

Eurochambres position on Learning Mobility



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Eurochambres welcomes the current revision of the European mobility framework and the objective of identifying and tackling existing obstacles to learning mobility. The emphasis placed on the mobility of apprentices and on the recognition of mobility periods, are also positive signs. In a context of skills shortages, Eurochambres underlines the need to support the mobility of adult learners, as part of a comprehensive vocational education and training (VET) development policy. Strengthening the use of a work-based approach to education and training can also be a powerful tool, in view to upskilling and reskilling the European workforce and establishing a lifelong learning culture.

1. Executive summary

Fostering learning mobility has been a priority for Eurochambres and the chamber network, as recently underlined in the Eurochambres' [position](#) on the European Year of Skills.

Given their role of **providing a wide range of services in the field of education and training, chambers** of commerce and industry have a particular interest in supporting the development of VET, including vocational education and training (C-VET) especially in its work-based and lifelong learning dimensions.

The current social and economic situation in the European Union is characterized by multiple and rapid changes, from the **twin transition** to major **demographic** evolutions. As a result, we have witnessed growing **skills mismatches and shortages**, that are becoming endemic, and threaten the functioning and future of the European economies and competitiveness.

Those shortcomings have made the importance of education, training and skills development even more central in the policy debate. In order to fully take advantage of the opportunities offered by

the single market, **increasing the mobility of learners**, should therefore remain a priority.

Learning mobility plays a pivotal role in facilitating the exchange of best practices, in allowing students, learners, apprentices and workers (as well as companies and institutions that would profit from the learner's experience) to benefit from an experience abroad. It is also an **opportunity to acquire and develop new skills**, including soft skills, and to improve adaptability to changes and new environments.

Finally, learning mobility also fosters **active citizenship, greater diversity** and increases intercultural exchanges.

Beside intra-EU mobility, cross-border mobility also has the potential to **further unlock synergies and partnerships across bordering regions**, which is especially valuable for SME's.

The necessary **upskilling and reskilling efforts**, and the necessity to improve and support the development of **lifelong and adult learning**, can only benefit from an increased mobility of learners, and also

teachers and trainers.

However, despite progress, learning mobility, especially for adults and in a work-based context, remains hampered by **significant obstacles**. Removing those barriers is essential if we want to

fully take advantage of mobility at European level, achieve the European Education Area (EEA) and support the development of VET as a way to address shortages and harness talent to drive the twin transition.

2. Why chamber network considers learning mobility relevant

Chambers of Commerce and Industry play an important role in addressing the skills mismatch, in facilitating the transition from school to work and in helping companies to play their part. They do so by developing, managing, implementing or being in any other way involved in a **wide range of activities in the fields of education and training, entrepreneurship**, and related areas.

In view of the **growing internationalisation** of companies, the acquisition of foreign language skills and multicultural competences through practical **learning and working experience abroad**, including for VET learners and apprentices, is increasingly important. Such experience can help better prepare future professionals for the labour market in the context of the European single market and globalisation.

Chambers are in particular active in the **development and delivery of education and training policies**. Around 80% of the chamber network is involved in education and training and 48% deliver initial or continuous VET. Every year, 1.8 million people receive **training qualifications** via the chamber network, which also delivers management and governance of **apprenticeship** schemes in many EU and candidate countries.

Furthermore, [Eurochambres Economic Survey](#) 2023 showed that **skills and labour shortages** to be consistently ranked among the main concerns of companies and businesses.

The case of **apprenticeships (or dual learning)** is also particularly relevant, as it remains a **powerful tool** to support the transition from school and/or training to work, and to improve workers' qualification and skills levels.

An internal "Stakeholders apprenticeships' mobility" survey among Eurochambres' has revealed the many **obstacles that restricts apprenticeships' mobility**. Among them lack of administrative capacity and know-how of companies, lack of information about opportunities, the difficulties of finding candidates, the lack of language skills of candidates and the disparity in apprenticeship schemes from one Member State to another were mentioned.

Half of the national, local and regional chambers of commerce and industry consider apprenticeship as an extremely important scheme as a tool to foster the upskilling and reskilling effort. The other half considers apprenticeships as "somewhat important". Part of the chamber network answered that apprenticeships are used on a regular basis by businesses they work with. This proportion significantly drops when talking about cross-borders or intra-EU apprenticeships.

3. Summary of Eurochambres' main messages/recommendations

Importance of VET and mobility

- Underlines that **accessing and benefitting from quality and inclusive VET** should be a right for all learners. In a context of high uncertainty and rapid transformations, investing in people's skills and competences is the best option to increase the confidence of European citizens, that this confidence is crucial to **foster a lifelong learning and reskilling/upskilling culture**.
- Points out that new technologies, digitalisation, demographic change, climate change and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine are **durably transforming European economies** and labour markets. In order to adapt to those transitions, flexible responses from VET systems are needed.
- Insists that a **new lifelong learning culture** also implies that work-based learning and on-the-job learning stand out in VET and C-VET strategies.
- Allowing learners to move within the EU, regardless of their age or the level of their education/skills/qualifications, remains a priority in terms of education and training.
- Fostering learning mobility is crucial, in order to facilitate the exchange of best practices, to allow students, learners, apprentices and workers (as well as companies and institutions) to benefit from an **experience abroad, to develop new skills**, including soft skills, and to benefit from a diverse working environment.
- Considers the **mobility of teachers and trainers** as equally important.

Copenhagen & Osnabrück declaration, and achieving the EEA

- Underlines that, in 2002 already, the **Copenhagen Declaration** (on "Enhanced cooperation in VET, 2002) underlined the importance of: "*Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving closer cooperation in order to **facilitate and promote mobility** and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other transnational initiatives, all in order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners*".
- Reiterates the objectives of the **Osnabrück declaration**. Underlines in particular the objective number 4 of the Declaration, for a European Education and Training Area and international dimension of VET.
- Underlines the need for sufficient **investment** and the involvement of all stakeholders as key to achieving the Osnabrück Declaration's objectives.
- Underlines the necessity to fully take advantage of the single market and of mobility at European level, including the objective to achieve the **European Education Area** and to support the development of VET as a way to address shortages and harness talent to drive the twin transition.

Learning mobility in VET and adult learning

Position on learning mobility

- Acknowledges that **mobility in VET has increased over** the past twenty years, with over 1,5 million learners and trainers having benefited from programmes such as Erasmus + mobility. Every year, more than 130,000 VET learners and apprentices, as well as 20,000 VET staff benefit from Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, on the way to achieve the 8% target of all VET learners benefiting from a mobility abroad by 2025.
- However, points out that those objectives for VET and adult learners could be more ambitious, and that it remains crucial to continue strengthening the promotion and funding of VET provision, at local, national and EU level, as a common European training and education area.
- Reiterates the importance of **facilitating mobility for learning** (including work-based learning) in Europe, providing **easy access** to transparent and reliable information on skills, learning opportunities and labour market trends, facilitating the **Europe-wide interconnection of digital platforms for learning** and career management and enable education and training institutions to issue digital diplomas and certificates (Europass Digital Credentials), thus facilitating transparency and recognition of qualifications across Europe, through the new Europass platform.
- The cross-border **mobility funding from ERASMUS+** should include both short-term stays of a few weeks and longer stays (over three months) abroad to allow as many people as possible to benefit from a learning mobility experience as part of their education, including apprentices and VET learners. The procedures and administrative burden to apply for funding under ERASMUS+ should be further reduced so that in particular SMEs can use ERASMUS+ more flexibly.
- The use of digital opportunities as a supplement to physical stays abroad should be further expanded. Virtual mobility, which is currently being tested by some European universities, can serve as a model for vocational training.

Apprenticeships' mobility and the importance of work-based learning

- Underlines that **companies play a key role as learning venues** and are key in terms of providing on-the-job experience and contribute to quality VET and responsive to the labour market needs.
- Highlights the necessity **to maintain high-quality apprenticeships** and work-based learning, as well as the need for the better integration of initial and continuous VET to ensure reskilling and upskilling, including pathways from IVET to C-VET. Underlines that apprenticeship systems are important and crucial learning and career pathways.
- Points out that, while SMEs represent two-third of private sector employment in Europe, their involvement in apprenticeships is hampered by a lack of human resources, time and knowledge of the relevant legislation and administrative requirements. **Support** could be offered **to SME's** by regionally anchored and company-related contact points for advice, placement service and information in the member states. Such **contact points** are essential for small and medium-sized companies in particular when planning and implementing learning stays abroad. Moreover, SMEs are often unaware of the **benefits** of hosting apprenticeships.

- Underlines that **learning mobility of two to eight weeks** has proven to have enormous added value for apprentices (in dual training) and should not be disadvantaged compared to long-term mobility.
- Call for renewed commitments, increased partnerships **for quality and effective apprenticeships** linked to **green and digital** technologies and jobs, under the renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships, focusing particularly on the economic sectors key for the twin transition. Underlines the importance of raising awareness about apprentices' schemes and opportunities, as well as increased support to SME's, including financial support.

Cross-border dimension of learning mobility

- Underlines the need to fostering **cross-border mobility** of learners in order to take advantage of regional synergies and improve the skills matching on the labour market. Insists on the necessity to engage and enable VET providers and intermediary organisations and encourage exchange and **creation of cross-border networks**.

Lifelong learning and recognition and portability of qualifications

- Points out the importance of **establishing a lifelong learning culture** so that individuals can benefit from adequate career guidance throughout their life, can enrol in quality and inclusive VET programmes and acquire the skills and competences needed to manage their education, training and employment phases with the proper support.
- Underlines the role the EQF and Europass have been playing in terms of **recognition of qualification**. Their ongoing development must be supported, with a sustained effort in making these tools more user-friendly and more widely-known, for all stakeholders.
- Supports the continuous **development of tools such as the individual learning accounts (ILA) and micro-credentials**, in order to facilitate the development, recognition, transparency and portability of skills and competences, in a lifelong learning perspective. While remaining voluntary to use for companies these tools should be open to all types of education and training, including VET, in line with the national frameworks in place in different Member States.
- Calls in this context for a broader skills-based approach and the development of a more efficient skills-driven lifelong learning framework instead of an automatic "right to training".

Eurochambres, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 20 million businesses in Europe through 45 members (43 national associations of chambers of commerce and industry and two transnational chamber organisations) and a European network of 1700 regional and local chambers. More than 93% of these businesses are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

More info and previous positions on: <https://bit.ly/ECHPositions>

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The logo for Eurochambres features the word 'EUROCHAMBRES' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'O' is replaced by a stylized graphic consisting of a yellow circle with a blue outline, and a yellow arc above it, resembling a stylized sun or a globe. Above the 'EURO' part of the logo, there is a semi-circle of twelve yellow stars, similar to the European Union flag.

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