

## The EU Pact for Skills – Regional Skills Partnerships for *Lifelong Learning Mobility*

### The challenge

1. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have deeply impacted our regional education and training systems as never before and have also accentuated the strategic dependencies and labour mismatches that we recognise in Europe. The governance of education is drastically changing in European regions and cities and regional skills ecosystems are being set up to forge partnerships with new stakeholders. Exchanging our experiences, sharing our concerns to try to find the most appropriate responses to the demands of Europe's territories are crucial to reinforce our capacity to drive the recovery through appropriate pro-active, just and inclusive measures that don't leave anyone behind.
2. A considerable proportion of businesses in the EU report difficulties finding staff with adequate skills and consider the lack of skilled workers as one of their biggest challenges. At the same time, many young workers in the EU are classified as being overqualified and face a horizontal skills mismatch (i.e. they do not work in an occupation that corresponds to their field of study). In cases where such gaps and mismatches are not a result of individual choice, but rather the consequence of a lack of professional opportunities, of information or coordination, they may hinder the diffusion and adoption of innovation as well as reduce inclusive economic growth and individual wellbeing.
3. **Acute demographic transformations are taking place in our societies and our economies.** Overall, the population in the EU is ageing and birth rates have been steadily declining since the 1960s. Several regions in the EU face the problem of intense departure of their young and skilled workforce. The combination of these demographic trends has led to a shrinking working age population. To include a description of the specific challenges for the region. **If left unaddressed, this process will trigger new and growing territorial disparities as regions age and fall behind in terms of size and skills of their workforces.** The change in Europe's demographic landscape will hamper the resilience and competitiveness of the EU as a whole and compromise Cohesion. This is taking place in the context of a fierce global race for talent and against the backdrop of other structural transformations, such as the transition to a climate neutral and resilient economy and technological change, that may also exacerbate disparities between regions.

4. The mobility of learners can significantly enhance regional cohesion, foster growth, and facilitate the transition from education to work. By enabling students to study in different regions or countries, educational mobility promotes cultural understanding, tolerance, and collaboration across diverse communities. This exposure to different environments and perspectives cultivates a broader skill set and global mindset among learners, which is valuable for regional development. Furthermore, educational mobility often leads to networking opportunities and exposure to varied job markets, which can enhance career prospects and the ability to transition smoothly from education to the workforce. In essence, learner mobility acts as a catalyst for regional integration and economic development by nurturing a more adaptable and interconnected workforce.
5. In this context, on 15 November 2023, the European Commission adopted the proposal for Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' – Learning Mobility for everyone. The proposal is part of the Skills and Talent Mobility Package. The Proposal aims to make learning mobility a standard and integral part of all education and training pathways, with a special focus in two annexes on Teacher and Apprenticeship mobility.
6. EARLALL recognises the importance of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the proposal and the **wider importance of providing cooperation between regional and local authorities** for mobility across all sectors. With the targets of at least 15% of vocational learners in vocational education and training (VET) benefitting from mobility, and 20% of all learners who should be from disadvantaged backgrounds, a lifelong learning perspective to mobility is needed.

### **The ambition**

Regional authorities play a crucial role as drivers of learner mobility by implementing policies and initiatives that support and facilitate educational exchanges within and beyond their regions. These authorities can establish partnerships with educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders to promote opportunities for learners to study or gain practical experience in different locations. By providing funding, scholarships, and logistical support, regional authorities can lower barriers to mobility and encourage more learners to participate in exchange programs. They can also promote the recognition of qualifications and experiences obtained abroad, ensuring that students' experiences contribute meaningfully to their educational and professional development. Ultimately, regional authorities act as catalysts for learner mobility by creating an enabling environment that fosters collaboration, diversity, and the acquisition of valuable skills for the benefit of regional development.

Acknowledging the ambitious targets set in the proposal Europe on the Move, the Regional Pact for Skills for Lifelong Learning Mobility seeks to increase the number of mobilities of Vocational and

Educational Training (VET), Apprenticeship, Adult Education, informal education students, in addition to increasing mobilities for those with fewer opportunities. The Partnership will focus on promoting a culture of lifelong learning and providing opportunities for those with fewer opportunities, by creating solid links between regions in these fields of exchange and by committing to monitoring and evaluating exchanges in these fields.

Higher mobility rate in VET, Adult Education, Apprenticeships and those from disadvantaged backgrounds is important because it can meet regional skills demands by providing access to diverse skills and knowledge across borders. It can also address social and economic inequalities as mobility allows exposure to different environments and skills. Nevertheless, in a 2022 Eurobarometer survey of Europeans aged 15-30, only 15% of respondents had participated in studying, training or apprenticeships in another EU country.

Particularly important for this Lifelong Learning Mobility Regional Skills Partnerships is to support and increase **international job shadowing experiences** and exchange on best practices for people working for regional and local administrations. Participating in a mobility experience for job shadowing can significantly enhance the capacity and peer learning of individuals working for local and regional authorities. By immersing themselves in different settings, professionals gain exposure to diverse operational methods, policies, and challenges. This first-hand experience allows them to broaden their perspectives, develop new skills, and acquire innovative strategies. Additionally, job shadowing and best practice exchange promotes peer learning by facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration between participants from different regions. Through this interaction, individuals can share best practices, address common issues, and build a supportive network. Ultimately, mobility experiences for job shadowing contribute to professional growth, fostering a more informed and effective workforce within local and regional authorities. In addition, to enhance the effectiveness of EU mobility programs like Erasmus+ and meet the established EU targets, it's crucial **to provide comprehensive training and support to experts** within regional and local authorities. By empowering these professionals with specialized knowledge about Erasmus+ and other mobility initiatives, they can effectively engage and educate local stakeholders. This approach not only strengthens community awareness but also contributes to achieving EU objectives by fostering greater participation and uptake of these programs at the grassroots level.

## **The proposal**

The Regional Skills Partnership for Lifelong Mobility commits to help to reach the goals of Europe on the Move, with 20% of VET learners by 2030 on mobilities and 20% of all mobilities for those with fewer opportunities.

The Partnership commits to networking with regional and local authorities to implement solid cooperation links in the field of VET mobility, with a focus on providing opportunities for apprenticeship mobility and on attracting new members to the Partnership.

The Partnership commits to contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of mobilities in lifelong learning for the local skill needs.

The Partnership commits to cooperate with other networks and organisations, including, for example Euroguidance, with the aim to gather training courses and material on internationalisation and mobility.

The Partnership commits to increasing capacity-building and awareness on organising mobilities and strengthening the image of mobility, through online activities.

## Activities

The Regional Skills Partnership for Lifelong Learning Mobility will design and implement, among others, the following activities:

1. Sharing inspiration and good practices of mobility, particularly for those with “fewer opportunities”. This will be achieved through bi-yearly webinars and communication activities by all members to showcase best practices.
2. Defining the meaning of “fewer opportunities” and how to best involve these people. The result will be a short 1-2 page note from the partnership, that will be shared with, for feedback, from partners outside the network.
3. Monitoring and tracking mobility opportunities and mobility in implementation across partners of this Pact,. This will include tracking apprenticeship systems across the partnership, with the aim of facilitating mobilities.
4. Developing the concept of **lifelong learning mobility promoters**, working to expand a network of individuals and institutions committed to educational mobility. The concept of a **Mobility Promoter** refers to an **individual or an entity** that takes the **leadership role in promoting and supporting learning mobility initiatives**. This is included, but not limited to: Vocational and Educational Training (VET) institutions, directors, teachers or students; teachers across all levels of learning; technical and administrative staff working to organising mobilities; staff in regional and local authorities; academic staff or NGOs or youth

organisations. The Mobility Promotor will benefit from **visibility on social media** and networking opportunities. We will call for volunteers from the Pact for Skills community to become Mobility Promoters. Each **June** we will launch a call for expression of interest through an email to all PfS members and will require the filling in of an application form/ initial interview, which will include questions on: name, institutions, reason for nomination, priorities in lifelong learning, key messages on learning mobility, key interests in learning possibilities. The further concept of the mobility promoters will be defined following the launch of the PfS regional partnership.

5. Expanding the scope of a **mobility matchmaking tool** to new stakeholders, matching high-quality exchanges and, student mobility and also regional and local staff job shadowing. The mobility matchmaking tool was originally developed by EARLALL in April 2024 and is an online tool that puts hosting and sending organisations in touch with one another, matching mobility topic and format interests. It is an unfunded scheme, and the matchmaking is facilitated currently by the EARLALL secretariat. Within the scope of the PfS, this tool will be expanded to more partners and guidelines of pre-and post mobility reporting could be developed.
6. Organising one-off or regular project matchmaking events to prepare for joint mobility projects.

### Tracking your impact

<i>KPI</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Timeframe for achievement</i>	<i>Key Milestones</i>
<b><i>Number of good practices of mobilities with lifelong learning approach shared in online training webinars</i></b>	10 <i>Of which 2-3 on VET and 2 on fewer opportunity learners</i>	<i>By Year 1 - 2025</i>	- 4 by end of 2024 - 10 by end of 2025
<b><i>Number of stakeholder consulted to define fewer opportunities and how to best monitor this in mobilities</i></b>	20	<i>By Year 2</i>	10 stakeholders within the partnership by Year 1  10 stakeholders outside the partnership by Year 2

<b>Number of regions responding to a survey on tracking apprenticeship surveys</b>	20	By Year 2	20 regional and local authorities have responded to a survey which tracks their apprenticeship systems
<b>Number of networking events/project matchmaking events</b>	2	By Year 2	1 networking event in year 1 (online) 1 networking event in Year 2 (online/offline)
<b>Database entries for institutions interested in high quality exchange via the mobility matchmaking tool</b>	30	10 by year 1 30 By Year 3	10 by year 1 10 in year 2 10 in year 3
<b>Number of Lifelong Learning Mobility Promoters</b>	10	By Year 1	10 in Year 1 piloting phase
<b>Online collaborations with key networks, including Euroguidance</b>	2	2 by Year 2	2 online webinars

## Partnership arrangements

**Coordinating organisation/steering group:** The Regional Partnership will be steered by a newly composed “ PfS Lifelong Learning Mobility Working Group”. The group will be first formed by the members of the Working Group Mobility in the EARLALL network, but have the unique distinction that members that are outside of the network can put themselves forward to be part of the decision-making group and also organisations which are not regional and local authorities may too.

**Types of organisations in the membership:** The members will predominately begin with regional and local authorities for lifelong learning, but are open to: Vocational and Education Providers; NGOs; Adult Education centres; Guidance organisations and counsellors; youth centres etc. Links and invitations will be created with the European Alliance for Apprenticeship Community of Practice on the Role of Regions and Cities in Apprenticeships

(which EARLALL co-organises) and other networks such as EPALE, Euroguidance and FREREF.

**Ways of working, frequency of meetings of members etc:**

A manual will be established for the partnership within the EARLALL Working Group of Mobility (as the initial members of the Pact). Then, with expanding membership, it will be revised. The manual will outline:

- Formal requirements/ commitments
- An assigned representative of the organisation participating
- An annual action plan
- A defined process for setting up meetings

For meetings, the Working Group will aim to meet every 4 months. In these meetings, the action plan and next steps will be discussed, with the goal on ensuring each meeting has a presentation of best practices and a networking opportunity to interest new members.

**Supported by:**



**Regional and local authorities:**



International education mobility institution:



*Please include the logos of key regional and/or local partners as well as supporters of the regional partnership. If possible, classify in categories such as industry, education and training providers, social partners etc.*

**Contact and more information:**

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