantitative learning mobility targets in higher education, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Education system	Outward mobility		Inward mobility	
	Quantitative target	Target date	Quantitative target	Target date
Flemish Community of Belgium <sup>(6)</sup>	33 % of graduates should have participated in mobility during their tertiary studies (study or work placement), gaining a minimum of 10 ECTS credits	2020	-	
Czechia <sup>(7)</sup>	At least 10 % of bachelor's and master's graduates should have participated in a mobility experience (study visit or work placement) for a period of at least 14 days	2020	At least 10 000 foreign students per year for short term study of at least 14 days	Yearly (2016-2020)
Germany <sup>(8)</sup>	50 % of all higher education graduates should have participated in a mobility experience	2020	350 000 foreign students	2020
	1/6 of all higher education graduates should have participated in a mobility experience of at least 15 ECTS			
Estonia <sup>(9)</sup>	10 % of Estonian students should have participated in a credit mobility experience	2020	10 % of all students should be foreign degree students	2020
Ireland <sup>(10)</sup>	Increase in higher education Erasmus+ students to 4 400	2020	Increase in higher education international students to 44 000	2019/20
France <sup>(11)</sup>	Double the number of French graduates who have participated in a mobility experience of at least 2 months during their tertiary studies	2025	Double the proportion of inbound mobility	2025
Croatia <sup>(12)</sup>	Outgoing student mobility rate of 10 %	2020	Incoming student mobility rate of 5 % (both semester and degree mobility)	2020
Latvia <sup>(13)</sup>	20 % of higher education graduates should have participated in credit mobility	2020	2 % of the total number of students are foreign credit mobility students	2020
	2 548 students participating in credit-mobility activities per year		8 % of the total number of students are degree mobile students	
Lithuania <sup>(14)</sup>	The ratio of incoming and outgoing students for temporary studies in the Bologna Process countries should be 1:2	2020	The ratio of incoming and outgoing students for temporary studies in the Bologna Process countries should be 1:2	2020
Hungary <sup>(15)</sup>	Increase the rate of students studying or on work placement abroad for a minimum of 3 months or 15 ECTS credits to 20 %	2023	Increase the number of foreign students in Hungarian higher education to 40 000 per academic year	2023
Malta <sup>(16)</sup>	-		5 000 fee-paying foreign students	2020

<sup>(6)</sup> Brains on the Move! Action plan for mobility 2013: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/brains-on-the-move-action-plan-for-mobility-2013-1>

<sup>(7)</sup> Strategy Plan for 2016-2020. <http://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/strategic-plan-for-higher-education-institutions-2016-2020?lang=2>

<sup>(8)</sup> DAAD Strategy 2020. <https://www.daad.de/medien/der-daad/medien-publikationen/publikationen-pdfs/daad-strategie-2020.pdf>

<sup>(9)</sup> Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy. [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian\\_lifelong\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian_lifelong_strategy.pdf)

<sup>(10)</sup> International Education Strategy 2016-2020. <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>(11)</sup> Stratégie nationale de l'enseignement supérieur (StraNES), 2015. <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid30540/strategie-nationale-de-l-enseignement-superieur-stranes.html>

<sup>(12)</sup> Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (Official Gazette 124/2014). [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014\\_10\\_124\\_2364.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_10_124_2364.html)

<sup>(13)</sup> Education Development Guidelines 2014 – 2020. <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>

<sup>(14)</sup> Government of the Republic of Lithuania. Resolution regarding the approval of the national programme for the development of studies, scientific research and experimental (social and cultural) development for 2013-2020. [https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/en\\_smm/SMTEP%20programa\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/en_smm/SMTEP%20programa_FINAL_EN.pdf)

<sup>(15)</sup> A change of pace – Hungarian Higher Education Strategy. <https://www.kormany.hu/download/3/18/e0000/20161202%20Fokozatv%C3%A1lt%C3%A1s%20a%20fels%C5%91oktat%C3%A1sban%20k%C3%B6z%C3%A9pt%C3%A1lv%C3%BA%20strat%C3%A9gia.pdf>

<sup>(16)</sup> Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020. [https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Strategy%20Documents/Further\\_and\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Strategy\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Strategy%20Documents/Further_and_Higher_Education_Strategy_2020_1.pdf)

Education system	Outward mobility		Inward mobility	
	Quantitative target	Target date	Quantitative target	Target date
Austria <sup>(17)</sup>	30-35 % of annual graduates should have participated in a learning mobility experience abroad	2025	-	
	120 000 Austrian Erasmus+ students by 2021			
Poland <sup>(18)</sup>	-		5 % of all students at Polish universities are foreign students studying in Poland for at least a year	2020
Slovenia <sup>(19)</sup>	5 % of bachelor's and master's students should have participated in a credit mobility experience	2020	-	
UK – England, Northern Ireland and Scotland <sup>(20)</sup>	Double the percentage of UK-domiciled, full-time first degree students who have a mobility period as part of their higher education programme from 6.6 % to 13.2 %	2020	Increase the total number of international students choosing to study in the UK higher education system each year to 600 000	2030
UK – Wales <sup>(21)</sup>	Double the number of Welsh students who spend time abroad as part of their studies (currently 2 %) by the end of the current government term (May 2021)	2020/21		
Norway <sup>(22)</sup>	20 % of Norwegian graduates will have a study or training period abroad	2020	-	
Serbia <sup>(23)</sup>	At least 20 % of students should have spent a mobility a period abroad	2020	At least 10 % of students studying in Serbia should be foreign students	2020
Turkey <sup>(24)</sup>	Increase the number of outgoing students from 25 000 to 30 000 in the next four years	2021/22	30 000 international degree students	2021/22

<sup>(17)</sup> Hochschulmobilitätsstrategie des BMWFW zur Förderung transnationaler Mobilität an österreichischen Universitäten, Fachhochschulen und Privatuniversitäten, 2017.

[https://bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/wissenschaft/publikationen/HMS\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/wissenschaft/publikationen/HMS_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>(18)</sup> Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020 (Human Capital Development Strategy 2020.)

<https://www.gov.pl/attachment/e02ee6e4-5b46-42c0-ab64-766fd53beece>

<sup>(19)</sup> Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education 2016-2020 (<https://www.uni-lj.si/study/news/strategy/>) and Action plan strategy for the internationalisation of Slovenian higher education 2016-2018 ([https://eng.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Akcijski-nacrt-2016-2018\\_ANG-WEB.pdf](https://eng.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Akcijski-nacrt-2016-2018_ANG-WEB.pdf))

<sup>(20)</sup> UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-2020 <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/UK-Strategy-for-Outward-Student-Mobility-2017-2020.aspx>;

International Education Strategy: Global Potential, Global Growth

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth>

<sup>(21)</sup> Secretary for Education, Oral Statement: International Student Mobility, 28 November 2018

<https://gov.wales/oral-statement-international-student-mobility>

UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-2020 <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/UK-Strategy-for-Outward-Student-Mobility-2017-2020.aspx>;

International Education Strategy: Global Potential, Global Growth

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth>

<sup>(22)</sup> Meld. St. 16 (2016–2017). Kultur for kvalitet i høyere utdanning. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-16-20162017/id2536007/sec1>

<sup>(23)</sup> Strategy for Education Development 2020.

<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/STRATEGIJA-OBRAZOVANJA.pdf>

<sup>(24)</sup> Yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma strateji belgesi 2018-2022, 2017.

<https://www.yok.gov.tr/Documents/AnaSayfa/Yuksekogretimde-Uluslararasılaşma-Strateji-Belgesi-2018-2022.pdf>

The table under Figure I.2 presents an overview of the national outward and inward learning mobility targets of 21 higher education systems. The targets are expressed in the same terms as used in national documents and so are not directly comparable but some patterns can be identified.

Nineteen higher education systems set outward mobility targets. Of these, three countries (Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia) have defined specific credit mobility targets. Other countries' targets refer more generally to mobility periods spent abroad, not specifying whether they apply to credit and/or degree mobility. Therefore, these targets are assumed to cover both types of mobility.

Six systems (the Flemish Community of Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Austria and Norway) focus on graduates who should have participated in outward mobility during their studies. All of these, with the exception of France, phrase their target in relative terms – that is, the percentage of graduates who should have participated in learning mobility during their tertiary studies. However, these systems differ not only in the proportion of graduates that should have had a learning mobility experience but also in the length of the mobility period or the number of ECTS credits acquired. Germany sets the highest percentage target – half of its higher education graduates should have participated in learning mobility experiences by 2020. The Flemish Community of Belgium comes next with a target of 33 %. In terms of the mobility period, four education systems (the Flemish Community of Belgium, Czechia, Germany and France) set either a minimum length or number of ECTS credits ranging between 14 days to two months or 10 to 15 credits.

Eleven countries use the term 'students' to define national outward mobility targets rather than 'graduates'. They may refer to absolute numbers (Ireland, Latvia, Austria and Turkey) or percentages (Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovenia, the United Kingdom – Wales, and Serbia). Interestingly, almost none of these specify the length of the mobility period. The only exception is Hungary, which specifies that by 2023, 20 % of students should be studying or in work placement abroad for a minimum of three months or 15 ECTS credits.

Latvia and Austria set dual targets for outward mobility. They define targets both in terms of the percentage of graduates and the number of students that should be outwardly mobile. In addition, Lithuania is the only country that links its two (inward and outward) mobility targets, and even indicates the countries involved: the ratio of incoming and outgoing students for temporary studies in the Bologna Process countries should be 1:2.

For the countries with internationalisation strategies, the intention is usually to attract foreign students into their higher education institutions. As the table under Figure I.2 shows, 17 systems set inward mobility targets. Countries rarely define the type of mobility (credit or degree) they aim for. Only Estonia, Latvia and Turkey specify targets for inward degree mobility; and Czechia and Latvia have targets for inward credit mobility. Here it should also be noted that only two countries set any minimum study period for their inward target. By 2020, Poland aims to have 5 % of foreigners among its total student population, and they should stay in Poland for at least a year; while between 2016-2020, Czechia plans to have at least 10 000 foreign students per year for short term study periods of at least 14 days.

None of the national inward mobility targets refer specifically to graduates. Any inward degree mobile students would, of course, be expected to graduate in the host country, but these are not mentioned explicitly in the national targets. This may eventually have an impact on what and how targets are monitored.

Inward targets are always framed as the number or proportion of students participating in inward mobility. They are mostly defined in absolute terms, i.e. in terms of the number of incoming students

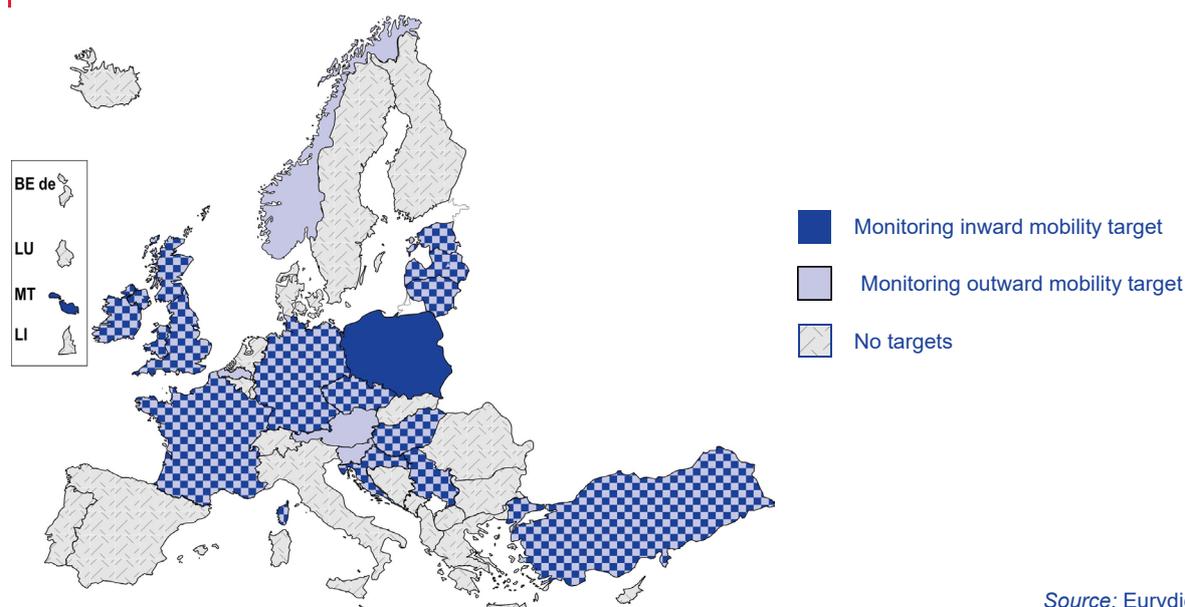
(Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Hungary, Malta, the United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Turkey). However, four countries (Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Serbia) link the national inward mobility target to the total number of students in their higher education system, and define the target as a percentage of the total student population. For example, by 2020, 10 % of all students in Estonia should be foreign degree students, or in Latvia and in Serbia, 10 % of the total number of students should be foreign mobility students.

### Monitoring top-level learning mobility targets

In order to gather information on the progress made in achieving national targets, top-level authorities may establish monitoring systems. As well as providing data on the current state of play, monitoring systems can provide information for further analysis so that the relevance and effectiveness of policies can be evaluated.

Figure I.3 shows which education systems monitor progress towards learning mobility targets. In all systems with national targets, authorities carry out monitoring.

**Figure I.3: Monitoring of quantitative learning mobility targets in higher education, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

Three ways of monitoring can be identified. First, in the Flemish Community of Belgium<sup>(25)</sup>, Czechia<sup>(26)</sup>, Poland<sup>(27)</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>(28)</sup>, a centralised higher education database is used to collect administrative data on mobility from higher education institutions. The database in the United Kingdom, for example, collects data on the duration, location, scheme and type of mobility (study or work placement) from the three higher education systems.

<sup>(25)</sup> <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/actieplan-studentenmobiliteit?>

<sup>(26)</sup> SIMS - Sdružené informace matrik studentů (Associated Students Matrix) <https://sims.msmt.cz/Default.aspx?pozadovanaStranka=Default.aspx>

In Czechia, in addition to the database, the ministry responsible for education also requires annual mobility data provision from higher education institutions.

<sup>(27)</sup> POLON database <https://polon.nauka.gov.pl/polon/>

<sup>(28)</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c18051/a/mobility>

Second, in France, mobility data is collected from higher education institutions as part of the performance agreements between higher education institutions and the responsible top-level bodies. Higher education institutions provide data annually to the top-level body based on specific pre-defined performance indicators for mobility.

Third, monitoring can be carried out in the context of the monitoring and evaluation related to the implementation of major strategies which address higher education student mobility. This is the main approach followed in Estonia, Latvia, Austria, Slovenia and Serbia. Switzerland reports that they monitor student mobility flows, but this is not related to a national target.

Data collection may be carried out at different intervals. In several systems, mobility data is collected annually, especially in systems that have a centralised database or performance agreements with higher education institutions. When the data collection is related to the implementation of a top-level strategy, monitoring reports may be produced less frequently. This is the case, for example, with the mid-term evaluation of the relevant strategy in Austria and Serbia.

## ANNEX II: LEARNING MOBILITY GRANTS

While it is important for learners that their domestic grants or loans are portable and can be used for outward learning mobility purposes (examined in Chapter 3), equally significant is the availability of dedicated financial support for learning mobility. This may be provided in addition to the portable domestic grants or loans, or instead of them, where unavailable <sup>(29)</sup>.

As with the support analysed in Chapter 3, dedicated learning mobility support can be offered as a grant or as a loan, or a combination of both. While each of these arrangements can influence a student's decision to study abroad, this annex concentrates on non-repayable financial aid (i.e. grant support), which arguably contributes more to the student's sense of financial security.

The annex examines mobility grants in three parts. The first provides a general overview of national mobility grants. The second and the third parts provide further details on each type of grant – for outward and inward mobility, respectively.

### Learning mobility grants: general overview

Learning mobility grants provided within Erasmus+ undoubtedly provide one of the main boosts to credit mobility for European students <sup>(30)</sup>. Other grant schemes are, however, also in place across Europe to support learning mobility. In particular, virtually all European countries have in place bilateral learning mobility arrangements with countries in or outside Europe. These often stipulate financial support for mobile students studying in the country covered by the arrangement. There are also a number of multilateral agreements either between European countries <sup>(31)</sup> or between European countries and countries outside Europe <sup>(32)</sup>. Alongside the learning mobility grants provided within the framework of bilateral and multilateral programmes, there are national mobility grants, which are defined, controlled and operated by national top-level authorities and funded or co-funded from national public sources. Figure II.1 focuses on these national grants, showing which European countries offer them and which type of mobility is covered – outward and/or inward.

As the figure shows, most European countries offer national mobility grants. Outward mobility grants, i.e. financial support for outgoing students, are in place in more than two-thirds of the higher education systems studied. Inward mobility grants, which are intended to attract foreign students into a country are less widespread, provided in around half of the systems.

Usually, outward and inward mobility are covered by separate grant schemes – one or several schemes for outward mobility, and one or several schemes for inward mobility. In some cases, however, a single scheme is used to subsidise both types of mobility. For example, the Holland Scholarship run by the Netherlands aims at supporting both outgoing and inward credit mobility

<sup>(29)</sup> For more details on portability of domestic support, see Chapter 3.

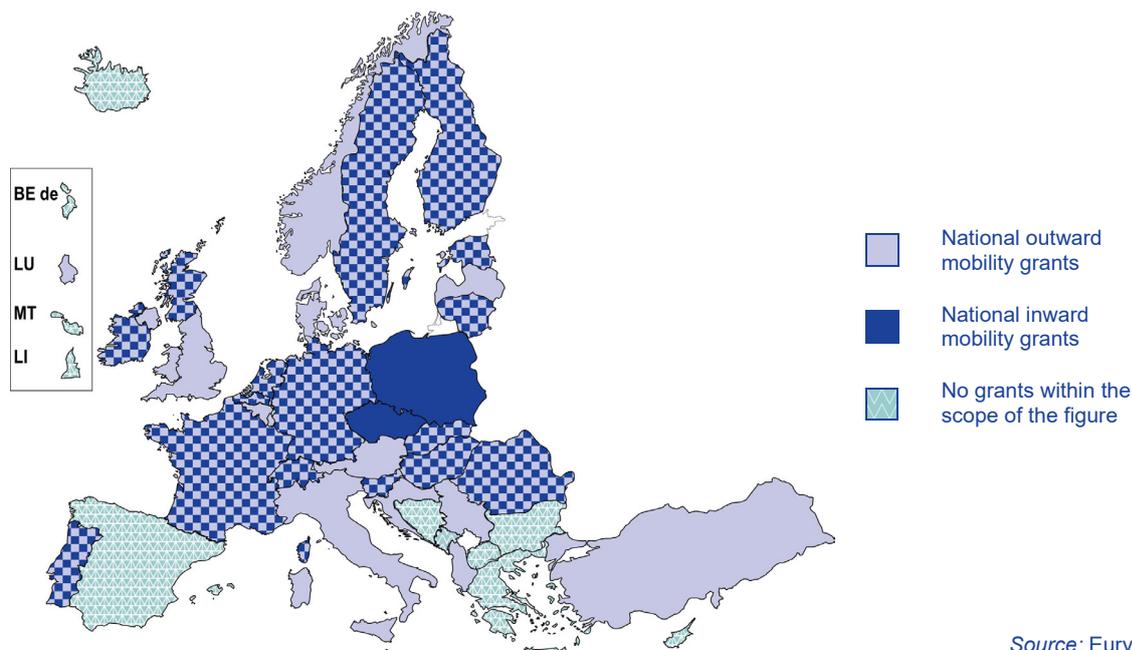
<sup>(30)</sup> See Figure III.2 in Annex III for country data on credit mobility by type of mobility scheme (EU programmes vs other programmes).

<sup>(31)</sup> Major European multilateral programmes include: the Nordplus Higher Education Programme (mobility programme for bachelor's and master's levels for the Nordic and Baltic countries), the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies – CEEPUS (scheme providing support for the participation in joint programmes in the central European region) and the Visegrad scholarships (supporting master's and post-master's level students in the Visegrad Group countries i.e. Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, as well as in the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries).

<sup>(32)</sup> One example of multilateral cooperation between European countries and countries outside Europe is the North2North programme, which provides study grants for student mobility within the University of the Arctic consortium (the latter includes more than 100 universities). The programme involves the Nordic countries, Russia, Canada and the United States.

outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Alongside this programme, the Netherlands provides further mobility grants for outward and inward mobility, including the grant *VSBfonds Beurs*, which targets outgoing (credit and degree) mobility for postgraduate students. Another example of a scheme targeting both outward and inward mobility is the Swiss-European Mobility Programme, funded by Switzerland, which seeks to compensate for its non-participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

**Figure II.1: Provision of national grants for outward and inward mobility, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory notes**

The figure indicates the presence of national mobility grants, i.e. grants defined, controlled and operated by national top-level authorities and funded or co-funded from national public sources. Only grant schemes that operate throughout the whole country or a significant geographical area are included. The support considered covers first- and/or second-cycle students, with or without students in other cycles (i.e. support targeting only short-cycle or PhD students is not considered).

The figure excludes: grants provided within the Erasmus+ programme (however, national Erasmus+ top-up grants are included); grants provided within bilateral intergovernmental agreements; multilateral grant programmes involving several European countries or European countries and countries outside Europe; grants covering only specific study fields (e.g. teacher training); grants that do not support participation in higher education degree studies (e.g. grants targeting the participation in higher education competitions abroad, summer courses, internships or work placements).

In countries with no national mobility grants for outward and/or inward mobility, students can still benefit from mobility support provided within other schemes. Indeed, as pointed out previously, students can participate in credit mobility within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme or they can take advantage of a great variety of bilateral and multilateral agreements providing openings for publicly sponsored learning mobility. Moreover, mobility grants can be offered by authorities below the national level. For example, in Spain, all powers regarding grants are devolved to the Autonomous Communities, which implies that no grant scheme operates throughout the whole country. Still, the education administrations of Autonomous Communities commonly provide grants to support learning mobility, especially outward mobility. Support can also be initiated and managed by higher education institutions themselves. In Czechia, for instance, higher education institutions receive top-level funding for international cooperation as part of their overall budget. While the institutions have the autonomy to use these resources as they see fit (i.e. not necessarily to subsidise mobility grants), most do use them to provide additional subsidies (top-up outward grants) for mobility within the Erasmus+ programme. The institutions can also receive further project-based funding – including funding to subsidise outward learning mobility – via development programmes run at ministerial level.

Building on the overview depicted on Figure II.1, the remainder of this chapter provides further details, on outward and inward national mobility grants.

### National outward mobility grants

National outward mobility grants vary greatly from one country to another. They cover different destination countries and target different types of mobility or categories of students. One observation is that only a limited number of outward mobility grants are relatively 'universal' in terms of their country coverage, the type of mobility (credit or degree) and/or profile of beneficiaries. For example:

**Norway** offers several types of mobility grant, including tuition fee grants, which are available for both credit and degree mobility. The tuition fee grant is not limited to specific countries (although it does not apply to Nordic countries). In 2017/18, about 15 500 students (credit and degree mobility combined) were given a tuition fee grant.

National outward mobility grants often specify some country limitations (e.g. only to countries outside the Erasmus+ programme, or, in contrast, only to countries within Europe), with or without further restrictions:

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, there are generic mobility grants for countries outside the Erasmus+ programme. These grants are available for students at levels 5, 6 or 7 of the Flemish Qualification Structure. The mobility period must last between one month (minimum 5 credits) and 12 months, and it has to include study, internship or research for the purpose of a bachelor's or master's thesis. Student selection takes place at the higher education institution.

In **Germany**, the DAAD programme offers one-year scholarships for study visits abroad. The aim of the programme is to provide students with the opportunity to gain international study experience abroad over a longer period of time. Applications are open to both first- and second-cycle students, in all disciplines. Excluded are stays abroad in Erasmus+ programme countries.

In the **Netherlands**, the Holland Scholarship programme supports student mobility for a part of a programme (credit mobility), internship or research outside the EEA.

In **Switzerland**, the Swiss-European Mobility Programme provides grants for students (first, second and third cycle) enrolled in a Swiss higher education institution to spend up to 12 months per cycle at a higher education institution abroad. All the 34 programme countries of Erasmus+ are covered by this programme. The grants (around EUR 300/month) can be used to cover the additional costs (travel and accommodation) of the study period abroad. The same programme also provides subsidies for inward student mobility.

As some of the above examples show, not all outward mobility grants cover both credit and degree mobility. More specifically, while virtually all the countries with national outward mobility grants support credit mobility<sup>(33)</sup>, only around half support degree mobility. In other words, top-level authorities typically focus on subsidising short-term study visits (credit mobility) abroad within the framework of a home study programme, rather than long-term studies leading to a full higher education degree. With respect to short study visits, the national support often includes schemes providing additional (top-up) subsidies for the mobility undertaken within the Erasmus+ programme.

Outward mobility grants may also have limitations related to the study cycle, meaning that the support does not cover both first- and second-cycle students. For example, in the United Kingdom, there are travel grants to subsidise credit mobility abroad, but these are only available for first-cycle students. In the Netherlands, alongside credit mobility grants (provided as part of the Holland Scholarship programme), which are available to both first- and second-cycle students, there are also grants financed within the *VSBfonds Beurs* scheme which target graduates, i.e. students who have already completed the first cycle, embarking on outward (credit and degree) mobility. Further examples include

<sup>(33)</sup> Albania and Serbia are the exceptions. In these two countries, national outward mobility grants target degree mobility for outstanding students (see country-specific information further in the text). No national outward grants for credit mobility are in place.

Estonia, where most degree mobility grants are only accessible to postgraduate students, whereas credit mobility can be subsidised in both the first and second cycles; and Serbia, where the only available national mobility grant scheme focuses on degree mobility for second- and third-cycle students.

An additional dimension that differentiates outward mobility grants is the type of student targeted. Indeed, all national mobility grants stipulate eligibility criteria, which vary in the level of restriction imposed. These criteria are often tied to the purpose of the grant scheme. For example, if a country provides supplementary (top-up) national grants for the Erasmus+ mobility, only students participating in the programme qualify. Also, as discussed in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.3), some mobility grants (or specific budget lines within mobility grants) are aimed specifically at disadvantaged students. For example:

In **France**, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds can benefit from learning mobility funding known as AMI (*aide à la mobilité internationale*). This is the main type of national outward student mobility support.

**Hungary** runs the scholarship project Campus Mundi, which is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and the Hungarian Government. Within the project, an additional lump-sum support (top-up) is offered based on students' social status, or on their disability or special needs.

In **Finland**, it is possible to receive a nationally funded special-needs learning mobility grant for study periods outside the Erasmus+ programme. Grants can be allocated if the student has a disability, illness or other condition that results in significant additional costs during a period spent abroad and if the additional costs cannot be recovered from any other source. Alongside this special-needs support, there are further outward (as well as inward) mobility grants.

In the **United Kingdom**, in addition to travel grants (see above), there are targeted learning mobility grants for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. These are aimed at students eligible for the various participation premiums attached to the widening of higher education, and they correspond to a monthly supplement of EUR 120. Moreover, students with a severe disability or exceptional special needs may be entitled to extra funding to cover associated costs while abroad.

In contrast to the support targeting students who are most in need of financial assistance, some grant schemes favour merit-based distribution, i.e. allocation based on academic performance and excellence:

In **Lithuania**, a new form of state support – Another One Hundred – introduced in 2018 targets Lithuanian students who study at the best universities in the world (according to acknowledged rankings). Selected candidates are offered funding to cover the cost of studies as well as living abroad. During the first year of its operation, the government allocated EUR 226 000 to this project (15 students received financial support). The budget for 2019 is EUR 400 000.

**Albania** runs the scheme Fund for Excellence, which supports high-performing Albanian students who study abroad. The scheme targets the best students enrolled in the 15 best-ranked universities in the world. During the academic year 2018/19, 38 students benefited from the scheme (of which 21 were new applicants).

In **Serbia**, the Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia includes a budget line to provide subsidies for up to 500 of the top performing students from Serbia during master's or doctoral studies at universities in the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), as well as at world leading universities.

Higher education institutions may have some degree of autonomy in defining (or fine-tuning) the eligibility criteria for mobility grants and the target student population. For example, in Italy, the principal grant scheme for outward mobility – *Fondo Giovani* – mainly focuses on students' socio-economic situation. Higher education institutions can, however, introduce additional selection criteria, including merit-based criteria, while keeping the primacy of the needs-based allocation approach. Similarly, the French Community of Belgium runs the Student Mobility Fund, which is largely intended to co-finance the Erasmus+ mobility of socio-economically disadvantaged students. In line with this general aim, each higher education institution defines its own selection criteria, which, however, must be transparent, documented and accessible to all stakeholders.

Finally, outward mobility grants can be differentiated according to the costs they cover. While most grants can be used to cover a range of expenses related to studying abroad, some are designed for specific costs. For example, Norway provides several types of outward mobility grant, each aimed at different types of expenses: tuition fees abroad, travel costs and costs related to language courses. The United Kingdom offers grants covering travel expenses related to credit mobility. National mobility support to cover travel costs is also in place in Croatia, where it is aimed at students participating in bilateral mobility programmes and in the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS).

### National inward mobility grants

As indicated previously (see Figure II.1), national inward mobility grants are less common than outward grants. Furthermore, the nature of inward support is often quite different. While outward mobility grants generally cover both first- and second-cycle students, especially where credit mobility is concerned <sup>(34)</sup>, inward schemes often focus on students at an advanced stage of higher education as their principal or only target population. This goes hand in hand with the fact that inward grants are often designed to attract elite students either from a selection of countries or from anywhere in the world. For example:

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the government awards Master Mind Scholarships, which target outstanding foreign second-cycle students. The programme aims to promote Flanders and Brussels as a top study destination.

The Government of **Ireland** awards the International Education Scholarships (GOI-IES) of EUR 10 000 to high calibre students from non-EU/EEA countries to study in Ireland for a period of one year. This scheme falls under the strategy 'Irish Educated, Globally Connected (2016-2020)' <sup>(35)</sup>. The scholarship may be used for the final year of an undergraduate programme, one year of a taught master's degree programme or one year of a PhD programme. Around 60 study places are offered annually.

**Poland** subsidises the programme 'Poland my First Choice', which aims to encourage young talented students from specific countries to pursue their second-cycle studies at the best Polish higher education institutions. Candidates can apply for a second-cycle cursus of their choice, and can study in Polish or another language. Decisions regarding admissions and financial conditions are made by higher education institutions.

In the **United Kingdom – Scotland**, the Government in collaboration with universities runs the Saltire Scholarships programme. The programme targets the areas of science, technology, creative industries, healthcare and medical sciences, and renewable and clean energy. The aim is to attract postgraduate students from defined countries – namely Canada, China, India, Japan, Pakistan and the United States – who aspire to become influential leaders in their future careers. The scheme offers up to 50 awards per academic year, each worth £ 8 000 (around EUR 9 000), towards tuition fees for any one year of full-time study on a second-cycle programme at any higher education institution in Scotland.

Some inward grant schemes while not explicitly focusing on 'excellence', still target postgraduate rather than undergraduate students:

In **Czechia**, the government offers scholarships for students from a selection of non-EU developing countries to follow master's and doctoral degree programmes. Students who opt for a programme in the Czech language are entitled to a one-year preparatory language training course.

**Estonia** runs the Dora Pluss programme, which includes scholarships for outward as well as inward mobility. The target population for inward mobility scholarships are master's degree and PhD students. The scheme aims at increasing the proportion of international postgraduate students in Estonian higher education and improving the capability of higher education institutions to involve international students. In 2018, 388 foreign students received a Dora Pluss grant.

<sup>(34)</sup> Exceptions to this pattern are outlined in the previous section.

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>

In **Slovakia**, outward and inward mobility are subsidised from the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic. The inward mobility scholarship of EUR 350/month focuses on international students following second-cycle studies. In 2018/19, 28 foreign students benefited from the programme.

It is interesting to note that inward grants do not usually target disadvantaged students. Indeed, none of the countries studied report national support for disadvantaged inward bound students, whereas such targeted support exists in a number of countries where outward bound mobility is concerned (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.3). For example, in France, the main national scheme to support outward mobility concentrates on students from low socio-economic backgrounds, whereas all the inward grant schemes favour the merit-based allocation approach.

Alongside attracting high calibre students, inward mobility grants also have other functions, including the promotion of the host country's language, culture and identity. Some grant schemes emphasise these aspects, in particular those targeting foreign students with origins in the grant-providing country. For example:

In **Lithuania**, the State Scholarships Programme is designed to support the inward mobility of foreign students, lecturers or researchers. Various types of programmes can be followed within the scheme, including Lithuanian language and culture courses, short-term studies as well as degree courses. The provision targets foreigners of Lithuanian origin and students from a selection of countries.

In **Poland**, the General Anders Programme Scholarships for the Polish Diaspora target foreigners with a documented Polish origin. Selected students can follow both first- and second-cycle studies and, prior to the studies, they may participate in a one-year preparatory programme. Candidates are selected on the basis of calls for proposals announced on a yearly basis.

**Romania** waives fees and offers scholarships for Romanians from abroad. The aim is to support the Romanian cultural identity. In 2018/19, 3 019 first-cycle and 1 556 second-cycle students benefited from the scheme.

**Slovenia** offers scholarships for young Slovenians living in neighbouring countries and around the world. In 2018/19, 135 undergraduate students benefited from the scholarship.

The cultural dimension is also central to schemes that target students studying the official language of the destination country in their home country. Here, students qualify for a grant based on their demonstrated interest in the host country culture. For example, the grant scheme 'Finnish in Finland' aims to provide Finnish language and culture students from outside Finland with the opportunity to study in Finland.

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This annex complements Chapter 3 on the portability of domestic financial support by providing information on national grants dedicated to learning mobility. They are provided by most European higher education systems and generally aim to help domestic students undertake short-term international study visits (outward credit mobility). In a number of European countries, students can also benefit from national outward mobility grants for degree mobility purposes, which means that they can achieve a whole degree abroad while being financially supported by their home country. Although outward national mobility grants are more widespread than inward grants, the latter type of support is still quite common, in place in around half of the higher education systems studied.

Overall, mobility support for higher education students appears as a mosaic of several distinct elements – the portability of domestic financial support, the presence of national support schemes dedicated to mobility and involvement in international mobility agreements. These can only be fully appreciated in a combined perspective.

## ANNEX III: LEARNING MOBILITY RATES

Learning mobility depends on many factors – cultural, economic and social. Therefore, while the policy environment as described by the scoreboard indicators can be supportive, helping to promote learning mobility and remove obstacles, its impact on mobility flows will always be to some extent limited. A comparison between countries' outward mobility rates well illustrates this point. In order to contextualise the indicators of the Mobility Scoreboard, therefore, Annex III presents a statistical overview of outward mobility in higher education based on currently available data.

Since 2016, both credit and degree mobility figures have been available from the UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) joint data collection. Outward degree mobility rates have been computed by the Joint Research Centre based on UOE data (Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo, 2018). However, as described under the figures below, outward mobility rates have only partial coverage in terms of countries of origin with respect to credit mobility, and destination countries with respect to degree mobility. Therefore, any comparison against the higher education learning mobility benchmark <sup>(36)</sup> has to be made with caution.

### Credit mobility

For data collection purposes, credit mobility is defined as a short period of tertiary education and/or study-related traineeship abroad, within the framework of a tertiary education programme at a 'home institution', usually for gaining academic credits (i.e. credits that will be recognised in the home institution).

In accordance with the learning mobility benchmark <sup>(37)</sup>, the credit mobility rates refer to graduates who have successfully completed a given tertiary ISCED level programme during which they had a short study period and/or work placement abroad (Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo 2018, p. 13). This mobility period is taken into account if it lasted a minimum of three months and represented a minimum of 15 ECTS credits. The rates do not include the figures for students who have spent a short period abroad but have not yet completed their studies.

Figure III.1 presents the outward credit mobility rates of graduates in 2017 for countries with available data. Figure III.1.A shows the aggregated data for ISCED 5-8, while Figure III.1.B depicts differences between ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8 (thus between the first, second and third cycles of higher education studies). Data on ISCED level 5 (short-cycle studies) have been excluded from the latter figure due to their marginal weight in absolute numbers and the relatively fewer countries reporting figures for this level <sup>(38)</sup>.

In the EU-28, the overall outward credit mobility rate stands at 8 %. However, the differences between countries are substantial: outward credit mobility rates range from virtually 0 % in Slovakia <sup>(39)</sup> to 22.6 % in the Netherlands. Besides Slovakia, the countries with the lowest credit mobility rates are Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus <sup>(40)</sup>, Romania and Serbia, all below 2 %. The Netherlands is alone with a

<sup>(36)</sup> The benchmark on learning mobility is phrased the following way: 'By 2020, an EU average of at least 20 % of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of 3 months' (Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility, OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 34).

<sup>(37)</sup> Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility, OJ C 372, 20.12.2011.

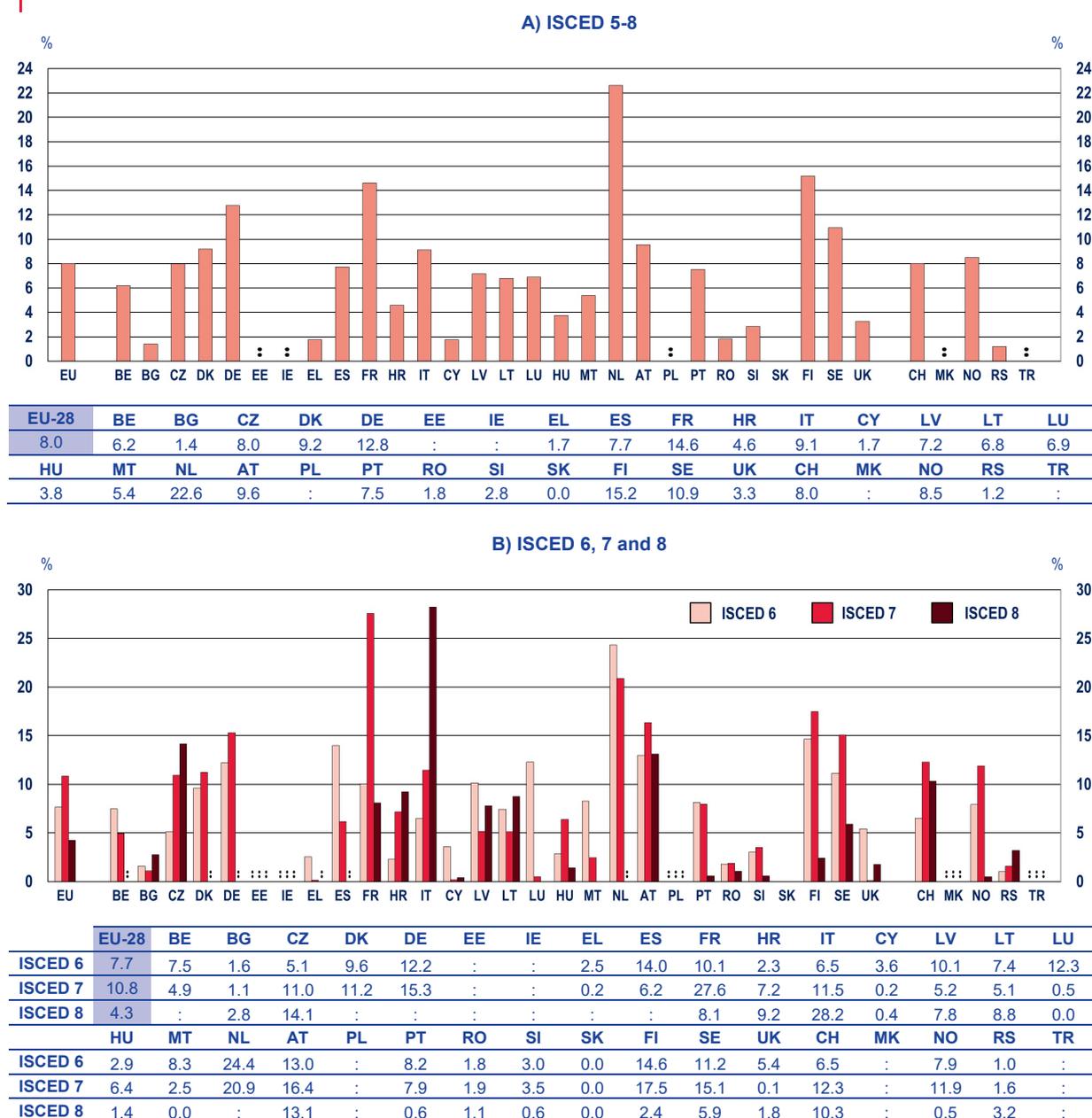
<sup>(38)</sup> For a list of countries where ISCED level 5 data is available, see Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo (2018).

<sup>(39)</sup> Please note that the figure presents credit mobile graduates who were not degree mobile. When not taking into account participation in degree mobility, the percentage of credit mobile graduates in Slovakia is higher than 0.

<sup>(40)</sup> Please note the high degree mobility rates in Cyprus, see Figure III.3.

credit mobility rate above 20 %; other countries with a rate above 10 % are Germany (12.7 %), France (14.6 %), Finland (15.2 %) and Sweden (10.9 %).

**Figure III.1: Outward credit mobility rates – mobile tertiary education graduates as a percentage of total graduates of the same country of origin, by country of origin, 2017**



Source: Calculations by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, based on Eurostat (UOE; 2017).

Online data codes: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_mobc01] for credit mobile graduates in EU, EFTA, EEA and candidate countries; Eurostat [educ\_uae\_grad01] for total graduates.

### Explanatory notes

Outward credit mobility rates for a given country are based on the number of outwardly credit mobile graduates (who were not degree mobile) *divided* by the graduates originating in the same country.

In order to avoid double counting, graduates who are both credit and degree mobile (dual mobility status) are only counted among degree mobile graduates. Figures on credit mobility hence exclude the number of credit mobile graduates who were also degree mobile.

Graduates originating in a given country are calculated on the basis of the total number of graduates in the given country *minus* the inwardly mobile graduates from other countries *plus* the outwardly mobile graduates from the given country to other countries.

Outward mobility rates for the EU are calculated according to similar formulas, with the sum of outward credit mobile graduates from EU Member States as the numerator, while the denominator is computed as the number of graduates in EU Member States *minus* inwardly mobile graduates from non-EU to EU Member States *plus* outwardly mobile graduates from EU to non-EU countries).

### **Country-specific notes**

**Estonia, Ireland and Poland:** No information on outward credit mobility available (derogation until end of 2018).

**Germany and Austria:** No well-developed credit transfer system is in place for vocational ISCED level 5 programmes.

**Czechia, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, and Slovenia:** Data on graduates with credit mobility who were not degree mobile is missing; total graduates with credit mobility is used instead.

When looking at patterns across the three main cycles of higher education (Figure III.1.B), there are significant differences between countries. In the EU-28, credit mobility is the highest, above 10 %, in the second cycle (ISCED 7), while it is lowest, below 5 %, in the third cycle (ISCED 8). Countries with similar patterns are France, Finland and Sweden at relatively high levels (credit mobility in the second cycle is especially high in France at 27.6 %), and Hungary, Romania and Slovenia at relatively low levels. Besides France, credit mobility in the second cycle exceeds 15 % in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland and Sweden.

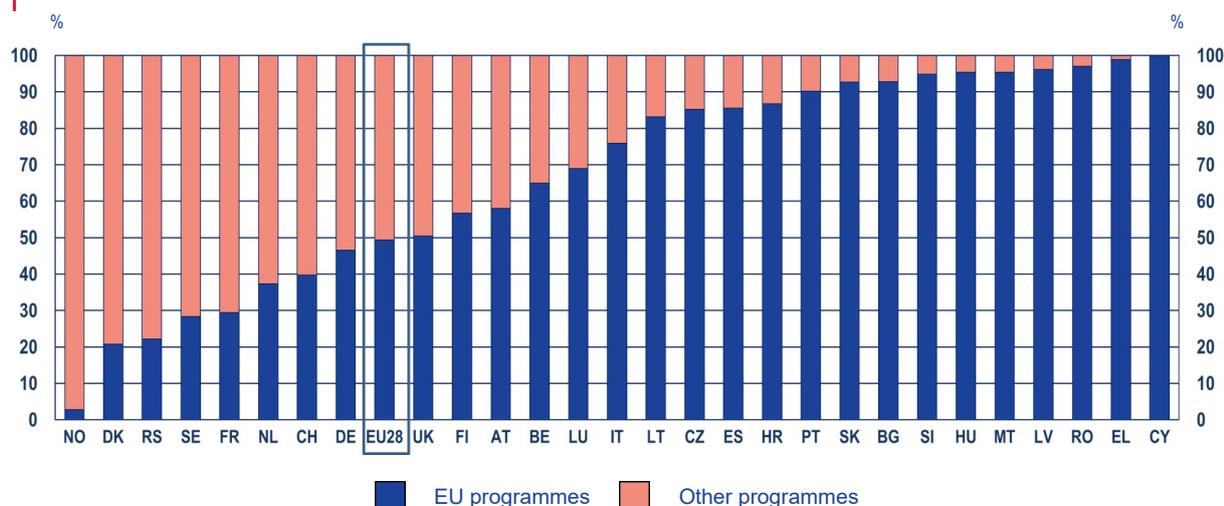
Credit mobility rates in the first cycle are the highest in the Netherlands (24.4 %), where they even exceed credit mobility rates in the second cycle. A similar relation between first-cycle and second-cycle mobility rates can be found in an additional 11 countries; however, outward credit mobility rates in the first cycle are below 15 % in all other countries. Credit mobility rates in the first cycle are above 10 % in Germany, Spain, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland and Sweden.

Credit mobility in the third cycle (thus during doctoral studies) is on average the lowest of the three across Europe. Nevertheless, in Italy, the outward credit mobility rate of third-cycle graduates is 28.2 %, and is also relatively high in Czechia (14.1 %), Austria (16.4 %) and Switzerland (10.3 %).

For credit mobility, it is also possible to distinguish between credit mobility in the framework of EU programmes (most notably Erasmus+) and credit mobility in other programmes (including national/international bilateral or multilateral programmes not financed by the EU, as well as 'free movers' <sup>(41)</sup>). This distinction, pictured on Figure III.2, makes it possible to evaluate the relative weight of EU credit mobility programmes in different European countries.

Figure III.2 depicts credit mobility by type of learning mobility scheme in countries in ascending order of prevalence of EU programmes. As the figure illustrates, Erasmus+ and other EU programmes have very different weights in terms of total credit mobility in the European countries with available data. The proportion of credit mobile graduates who spent time abroad in the framework of an EU programme ranges from 3 % in Norway to 100 % in Cyprus. As a general pattern, the prevalence of EU programmes tends to be higher in eastern and southern European countries, and lower in Northern and Western Europe (see also Annex II on national mobility support schemes).

<sup>(41)</sup> Free movers are students who organise their own recognised learning mobility experience, which is credited by the home higher education institution (Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo 2018, p. 19).

**Figure III.2: Credit mobility by type of mobility scheme, ISCED 5-8, 2017**


	NO	DK	RS	SE	FR	NL	CH	DE	EU-28	UK	FI	AT	BE	LU	IT
<b>EU programmes</b>	3	21	22	28	29	37	40	47	49	50	57	58	65	69	76
<b>Other programmes</b>	97	79	78	72	71	63	60	53	51	50	43	42	35	31	24
	LT	CZ	ES	HR	PT	SK	BG	SI	HU	MT	LV	RO	EL	CY	
<b>EU programmes</b>	83	85	86	87	90	93	93	95	95	95	96	97	99	100	
<b>Other programmes</b>	17	15	14	13	10	7	7	5	5	5	4	3	1	0	

Source: Calculations by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, based on Eurostat (UOE; 2017).  
Online data code: [educ\_uae\_mobc01].

### Explanatory notes

'Other programmes' include both 'International/national programmes' and 'Other programmes' as reported by Eurostat. Values are the sum of the ISCED levels available for each country. The EU-28 value is the sum of the available EU-28 countries.

Countries are in ascending order of prevalence of EU programmes. These data by type of mobility scheme refer to all credit mobile graduates including those who were also degree mobile. This differs from the formula used in the calculation of outward credit mobility rates.

### Country-specific note

**Estonia, Ireland and Poland:** No information on outward credit mobility available (derogation until end of 2018).

## Degree mobility

Degree mobility is defined as the physical crossing of a national border to enrol in a degree programme at tertiary level in the country of destination, where the degree programme requires the students' presence for the majority of modules (Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo 2018, p. 12). Again, degree mobility rates are calculated on the basis of tertiary graduates. For data collection purposes, degree mobile graduates are therefore defined as graduates whose country of origin<sup>(42)</sup> is different from the country in which they graduate at the given tertiary ISCED level (ibid.).

Outward degree mobility rates presented by country of origin are calculated on the basis of data collected by the countries of destination. Information on non-European destinations is provided by the

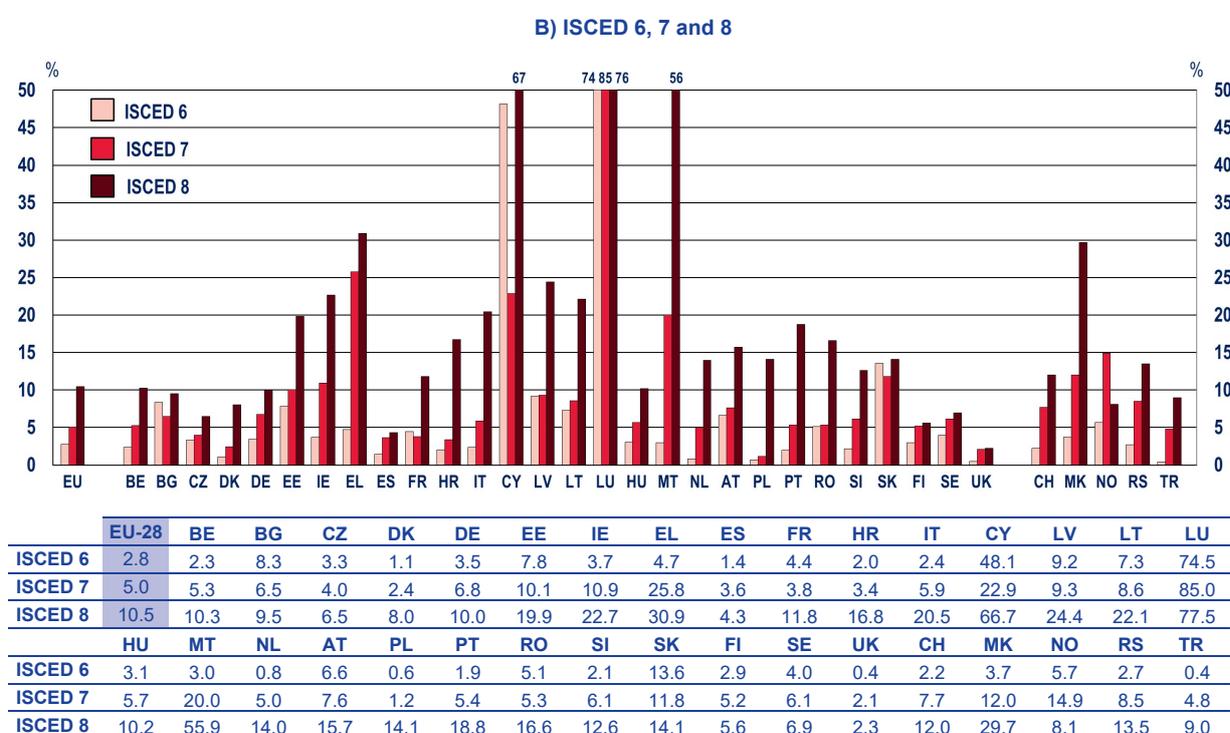
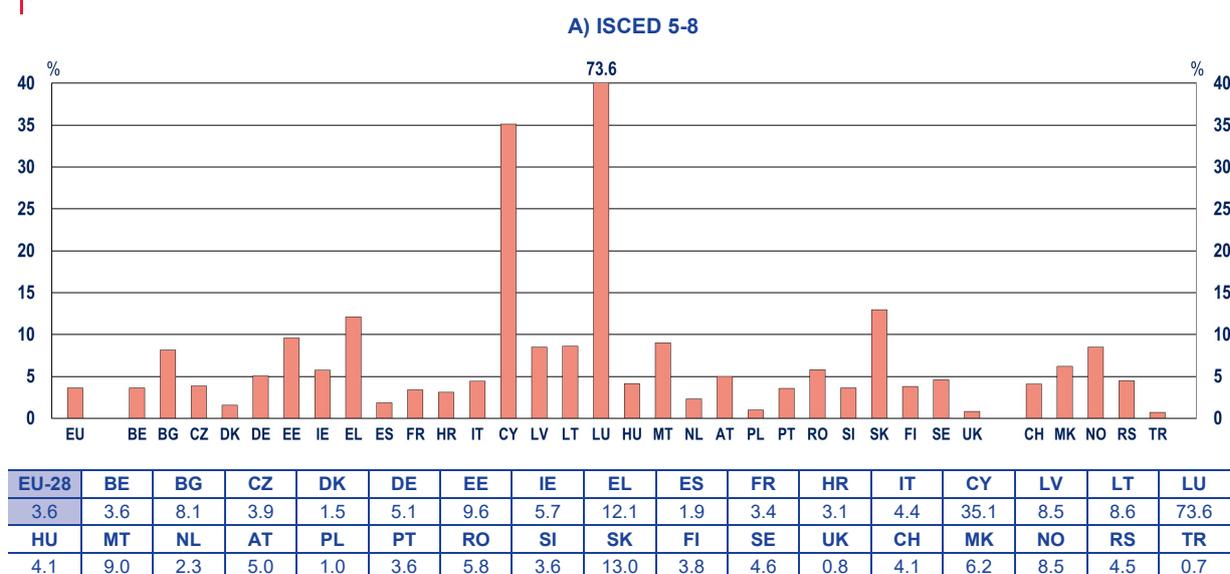
<sup>(42)</sup> According to Eurostat, the countries covered in the 2017 data collection adopted the following definitions of country of origin (see also Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo 2018, p. 14):

- country of prior education or upper secondary diploma: BE, DK, DE, EL, CY, LV, LT, LU, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, FI, CH and NO;
- country of usual residence defined as domicile, which refers to the student's home or permanent address prior to starting their course: EE, IE, ES, FR, HR, SI and UK;
- country of citizenship: CZ, IT, HU, MT and SK. For SE, international students are defined as students who have a student residence permit or are either non-residents or have moved to Sweden not more than six months before starting their studies (24 months for ISCED 8);
- estimations: BG.

OECD. However, no figures are available from the United States of America, which leads to an underestimation of degree mobility rates for at least some countries.

Figure III.3 presents the available outward degree mobility rates of European countries. Figure III.3.A depicts aggregated data for all tertiary ISCED levels (ISCED 5-8), while Figure III.3.B shows the proportion of degree mobile graduates in the first, second and third cycles of higher education separately (ISCED 6, 7 and 8).

**Figure III.3: Outward degree mobility rate – mobile tertiary education graduates as a percentage of graduates of the same country of origin, by country of origin, 2017**



Source: Calculations by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, based on Eurostat (UOE; 2017).

Online data codes: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_mobg02] for degree mobile graduates in EU, EFTA, EEA and candidate countries; OECD, International graduates, for degree mobile graduates who graduated in non-European countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Israel, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Russia); Eurostat [educ\_uae\_grad01] for total graduates.

### **Explanatory notes**

Outward degree mobility rates for a given country are based on the number of outwardly degree mobile graduates from the given country *divided* by the number of graduates originating in the country.

Graduates originating in a given country are based on the total number of graduates in the given country *minus* the inwardly mobile graduates from other countries *plus* the outwardly mobile graduates from the given country to other countries.

Outward mobility rates for the EU are calculated according to similar formulas, with the sum of outwardly degree mobile graduates from EU Member States as the numerator, while the denominator is computed as the number of graduates in EU Member States *minus* inwardly mobile graduates from non-EU to EU Member States *plus* outwardly mobile graduates from EU to non-EU countries).

No inward degree mobility data is available for Slovenia by country of origin; no inward degree mobility data available for ISCED 5 for Belgium, ISCED 8 for Spain, ISCED 5 and 8 for Poland; this implies a potential underestimation of outward degree mobility from other countries. No information on EU-origin degree mobile graduates who graduated in the United States, which implies potential underestimation for some EU Member States.

For the EU-28 on average, the outward degree mobility rates of graduates are lower than the outward credit mobility rates: 3.6 % of graduates from EU Member States obtained their degrees abroad in 2017. Nevertheless, degree mobility figures vary substantially between European countries, even more so than in the case of credit mobility. The outward degree mobility rate is the highest in Luxembourg at 73.6 %, while it is lowest in Turkey at 0.7 %. Besides Luxembourg, the outward degree mobility rate is also very high in Cyprus (35.1 %), and is above 10 % in Greece (12.1 %) and Slovakia (nearly 13 %). And besides Turkey, degree mobility rates are also below 2 % in Denmark (1.6 %), Spain (1.9 %), Poland (around 1 %) and the United Kingdom (0.8 %).

Looking at degree mobility rates by ISCED level reveals that in the EU-28 on average, and in most European countries, the higher the education level, the higher the outward degree mobility of graduates. In the EU-28, graduate degree mobility stands at 2.8 % in the first, 5 % in the second, and 10.5 % in the third cycle.

Degree mobility for doctoral studies is the most common form of degree mobility in all European countries except Luxembourg and Norway. Outward degree mobility in the third cycle is the highest in three small higher education systems (Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta), where it is nearly or above 50 %, but it is also above 20 % in Ireland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and North Macedonia. The proportion of graduates getting their doctoral degrees abroad is below 5 % in Spain and the United Kingdom.

After the third cycle, graduates are most likely to get their second-cycle degrees abroad. Degree mobility for a master's degree or equivalent is most common among graduates coming from Greece, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta, with mobility rates above 20 % (and above 80 % in Luxembourg). In Bulgaria, France, Cyprus and Slovakia, however, the degree mobility of first-cycle graduates is higher than the graduate mobility rate in the second cycle. Outward degree mobility rates in the second cycle are the lowest, below 3 % in Denmark, Poland and the United Kingdom.

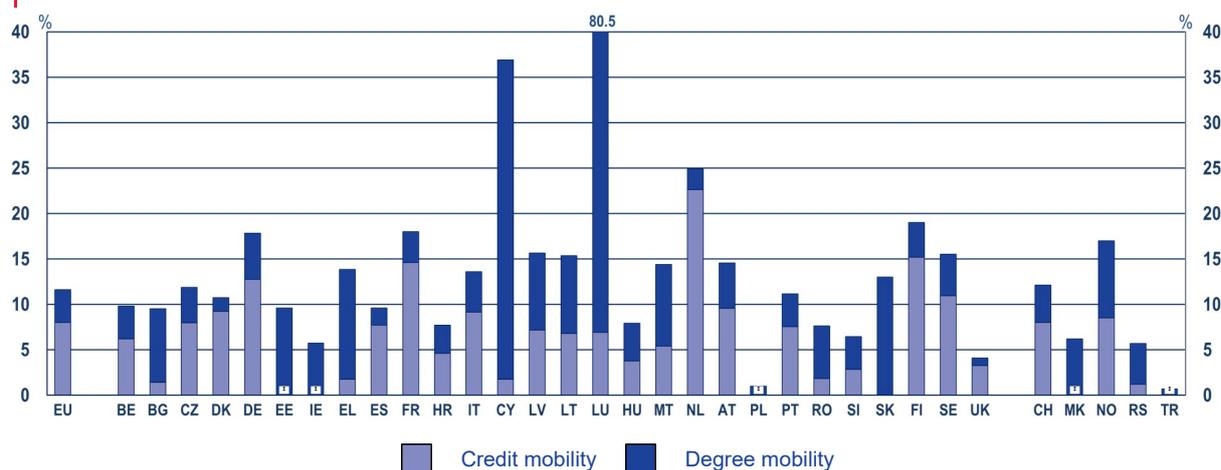
Degree mobility rates in the first cycle are usually below 15 %, with the exception of Cyprus and Luxembourg, with first-cycle mobility rates at 48 % and 74 % respectively. Besides these two countries, the proportion of degree mobile graduates in the first cycle only exceeds 10 % in Slovakia. Getting a bachelor's degree or equivalent abroad is the least common in the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and Turkey, with degree mobility rates below 1 %.

### **Learning mobility: total outward mobility rates**

After presenting outward mobility rates separately for credit and degree mobility, Figure III.4 merges this information to provide the total outward mobility figures for tertiary education. These proportions can then be compared to the EU benchmark on learning mobility, keeping the limitations of available data in mind (see above).

As Figure III.4 illustrates, in 2017, only three education systems reached the 20 % learning mobility rate specified by the benchmark, Cyprus (36.9 %), Luxembourg (80.5 %) and the Netherlands (24.9 %), with Finland being very close with 19 %. On average in the EU-28, the learning mobility of graduates is at 11.6 %. Overall learning mobility rates are the lowest in the United Kingdom, where they do not reach 5 %.

**Figure III.4: Total mobility: credit and degree outward mobility of graduates, ISCED 5-8, by country of origin, 2017**



	EU-28	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
<b>Total</b>	11.6	9.8	9.5	11.9	10.8	17.8	:	:	13.9	9.6	18.0	7.7	13.6	36.9	15.7	15.4	80.5
	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	CH	MK	NO	RS	TR
<b>Total</b>	7.9	14.4	24.9	14.5	:	11.1	7.6	6.5	13.0	19.0	15.5	4.1	12.1	:	17.0	5.7	:

Source: Calculations by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, based on Eurostat (UOE; 2017).

Online data codes: Eurostat [educ\_uoe\_mobc01] for credit mobile graduates and [educ\_uoe\_mobg02] for degree mobile graduates in EU, EFTA, EEA and candidate countries; OECD, International graduates, for degree mobile graduates who graduated in non-European countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Israel, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Russia); Eurostat [educ\_uoe\_grad01] for total graduates.

### Explanatory notes

Total outward mobility rates for a given country are calculated on the basis of the number of outwardly degree mobile graduates from the given country *plus* the outwardly credit mobile graduates (who were not degree mobile) from the given country *divided* by the graduates originating in the given country.

Graduates originating in a given country are calculated on the basis of the total number of graduates in the given country *minus* the inwardly mobile graduates from other countries to the given country *plus* the outwardly mobile graduates from the given country to other countries.

Outward mobility rates for the EU are calculated according to similar formulas, with the sum of outwardly degree and/or credit mobile graduates from EU Member States as the numerator, while the denominator is computed as (the number of graduates in EU Member States *minus* inwardly mobile graduates from non-EU to EU Member States *plus* outwardly mobile graduates from EU to non-EU countries).

No inward degree mobility data available for Slovenia by country of origin; no inward degree mobility data available for ISCED 5 for Belgium, ISCED 8 for Spain, ISCED 5 and 8 for Poland; this implies a potential underestimation of outward degree mobility from other countries. No information on EU-origin degree mobile graduates who graduated in the United States, which implies potential underestimation for some EU Member States.

### Country-specific notes

**Estonia, Ireland and Poland:** No information on outward credit mobility available (derogation until end of 2018). Therefore, total outward learning mobility rates cannot be calculated.

**Czechia, Croatia, Italy, Hungary and Slovenia:** Data on credit mobile graduates who were not degree mobile is missing; the total number of credit mobile graduates is used instead.

**Germany and Austria:** No well-developed credit transfer system is in place for vocational ISCED level 5 programmes.

Figure III.4 also allows for a comparison on the relative weight of credit and degree mobility within total learning mobility in the European countries with available data. In the EU-28, credit mobility is on average much more common than degree mobility, especially keeping in mind that the figure does not include credit mobile graduates who were also degree mobile at a given ISCED level <sup>(43)</sup>. This pattern is true for the majority of countries with available data. The relative weight of credit mobility is especially substantial in Denmark, France and the Netherlands.

On the other hand, the proportion of degree mobile graduates is higher than that of credit mobile graduates in 12 countries. Degree mobility is the predominant form of learning mobility in Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia, with more than three quarters of mobile graduates leaving their country of origin to get a whole degree abroad.

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<sup>(43)</sup> In order to avoid double counting, graduates who are both credit and degree mobile (dual mobility status) are only counted among degree mobile graduates. Figures on credit mobility hence exclude the number of credit mobile graduates who were also degree mobile (Flisi and Sánchez-Barrioluengo 2018, p. 15).

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## Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report – 2018/19

This report has been produced in support of the European Commission's Mobility Scoreboard, developed to follow up on the 2011 'Youth on the Move' Recommendation of the Council of the European Union promoting the learning mobility of young people. The purpose of the Mobility Scoreboard is to provide a framework for monitoring progress made by European countries in promoting, and removing obstacles to, learning mobility.

The Higher Education Mobility Scoreboard was first published in 2016 and includes six indicators on information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, participation of disadvantaged learners, recognition of learning outcomes and the automatic recognition of qualifications. This second edition provides updated background information for the six featured indicators, mapping changes in the policy environment for international mobility of higher education students.

Information was provided by Eurydice National Units and covers the 28 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

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The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

