Connecting mobility policies and practice:

Observations and recommendations on national and institutional developments in Europe

MPPC

MOBILITY POLICY • PRACTICE CONNECT

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Introduction

This publication intends to provide observations on and recommendations for enhancing the complementarity between higher education mobility policies at the institutional, national and European level. A collaborative venture by the European University Association (EUA) and the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the paper is based on the results of the EU-supported project "Mobility Policy-Practice Connect" (MPPC),[1] as well as a number of other mobility-related studies and projects[2] that EUA and ACA have carried out since 2009, when the 20% mobility objective of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was first agreed.[3]

MPPC was an opportunity to test findings and conclusions from this previous work and gain new insights; the project aimed to encourage dialogue between higher education institutions and governments on the development and implementation of mobility policies and to better align institutional and national objectives. Carried out in partnership with the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference (LURK), the Conference of French University Presidents (CPU) and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference (MRK), MPPC targeted three countries and consisted of a national workshop, focus groups and a university site visit in each. This resulted in country reports, drawn up jointly with the rectors' conferences.[4]

Although the sample of countries examined in MPPC is not representative of the entire EHEA, the intention of this paper was to highlight issues that could be of wider relevance across different national systems in Europe. In the **first section**, the paper outlines a series of observations on specific elements of institutional practice when it comes to strategising and managing mobility. The **second section** provides some guidance for national policy makers, in particular education ministries, with regard to developing and implementing national mobility-related policies. And finally, in the **third section**, the paper provides some suggestions on how current European mobility objectives can be optimised with respect to national and institutional interests. It is hoped that the observations and recommendations provided here will contribute to the ongoing policy reflection on European higher education internationalisation in the context of the Bologna Process, ET2020[5] and other related agendas.

[1] Supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission.

[2] A summary of the EUA-coordinated projects MPPC, MAUNIMO (Mapping University Mobility of Students and Staff), and several studies conducted by ACA (related to mobility data, mobility national policies, mobility windows and portability of state grants and loans) can be found in the Annex.

[3] The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué of the Bologna Process calls for 20% of all students graduating in the European Higher Education Area to have had a mobility experience by 2020.

[4] Country reports can be found on the project website: www.maunimo.eu and at www.eua.be/mppc

[5] Education and Training 2020 is the European Union's strategic framing for education and training, which highlights mobility, quality, efficiency, equity and entrepreneurship in higher education.

Mobility in Europe refocused

Increasing higher education mobility in Europe is a long-standing political priority; it already found its expression in the Erasmus Programme and European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in the second half of the 1980s, and became one of the rationales for the subsequent launch of the Bologna Process in 1999. The European Higher Education Area, which resulted from the Bologna Process, is built on structures and tools meant to render cross-border academic mobility easier and more frequent, further encouraged by EU funding for mobility scholarships and institutional cooperation projects.

Yet while the political declarations and resulting frameworks, tools and programmes demonstrate a strong will to enhance and improve mobility, both the Bologna Process, as well as the EU, have realised the need to set clear measurable goals. This has been evidenced by the 20% benchmark[6] endorsed by the 2009 Bologna Ministerial Conference, and mirrored by a subsequent EU mobility benchmark.

As a result, recent attempts have been made to better define what type of mobility is in fact needed for countries and for institutions, and how to measure it. Policy discussions in Europe have tended to refer to short-term ("credit") student mobility – a result of the Erasmus programme – and the institutional structures and data that it has generated. While other types of mobility with different purposes were inevitably occurring (staff exchanges, students seeking degrees abroad, other types of credit mobility, etc.), they were seldom (with some exceptions) the focus of institutional and national policy. This tended to neglect the complexity of mobility and how different types may relate strategically. Student mobility is an encompassing term, which can be categorised by purpose or duration (degree vs. credit mobility), by direction (incoming vs. outgoing), by the type of activities undertaken abroad (mobility for the purpose of studies, research, training, language learning, etc.) and by the framework in which it takes place (national or European funding programmes, the institution's own measures or "free mover mobility"). In the same way, when speaking about staff mobility, a distinction is to be made between the mobility of academic, administrative and even technical staff, as well as between mobility for teaching, research or training purposes. In both strategic and organisational terms these types of mobility are inherently different, and thus have different motivations and implications for higher education institutions and policy makers.

This complex picture became evident with the launch of the European mobility benchmarks, which required a clearer indication as to which types of mobility would be included in the "20% mobility by 2020" target. The subsequent 2012 strategy of the EHEA *Mobility for Better Learning* suggests some parameters for the benchmark and calls upon national governments to define their own mobility strategies and targets.[7] Similarly, the EU Communication *European higher education in the world* (2013) encourages member states to develop "comprehensive internationalisation strategies" that encompass

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[6] The target is that 20% of students graduating in the EHEA should have had a mobility experience by 2020.

[7] EHEA (2012) *Mobility for Better Learning – Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area:* www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf

"international student and staff mobility, internationalisation of curricula and digital learning, strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building".[8]

As a result of these and other developments, mobility has to a large extent been refocused in national policy discourse: it is increasingly seen as an instrument to internationalise the teaching and learning experience and to improve its quality, render research more competitive, cultivate institutional partnerships and generate visibility on the international stage. In addition, mobility objectives are featuring in other policy areas beyond the internationalisation of higher education, for example employment, economic growth, foreign affairs, development cooperation and migration policies. Current EU higher education programmes and investments are premised in particular on the conviction that mobility and employability are strongly interlinked; EU objectives under the umbrella of EU2020 stress mobility as a means to provide graduates with a set of skills for the international labour market.

In parallel to the positive policy attention that mobility receives, some European countries have also become acutely aware of unintended consequences of mobility and of potential drawbacks. In the last five years national discussions have taken place on whether and to what extent taxpayers should support international students and, in order to defend the investment, on how international students contribute to the national economy (e.g. Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Sweden). In both the EU and the EHEA context, concern continues to be voiced regarding "unbalanced mobility" and brain drain, particularly given economic disparities and demographic decline. In addition, some countries have questioned how to equate the "attractiveness" and recruitment objectives for their higher education systems with development cooperation policies, and the extent to which the two are compatible.

In the past five years, several important studies have been produced on European higher education mobility and its relationship to internationalisation in Europe.[9] In addition, a number of initiatives, projects and networks have examined the institutional dynamics of mobility and voiced the need for policies to enhance it qualitatively and quantitatively: Understanding what **"quality mobility"** is and how it can be potentially measured, for example, has been one of the preoccupations.[10] The topic of **joint degrees** and their strategic impact has featured in a number of European initiatives and has been the subject of both policy dialogue and institutional cooperation between Europe and other parts of the world.[11] **Data management and monitoring** of mobility is indeed another topic around which institutions are experimenting. EUA, through its

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[8] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/international-cooperation/world-education_en.htm

[9] The following studies/projects can be instructive (non-exhaustive): *Towards a Mobility Scorecard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe,* Eurydice Report, 2013, *Eurostudent IV: Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe:* www.eurostudent.eu, Annual surveys of the Erasmus Student Network: www.esn.org/publications.

[10] The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) is currently developing a paper that outlines how the quality of mobility can be considered and improved. This is inspired to a large extent by the Erasmus University Charter and the work that has been done in several institutional projects, such as "Erasmus Mobility Quality Tools" (2009-2011).

[11] Joint programmes and degrees have been a key topic in recent EU policy dialogues on higher education with China and Brazil, for example. Joint programmes are also one thematic priority of the Arab-Euro Higher Education Conferences (AECHE) led by EUA and the Association of Arab Universities (AAU). The BFUG is currently discussing a European approach for external QA of joint degrees.

Council for Doctoral Education (CDE), has also addressed **doctoral candidate mobility** and provided a forum for institutional practice sharing.

While all of these themes have been taken up at different levels in MPPC, two recent studies have been particularly promoted and probed by the project: *Mobility: Closing the Gap between Policy and Practice*, produced by EUA in 2012, and *European and national policies for academic mobility. Linking rhetoric, practice and mobility trends,* published by ACA, also in 2012. This paper draws on these studies and brings forward a number of aspects that surfaced in the MPPC project that seem to merit further attention in the European mobility debate, both from institutions and from policy makers. Some of the issues, while not "new", seem to have gained even more impetus in the past few years, as evidenced by the three countries in which they were examined.

A. Considerations for institutions: Emerging and recurrent issues

The 2012 EUA report *Mobility: Closing the gap between policy and practice* anticipated the increased attention that would be placed on mobility from a national and European policy perspective and the potential trickle-down effects and opportunities for the internationalisation of higher education institutions. In order to exploit these opportunities, the report proposed that institutions develop and implement context-specific mobility strategies, related to – if not part of – strategies for internationalisation, teaching and learning, research and their third mission, service to society.

The recommendations of this report are still very relevant two years on; they highlight the need for institutions to develop comprehensive policies that consider mobility in its different forms, scrutinise and improve mobility data collection to this effect, and consider cross-institutional buy-in for mobility objectives beyond the international office.

The three country workshops and focus groups that took place in the context of MPPC by and large reaffirmed these recommendations. They also resulted in the observations that follow. In addition, a series of recurrent questions that were posed during the MPPC activities are listed, to be considered by institutions as they take their strategies forward and by national and European authorities as they consider institutional needs.

1. Refining, implementing and monitoring institutional strategies

Mobility is inherent to internationalisation strategies, which most institutions have developed. However, institutions are still striving to better assess these strategies, communicate them to internal and external constituencies and demonstrate impact. Enhancing and streamlining data collection remains essential in this regard.

Results of a 2013 survey by EUA showed that although practically all universities in Europe have internationalisation strategies,[12] such strategies require enhancement and better implementation. Similarly, EUA's previously mentioned *Closing the Gap* report of the MAUNIMO project found that while mobility is usually mentioned as a goal and a means in these strategies, it is not further defined or qualified in a detailed way. In MPPC, workshop participants – usually from the leadership of the international office of institutions – concurred that mobility is often driven by the particular interests of faculties, departments, individual staff and students and, most importantly, by the

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[12] Membership consultation – Internationalisation in European higher education: European policies, institutional strategies and EUA support (2013), EUA Publications, www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/EUA_International_Survey.sflb.ashx

availability of funding streams. As a consequence, beyond Erasmus exchanges and a few flagship projects, institutions usually do not have comprehensive mobility data. However, advancements have been made in some institutions which have piloted mobility data collection projects, tools and platforms, and a number of case studies were shared in the MPPC workshops. It was agreed that much work has yet to be done and that institutional leadership craves practice-sharing, both within countries and between countries.

In addition, it seems that institutions perceive a growing need to utilise data on mobility for general internal quality assurance and other strategic purposes. Better communication of such data to different constituencies could contribute to general awareness building for the necessity of student and staff mobility, and for its benefit to institutions and individuals, as well as more broadly for the wider social and economic interest.

The following questions were emphasised in MPPC with regard to generally enhancing mobility strategies and improving data:

- How can internationalisation strategies be effectively implemented? What are the resources and structures to underpin the strategy?
- How can funding sources be secured to implement strategies, given that mobility is still mainly driven by opportunities that funding programmes create, in particular those provided by the European Union?
- How can institutional strategic goals for internationalisation and mobility be made more visible, both for internal and external stakeholders, including policy makers?
- How can the impact of strategies be assessed? Is there sufficient qualitative and quantitative evidence available (beyond those activities that take place in externally funded programmes)?
- How can data collection and reporting from different parts of the institution be better coordinated?
- How can data contribute to enhancing strategic dialogue within the institution, involving leadership, structures and services for internationalisation, faculties but also representatives of staff unions and students and, where appropriate, external stakeholders?

a. Governance and management structures for mobility

Effective institutional strategies for mobility and internationalisation require fit-for-purpose and well-articulated management structures.

Practically all institutions that attended the MPPC workshops, as well as those visited in the MPPC site visits, have changed their organisational structures for internationalisation or are in the process of doing so. While different types of mobile students (Erasmus credit mobility, fee-paying degree students, doctoral candidates, etc.) may require dedicated structures and services, at some institutions there was concern that these tend to be rather isolated and disconnected from one another. In addition, other forms of mobility (e.g. staff mobility, students on joint degrees, exchanges through partnerships, etc.) may not appear in the portfolio of any of the existing offices and thus are not analysed or promoted systematically. Examples mentioned in the French workshop concerned incoming academic staff in particular (outside of programmes such as Erasmus) and students enrolled in joint degree programmes who have, in some cases, special support services organised at faculty or departmental level.

Regardless of the management structures that institutions choose, it was agreed that practice-sharing and communication – both across faculties/departments and between different centralised structures – should be systematised. As an example, several institutions found that an interface was needed between the support structures dealing with doctoral candidate mobility and staff mobility on the one hand, and those dealing with different types of student mobility on the other. In addition, streamlining some structures and seeking synergies between others may also yield greater efficiency; obtaining economies of scale regarding support and other mobility services may be one concrete benefit. Furthermore, external funding and student demand for mobility may change in the short to medium term, and hence management and services would have to be constantly adapted. This also raises the question of potentially outsourcing some of these services to private companies, another way to manage mobility that was elicited at the Hungarian workshop.

- While there is no one-size-fits-all structure for governance and management of mobility and internationalisation, are there trends and good practices to be shared?
- How can the specific structures and services for different types of mobility (student, staff and doctoral candidates, incoming and outgoing mobility) be better related?
- Would institutions have to factor in ad-hoc management and services for projects and other externally funded related initiatives, e.g. by being able to reallocate or redesign existing structures across the institution? Or through partially outsourcing resulting workload to private companies?
- Are adequate opportunities for practice sharing and staff training on managing mobility available and sufficiently used? If not at the institutional, then at the national level? Can this be done in collaboration with partner institutions?

b. Integrating international students and staff

Institutional strategies could put more emphasis on the integration of international students and staff, which among other benefits could improve outgoing mobility.

The integration of international students and staff is increasingly becoming a critical issue for the quality of the individual mobility experience, but also more generally for the internationalisation of the campus and classroom ("internationalisation at home"). Enhancing contact between domestic and international students, for example, may promote outgoing mobility and generate interest in new study destinations and research fields for students and staff that were not considering to be mobile. This task appears to be more complex in countries with less-widely spoken languages – such as Lithuania and Hungary in the context of MPPC – where international students usually do not possess sufficient command of the local language and frequently attend separate courses taught in English. These courses are usually not chosen by domestic students. In addition, several institutions that participated in the MPPC project reported that international, fee-paying degree students often remain in isolated groups, and are detached from local students and international credit-seeking students. Many institutions are trying to address this issue by examining recruitment policies and focusing on the overall quality of the mobility experience, which can include language learning, social integration and enhancing student/staff exposure to academic and cultural differences.

- How can integration of international students and staff be improved and obstacles such as language and cultural differences be overcome?
- How can the participation of domestic students and international students in the same study programmes be increased? How to proceed when there are obstacles due to national regulation (for example, high tuition fees, the requirement to offer parallel courses in English and the domestic language)?
- How can international students and staff actively contribute to promoting and encouraging outgoing mobility?
- Who at the institution is in charge of international student integration? How is this monitored and evaluated?

c. Strategising academic and administrative staff mobility

Institutions are starting to pay more attention to different types of staff mobility, given the potential link to strategic internationalisation, enhancement of research and teaching and general professional development.

Amongst the participants in MPPC, there was widespread agreement that staff mobility has clear benefits for the individuals and the institutions concerned, and should be a stronger focus within strategies, whether for internationalisation, research or teaching. However, this sentiment is not always shared across the institution, as *Closing the Gap* and the MAUNIMO project[13] demonstrated. A recent call has thus been made, both at the European and institutional level, to put staff mobility into focus and better understand its complexities.

MPPC demonstrated once again that academic staff is a very heterogeneous category,[14] and that the situation and status of staff differs greatly between higher education systems in Europe. This often makes it untenable to compare. The project participants felt that institutions should better assess the potential of academic staff mobility for diverse purposes, such as research, teaching, preparing joint study programmes, language training and inter-university development cooperation projects. These different types of staff mobility would need to be considered in conjunction with strategic goals and further incentivised and supported accordingly. Staff should be encouraged to take a proactive role in mobility programmes and opportunities, both by taking advantage of existing partnerships and initiatives but also by pioneering new ones.

Institutions should also consider the duration of staff mobility, which can vary from a few days (for conference attendance, for example), to shorter-term teaching assignments, to longer mobility periods, such as sabbaticals or mobility in the framework of joint projects.[15] In both the French and Lithuanian workshops, it was felt that **longer-term staff mobility** – while clearly a challenge from the point of view of resources – could indeed be a welcome opportunity for deepening the teaching and research experience abroad and yielding, potentially, a wider institutional impact – both for the host and the home institution. However, there are often administrative and regulatory restrictions and obstacles (lack of sufficient possibilities to take sabbaticals, pension restrictions, etc.) which make this impossible and need to be addressed at the level of both institutions and national regulatory bodies.

MPPC also confirmed that higher education institutions should devote specific attention to the mobility of their **administrative staff**. So far, the personnel of

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[13] The EUA project "Mapping University Mobility of Students and Staff" (2010-12) supported by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

[14] ACA has proposed a means for distinguishing different types of staff and collecting data on them in *"Mapping Mobility in European Higher Education" (2011)*.

[15] Depending on the country and system, the perception of what a longer mobility stay is may range from more than two weeks to more than six months. Regulatory limitations may pose a problem in some systems when a staff member is gone for longer than one month, although this varies.

international relations offices seem to be the only type of mobile administrative staff, and in very limited numbers, due mostly to a lack of demand from other administrative staff categories and linguistic limitations. Several institutions shared their experiences in providing professional development opportunities abroad as part of their general human resources policy. Lithuanian, French and Spanish cases highlighted in particular "International staff training weeks" – both in sending staff abroad and in receiving staff from partner institutions – as a model to encourage and increase administrative staff mobility. More practice should be shared to this effect.

Recruitment of international staff was touched on only briefly in the context of the MPPC workshops (in Lithuania, for example), but it should be noted that international staff are increasingly perceived as a key factor for internationalisation. A recent project conducted by EUA on the internationalisation of doctoral education – "FRINDOC" – reaffirmed that "number of international staff" is one indicator in how institutions assess internationality.[16] Such metrics are increasingly being used in institutional and national quality evaluation processes. However, in most European countries higher education institutions predominantly recruit domestic staff, due to financial and regulatory restrictions, as well as cultural and language issues. A forthcoming EUA study clearly indicates a widespread preference for hiring domestic academics with "international experience".[17]

- How can mobility of academic and administrative staff be better aligned to the institutional strategic goals?
- How can academic and administrative staff mobility be used to consolidate and enhance institutional partnerships in a more systematic fashion?
- How can administrative staff mobility be better framed in terms of professional development and incentivised as such?
- What are the obstacles preventing staff of different types from being mobile? If they are linked to national-level regulations, how can they best be addressed with the national regulatory bodies?
- How to eliminate obstacles to international staff recruitment, at institutional and national level?

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[16] More information on the EUA project FRINDOC can be found here: www.eua.be/FRINDOC

[17] Forthcoming EUA study *TRENDS 2015*.

d. The potential of international work placements and other forms of short-term mobility

International work placements are one area of growing interest and also show the potential for further diversifying mobility opportunities.

In the three countries examined by MPPC, institutions discussed diverse student mobility opportunities ranging from language courses and international volunteer programmes to international work placements. Diversifying and promoting such forms of mobility may be a strategic means to widen the pool of mobile students and provide more students with international exposure.

International work placements in particular seem to have generated high interest in recent years, aided by the fact that they can be funded through Erasmus. In some countries, national and institutional funding sources are emerging as well. In particular in the case of Lithuania, the demand for international work placements seems to have been growing steadily, both for incoming international students and outgoing domestic students. Work placements seem to be a great tool to connect both incoming and outgoing students with host companies, which can become potential employers, as well as to help the students create a professional network of contacts in the host country, which they could then use after graduation. They should also be considered with regard to building innovation capacity and enhancing the knowledge triangle; facilitating such placements requires the development of institutional partnerships with companies, both domestically and internationally, which can have an important impact on research and teaching. It should be noted, however, that institutions mentioned certain concerns on how to measure the quality of work placements, an issue to be examined in the future.

- How do work placements fit into the institutional mobility strategy?
- How can institutions meet rising demand for such placements? Will they potentially overshadow more traditional academic exchange?
- How can the quality of work placements be assured?
- What other types of mobility can be further developed to incentivise students to be mobile?

e. Language policy and mobility

Mobility and internationalisation are likely to involve language considerations that may be strategically addressed through a comprehensive language policy.

Language learning and teaching underpins mobility and internationalisation in many ways. As one prominent trend, many European countries and institutions are emphasising foreign-language programmes (often in English) as a vehicle for internationalisation, and more specifically for attracting international students. Legislative barriers to teaching in foreign languages have recently been dismantled in several countries (Lithuania and France being two examples from MPPC). However, at institutional level teaching in English (and occasionally in other foreign languages) is still contested by faculty, and to some extent by students. Beyond the practical reality that not all teachers and students are well prepared for English-taught courses, there are issues of wider importance, such as whether all disciplines and study cycles should be taught in English (which is commonly not the case) and how English-taught courses would impact the cultural and linguistic identity of the institution.

Therefore, developing a coherent language policy may be highly beneficial, not just regarding teaching in foreign languages/English, but also regarding the integration of larger groups of international students and staff members, preparing domestic students and staff to be mobile, preserving linguistic integrity and generally "internationalisation at home". Part of the language policy could be, for example, that international students are offered training in the domestic language as well, something that has become mandatory in some institutions in France, for example, and is generally voluntary in Lithuania and Hungary. Some knowledge of the domestic language is crucial for integration into the society and culture of the host country beyond the university campus. Outgoing students and staff would require specific language support for the various countries they may elect to study or teach in, an element of enhancing the quality and likely success of their academic and social experience abroad.

Language policy should also consider to what extent the **internationalisation of the institutional administration** is required, e.g. regarding key student and staff services and the operating language of the institutional governing bodies. With a few notable exceptions (mostly in the Netherlands), administrative service units such as libraries, housing and welfare services or student counsellors still function only in the domestic language; the same goes for central governing bodies which should, however, be open to the participation of foreign students and staff as well. Both these issues were already raised in an ACA study on English-taught programmes in Europe in 2002, and were confirmed in a follow-up study in 2008.[18]

[18] Friedhelm Maiworm, Bernd Wächter, 2002, *English-Language-Taught degree programmes in European higher education. Trends and success factors*, ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education (Bonn, Lemmens); Bernd Wächter, Friedhelm Maiworm, 2008, *English-taught programmes in European higher education. The picture in 2007*, ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education (Bonn, Lemmens).

- How can teaching in foreign languages become better integrated into the curricula and the institutional culture in general?
- How to ensure that the institutional language policy considers the needs of both domestic and international members of the institution?
- What linguistic challenges does internationalisation pose for the administration?
- How can language policies be resourced and promoted?
- How can tension around language policies best be resolved?

2. The role of institutions in national strategy-making

It is critically important that higher education institutions take a proactive role in the national and European debates on defining and implementing mobility and internationalisation policies more generally, but also in broader policies in which mobility is implicit.

As has already been outlined in *Closing the Gap*, institutional mobility and internationalisation strategies are most effective if complemented by national (and European) reforms. Collective lobbying of the university community is thus essential in this pursuit. Such advocacy of institutional needs and interests can usually be articulated through higher education representative bodies, including the national associations, but would also require input from other relevant stakeholders, such as the national agencies implementing mobility programmes, student organisations and networks of institutions that have worked extensively on the topic of mobility. Most importantly, the breadth of experimentation and innovation at the institutional level in Europe regarding managing and improving mobility should be better communicated and showcased as it has important implications for policy development. MPPC, as it only took on three countries, could only capture a small portion of this, and more projects of this nature are needed.

- How can a consensus between institutions be established in order to collaborate with national authorities on these issues? Who should drive this process in different systems?
- Who are the actors that would have to be considered, given that mobility is no longer an academic issue only and affects other sectors beyond higher education?

B. Recommendations for national strategy development: Sharpening priorities and enabling diverse institutional approaches

Articulating mobility objectives at the national level – either in the form of a stand-alone strategy, as part of a wider national strategy for the internationalisation of (higher) education, or for economic growth and competitiveness, for example – is clearly becoming a priority across Europe. This was initially mapped in the context of the ACA study *European and national policies for academic mobility. Linking rhetoric, practice and mobility trends* (2012) and was also a primary focus of the workshops and focus groups conducted in the context of MPPC.

However, the MPPC activities demonstrated that institutional and national policies are still at times differentiated and that national policies are sometimes slower to catch up with institutional needs. For example, in the cases of France and Lithuania, attracting foreign students remains a high policy priority at national level. However, institutions are also reflecting on measures to enhance the quality of outgoing mobility, a topic they feel could be better articulated in the national higher education strategy. Increasing the number of joint degrees on offer is another goal (a priority in all three countries examined), yet legislative barriers for both offering and quality-assuring such degrees have been slow to be dismantled. In Lithuania and Hungary joint degrees are possible, although apparently it can be complicated and cumbersome in some instances to have these programmes accredited.

As another example, linking the attraction of highly skilled foreign students to local labour market needs was indeed a topical issue for national governments, although perhaps a secondary feature of institutional strategies, in which the primary interest is in enhancing academic collaboration. In Hungary, while outgoing credit mobility has gained traction as a national priority, the recent increase in grants on offer is still not fully exploited. It is rather that incoming international degree-seeking/fee-paying students in specific disciplinary areas remain critical for institutions as they compensate for an underfunded sector. In all three countries, the issue of the growing network of research and teaching and learning partnerships was discussed and it was observed that they are often strategically unrelated, both at national and institutional level. For example, in Hungary, at the time of the workshop, a higher education internationalisation strategy to complement and underpin a recently launched R&D internationalisation strategy had yet to be defined.

Thus work remains to close the gap between institutional and national priorities. One can also more generally question the role that national strategies should in fact play and how they could be more effectively designed to accommodate such diverse institutional interests. In MPPC, it was agreed that the national strategy should clearly

articulate national mobility-related funding and frameworks and provide guidance and direction with regard to how mobility can achieve public policy goals. It should not be too prescriptive, as this could stifle international institutional cooperation and exchange which may prioritise different sectors, disciplines and geographic regions beyond immediate political and economic interests.

There is no recipe book for creating a successful national strategy for mobility, no one-size-fits-all approach. However, there seems to be a list of basic ingredients that should feature in every formula, which can be adapted according to national "taste", i.e. to national priorities and specificities. The following points have been reconfirmed by the MPPC discussions, in which national strategy development was a clear focus.

1. In developing and implementing a national strategy, it is essential to *engage the relevant actors,* both from the national and the grassroots level.

Good national strategies are never the single-handed act of the ministry of (higher) education, but rather the result of cooperation and dialogue with other competent ministries (of research, internal affairs, employment, foreign affairs, etc.), with the higher education institutions, with the students and ideally with the social partners. Drafting a national strategy is not, in itself, the most difficult task; implementation is. For successful implementation, all the important actors need to feel ownership of the strategy. Therefore the development of a good national strategy requires an optimal mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Good national strategies should provide enough guidance and incentives for institutional-level actions, while still leaving enough flexibility for individual institutional take-up and target-setting.

2. Fully developed national strategies do not promote mobility plain and simple. They consider different types of mobility (degree vs. credit, outgoing vs. incoming, for studies vs. internships vs. other purposes) that respond to priorities and are fit for purpose.

Prior ACA research shows that, in the European context, outgoing credit and incoming degree mobility are the most often promoted student mobility types because of their associated benefits. Outgoing credit mobility at Bachelor and – to an extent – Master level is most strongly coupled with personal growth and inter-cultural skills development (and linked to the internationalisation and employability of young graduates), while incoming degree mobility is generally seen as an important form of gaining talent (and in some countries is also an important form of revenue generation).

As for the two types that are prioritised less often, incoming credit mobility tends to be seen as a "side effect", a normal consequence of outgoing credit mobility, rather

than as a policy priority in itself. On the other hand, outgoing degree mobility is rarely mentioned as a policy priority, mostly out of fear of brain drain. In general, outgoing degree mobility is only openly pursued by countries that lack enough higher education capacity internally, and therefore need to "import" education in certain fields. However, European countries need graduates that have a more profound knowledge about other countries and world regions, which can be obtained through longer stays abroad. In this sense, there may be further value in supporting outgoing degree mobility as a policy line, despite the risk of brain drain.

In MPPC, it was clear in which direction national strategies were leaning in the three countries concerned. For example, attracting degree students to France, Lithuania and Hungary seemed a more explicit and quantified priority than that of outgoing credit mobility. However, discussions with institutions revealed the need to reinforce outgoing student credit and staff mobility as well, particularly as this would render the learning experience more international for domestic students.

While national strategies should articulate some common goals, they should not over-prescribe certain types of mobility. Ultimately, and beyond the national policy context, mobility would have to serve academic purposes and goals in fostering international partnerships, enhancing language training, strengthening the research portfolio, internationalising curricula, improving the quality of programmes and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes and competences. This would require a diverse range of mobility types that should be enabled by national strategies.

3. Strategies should not only consider types of mobility, but also world *regions and/or countries* in both an immediate and longer-term strategic perspective. This should support but not overly prescribe geographic foci for mobility.

Given limited resources, some countries may have to concentrate efforts and funding for mobility in higher education, particularly in terms of maximising impact with certain partners/countries/regions in other parts of the world. As a further complication, education, foreign affairs, trade and development cooperation ministries, for example, may have different stakes and interests. Synergies between the higher education sector and other national development objectives in trade, energy, foreign affairs, etc. may be better realised through explicit country and regional targeting.

However, while geographic priorities may be helpful in concentrating efforts and funding, they should not stifle organically driven research and academic cooperation interests that may develop at the level of institutions themselves. Institutions must maintain the autonomy and flexibility to collaborate and exchange according to their own needs and respective strategies. This is also important with regard to the sustainability of collaboration

and exchange; while national priorities and funding may fluctuate politically, institutions should be enabled to engage with different countries and regions in a longer-term partnership perspective. This is critical in order to build academic relationships, enhance impact and ensure that mobility is not solely driven by the economic and foreign affairs interests of today. Geographic targets in national policy should thus be closely thought through with higher education and other related sectors.

4. Mobility ambitions should be expressed in the form of clear targets and have a clear *timeline* and *modus operandi.*

Currently, too many European countries express their mobility ambitions in vague terms. "Increasing" mobility, or "more" mobility are terms often found in national-level documents, without any further details. In order to monitor progress, though, countries need clear goals. The targets can be either quantitative – like the current European benchmark of having 20% of European graduates with a mobility experience by the year 2020 – or qualitative (e.g. improving the mobility experiences of mobile students, enhancing the recognition of credits, etc.), or ideally, a mix of the two. In addition, these targets, whatever they may be, need to be accompanied by clear indicators to measure progress. Governments should define by when the targets should be reached, who is in charge of implementing the different actions and who measures progress.

Very importantly, institutions should set their own, tailor-made targets. While being aware of or aspiring to the European/national benchmarks is a positive development, there were examples of institutions in the MPPC project that automatically adopted these targets as their own, without the realistic means to actually reach them. The national target should serve as a collective parameter for the sector, as opposed to a uniform target for each institution.

5. The articulation of clear mobility objectives should be accompanied by an array of support instruments and relevant resources as well as by regulatory reforms.

Such instruments include providing appropriate funding for different forms of mobility, conducting impact studies, supporting pilot initiatives (mobility platforms, for example), encouraging experimentation in arranging and incorporating mobility into study programmes and launching mobility promotion campaigns. This should also include the deepening of certain structural reforms, like allowing for more flexibility of the curricula, removing legislative obstacles to teaching in foreign languages or to the creation of joint degrees, enhancing recruitment possibilities for international staff and facilitating staff sabbaticals. Without such support instruments, policies and strategies are bound to remain simple rhetoric.

C. Considerations for the European level: Implementation, monitoring and peer learning regarding existing policy frameworks

Higher education strategies at the institutional and national level can be closely linked with and influenced by European policy development. At least four important policy papers have been launched in the past few years in both the EU and the EHEA contexts:

- 2007 – *European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process*
- 2009 – *Green paper on learning mobility of young people*
- 2012 – *Mobility for Better Learning. Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*
- 2013 – *European higher education in the world* (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions)

MPPC has attempted, on a relatively small scale and with a limited number of countries, to revisit the objectives of these various policy commitments, and to understand better how they impact higher education institutions and national governments. In this regard, several important points were emphasised in terms of how the EHEA and EU policies and programmes can advance and improve mobility going forward and add value to institutional and national strategies:

1. Focus on the promotion, implementation and proper monitoring of existing policies as well as on ensuring their compatibility.

One may argue that there are too many related policies and too little follow-up. Further work to promote these policy papers at the institutional level would be needed, to raise awareness, gain support for their implementation and demonstrate how they relate to important funding programmes such as Erasmus+.

As an example, it is noteworthy that both the EHEA and the EU have launched strategies for higher education internationalisation. They should be more consistently referenced, promoted, and also occasionally revisited.

As the framework for *student* mobility is already quite well substantiated from a policy point of view, further actions at the European level should rather focus on monitoring country-level developments, implementation and on creating a space for dialogue where policy makers, national agencies, higher education institutions and other relevant

organisations could come together for exchanges of ideas and peer learning. MPPC is one example of an EU-supported project that has attempted to do just this. Peer learning of national governments, enabled by the Bologna Process and current EU funding mechanisms, is also welcome, and should be continued. In addition, institutions have expressed keen interest in practice-sharing amongst one another and across borders, particularly when it comes to monitoring the impact of different types of mobility on the quality and relevance of higher education and research. "Structural" cooperation projects (beyond inter-institutional mobility arrangements) should thus continue to be an important feature of the European funding programmes. In addition, the European Commission should systematically share reports, outcomes and evaluations from the past and present funding programmes for mobility and internationalisation. There has been a considerable amount of practice and knowledge generated across different EC-supported projects, for example, dealing with mobility in higher education and research and spanning different funding instruments. If placed on a central portal, beyond the existing portals for programme beneficiaries, these could provide a useful source of information and inspiration for practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

2. A thorough and informed reflection on staff mobility and the consultation of relevant actors is necessary before targets and benchmarks can be set in a meaningful way. European guidance on and attention to this topic is critical.

The topic of staff mobility and internationalisation of staff has become a policy objective in the EHEA and EU context. Given the growing interest at the level of national systems and institutions, this could be a timely moment to facilitate a broader debate on the issue, emphasising the role that EU programmes can play. The Bologna Follow-Up Group is preparing a recommendation on how to define staff mobility, which is expected to be referenced in the 2015 Bologna Ministerial Communiqué. In response, the EU has a vested interest, not only to organise the exchange of good practice around staff mobility, but also to lay the ground for enhanced data collection and monitoring. This could start with a broad analysis of the results of existing European studies conducted over the past decade. If necessary, this could also be underpinned by additional research on the issue, which would include the impact of the economic crisis as an obstacle to and, potentially, a driver for staff mobility, and an analysis of the extent to which administrative staff mobility is used for staff professional development more generally. It could also consider elements of "virtual mobility" and how they are used for staff collaboration and training.

As previously mentioned, staff can be difficult to define across systems and their mobility can take many distinct forms with distinct motivations. It is thus difficult to know whether and how European targets can be set. A benchmark would require some prior agreement on how staff mobility could be defined and measured in a productive way with a potentially useful impact. Institutional and national good practice must be a basis for this.

In this regard, European-level initiatives could inspire and fund further collaborative work between higher education institutions, national mobility agencies, data collectors and policy makers to better understand staff mobility and develop recommendations on how it could be incentivised, improved and tracked across borders. Specific attention should be given to administrative and technical staff in this regard.

3. Data collection is still to be enhanced at European level in order to inform the discussions on mobility and internationalisation

Successful follow-up of policies at the European level would also entail making more progress on the general mobility data collection front so as to track real impact. There have been advancements with EUROSTAT in terms of measuring credit mobility and better capturing degree mobility, but obtaining this data from all countries is slow and several countries are still not participating. National data collectors, such as national agencies for Erasmus+, are important players in this respect as they have direct contact with institutions and can support capacity development in institutional data collection. The EU and the Bologna Process work in parallel, and there is already notable cooperation when it comes in particular to the monitoring of objectives and collecting data on different types of mobility. This should continue in the next round of the Bologna Process as the mobility agendas of the EU and the EHEA reinforce one another.

Final Reflections

Mobility is part and parcel of a wider landscape of institutional, national and European strategies and goals. That the discussion on strategies – why we need them and what targets they should entail – is even taking place indicates a marked improvement from the early days of the Bologna Process where "increasing mobility" was framed generically and theoretically. Strategy-making, though challenging, must thus be taken as an opportunity; it provides a way to think in a more complex way about goals, priorities, differentiation of mobility actions, but also about the necessary resources and the expected outcomes of different types of mobility. Strategy-making also entails an exercise whereby important stakeholders within institutions, government and society at large are brought together in dialogue on these issues, an achievement in itself.

Autonomous higher education institutions will inevitably define their mobility objectives in a different manner than national and European governments. However, such diverse perspectives can enrich and inform the development of European internationalisation. What is essential is that national/regional strategies embrace institutional diversity and enable it, while at the same time channelling and enhancing synergies and opportunities with regard to international collaboration.

It is also important to keep in mind that European-, national- and institutional-level policies and actions are interdependent. Countries rely on institutions to reach their strategic objectives, while institutions depend on national and to some extent European-level funding and policy frameworks. This is why constant dialogue and a mix of bottom-up and top-down actions are crucial.

It should be noted that there are a number of important issues that this paper has not tackled that will merit further reflection in the future. For example, both countries and institutions will increasingly have to come to terms with the potential tension between quality and quantity of mobility and what this means with regard to funding internationalisation more generally. The emphasis on more and better quality of mobility should not exclude the need to ensure social equity: while in past years access and participation in higher education seem to have received increased attention, the access to mobility opportunities is not yet advanced in national and institutional thinking. This is important, as it would require explicit policy and funding mechanisms. Technology offers opportunities for internationalising teaching and learning and can complement physical mobility. It has not been addressed here in this paper, despite its growing importance, as it was felt that virtual mobility should not be considered as a substitute for physical mobility or a remedy for obstacles and problems. It is rather an additional instrument, which should be dealt with in the emerging European discussion on how to link digitalisation and internationalisation. Given that European universities are increasingly opening up and targeting new regions of the world with which they may not have had traditional academic or historical ties, it will be increasingly important that institutional, national and European internationalisation strategies reflect and anticipate global developments. Balancing the European and global dimensions of international mobility will also remain a challenge for EU funding programmes, for example, that are striving to "open up", yet maintain a European perspective and European added value. While this paper cannot provide the solution to these issues, it can at least launch a call for action in addressing them collectively.

Annex

Below is an overview of the most important projects and studies of EUA and ACA on which MPPC was based.

Mobility Policy-Practice Connect (MPPC)
Funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission, MPPC (2013-2014) was carried out by EUA and ACA in an attempt to support the alignment of national and institutional mobility strategies. France, Hungary and Lithuania were selected as case studies to illustrate the different contexts in which mobility strategies are developed and thus the different priorities. The national rectors' conferences in the three countries were asked to assess the different types of mobility that were currently relevant for their national and institutional policy objectives, and design a workshop and focus group around these priorities.

France: The focus was on **strategies and tools to promote the outgoing (short-term) mobility** of students, doctoral candidates, and academic and administrative staff. This topic was relevant for several related reasons: after a long period of growth in outgoing student mobility, several French universities report that a "ceiling" has been reached. However, higher education, but also the economy and society at large, require more graduates with international experience and competencies, best acquired through outgoing mobility. Furthermore, the topic was considered suitable because, as in most (if not all) other European countries, many outgoing mobility obstacles persist.

Lithuania: The workshop and focus group targeted incoming student and staff mobility and the various policies **to attract and retain talent**. This priority reflects both national and institutional interests; Lithuanian universities are currently increasing their promotional efforts to attract students, offering more English-language programmes and refining their respective internationalisation strategies. The government, conscious of the demographic decline but also of the need to internationalise and develop the Lithuanian knowledge economy, is also interested in attracting international students, and has been working on a series of reforms that would make it easier for students and researchers to work and live in Lithuania. However, there is a general sentiment that both policies and institutional approaches could be better sharpened and aligned.

Hungary: In Hungary, the objective was to assess a number of recent programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing both incoming and outgoing mobility, to understand how they intersect and their **impact on the internationalisation of Hungarian higher education** more generally. Hungary has channelled European Social Funds into an initiative called Campus Hungary that is both promoting the Hungarian higher education system and providing scholarships for outgoing mobility. In addition, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference manages the grantees of the Brazilian Science Without Borders programme in Hungary, which has provided a sudden spike in incoming student mobility from a non-traditional partner country. The government announced the launch of a new internationalisation strategy for higher education in the near future,

but it is still open how this will take institutional needs into consideration. Tackling mobility and internationalisation from a more global/"beyond Europe" perspective has thus risen on the agenda of Hungarian universities, as has the need to better understand how the institutions benefit from different forms of mobility.

MApping UNIversity MObility of Students and Staff (MAUNIMO)
The **MAUNIMO** project was carried out by EUA and four of its member universities, University of Marburg, University of Oslo, Swansea University and University of Trento, in the period from October 2010 to September 2012. Funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission, the project aimed to present a university perspective on mobility and to promote strategic approaches and related data collection at institutional level. Through the development and piloting of a "Mobility Mapping Tool" (MMT), a tool for institutional self-assessment, it encouraged institutions to be proactive in defining their individual approaches regarding mobility, while at the same time managing (and hopefully influencing) the national and regional data collection requirements. The project resulted in a publication *"Mobility: Closing the Gap between Policy and Practice",* which provided recommendations to institutions and governments on how to realise European mobility objectives.

Mapping mobility in European Higher Education (2011)
The study, coordinated by ACA, offers a trends analysis of student (and staff) mobility *into, out of* and *between* 32 European countries, collectively referred to as the "Europe 32" region, i.e. the (at the time) 27 member states of the EU, the four member countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Turkey, in the period 1998/99-2006/07. In the field of student mobility, the study covers both developments related to degree and to credit mobility, and features a number of national case studies.

European and national policies for academic mobility. Linking rhetoric, practice and mobility trends (2012)
This ACA publication analyses international student (and staff) mobility policies and strategies at the European level and across the 32 countries participating (at the time) in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Union. It is the outcome of the EU-funded ENPMOB project.

The study concludes that while student mobility seems to be – in one form or another – a national policy objective across Europe, very few European countries actually have a fully-fledged national policy for mobility in place.

The most often-stated priorities at the national level in the field of student mobility are outgoing credit and incoming degree mobility. The other two mobility modes – incoming credit and outgoing degree mobility – are almost never mentioned. Outgoing credit mobility is generally pursued as a policy aim because of its perceived benefits for the students (higher employability), the institutions (better reputation, more international partners, etc.) and the system as a whole.

Mobility windows: From concept to practice (2013)

This ACA study looks deeper into the topic of "mobility windows", exploring its potential meanings and looking at the implementation of mobility windows on the ground, i.e. at the level of study programmes. Given the lack of consensus within the higher education community in Europe on what exactly mobility windows are, the authors proposed a working definition of mobility windows, which they see as "periods of time reserved for international student mobility that are embedded into the curriculum of study programmes". In other words, mobility windows are an integrated form of mobility, being closely aligned to the curriculum of the home study programme and clearly identifiable in the study plan. Mobility windows should also give full transparency about the recognition procedures for study abroad, and should grant 100% recognition.

The study further explored **mobility windows** for **outgoing mobility only** and identified four main types of windows, based on two criteria – the status of a window in the study programme (mandatory vs. optional) and the degree of curricular standardisation of the mobility experience facilitated by the window (highly prescribed vs. loosely prescribed). It then looked at these various types of window in five selected countries (Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania), to draw broader conclusions on the rationales for setting up such instruments and on their actual functioning, perceived benefits and challenges.

Portable State Grants and Loans: An overview and their contribution to outgoing student mobility (2013)

This publication of ACA contains an overview of the student financial support schemes in 31 European countries and much more on the quantitative aspect of the use of portable grants/loans by European mobile students. It also includes short profiles of grant/loan schemes in 11 selected countries that have opened up their schemes, fully or partially, to outgoing student mobility.

The study finds that portable state grants and loans possess enormous "potential" for supporting outgoing student mobility. Over 25 European countries have "allowed" such national funds to be used outside their national borders. Among them, some 15 countries reported that their state grants and/or loans can be used, in principle, for *both* outgoing credit and degree mobility, offering annually at least 1.65 million students the "opportunities" to use such financial aid to study abroad. However, for degree mobility alone, only around 60,500 students took up these opportunities, the number representing a small fraction of all the beneficiaries of student aid in Europe.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.