

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND YOUTH MOBILITY IN SLOVENIAN SCHOOLS**

Abstract. *Although education policy is not one of the European Union's (EU) competencies, the EU still recognises it as an important policy area for the integration's future development. A key initiative in this respect is youth mobility. The most important environment in which young people learn about mobility is the school. In this article, we are interested in how Slovenian teachers view mobility. We anticipate that teachers who teach EU contents, teachers with greater confidence in teaching EU topics, and teachers working on the general upper secondary education level are more aware of the opportunities for mobility available at their schools. Analysis confirmed our assumption.*

Keywords: *European Union, mobility, teachers, Erasmus, Slovenia*

Introduction

There is no single European educational policy or system in the EU. The EU's treaty framework places education policy under the competence of the member states, only leaving the EU with the possibility of softly influencing the member states' education system via the open method of coordination, like recommendations and established goals that member states want to reach. Apart from the open method of coordination, the EU has some "encouragement and evaluation mechanisms" available, which it relies on. One of these important mechanisms is the mobility of students and teaching staff (European Union, 1992: 47–48). While the work programme Education and Training 2010 (Council of the EU, 2002: 38) recognised "Increasing mobility and exchange" as one of five sub-goals of the fourth strategic goal "Opening up education and training systems to the wider world" (Council of the EU, 2002: 5), the work programme Education and Training 2020 acknowledges

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“Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality” as one of four strategic goals (Council of the EU, 2009: 2). A crucial measure in pursuing these mobility-oriented goals in the EU is the Erasmus+ programme. This includes the learning mobility of individuals and participation in strategic partnerships in the field of school education, learning mobility projects for individuals in vocational education and training, virtual mobility and international cooperation in virtual projects in the framework of the e-Twinning action, and mobility of young people for non-formal learning as part of the Youth in Action programme. Besides the Erasmus+ programme, students have opportunities for mobility through national programmes (Eurydice, 2018).

While the positive outcomes for higher education students and staff mobility are well recognised, the mobility of elementary and secondary school students continues to be under-researched. In this article, we are interested in the less researched aspect of mobility in European education. Namely, we focus on the attitudes to mobility held by teachers from elementary and secondary level education. Mobility programmes have chiefly targeted university students, with scholars thus directing less attention to the mobility of students on lower education levels. However, several different factors make the opportunities for student mobility on lower levels of education highly significant. First, elementary and secondary education is vital for the development of adolescents’ identity (Greischel et al., 2018), which may also be said for identifying as European. Moreover, analysis of Slovenian school curricula through which students should come to know about and experience the EU demonstrated that EU topics are rarely included (Štremfel et al., 2013), further adding to the importance of mobility projects. Second, while university students are already quite independent in searching for educational opportunities abroad, the opportunities for elementary and secondary level education students depend on the choices made available in their schools and local environment. Third, students’ mixed social and economic backgrounds give them different possibilities for mobility within the EU outside of the school environment and hence opportunities for mobility within school environment should be the same for all students. Last but not least, students are more likely to participate in a future mobility programme at university if they had previously learned about mobility options. For all of the above reasons, elementary and secondary education level teachers must be aware of their students mobility opportunities if the intention is to include them in mobility activities and encourage them in terms of mobility in the future.

Our main research question in this article is: How does elementary and secondary level teachers’ awareness of the opportunities for student mobility vary depending on: 1) the level of education on which teachers work; 2) whether teachers include EU topics in their courses; and 3) their level of

confidence in teaching EU content? We anticipate that teachers who teach EU contents, teachers with greater confidence in teaching EU topics, and teachers working on the general upper secondary education level are more aware of the mobility opportunities available at their schools. Our analysis is limited to the case of Slovenian teachers.

We approach the research question through the following methodological framework: a) a review of theoretical and empirical research, revealing the effects of student mobility; b) secondary data analysis of student mobility data (mainly retrieved from the CMEPIUS and ICCS databases); and c) a survey conducted among Slovenian elementary and secondary education level teachers. After presenting the issue and research question in the introduction, the article continues by overviewing the aims and benefits of mobility programmes along with the methodological framework, and presents data showing the inclusion of Slovenian schools in mobility programmes on all educational levels. The research results of our own empirical analysis are then presented and the research question is given an answer. In the conclusion, we sum up the main findings.

EU mobility programmes

The initiative for the Erasmus mobility programme already emerged in 1987. The ERASMUS programme is named after the Dutch humanist and philosopher Erasmus Desiderius and also acts as an acronym for “European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students”, which thereby also reveals its principal target group (Feyen and Krzaklewska, 2013: 10). The programme permits students to complete part of their courses in another programme in another country without needing to pay additional fees while the home university also recognises the completed obligations (Delmartino and Beernaert, 1998). Erasmus mobility thereby simultaneously enables students to take advantage of the benefits of studying in their home country as well as gaining experiences of studying abroad (Teichler, 2004). The programmes quickly became popular and today mobility programmes known under the name Erasmus programme are some of the best recognised European Union (EU) initiatives among European citizens, leading to the iconic status of the “Erasmus generations” (Wilson, 2011). Following the free movement of people, goods and services and peace among EU member states, student exchange programmes like Erasmus are the third-most recognised with respect to the EU alongside the euro (Eurobarometer, 2019).

While the Erasmus programme is best known for the mobility programme for university students, already in 1987 Erasmus broadened its subject area to teacher education – elementary, secondary, technical/vocational and adult education; still, little funding was initially located to non-university

students (Delmartino and Beernaert, 1998). Besides student mobility, the programme includes university staff exchanges, internships and teaching opportunities for business staff at universities (Feyen and Krzaklewska, 2013). Certain target groups, such as students on a non-university level of education and trainees, were included in associated programmes of the Lifelong Learning programme, like Leonardo da Vinci and Comenius. The Leonardo da Vinci programme supported vocational education and training (EACEA, 2013a). In contrast, the Comenius programme funded cooperation between preschools, elementary schools and secondary education so as to increase mobility, develop cooperation between schools, encourage language learning, upgrade pedagogical and didactical approaches and intensify teacher training (EACEA, 2013b). In 2014, the Erasmus for All programme was established (Feyen and Krzaklewska, 2013). The Erasmus+ Programme brings together the mobility of teachers, university staff, preschool children, elementary school pupils, high school students and adults within a single programme.

The chief aim of creating the Erasmus programme in the 1980s was ambitious in that mobile students would become more pro-European, more strongly attached to the EU and, more importantly, more supportive of European integration (Wilson, 2011). The more citizens participated in the mobility programme, the more the EU would benefit from a strengthened European identity, shared European cultural values and a feeling of European citizenship as well as multiculturalism (Rodríguez González et al., 2011). At the same time, young Europeans participating in mobility would regard themselves as European citizens by developing a European identity. This is important because the EU is struggling with a democratic deficit, the lack of a European demos and a common European identity that would ensure the greater political participation of European citizens and reinforce the core of the European Community. Although the impact of a mobility experience on long-term attitudes to the EU is hard to measure, empirical analysis shows that students who participate in mobility feel more European than their colleagues who remain at the home university (Oborune, 2015), are more pro-European even before they take part in mobility, and remain pro-European during their time abroad (Wilson, 2011: 1135) or they lived abroad before their studies and already value a higher international orientation (Teichler, 2004: 399).

Mazzoni and colleagues (2018) found positive associations even between short-term movement across European nations and identifying as a member of the EU. Specifically, mobility was related to the likelihood that young people would identify as European, with the historical, economic and political visions of the EU as a community, coupled with their intentions to vote at the next EU elections. The authors issue one caveat regarding the results.

Šerek and Jugert (2018) and Mazzoni et al. (2018) found that social class was a distinguishing factor, with those young people who had travelled more likely to come from higher-income families (Flanagan, 2018: 358). While not surprising, this does raise an important question about social class gaps in opportunities to take advantage of the EU's affordances, as well as the issues of whether such affordances are related to a broadening of political perspectives and with stronger identification with and support for the EU, or whether social class differences within generations portend future problems for a sustainable EU.

On top of a political and socialising role, mobility programmes should hold educational and economic potential (Wilson, 2011). Students thus expect "academic, cultural, linguistic and professional benefits" from studying abroad (Teichler, 2004: 397). The EU thus also anticipates several more practical positive aspects for the individuals who participate in mobility programmes like independence, intercultural sensitivity, learning a foreign language, accessing specialist knowledge not available in the local environment, becoming a more competitive worker and thereby improving chances of finding and maintaining a job not just in the home country but especially abroad (Jacobone and Moro, 2015). This is also reflected in the following statement by the European Ministers of higher education (Leuven Communiqué, 2009: 4):

Mobility is important for personal development and employability, it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions. Therefore, mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area.

In line with the EU's strategy to become a knowledge-based economy, mobility programmes contribute to the development of a common European labour market. By making young Europeans more mobile, mobility programmes encourage the spread of business ideas as well as the mobility of competitive workers, skills, techniques and technology across borders within Europe. After all, studying abroad contributes to career enhancement, helps cope with the ever greater international dimensions at work, improves the international competencies of workers and, finally, increases the chances of young Europeans to work abroad later in life (Rodríguez González et al., 2011).

Another highly anticipated benefit of student mobility is improved language skills or even the learning of a new foreign language. Multilingualism is strongly supported by the EU as a symbol of European diversity but also

as one of the main competencies for equip citizens for the labour market. Students indeed tend to take advantage of mobility to learn or improve one of the EU's major spoken foreign languages and are not discouraged by their lack of language knowledge (Rodríguez González et al., 2011). Besides personal mobility, leisure, cultural appeal and new experiences are the most important reasons for mobility, followed by academic and professional motives, improving career opportunities, adding to academic achievements and learning foreign languages (Jacobone and Moro, 2015).

The aims and benefits of mobility programmes and the involvement of elementary and secondary level teachers and students in mobility activities underscores the great relevance of this article. Further, elementary and secondary education level teachers not only impact their students' inclusion in mobility activities while still at school, but even later on the higher education level. Although the mobility programme facilitates the experience of studying abroad, a student might still find it not a particularly easy decision to take. When students become aware of the exchange possibilities sooner, this may add to their participation in mobility. In the empirical part of the article, we focus on teachers' attitudes to mobility. More specifically, we concentrate on how different teachers are aware of the opportunities for mobility at their schools and in their local environment. After presenting the methodology, we continue by setting out the empirical results.

Methodological framework

In this article, we first conduct secondary data analysis of the participation of Slovenian schools in mobility programmes. *The Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes* (CMEPIUS) overviews the inclusion of Slovenian schools in mobility activities and regularly evaluates the benefits of mobility for teachers and students from Slovenia on all levels of education. We focus on the participation of Slovenian educational institutions on all education levels in the Erasmus programme, in particular in: 1) mobility projects under Key Action 1 that support mobility projects in the field of education, training and youth which target students, trainees, apprentices, staff, youth workers and professionals involved in education, training and youth (EACEA, 2020a); and 2) cooperation projects under Key Action 2 for cooperation on the innovation and exchange of good practices which enable participating countries to work together while developing, sharing and transferring best practices and innovative approaches in the field of education, training and youth (EACEA, 2020b).

The analysis of teachers' awareness of the European mobility opportunities at their schools is based on the survey Teaching European Contents

in Slovenian Schools (Lajh et al., 2020) conducted among Slovenian teachers at the elementary and secondary educational level between December 2017 and April 2018. The web survey included open and closed questions on a variety of aspects of teaching European contents, such as inclusion in European projects, use of teaching materials, participation at seminars on teaching European contents, and the cross-curricular integration of European contents in school curricula. We define European contents as topics connected with the EU and the member states. In addition, teachers shared their views on the need to teach European contents, trust in political institutions, multiculturalism, multilingualism, migrations and European citizenship. The respondents were teachers who had included European contents in their courses as well as those who had not included EU-related topics in teaching lessons. The survey included 72 questions and 428 different variables and was completed by 349 teachers. Although the sample of teachers is not representative for the whole population of Slovenian teachers, the results still provide important insights into our research question. The majority of respondents were female, with only 15% being male, which corresponds to the share of male teachers found in Slovenian schools. On average, the respondents have 21.5 years of teaching experience and come from schools of different sizes. The majority of respondents teach in elementary education (63%), 21% of respondents teach in general upper secondary education, 15% in vocational education and 23% in professional education. Most teachers (75%) incorporate European contents in their lessons (Novak et al., 2020). Teachers participating in our survey chiefly come from schools with a considerable involvement in a variety of European projects and programmes. Namely, 61.4% were included in the Erasmus+ programme, 55.2% had been included in the previous Comenius programme which enabled the international activity and mobility of school-level students and teachers, and 32.4% participate in E-twinning projects which facilitate the collaboration of European schools through technology use. Schools are also included in other types of European projects that encourage students' positive attitudes to the EU but do not include mobility activities.

Our dependent variable in the analysis was teachers' awareness of mobility. More specifically, we understand teachers' awareness of mobility opportunities as the actual opportunities and identification of opportunities for their students to become included in mobility activities. We observed several dimensions of student mobility: 1) how likely it is for students to visit other EU member states in framework of their school activities; 2) how likely it is to meet peers from other EU member states as part of school activities; 3) how likely it is to obtain information about studying and working in other EU member states; 4) how likely it is to meet other European citizens during activities in the local environment; and 5) how likely it is for them to

participate in mobility projects such as Erasmus+ projects at their schools. Teachers evaluated the possibilities for participation in mobility activities on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 means very high possibility, 2 they have some possibilities, 3 they have few possibilities, and 4 they have no possibilities. In addition, we formed an index of mobility where we added up the values of the five mentioned variables and divided that by 5 (the number of included variables). The new variable thus includes values from 1 – very high possibility of participation in mobility activities to 4 – students have no opportunities to participate in mobility activities.

We observed the teachers' awareness of the student mobility opportunities and compared them with three independent variables: 1) type of school at which teachers are employed: elementary school, general upper secondary education, vocational and professional education; 2) whether teachers include EU topics in their classes (yes or no), and 3) how confident teachers feel about teaching European contents on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 means very confident, 2 quite confident, 3 not too confident, and 4 not at all confident. In the analysis, we compare the share of teachers who are aware of a very high number of possibilities for student mobility with independent variables and perform an additional correlation analysis between the index of mobility and the independent variables.

Slovenian schools in mobility programmes

To better understand Slovenian teachers' awareness of their students' mobility opportunities, we first need to present the level of participation of Slovenian schools and individuals in mobility programmes.

The higher education level is well familiar with international cooperation activities. Between 2007 and 2016, up to 79% of higher education institutions in Slovenia participated in EU projects and programmes (Cmepius, 2020a: 4). Over this 10-year period, the number of students and teachers participating in mobility activities steadily rose. In contrast, the number of teachers and students in cooperation activities remained generally stable in that period (Cmepius, 2020b).

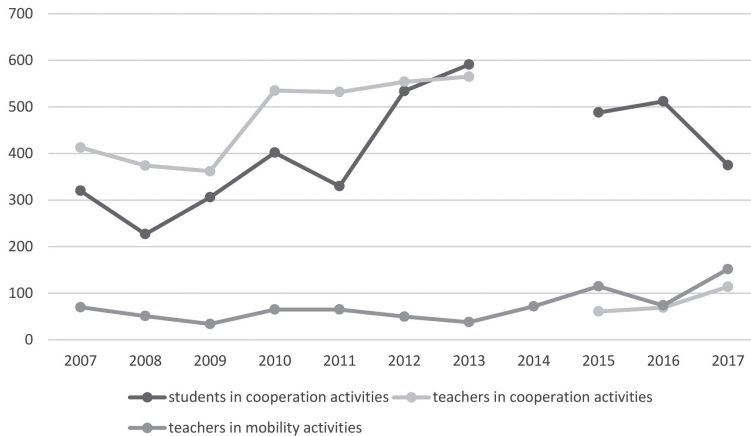
Although mobility activities initially targeted higher education institutions, the international cooperation between EU projects also started to include lower levels of education. Between 2007 and 2017, in Slovenia 35 preschool education institutions applied for 90 EU mobility projects while 26 institutions received 50 mobility projects; 137 preschool teachers participated in mobility activities; 39 preschool education institutions applied for 83 cooperation projects, with 29 institutions being successful and receiving 44 cooperation projects. Cooperation activities saw the involvement of 35 children and 613 teachers (Cmepius, 2020b).

Participation in EU projects and programmes is becoming more important for elementary and secondary education level schools. In the decade between 2007 and 2016, 76% of all elementary schools from all Slovenian regions participated in EU projects (Cmepius, 2020a: 2). In the 10-year period (2007–2017), 309 elementary schools applied for 744 cooperation projects, where 295 schools were successful and received 348 cooperation projects in which 4,085 students and 3,579 teachers participated. While mobility projects for elementary schools are only intended for teachers and not students, a large number of elementary schools also applies for mobility projects; namely, 316 elementary schools applied for 1,042 mobility projects, with 232 elementary schools being successful and receiving 511 projects, and 786 teachers having participated in mobility activities. The number of teachers engaged in mobility activities was gradually rising over the 10-year period (see Figure 1). The number of teachers and students participating in cooperation activities grew between 2007 and 2013. The data for period between 2014 and 2017 stand out, but we believe the data are incomplete (Cmepius, 2020b). According to participants, international cooperation at elementary schools contributed to the use of different teaching methods and the introduction of changes and new methods, the recognition and understanding of other school systems, the professional development of teachers, the exchange of knowledge among co-workers and development of skills for management and leadership (Cmepius, 2020a: 2).

The participation of secondary-level education in European projects is even more outstanding: 97% of all Slovenian secondary education institutions from all Slovenian regions have participated in EU projects (Cmepius, 2020a: 3). This means that secondary-level education institutions account for the biggest share of being included in EU projects. Between 2007 and 2017, 112 secondary education institutions applied for 614 cooperation projects, 95 secondary-level education organisations were successful and were given 263 cooperation projects in which 3,931 students and 1,639 teachers participated. Further, 138 secondary education institutions applied for up to 1,136 mobility projects. As many as 124 secondary-level education institutions were successful and received 765 mobility projects. Over the 10-year period, 8,436 students and 2,611 teachers participated in mobility activities. In the last years, the number of students and teachers participating in mobility activities increased noticeably (see Figure 2). While students from general upper secondary education and vocational and professional education participate in fairly equal numbers in cooperation projects, mobility projects are intended more for students from vocational and professional education (Cmepius, 2020b). In opinion of the participants, the international cooperation of secondary education institutions contributed to the cooperation between teachers, knowledge about modern styles of teaching and

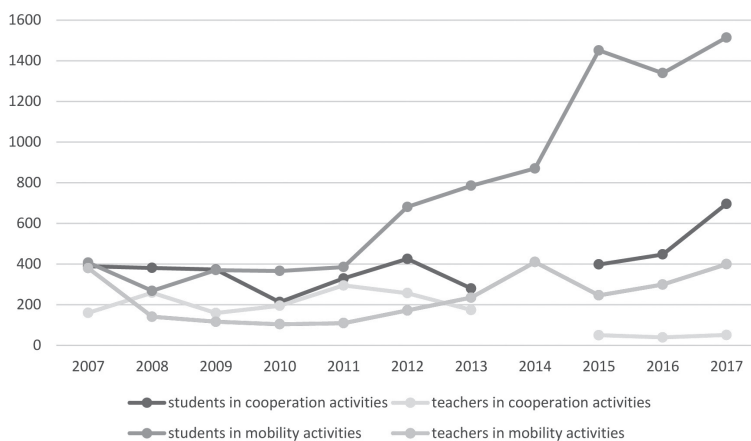
learning, the development of quality, vocational training, the development of organisational and management skills and recognition of the educational institution in the local environment and by employers (Cmepius, 2020a: 3).

Figure 1: NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN COOPERATION AND MOBILITY ACTIVITIES ON THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION LEVEL BETWEEN 2007 AND 2017¹



Source: Cmepius, 2020b.

Figure 2: NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN COOPERATION AND MOBILITY ACTIVITIES ON THE SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL BETWEEN 2007 AND 2017²



Source: Cmepius, 2020b.

¹ Tender years

² Tender years

Table 1: OVERVIEW OF SLOVENIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS' INCLUSION IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES BETWEEN 2007 AND 2017

	Participation in EU cooperation and mobility activities	Participation in mobility and cooperation activities in the frame of EU projects and programmes	Number of all teaching staff (2019/2020) and population of students (2018/2019)
Preschools	41 preschool education institutions received a project from the 52 that applied for an EU project	750 teachers 35 children	11,668 teachers 87,159 children
Elementary education	76% of all elementary-level educational institutions	4,365 teachers 4,085 students	19,268 teachers 186,330 students
Secondary education	97% of all secondary-level educational institutions	4,250 teachers 12,367 students	6,292 teachers 73,100 students
Higher education	79% of all higher education institutions	7,397 teachers 20,693 students	5,763 teachers 75,991 students
Adult education	80% of all institutions for adult education (known as Ljudska univerza)	626 teachers 178 students	19,700 students

Sources: Cmepius, 2020a; Cmepius 2020b; SURS, 2019; SURS, 2020.

Table 2: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF STUDENT MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES AND STUDENTS' ACTUAL EXPERIENCES

	Share of teachers who think students have possibilities to participate in the following activities	Share of students from EU member states aged 14 who already participated in the following activities (ICCS, 2009)
visits to other EU member states	65.5%	58%
meet peers from other EU member states	63.7%	53%
get information on studying and working possibilities in other EU member states	72.8%	51%
meet other European citizens in the local environment	66.9%	34%
participating in mobility projects (Erasmus +) with other EU member states	64.3%	25%

Source: Kerr et al., 2010; Lajh et al., 2020.

As we have shown with the secondary data analysis of the results gathered by Cmepius (2020b), Erasmus programmes and mobility activities are no longer limited to higher education institutions. Especially elementary and secondary education institutions are included in EU projects and programmes to a distinct extent (see Table 1). The number of students participating in mobility activities remains highest at the university level, although

the extent of secondary-level students' participation in mobility is not negligible. Further, the participation of teachers in mobility activities is high across the different education levels in absolute numbers. If we compare shares, the inclusion of teachers from higher education in mobility activities is much higher, especially with regard to elementary schools since the number of teaching staff is highest on the elementary level and every year teachers can participate in mobility activity. However, the difference is smaller in the share of teachers participating in mobility activities between the secondary educational level and the higher education level.

Slovenian elementary and secondary school teachers' awareness of mobility opportunities

Students are offered good possibilities to acquire particular experiences in frame of their schools participation in European projects. Frequency results of our index of mobility reveal that 37% of elementary and secondary school teachers believe the possibilities of their students to participate in all different dimensions of mobility are very high, almost 49% believe their students have at least some possibilities to participate in all different dimensions of mobility, only 13% think their students have few possibilities to participate in all dimensions of students' mobility, while 1.5% believe their students have no possibilities at all to participate in any of the five dimensions of student mobility.

We continue the analysis by describing elementary and secondary school teachers' awareness of students' opportunities to participate in each separate student-mobility dimension and compare it with the share of European students aged 14 who have already participated in mobility activities (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) research 2009). In general, a large share of elementary and secondary school teachers is aware of the different mobility opportunities for their students (see Table 2). The share of students who already had an opportunity to participate in these activities is smaller, although this is expected given that the students were only aged 14. The gap between the mobility opportunities the elementary and secondary school teachers are aware of and the students' actual experiences is smallest when it comes to visiting other EU member states. The highest share of elementary and secondary school teachers, on the other hand, is aware of the opportunity for students to receive information about studying and working in other EU member states. The information students obtain about the study and work possibilities in other EU member states is especially important for students even if they only wish to participate in mobility activities when they attend university. Elementary and secondary school teachers' attitudes to mobility activities can thereby

effect students not only on the current but also on the higher education level.

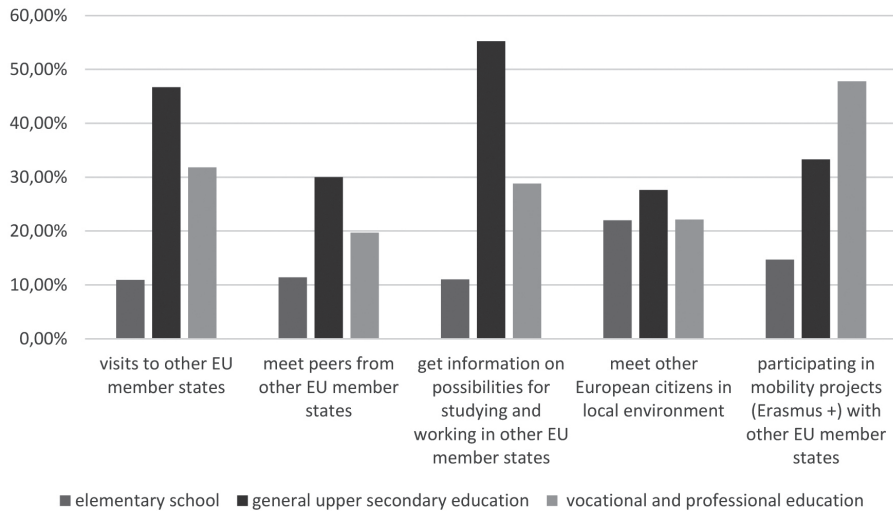
When comparing elementary and secondary school teachers' awareness of students' mobility possibilities, we notice that more possibilities for the mobility of students are available on the general upper secondary education level (see Figure 3). Although vocational and professional education schools participate in a variety of projects that enable students to conduct at least some of their practical classes and training in other EU member states, a smaller share of teachers from the vocational and professional education level believes their students' possibilities to participate in mobility activities are high. However, teachers of vocational and professional education stand out when it comes to opportunities to participate in mobility projects. Namely, teachers in vocational and professional education account for the highest share of those believing their students have very high possibilities of participating in Erasmus+ mobility projects. This is expected since vocational and professional education is more strongly included in direct mobility projects than general upper secondary education, as we demonstrated in the previous section (Cmepius, 2020b). As anticipated, elementary school teachers evaluate the possibilities of their students participating in mobility activities the lowest. Besides the age of students on different education levels, the type of school explains students' possibilities to become involved in mobility activities.

The smallest differences in the perception of students' mobility among teachers from different education levels are seen with the possibility to meet European citizens in the framework of activities organised in the local environment. Here teachers of elementary schools and vocational and professional education give equal scores for the possibilities to meet European citizens in the local environment. Only teachers on the general upper secondary education level assess the possibilities of students to meet European citizens as higher.

The index of mobility is statistically significantly correlated with the type of school at which teachers work. The higher the education level on which teachers are employed, the more likely they will be aware of more student mobility possibilities (Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.332 , $p > 0.001$). This result is expected since mobility programmes mostly target university students since, despite the programmes broadening their activities to also cover the secondary and elementary levels, older students are better prepared for mobility activities by for example possessing knowledge of a foreign language. Moreover, the secondary data analysis in the previous section of the article demonstrated that more students and teachers are participating in mobility activities on the secondary educational level than on the elementary educational level (Cmepius, 2020b). The difference in the

awareness of mobility between teachers teaching at different levels of education is connected with real difference in mobility possibilities.

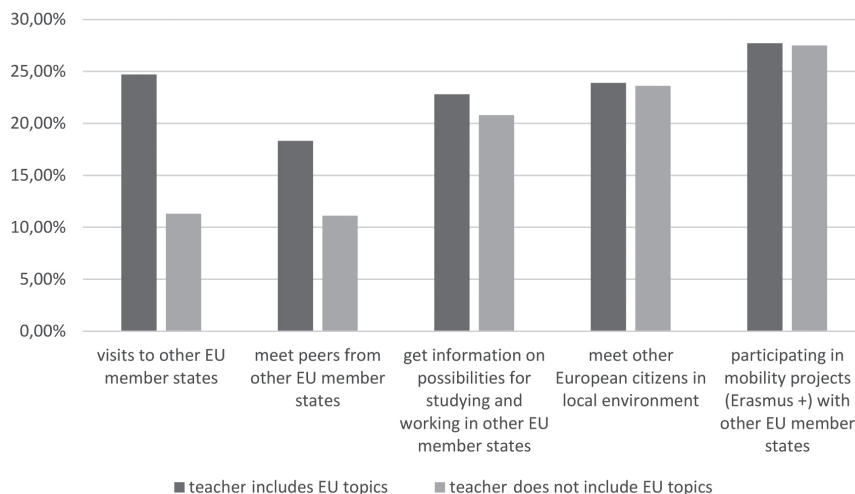
Figure 3: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF STUDENTS' VERY HIGH POSSIBILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES BY TYPE OF SCHOOL



Source: Lajh et al., 2020.

Only minor differences are noticed between the elementary and secondary school teachers who included EU topics in their classes and those who did not in their level of awareness of the student mobility possibilities. However, elementary and secondary school teachers who included EU topics in their classes are more aware of students' possibilities for visiting EU countries, meeting European peers and learning about studying and working possibilities in the EU, in comparison to elementary and secondary school teachers who did not include EU topics in their classes. Since the schools of teachers who do not teach EU topics are included in the same share of EU projects and programmes as the schools of teachers who teach EU topics, this difference cannot be explained simply by participation in EU projects. Interestingly, when it comes to meeting European citizens in activities in the local environment and being included in mobility projects, elementary and secondary school teachers who included EU topics and those who did not believe in equal shares that their students have high possibilities for these opportunities. Yet, the correlation between the index of mobility and whether elementary and secondary school teachers included EU topics in their classes is not statistically significant.

Figure 4: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF STUDENTS' VERY HIGH POSSIBILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES DEPENDENT ON TEACHERS INCLUDING EU TOPICS



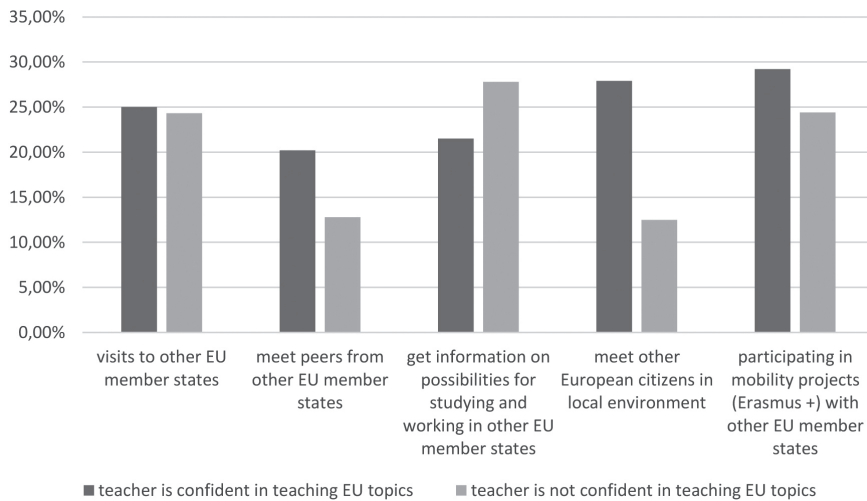
Source: Lajh et al., 2020.

Similarly, elementary and secondary school teachers' awareness of students' mobility opportunities also depends on the confidence in teaching Europe-related topics. We found it particularly interesting that confidence in teaching European topics is not connected in the same direction with awareness of students' mobility opportunities. Elementary and secondary school teachers who are confident and those who are not, are equally aware of students' possibilities to visit other EU member states. While a bigger share of elementary and secondary school teachers who are confident in teaching EU topics think their students have a high possibility of meeting peers from other EU member states, meet other European citizens in the local environment and participate in mobility projects. A higher share of elementary and secondary school teachers who are not confident in teaching EU topics believes their students have high possibilities of obtaining information about studying and working in other EU member states. It is possible that elementary and secondary school teachers with little confidence in teaching EU topics believe that information on studying and working in other EU member states is easy to acquire and underestimate the complexity of mobility. Nevertheless, we anticipate that elementary and secondary school teachers who are more confident in teaching EU topics are also more likely to be aware of students' possibility to obtain information on mobility.

The correlation between the index of mobility and the elementary and secondary school teachers' confidence in teaching EU topics is statistically

significant and positively correlated. The more confident teachers are in teaching EU topics, the more likely they are aware of higher possibilities of students' mobility. However, the correlation is very weak and almost negligible (Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.080, $p < 0.05$).

Figure 5: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF STUDENTS' VERY HIGH POSSIBILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES DEPENDENT ON TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE IN TEACHING EU TOPICS



Source: Lajh et al., 2020.

In general, elementary and secondary school teachers are aware of many positive aspects of their school's participation in project activities, ranging from: 1) learning about multiculturalism through an exchange of cultures and intercultural dialogue; 2) political socialisation with social learning, active citizenship education; 3) gaining new skills and experiences; 4) learning and practising foreign languages; 5) learning about the EU and its member states, through to more personal benefits like 6) socialising with peers and establishing close ties with colleagues from other EU member states.

Conclusion

Although the EU's mobility programmes (including Erasmus) initially targeted university students so as to increase support for the European integration and develop a common European labour market in which ideas, skills and competencies would freely travel across borders, the Erasmus programme's activities have been extended to lower education levels. Mobility

activities are now also more greatly available to general upper secondary education, professional and vocational education students, and teachers on all levels of education. However, in the area of cooperation activity, students on the lower education level can also obtain the opportunity to travel to other EU member states and meet other European peers and citizens. While university students are able to obtain mobility information on their own, for students on the elementary and secondary levels of education it remains vital that their teachers are aware of the availability of these opportunities at their schools. In this article, we were thus interested in the under-researched area of how elementary and secondary school teachers view mobility. In particular, we focused on how the type of education level on which teachers work, whether they include European contents in their courses, and how confident they feel while teaching European topics correlate with their awareness of the mobility opportunities at their schools. We argue this research question is relevant for two main reasons: 1) if students of elementary and secondary educational level wish to participate in mobility activities their teachers must be aware of the mobility opportunities available at their schools; and 2) since the decision to participate in a mobility programme on the university level is an important decision in their first years of studying, students should be informed about this opportunity as early as possible.

Our empirical research demonstrates that mobility on the elementary and secondary levels of education is not negligible and increasing in the last few years. Further, a large share of elementary and secondary school teachers is aware of the different student mobility opportunities at their schools. Elementary and secondary school teachers' awareness of the mobility opportunities at their schools correlates with the level of education on which they are teaching. Teachers from the general upper secondary education level show a statistically significant higher level of awareness than teachers from elementary schools. However, it is also very likely that students on the secondary level have more real opportunities for mobility than students on the elementary level. After all, students of elementary schools mostly participate in cooperation projects which only to a limited extent include mobility. In addition, whether elementary and secondary school teachers include EU topics in their courses is uncorrelated with their awareness of mobility opportunities. This result allows us to be reasonably optimistic since it means that students actually have considerable mobility opportunities during their education. Still, elementary and secondary school teachers who are more confident in teaching European topics are more aware of better mobility opportunities for students at their schools, although the correlation is very weak.

Despite being very popular, mobility programmes are currently challenged by the global health crisis brought by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. In future years, one may expect less student mobility on all educational levels, especially on lower levels where schools will probably avoid putting their students at risk. At the university level, students are more independent in their decisions, and some of their activities will probably move online. This will open a new possible research focus.

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