

TRACER STUDY ON VET MOBILITY

LUXEMBOURG NATIONAL REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocational education and training in Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the ministry of Education, Children and Youth (*MENJE; ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse*) is responsible for the planning and management of school education, of structures providing non-formal extracurricular education and care, and of a large part of adult education provision and support schemes. Vocational education and training (VET) is managed by the ministry of Education's VET service.

Secondary education (enseignement secondaire, ISCED levels 2-3) is offered in either classic or general secondary schools called "lycées". Most secondary schools provide both types of education (ESC "classic", and ESG "general" secondary).

The national public education system offers two main pathways in secondary education:

1. **Classic secondary education** (ESC; *enseignement secondaire classique*) mainly prepares pupils to continue further studies in higher education and university
2. **General secondary education** (ESG; *enseignement secondaire général*) is more vocationally oriented and prepares pupils, depending on the pathway chosen, either to continue their studies in higher technical education or to learn a trade via **vocational education and training**, or else to directly access the job market as qualified workers.

The public education system in Luxembourg also offers several other **organisational variations**, notably European education, International education, German-Luxembourgish education and UK-style education. The main objective of these alternative offers is to adapt the national education provision to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Luxembourg's residents. These variations are part and parcel of Luxembourg's public education system, and as such they are free of costs.

In 2018/19, pupils enrolled in ESG were 23,822 in public lycées and 3,394 in private schools. In the same period, ESC classic education was pursued by 12,504 pupils in public lycées and 261 in private establishments applying Luxembourgish official syllabuses (*MENJE, 2019. Les chiffres de la rentrée 2019/2020*).

Post-secondary non-tertiary education mainly consists of preparatory courses for a vocational master's qualification (brevet de maîtrise). These courses are organised by the Chamber of Skilled Trades and Crafts (Chambre des métiers) for artisans holding a vocational aptitude diploma or another recognised qualification. The master craftsman's diploma (ISCED 4) enables its holder to work as an independent artisan and to train apprentices.

Several secondary schools propose short-cycle programmes leading to **advanced technicians diplomas** (BTS; brevet de technicien supérieur, ISCED 5) in various fields, as well as specialised preparatory classes for the French "*grandes écoles*".

The overview of the full public education provision can be downloaded from the ministry of Education's website.

The Education ministry's publication on schools' programme provision (in French) '*Offre scolaire ESC-ESG: 2019-2020*' informs about the geographical location of the establishments. It also gives details on each school's educational offer.

In the framework of the present report, which focusses on vocational education and training mobility, the only type of provision applicable concerns General secondary education.

General secondary education (ESG; enseignement secondaire général) is technically oriented and comprises a variety of educational pathways, among which **vocational education and training**.

ESG offers several learning pathways of *technically-oriented* education. According to the learning path chosen, pupils can prepare for studies in higher education or higher technical education, or directly for working life.

The standard study duration in ESG depends on the target certification of each pathway.

It takes 7 years to obtain a **secondary school leaving diploma** or a **DT technician's diploma**, and an additional 8th year for diplomas in health professions and social professions. To obtain a vocational **DAP diploma** or a **CCP certificate**, the standard study duration is 6 years.

Study years are named in descending order from 7^e (*septième*), which is the first study year, downward to 1^{ère} (*première*), which is the 7th and final year in ESG.

ESG comprises 3 years of lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and 3 to 4 years (respectively 5 for social & health professions) in the upper cycle (ISCED 3).

Upper years (pupils aged 15 to 19) are divided into three regimes:

1. **Technical regime** (*régime technique*) has a standard duration of 4 years (*5 years for health and social professions*) and leads to a general secondary school leaving diploma (*diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales*) allowing access to higher education
2. **Technician's regime** (*régime de la formation de technicien*) lasts 4 years for a technician's diploma (*DT; diplôme de technicien*) providing access to higher technical studies
3. **Vocational regime** (*régime de la formation de technicien*) lasts 3 years and leads to either a vocational aptitude diploma (*DAP; diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle*) granting job market access as a qualified worker; or to a certificate of vocational ability (*CCP; certificat de capacité professionnelle*).

Vocational education and training (*enseignement et formation professionnels*) comprises the Vocational regime (*régime professionnel*) and the Technician's regime (*régime de la formation de technicien*). Curricula and syllabi are defined according to each kind of regime.

A complete list of the current programmes is available on the ministry's **educational portal**, where each school year's subject provision and the time grids can be downloaded.

Transnational apprenticeship (*apprentissage transfrontalier*) is defined by Luxembourg's legislation (*Code de l'éducation nationale 2020, p. 913*) as vocational education and training under apprenticeship contract, where the **practical part** of the training is performed under contract at a workplace in Luxembourg, and the part of formal **school education** at an institution of a neighbouring country. Transnational apprenticeship explicitly concerns the officially recognised professions and crafts (*ibid.*, pp. 917-919) where no VET programme is foreseen in Luxembourg. In cases where a VET provision does exist in Luxembourg, the minister may authorise transnational apprenticeships in consultation with the professional chambers concerned.

General information about the implementation of VET mobility in Luxembourg

The European Union's programmes in the field of education and training – the LLP (Lifelong Learning Programme) in the period 2007-2013, followed by the Erasmus+ programme from 2014 to 2020 – had been offering learners and educational staff the opportunity of transnational learning mobilities. Mobility abroad was aimed at enabling learners and staff to acquire new knowledge and skills.

In vocational education and training (VET), transnational learning mobilities allow learners as well as staff to receive training abroad. For the VET learners, the mobilities consist in traineeships at companies or VET centres in other countries.

For VET learners, learning mobilities abroad are important experiences. They can improve their language skills and discover different approaches to learning and to the acquisition of vocational skills. The learners get to know other training methods than their usual ones as performed in their home country. They also get in touch with the host country's culture. In addition, most often a transnational learning mobility represents for VET learners their first professional experience abroad. Having acquired new formal and informal skills the learners also improve their employability, which contributes to their smoother transition towards the labour market.

From 2007 to 2020, the European Commission offered VET learners from Luxembourg funding for over 2,318 traineeship mobilities abroad. Many VET schools confirm that thanks to the European programmes they could offer and fund learning mobilities abroad which would not have been affordable by neither the institutions nor the VET learners themselves. The European funds, from the earlier Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) or the subsequent Erasmus+ Programme, were essential in making these trainings and stays abroad possible.

Between 2007 and 2018, only 4 mobilities were carried out by VET apprentices. In fact, the demand for transnational mobilities of VET apprentices is relatively small in Luxembourg due to the fact that the apprentices are required to attend their courses at school 1 to 3 days a week, in the same period of time as their vocational apprenticeship in an enterprise. For this reason, VET learners' transnational mobilities still remain complicated to organise.

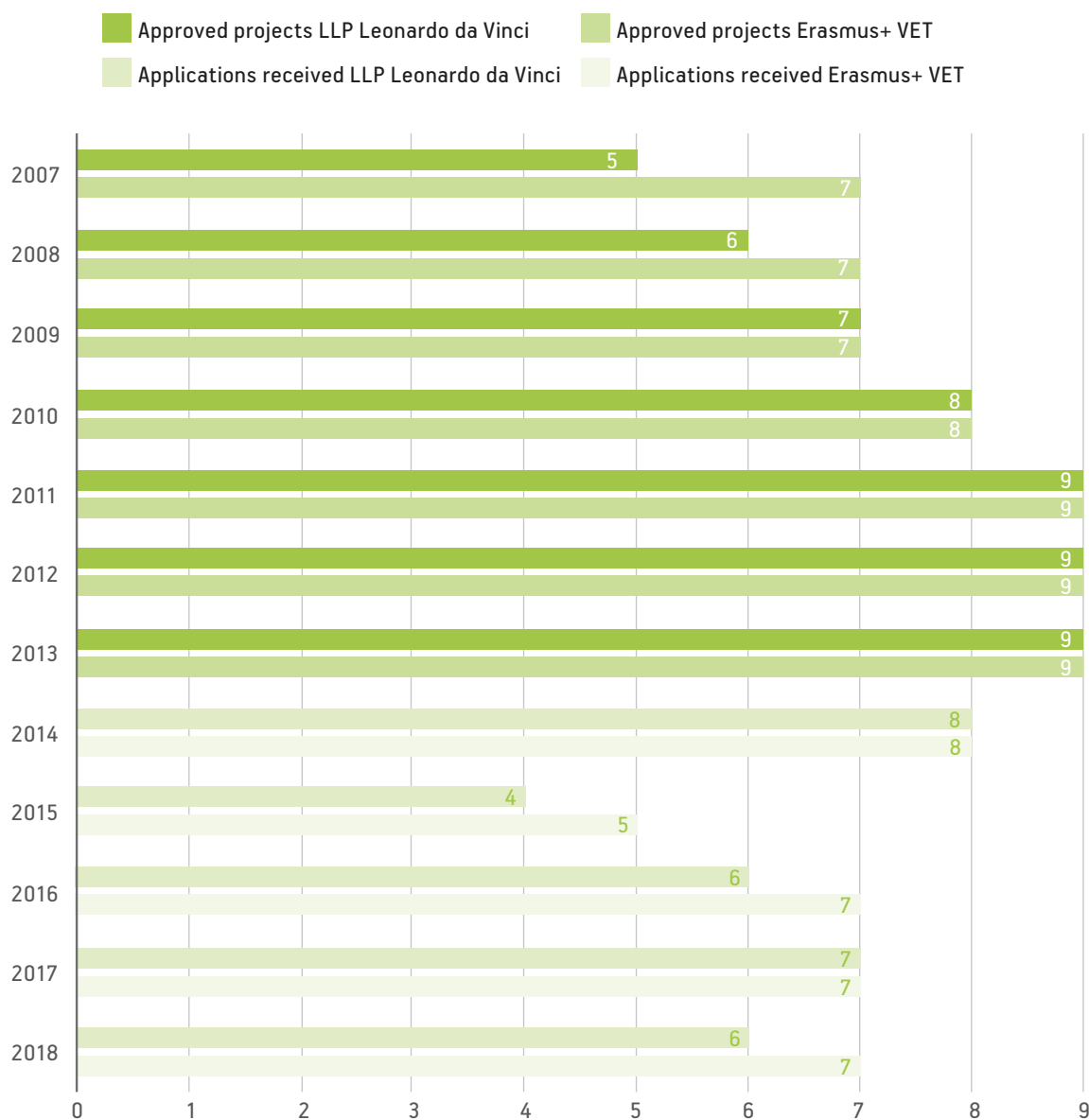
Another national specificity is multilingualism, which is part and parcel of everyday life in Luxembourg.

Few Luxembourgers indeed would use only one language in the course of a day. Switching languages, even within a sentence, is informal common practice among Luxembourgers. People use ideas and expressions from different languages at the same time and enrich their own national language with new influences. The country has three official languages: the national language is Luxembourgish, the legislative language is French, and the administrative and judicial languages are French and German. Other languages, such as Portuguese and English, are becoming more important in daily life as a result of the increasing presence of citizens with different cultural backgrounds. Since 2018, the government is implementing a promotion strategy for the Luxembourgish language, which is becoming citizens' lingua franca. The country's linguistic and cultural openness is perceived as a great asset, not least in respect of Luxembourg's active participation in the construction of a common Europe. In the Luxembourgish education system, pupils start learning German and French as from the very first years of primary school. English is taught intensively at secondary school, sometimes in addition to other languages like Latin, Spanish and/or Italian.

Luxembourg's VET learners' multilingualism facilitates their transnational mobilities, many of which are realised in the so-called Greater Region – a territorial cooperation area (EGTC; European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) made up of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, the Lorraine region in France, and Wallonia and the German-speaking Community in Belgium.

Multilingualism in Luxembourg thus shows the citizens' openness towards other people and ideas, while at the same time it shapes a welcoming and positive attitude towards cultural enrichment and new influences from outside the country.

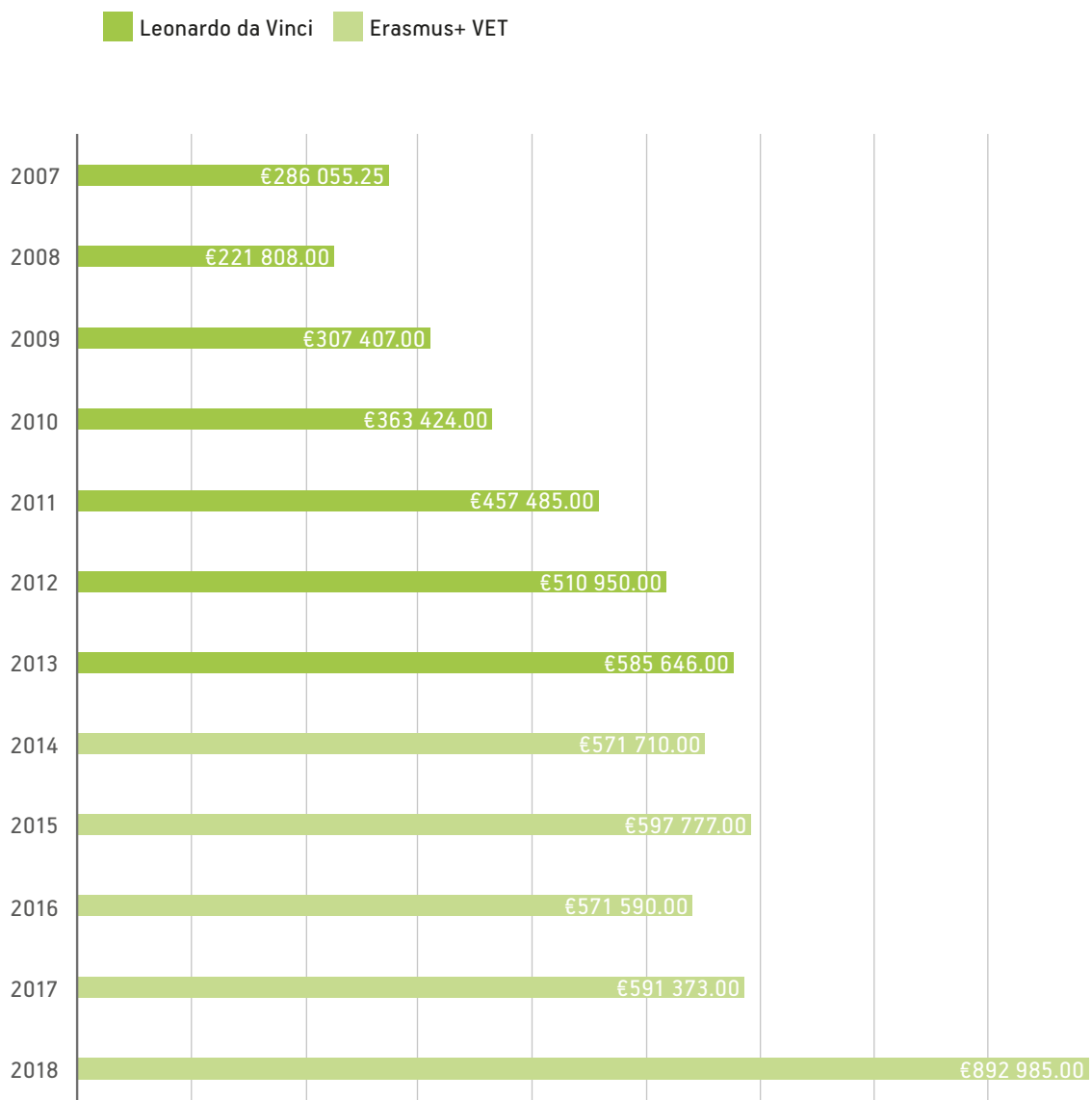
Figure 1: Number of projects (submitted / approved) under the different calls for projects of the Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo da Vinci mobility 2007-2013) and the Erasmus+ Programme (Key action 1, VET mobility 2014-2018)



Under the LLP calls from 2007 to 2013 and Erasmus+ calls from 2014 to 2018, the National Agency received 90 applications for Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Projects and Erasmus+ KA1 VET mobility projects, of which 84 projects were selected and funded. In comparison with

other participating countries, the success rate of the submitted projects, amounting to 93.3%, is relatively high. To date, 62% of all VET schools in Luxembourg, where the curricula foresees VET placements, have participated in the LLP or Erasmus+ Programmes.

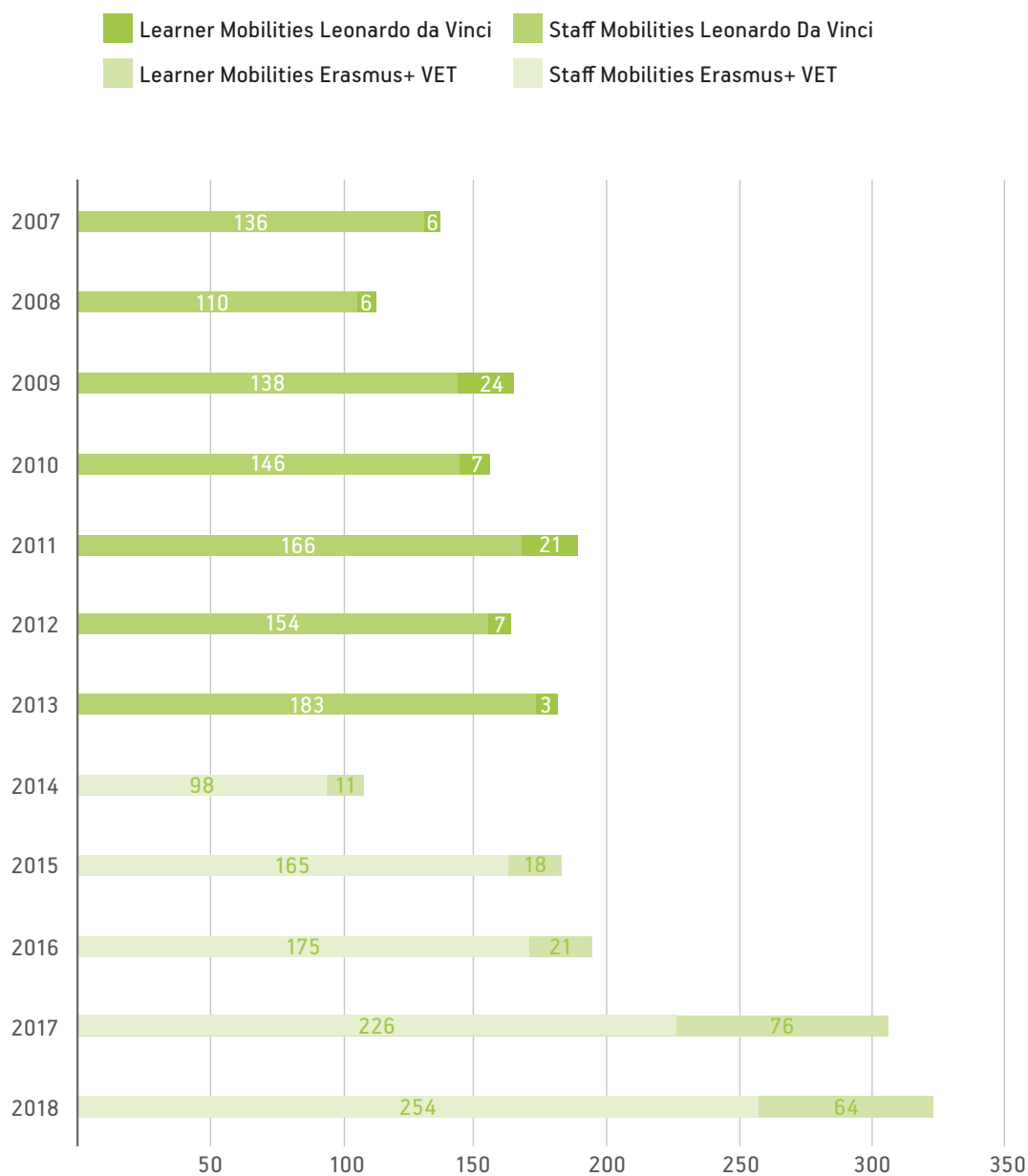
Figure 2: Funds allocated to the selected projects of the Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, and of the 2014-2018 Erasmus+ Programme under Key action 1, VET mobility of individuals



In total, nearly 6,000,000 euros have been allocated to the 84 VET mobility projects selected and funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ between 2007 and 2018. The allocated budget represents 94.87%

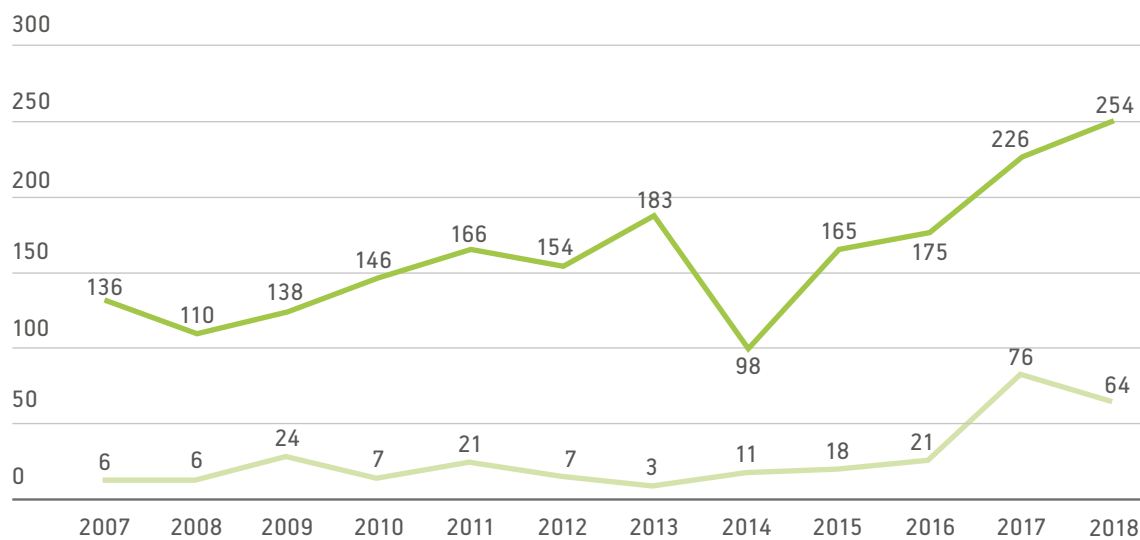
of the total available budget for VET mobility projects under the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ Programme under the calls for proposals of the years 2007 to 2018.

Figure 3: Mobilities carried out by VET learners and VET staff under calls of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) and the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2018)



The average number of realised VET mobilities per call year from 2007 to 2018 amounts to nearly 185

mobilities. In total, 2 215 VET mobilities have been realised, most of which by VET learners (1,951).

Figure 4: Number of VET mobilities from 2007 to 2018

2014 was a transition year between the former LLP Programme and the newly starting Erasmus+ Programme, which explains the higher demand in projects and mobilities of the 2013 call (last LLP year) compared to the call 2014 (first Erasmus+ year). From 2014 to 2018, the number of realised mobilities per year have been steadily growing.

At the moment of the present research, the figures of achieved mobilities within VET mobility projects selected from 2007 to 2018 were not yet the final ones, since several Erasmus+ KA1 VET mobility projects of the 2017 and 2018 calls were not finalised at that moment.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

General information on the scope of the study

This study was launched by the National Agency Anefore in 2018 with a view to obtaining an independent perspective, as experienced from the viewpoint of the participants, on the implementation of the programmes managed by the Agency. The study was conducted in cooperation with the SCRIPT (Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologiques). The main purpose was to collect participants' opinions on the skills they had acquired or developed thanks to their participation in these European transnational learning mobility programmes and to contribute with the results of the national study to a European study launched by the Polish National Agency FRSE.

In Luxembourg, Anefore is the National Agency in charge of the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme and its prior counterpart, the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). Since 2007, the Agency manages the administrative and financial aspects of the projects funded, monitors how they are carried out, disseminates the projects' results and communicates about the impact of these European programmes.

As a preliminary observation, it needs to be pointed out that, in general and over the years, the feedback from the side of VET mobility projects' beneficiaries has been positive. This may lead to a first conclusion that VET mobility projects, with their learning mobilities included, have actively contributed to raise the level of internationalisation of the participating VET schools, thus improving the quality of each establishment's vocational education and training activities.

It is more difficult, though, to reliably assess the impact of VET mobilities on the participants, given that the national agencies in the different countries usually have no direct contact with the projects' individual participants. Similarly, national agencies also lack information on the learners' later education and career paths, on how participants' opinions about mobility may have changed or not, and on how the mobility experience has influenced participants' further educational and professional choices.

In its day-to-day work, Anefore, Luxembourg's National Agency for the implementation of the European programmes in education, youth and sports, is mainly in contact with the beneficiaries of these programmes. The Agency has no direct contact with the individual

participants of the institutions' mobility projects, in this case with former VET learners having carried out learning mobilities.

The core objective of this study was to evaluate the impact that VET projects undertaken in the framework of the former LLP Programme "Leonardo da Vinci" and the Erasmus+ Programme "Key action 1- VET mobility projects" would have had on the participants' further career paths. The study also covered the intercultural and social dimensions of the VET learners' training experience abroad, as results of their learning experience in other countries and different cultural contexts. Special focus was put on aspects such as openness and overcoming of obstacles, in particular language, cultural, and social barriers.

In the course of this research, former VET learners having participated in VET mobility projects have been contacted via their former or current VET school and have been asked to assess the result of their learning mobilities and to evaluate the impact of their experience abroad. The data collected through their answers to the surveys and interviews allowed Anefore to identify the competences former VET trainees reported to have developed and the extent to which these competences had proved useful for their subsequent learning, their personal development or professional career.

The information thus collected has also helped to identify the former traineeship participants' profile, to appreciate their professional motivations and the rationale behind their work-related choices and their keenness to pursue further education.

Research timeline

The present study was conducted from May 2018 to mid-August 2019.

The link to the online survey was sent to the former VET beneficiary institutions at the beginning of October 2018. The beneficiary institutions forwarded the questionnaires to their former mobility participants. Responses were collected until mid-January 2019.

The individual interviews and focus group discussions with VET learners took place on 9 November 2018.

The additional interviews and focus group discussions with heads of VET schools and VET staff coordinating

VET mobility projects took place between 23 October and 6 December 2018.

Collected quantitative and qualitative data was analysed in the first semester 2019 and the study was completed with the finalisation of the present report by mid-August 2019 feeding in the European VET Tracer Study coordinated by the Polish National Agency FRSE .

The national VET tracer study report was finalised, translated in French and published in November 2020.

Methodology

As mentioned above, the study focusses on the assessment of the impact that transnational vocational mobility has had on the participants from Luxembourg, and in particular on the consequences of transnational learning experiences on VET learners' subsequent education and career development.

The qualitative and quantitative research approach in this study was based on the methodology developed by the Polish National Agency FRSE in 2017 for a similar

study on Polish VET mobility participants. The methodology was adapted as needed to fit the Luxembourgish national context.

The research tools used were the following:

- + Online surveys addressed to all former VET learners who had taken part in VET mobility projects under a call for proposals of the former LLP and/or the current Erasmus+ Programmes, during the time span between 2007 and 2018
- + Individual in-depth interviews with former mobility participants
- + Focus group interviews with VET learners who had already previously taken part in vocational placements abroad.

The research tools focus not only on the purely vocational skills the learners may have acquired in the framework of formal education,

but also on the soft skills obtained through non-formal education as part of the vocational mobility programme agreed between institutions.

The main focus of the study was identified by the following 3 key questions:

- + Did transnational mobilities have an impact on future careers and on the personal development of the former trainees, and, if so, to what extent?
- + What new competences and skills did mobility participants acquire or develop during their practical vocational training abroad?
- + To what extent have the acquired competences proven useful, especially in relation to professional status and standing on the labour market?

The triangulation of adopted tools resulted from the differing characteristics of the two respondent groups (vocational school pupils and graduates). The triangulation of the planned research methods was primarily aimed at collecting in-depth information on experiences related to mobility and its effects.

The online questionnaire served as the basic research tool. A hyperlink to the questionnaire was sent to the beneficiary VET schools having implemented European LLP and/or Erasmus+ VET mobility projects between 2007 and 2018. The schools were requested to distribute the link among the former and current VET learners who had carried out a VET transnational mobility.

The quantitative part of the study was meant to cover the entire population of former VET transnational mobility participants. There was no other criterion for the VET learners to be included in the survey than the fact that they had participated in mobility abroad in the framework of the programmes covered by the study.

In the end, Anefore received 130 anonymised questionnaires with the participants' responses included. The survey used the encoding system EVASYS, which ensured the anonymity of the responses collected.

All of the respondents met the study criteria, but not all of them provided an answer to every question. This explains, in the process of the answers' evaluation, the disparities in the total numbers of responses given to each separate item. The number of answers will be marked as a reference on top of each table in this report (N = number of responses).

In addition to the research via questionnaires for VET learners of mobility projects between 2007 and 2018 and via interviews and group discussions with some of these learners, the National Agency also took the initiative of conducting interviews with several members of the VET staff who had been managing the VET mobility projects, as well as with the heads of 7 VET schools. The idea was to complement the views and ideas of VET learners or graduates and thus to obtain a more complete final picture.

Research population

The study focuses on VET learners' transnational learning mobilities (internships and traineeships) organised via VET mobility projects and funded by European education programmes supporting activities in the area of vocational education and training:

- + Leonardo da Vinci programme, part of the former Lifelong Learning Programme carried out in the years 2007-2013
- + Erasmus+, the current programme, carried out in the years 2014-2020.

Table 1: Offer of VET learning mobilities abroad in the framework of European education programmes

	Lifelong Learning Programme Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects	Erasmus+ Key action 1 VET projects: Learning mobility of individuals
Project implementation time	2007-2013	2014-2020
Minimum duration of mobility	2 weeks	
Maximum duration of mobility	39 weeks (approximately 9 months)	12 months

Detailed sample description

The target population covered by the study was the whole population of former VET participants in transnational learning mobility. In other words, the survey was addressed to all VET learners who had taken part in one of the 84 European VET learning mobility projects funded by either the LLP programme Leonardo da Vinci or the Erasmus+ programme under Key action 1, Learning mobility of individuals.

Ideally, the number of potential responses to the survey would have amounted to a total of 1 951 which corresponds to the number of participants in transnational VET learner mobilities between 2007 and 2018. But disappointingly, only 130 persons completed the online questionnaire.

This just represents close to 6.7% of all the participants in the mobilities between 2007 and 2018.

It must be pointed out that in many cases the VET schools were not able to get in touch with their former VET learners who had completed a transnational mobility in the time span covered by the research.

In addition to these difficulties, it appeared that the contact data of many participants were outdated. As long as the VET learners were still enrolled at their institution, they had been using the e-mail address from their school. Evidently, having left the school after graduation, they didn't use these e-mail accounts any more. Furthermore, in compliance with the applicable

General Data Protection Regulation, VET graduates leaving their institution may choose whether they want to communicate their further personal contact data to their former school. This explains why so few VET learners could actually receive the questionnaire.

Other difficulties of the survey had to do with informatic protection. The online tool by which the questionnaire was to be filled out didn't work outside

the Greater Region. This may help to explain why the survey had such a weak response from former VET learners possibly living abroad.

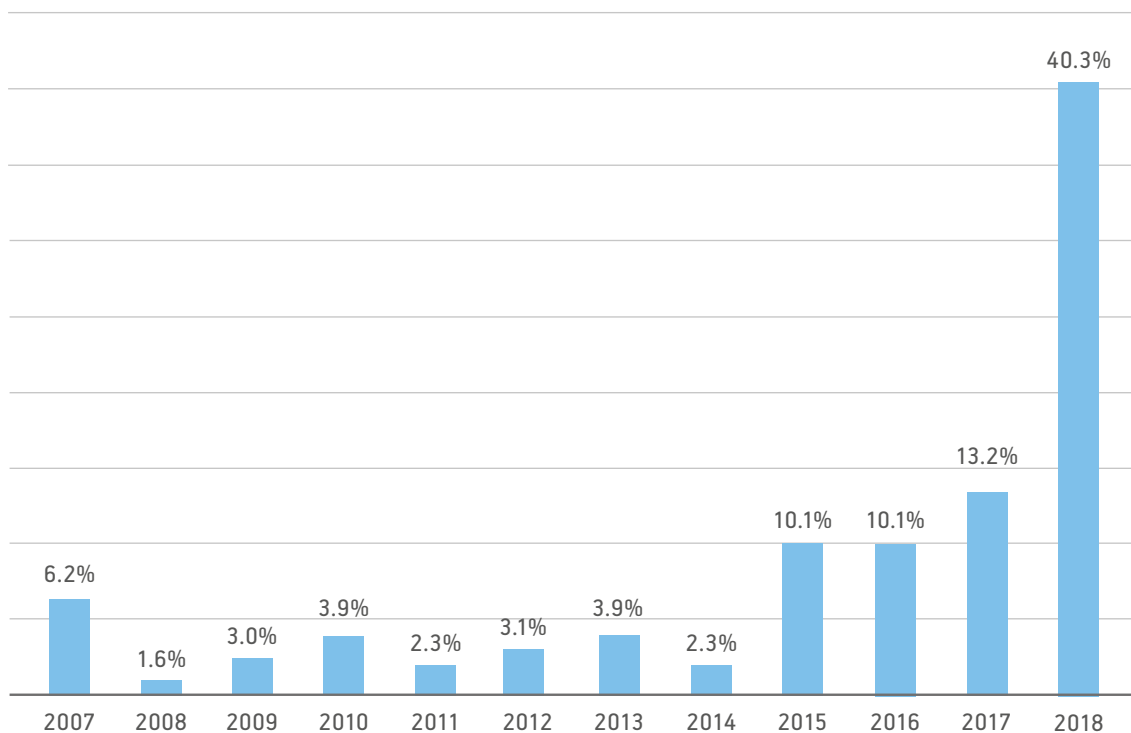
Several VET schools offered support to the survey by publishing a link to the questionnaire on their social media profiles. The National Agency also promoted the study questionnaire during the national student fair in November 2018.

Profile of the questionnaire's respondents

From a total of 130 respondents, 3 didn't answer this question. Of those who did, 1.6% did not want

to mention their gender, 55.1% were female and 43.3% were male.

Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of VET transnational mobility per year of completion (N = 130)



Most (53.5%) of the 129 respondents carried out their VET mobility in 2017 or 2018. The total amount of mobilities in these two years represents 76% of all VET mobilities that had previously been realised in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme (from 2014 to 2018). Only 24% of the respondents went on learning mobilities organised under the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013).

These figures don't necessarily show the full picture. Possibly they may only reflect the circumstance that, at the moment of this research, VET schools were better able to get in touch with their current or recent VET learners – those who carried out their mobility period recently and were still enrolled at their VET school, or the recent graduates with whom the VET schools were still in touch.

Detailed sample description

Asked about their country of residence, 90.5% of the respondents to this question state that they are still living in Luxembourg. The remaining 9.5% of them have moved to another country. 4 participants gave no answer to this question.

According to the 115 responses, 32.2% persons live in the north of Luxembourg, 12.2% in the west, 19.1% in the east and 23.5% in the south. The remaining 13% live in Luxembourg city. For the 12 former VET learners indicating that they live abroad, temporarily or permanently, 41.7% live in the country where they previously performed their transnational VET mobility. Those living abroad were staying in France (3), Germany (3), Belgium (3), Austria (1), Italy (1) and Switzerland (1).

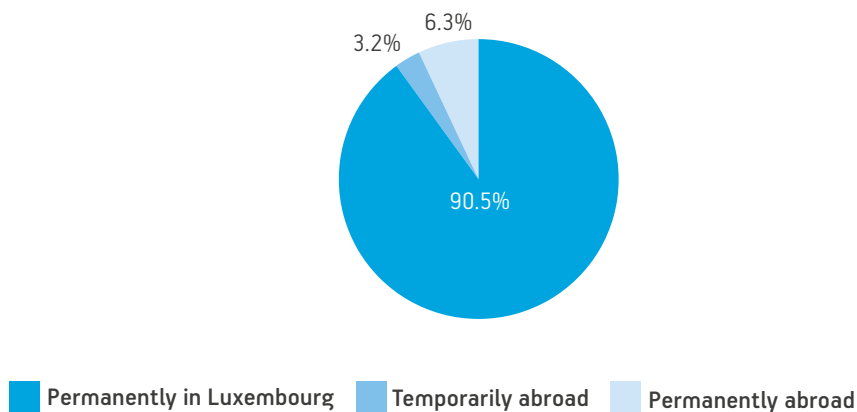
On the basis of 99 responses, it seems that the population examined in this survey is predominantly living in rural areas (93%), considering the fact that there are only 7 cities in Luxembourg with more than 15,000 inhabitants.

Out of 125 respondents, 43.2% were still VET school pupils at the moment they filled in the questionnaire. From the 56.8% others, 2.7% were enrolled at higher education institutions, whereas 39.7% had already graduated from higher education.

Out of 73 respondents, 87.7% were already active on the labour market (79.5% were occupied in a full-time job and 8.2% in a part-time job), and the remaining 12.3% were unemployed.

Asked whether they would consider to continue academic studies, 13% of the 31 respondents to that question stated that they intended to go on to undertake university studies (6.5% were already enrolled in studies (master or Phd levels) and 6.5% intended to do so).

Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of the respondents' country of residence (N = 126)



Individual and group interviews

Individual interviews (IDI)

Target group: current VET graduates (who had already entered the labour market or were continuing further education at another institution). In our case, interviews had been organised with 2 VET graduates who were studying at a higher education institution at the moment of the interview.

Interviews conducted: 2

Focus group interviews (FGI)

Target group: current VET pupils with a mobility experience. The focus group interviews were in-depth interviews with 2 learners per group.

Interviews conducted: 7 interviews with 7 VET schools were carried out between 23 October and 6 December 2019. Among these, 2 interviews were held with the head of the respective VET school. The other 5 interviews were rather focus group interviews, with the heads of the 5 VET schools but also with several staff members who coordinated the VET mobility projects, and sometimes even members of staff who had themselves carried out a VET staff mobility in the past.

Research limitations and preliminary remarks

A major limitation to this research was, as already mentioned above ("Detailed sample description"), the difficulty of reaching the target group to be studied, which was intended to be the entire population of former VET learners having participated in transnational learning mobility from 2007 to 2018.

Similar limitations also hindered the selection process of participants for the qualitative part of the study, in particular regarding the individual in-depth interviews. For this reason, the option was to limit the number of VET graduates for the interviews to only 2 recent graduates.

Although the study mainly focusses on the competences acquired by the participants during transnational VET mobility abroad, it has to be underlined that the data thus collected is of declaratory nature and merely reflects the participants' points of view. These opinions have been complemented by the supplementary sub-chapters dedicated to the additional interviews organised with VET school heads and members of staff coordinating the VET mobility projects.

Quotes presented in this report have been abridged and edited, meaning that they are of indicative nature, although in each case the literal meaning of the responses has been preserved. The quotes thus don't reproduce the exact wording of the actual conversations.

The critical mass of responses was too limited to allow any generalisation of the findings that may appear as results. The percentages of the answers are indicated, but cannot be evaluated reliably nor generalised. The graphics of the statistics mention the total number of answers in brackets (N =...).

N.B. – The sources of all the tables and figures in this report are the answers given by the VET learners to the questions and topics received through the online questionnaire.

III. MOBILITY EXPERIENCE

Motivation to take part in the project

61% of the respondents indicate that their trainee placement abroad was compulsory in the framework of their curriculum. Where this was the case, the trainees were awarded a vocational degree at their home institution upon satisfactory completion of their traineeship abroad.

Among those for whom the stay abroad was a part of their mandatory training, 40% think they would have taken part in a European mobility programme even if it had not been compulsory. 33% state that they might potentially have wanted to do a traineeship in another country, and only 14% say they would not have undertaken a traineeship abroad without this obligation.

While traineeships are commonly embedded in the VET curriculum so as to give pupils an opportunity to get to know the actual working environment of their future profession, the learners don't necessarily have to look for a VET placement abroad. Some of the young people interviewed say they chose their destination abroad on a voluntary basis. Their choice was essentially motivated by financial considerations, and the financial support provided by the European Union proved to be a strong incentive for their decision.

***"If there had been no Erasmus+, I would not have gone abroad. Because it is hard to cover the costs of such a stay without a financial support."
"[...] going to England would not have been possible for me without the support of the Erasmus+ Programme."***

Likewise, obligatory traineeship periods abroad can be boosted by financial incentives. This was indeed the case with the agricultural VET pupils in Luxembourg.

"Taking up a traineeship abroad is also relevant for any young farmer because trainees have to spend 6 months abroad in order to be entitled to state allowances."

Approximately 76% of the respondents had specific expectations related to their mobility. The objectives are diversified and cover three areas in particular.

Figure 7: Goals set by the trainees (N = 100)

91% of the respondents say that their expectations were met. The former trainees also confirmed in their individual interviews that the relevant areas of competence had been developed as a result of their mobility. Hence it seems logical that the vast majority of former trainees take a favourable view on their mobility experience. 92.2% of the respondents still keep their stay abroad in good memory.

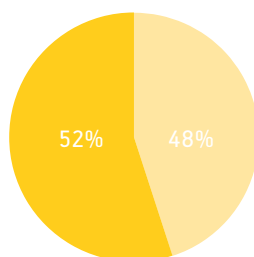
When asked at what stage in education their trainee placement abroad had been organised, 26.6% out of 130 respondents mention that it took place after the end of their initial vocational education. However, as the final project reports don't contain any information on the recent graduates' mobilities, this percentage must be strongly relativised. In any case, there is no reason to suppose that those respondents' traineeships took place on a voluntary basis.

Details on the placements' organisational aspects (including organisational models)

In general, the organisational aspects of the placements were mainly determined by the rules of the European programmes under which the funding for mobility was awarded. In that regard, the sending VET institutions were committed to the overall quality standards set for mobilities, particularly in terms of the envisaged learning outcomes, of participants' preparation, of practical elements' management as well as of establishing appropriate communication channels with both the participants and the host organisations.

Figure 8: Type of recognition received after a mobility abroad (N = 121), in percentages

■ Europass Mobility ■ Validation of the trimester(s) spent abroad



It should be kept in mind, though, that in Luxembourg the traineeship scheme is, first of all, an integral part of the initial VET curriculum, and as such it is encompassed within the national legal framework. According to the results of the questionnaire, almost half of the respondents confirm that their placement abroad had been validated by their VET institution; the remaining participants assert that they were awarded recognition of their mobility learning in the form of a Europass Mobility Certificate.

In order to put these results into context, it needs to be considered that in Luxembourg all VET pupils obtain their vocational degree upon satisfactory completion of both their initial education curriculum and their practical traineeship. Just a small percentage of VET learners undertake a mobility outside the framework of their curriculum. This is the population of those pupils who had been given only a Europass Mobility certificate.

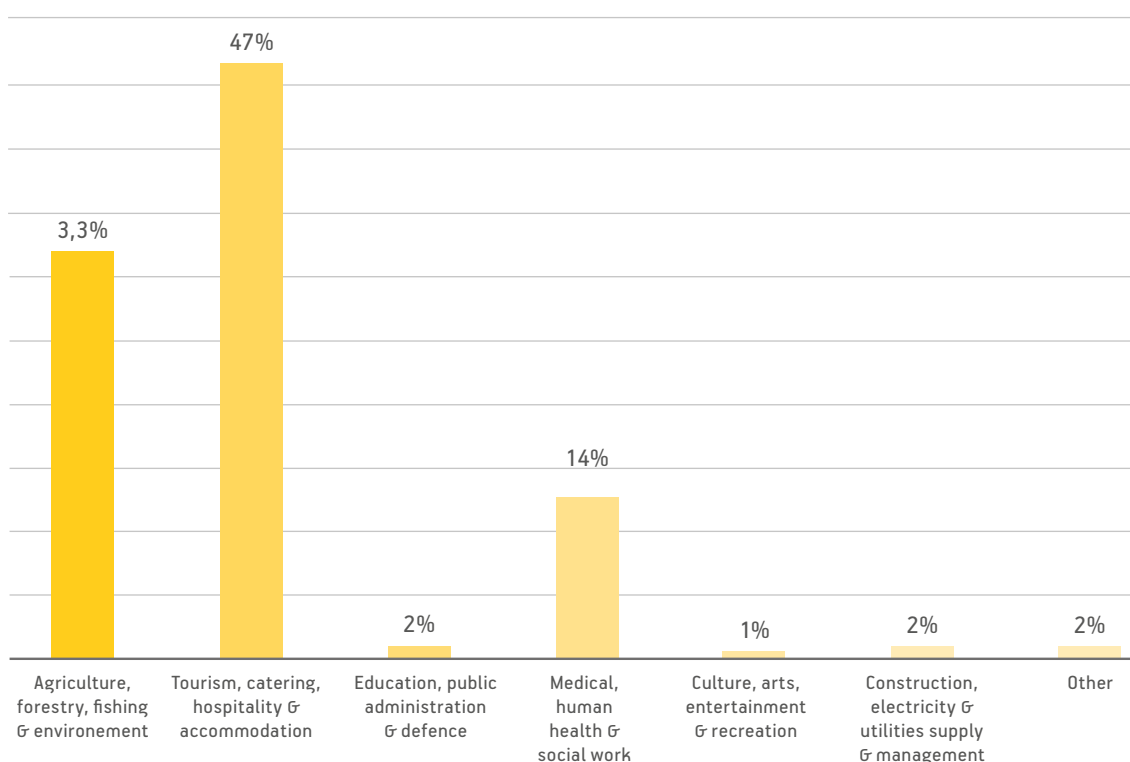
That being so, there is no doubt that Europass Mobility was, and still continues to be, a valuable tool for confirming knowledge and skills acquired during trainee placements abroad.

For this reason Anefore, being Luxembourg's National Agency for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, has instructed all VET project holders to award the Europass Mobility Certificate to every VET learner within their mobility projects.

Information obtained by means of this survey is deemed to be of potential intrinsic quality insofar as most respondents have gained a wider perspective over time, when asked to assess their mobility experience at a later moment in time. In fact, 57% of respondents finished their placement more than 12 months prior to the survey. The results of the study are thus ancillary, if not complementary, to the overall outcome of the EU participant survey, which is completed immediately at the end of the mobility.

For the vast majority of participants (78.5% of 130 respondents), the trainee period had lasted between 1 and 3 months. The statistical representativeness of trainees enrolled in public schools (46% of 119 respondents) on the one hand, and in vocational education institutions (54%) on the other, is more or less balanced.

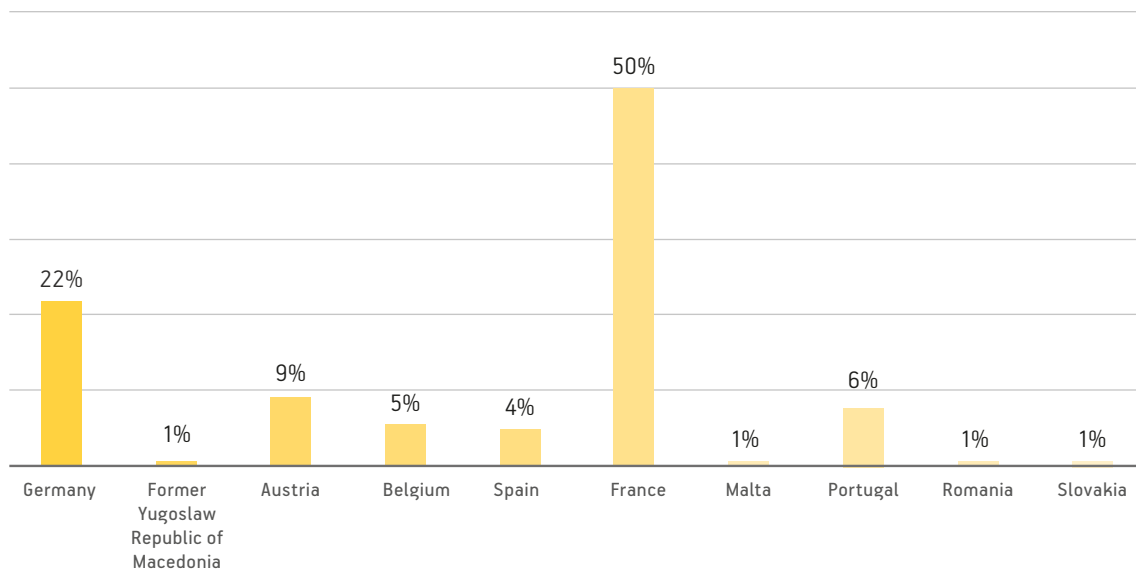
Figure 9: Occupational area within which trainee placements abroad were carried out (N = 130)



By contrast, there was a more uneven distribution concerning the professional sectors where transnational traineeships had been performed. The VET learners predominantly carried out tourism-related (50%) or agriculture-oriented (33%) traineeships.

This imbalance is primarily due to the fact that the sending institutions are vocational schools specialised in these fields, where in addition the traineeship experience abroad is regarded as being compulsory or quasi-compulsory.

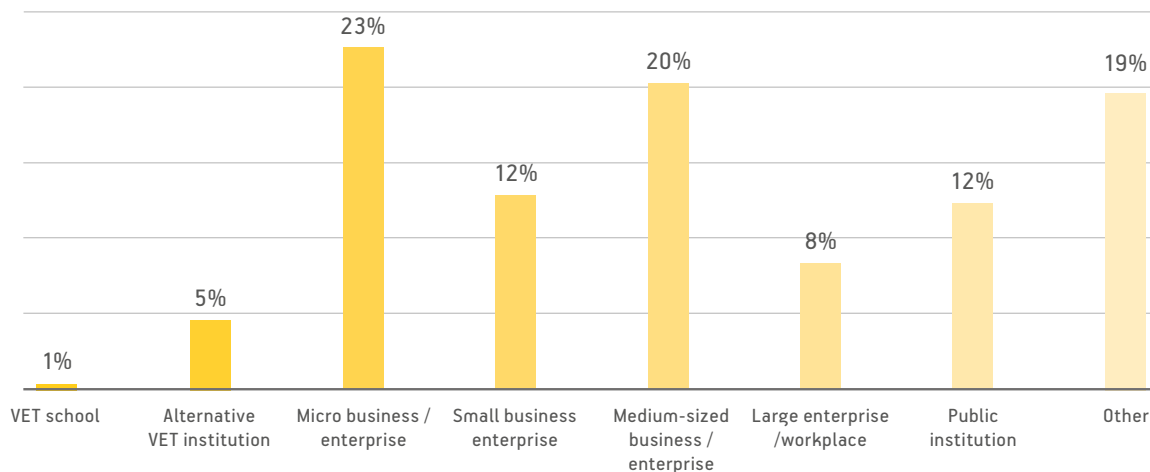
Figure 10: Countries where trainee placements took place (N = 130)



France is by far the most popular destination for VET trainee placements, Germany comes second and Austria third. The purposive selection of the country is strongly linked to each participant's linguistic preferences.

It has to be noted that in one VET school the pupils are required to carry out their traineeship in a country in the language of which they are less proficient.

Figure 11: Type of host institution (N = 129)



More than 40% of questionnaire respondents completed a traineeship in the sectors of micro enterprises, or small and medium-sized enterprises. 19% of them carried out their internship in very specific vocational sectors. In fact, among the 'Other' replies, there is a large array of activities.

Some trainees may have worked on a farm, others in a childcare facility, a hospital or psychiatric centre, or even in a nature reserve. Even though only 1 percent of respondents undertook a mobility in a VET school, the vast majority of respondents (86%) noticed significant differences between vocational training in Luxembourg and abroad.

Details on mentoring and support provided by hosting companies / institutions

In accordance with the guidelines of the programmes covered by the study, VET learners participating in transnational learning mobilities were accompanied by members of both the sending and hosting institutions, so as to make sure that the trainees were safe and could reap maximum benefit from their training period abroad.

At all times throughout the duration of the European mobility programmes, the sending VET institutions from Luxembourg have demonstrated a high degree of commitment to offer their learners individual support. The VET schools' traineeship office plays a key role in this context: in addition to dealing with the administrative arrangements of the mobilities, the personnel involved closely consults with school tutors so as to take appropriate measures to accompany and support the mobility participants. During the mobility period, the traineeship office remains in regular contact with the trainees and stays involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the mobilities.

In many cases, site visits are carried out to trainee placement locations, as part of the field monitoring actions set by the agreements. These visits do not only help reassure the trainees, but they also create and maintain a direct contact between the sending and host organisations, which can open up new prospects for future trainee placements. Furthermore, the VET teachers visiting the host organisations often benefit from these visits as well, in the sense that they discover local and particular structures, different techniques and working methods.

While in the context of this study the VET institutions from Luxembourg mainly focused on administrative and pedagogic supervision, their foreign counterparts primarily concentrated on the substantive part of the traineeship. The study indicates in this regard that the support from the hosting institutions appears to have had a large impact on the trainees and had proved critical in the process of their acquisition of practical knowledge and new skills.

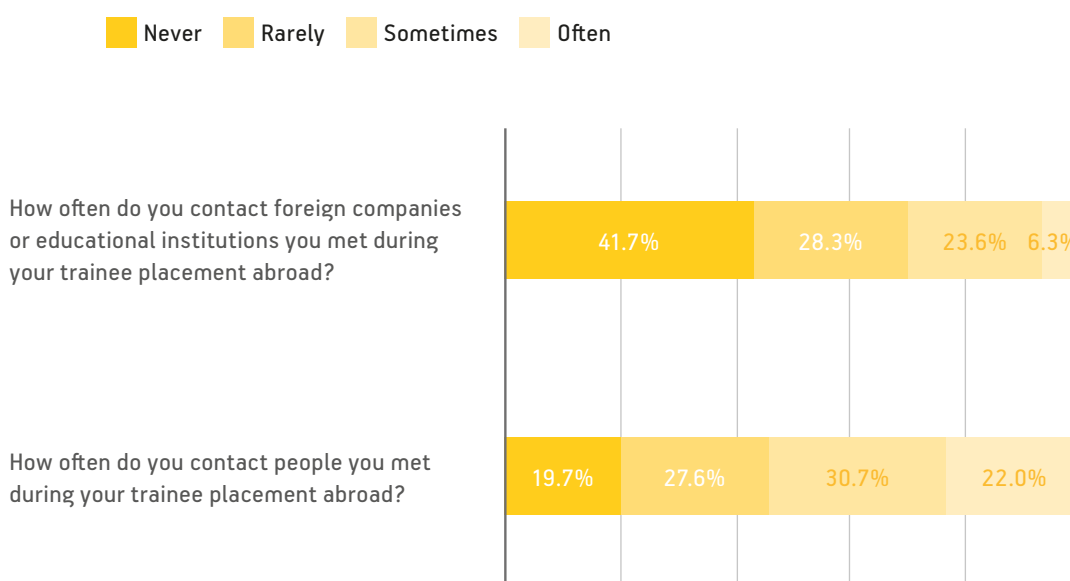
83.2% of 125 respondents stated that during their VET mobility they had learned elements of the profession that they could not have learned at their home school. 86.3% of 117 respondents said that they had the opportunity of encountering a professional environment, organisation and culture of work very different from Luxembourg. 85.9% of 121 respondents believe that their traineeship has led them to better understand the characteristics of different workplaces. The findings of the questionnaire are underpinned by the interview with a former VET trainee:

"[Our bosses] did not treat us as 'just' trainees. We were really part of the team, and they taught us even more than what we were taught at school."

New contacts established by participants

Since young people with vocational qualifications are nowadays expected to have international competences when entering the labour market, VET placements abroad can offer professional networking opportunities beyond national borders and contribute to building professional relationships with contacts established abroad.

Figure 12: New contacts established by respondents (N = 127)



However, the results of the survey show that these benefits are not as obvious to younger trainees as to some others. Nearly 42% of the 127 respondents had not maintained any contact with the foreign companies or educational institutions where they carried out their VET placement abroad. Only less than a third of the respondents confirm that they stayed in frequent or occasional contact with these foreign organisations.

The picture becomes more nuanced as to the question whether the participants have continued socialising with people they met during their stay abroad. According to the answers received in the questionnaire, slightly more than half of the respondents are either occasionally or frequently in touch with their former colleagues or supervisors.

“I did [my first traineeship] in Düsseldorf and I am still in touch with the people I met there. And I also visit them several times a year. You can learn a lot from being in another country.”

Hence, participation in transnational mobilities alone does not guarantee that the trainees would build lasting relationships which in the future might lead to job opportunities abroad. Even though mobility may have resulted in new professional and social contacts, it appears that for most respondents the objective in itself was not to obtain work abroad.

This assumption is supported by the fact that only 22.3% of 130 respondents would like to leave the Grand-Duchy in order to seek employment, even if they are aware of the fact that transnational work experience may bring an added value to their career prospects.

Almost two thirds of respondents state that they would like to work in Luxembourg. It appears indeed that the

difference between their place of residence from the time when they carried out their trainee placement, and their current place of residence does not exceed one percentage point in the majority of regions in Luxembourg, except for the northern area, where the ratio has dropped by 4.6 points while the eastern region of the country gained 4.7 points.

A more positive result of the mobility experience's impact on the participants' attitude was their opinion about the European labour market. 80% of the 60 respondents in employment said that they would not be afraid to work abroad, and almost 90% of the 28 recent VET graduates pursuing studies in higher education stated they were not afraid to study abroad.

In the context of a separate survey, supervisors from VET institutions in Luxembourg have summed up the main benefits of the mobility experience as follows:

- + Acquisition of social skills such as independence, autonomy, self-confidence and maturity
- + Intercultural understanding
- + Language learning
- + Development of relationships in the creation of an exchange network benefitting both teachers and pupils
- + Acquisition of flexibility and transfer of skills for future professional life
- + Help with orientation through the definition of each learner's professional project.

The sending institutions from Luxembourg acknowledge the importance of exchange as a key aspect of the learning experience. In the opinion of their members of staff, their mobility projects open a whole new realm of

possibilities that would have been virtually inexistent under other circumstances. Hence, VET mobility represents a valuable source of their pupils' professional and personal enrichment.

“We have found that our pupils have, indeed, evolved in terms of practical [knowledge], on a professional and on a behavioural level at the same time.”

“Our pupils do not go abroad only for a language stay. (...) [They do so in order to see] what concepts exist in other countries, what working methods are used, etc. [This professional development is] one of the main objectives, apart from discovering another culture or exchanging with other people: it is about seeing how people, by acquiring experience abroad, can bring back new concepts to Luxembourg.”

Financial support remains an essential asset of the Europe-wide success of the programmes organised by the EU. This support is appreciated where the European Union’s programmes are designed to make a difference: on the one hand, it allows young people to go abroad for their traineeship, and on the other hand it facilitates the preparation and monitoring process by allowing supervisors’ on-the-spot visits to their pupils at the host institutions.

Even if the administrative formalities of a mobility project were reported to be quite cumbersome, the VET schools’ supervising staff agree that since the funding programme had been simplified, there was less red tape and they had more time to fully focus on the monitoring of the learners’ mobilities.

“In principle, we would not consider sending anyone abroad if there were no [funding] programme – at least not those for whom transborder traineeship is non-compulsory.”

The main disadvantages mentioned by the VET supervising staff are significant:

- + Travel-related expenses to still be covered
- + Offer, at the host institutions, of VET courses or subjects that don’t exist on the syllabus of the sending VET institution
- + Workload related to the organisation of the implementation of mobilities.

For the vast majority of VET institutions, the administrative burden remains the main negative point hampering the management of European projects,

given that they have no specific staff members solely dedicated to that task. The shortage of organising staff is widely perceived as an obstacle to mobility.

“One of the problems is the lack of resources for the programme’s further implementation and promotion. We keep seeking strategies to increase the figures, but unfortunately we do not have the resources nor the time required for this purpose.”

| In the young trainees’ opinion, the volume of paperwork also puts a burden on them.

“[It is difficult] for the youngsters as well. They receive a full range of documentation that must be signed by their bosses, but often they are not confident enough to ask.”

| Furthermore, the financial aspect can also cause a major concern to trainees who experience higher living costs | than expected in some countries or cities.

“We had the case of a trainee who did not find an accommodation less expensive than 2 000 € [per month]. Thus, the trainee was forced to work besides his trainee placement [in order to pay the rent].”

| Last but not least, the supervisors from Luxembourg think that the funding programme lacks flexibility when it comes to the mobility duration that will be accepted by the European Commission.

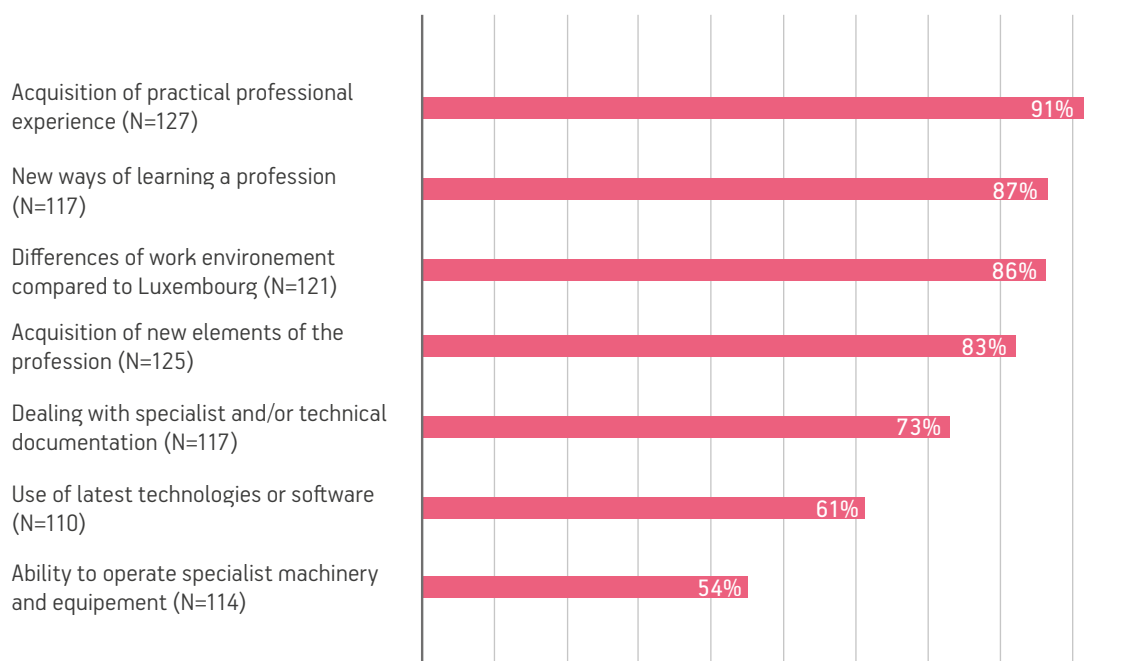
| Nevertheless, when finally asked to weigh all the pros and cons of the learners’ VET mobilities, the supervising staff came to the conclusion that a vocational experience abroad is strongly recommendable to all of their pupils.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES

Vocational skills gained or developed during a mobility period

The respondents considered that their mobility had an impact on their practical experience and gave them the opportunity to access a new form of apprenticeship. The acquisition of professional skills was generally rated very positively (see Figure 13 for survey results). It seems, however, that the impact of international experience was less significant concerning the acquisition of skills related to the use of specific documents, machines or technologies.

Figure 13: Impact on vocational skills



Knowing that 79% of 125 respondents had also undertaken a traineeship in Luxembourg, it is interesting to note that over 85% of the 115 former trainees say that their placement abroad gave them the opportunity to learn how functions at workplaces and in industry differ compared to Luxembourg.

In some cases, the experience abroad even allowed the trainees to draw direct parallels with their current professional activity and to draw their own conclusions.

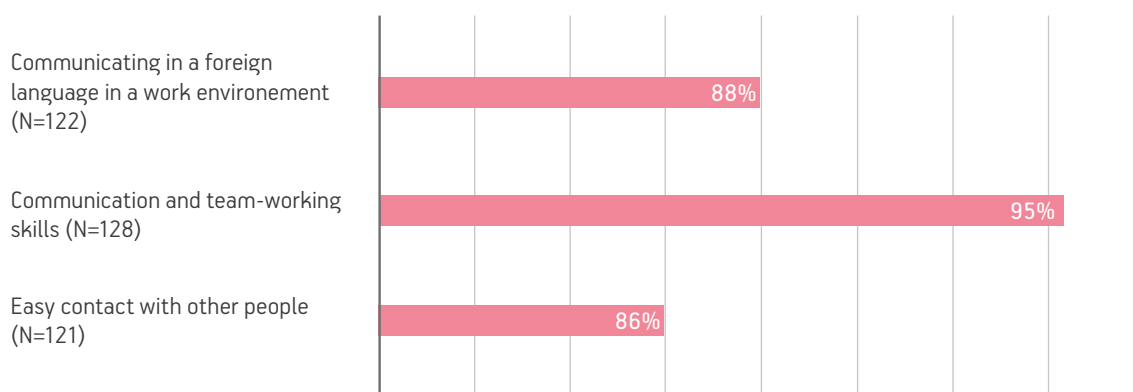
“The more farms you see, the more diversity you appreciate. You can start thinking about the best way to proceed such as to optimise processes. For this purpose, you also need to see things as they should not be done.”

Pupils from the agricultural sector stated that their mobility experience has influenced their professional choices and had an impact on their further pathway.

“It is still a good experience, especially for those who do not know at all what they intend to do in the future. A traineeship abroad gives them the possibility to step back and gain on-the-job experience.”

Language skills gained or developed during mobility periods

Figure 14: Impact on language skills



Most respondents felt they had improved their linguistic skills by communicating in a foreign language on the job. The evidence of this assessment opinion also clearly appeared in the interviews lead with those former

trainees who listed the development of language skills among their mobility’s expected –and achieved– outcomes.

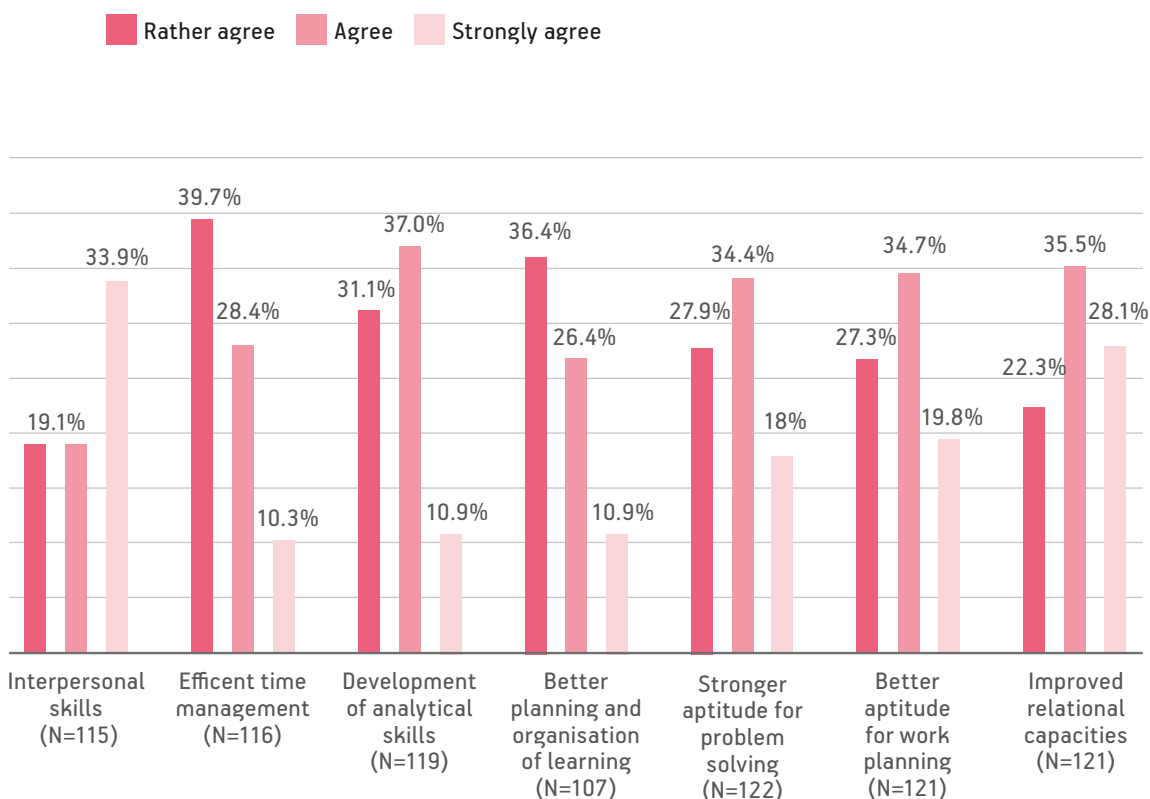
“[Once] abroad, there is no going back. You are far away from your family and you cannot go home at once. In order to learn another language, such as French, it is better to stay [in your host country]. You have to speak the language and thus you progress.”

A large majority of respondents think they have also improved their communication and interpersonal skills within a working team. Another positive development is

that the trainees have learned to more easily establish contact with other people.

Soft skills developed during the mobility period

Figure 15: Impact on soft skills



Respondents generally viewed their mobility experience as an added value and an opportunity to acquire additional soft skills abroad. Their responses regarding the development of their interpersonal skills were mostly very positive. In addition to this, they largely agree with the statement that their stay abroad had

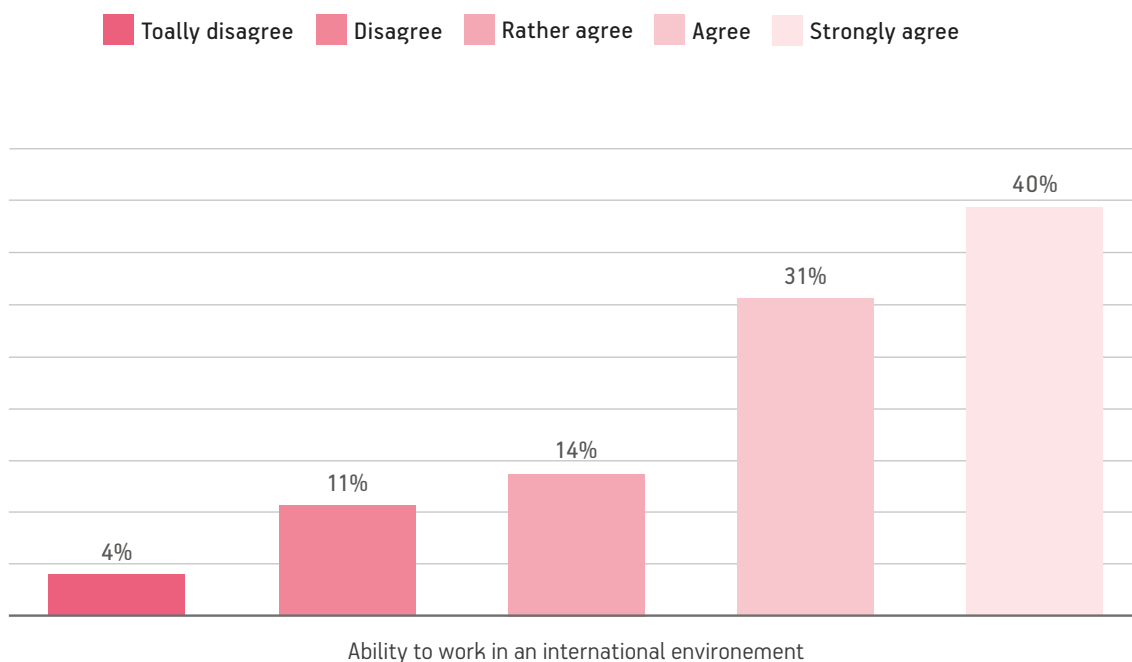
contributed to the development of their analytical skills and had improved their aptitude both for work planning and problem solving. However, they tend to be less assertive when asked about their ability either to manage their time or to plan and organise their own learning more efficiently.

“I have learned to work independently alone, and also to work in a team. I think that I have become more open.”

“Going abroad is essentially a personal discovery.”

Intercultural competences developed during the mobility period

Figure 16: Impact on intercultural skills (N = 124)



According to the overall majority of responses, the mobility experience is largely considered to be efficient in strengthening intercultural skills.

In the course of the interviews, former trainees also highlighted the cultural appeal of traineeships abroad. In their opinion, the mobility experience gave them the opportunity not only to discover new cultures and

visit new places, but also to meet and speak with people from other countries. The intercultural competences must thus be considered in relation to communicative competences. Interviewees from the hospitality sector, especially, set highest priority on these competences, knowing that they would have to work later on with both colleagues and customers from different backgrounds.

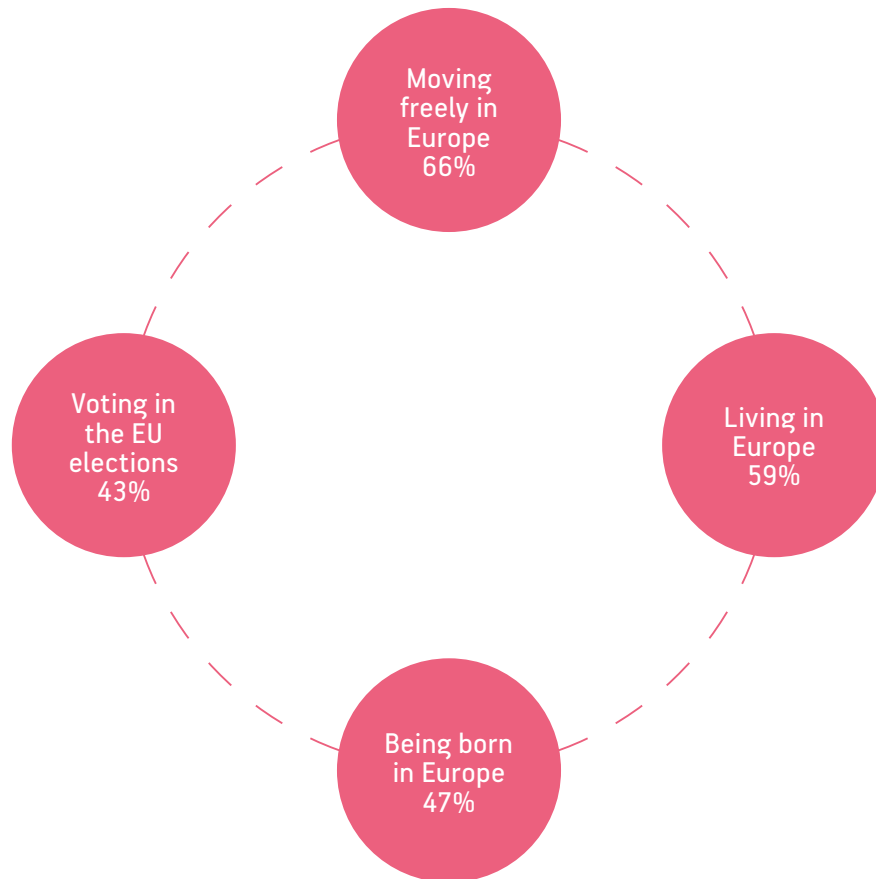
“It is important to learn and know for the future how to behave with people from different countries.”

From this perspective, it seems appropriate to use the term “intercultural”, in the sense that cultural heritage cannot be considered in isolation and with no reference

to other cultures. The discovery of Europe’s diversity thus contributes to the participants’ broader reflection on the idea of identity, both national and European.

Figure 17: View on European citizenship (N = 124)

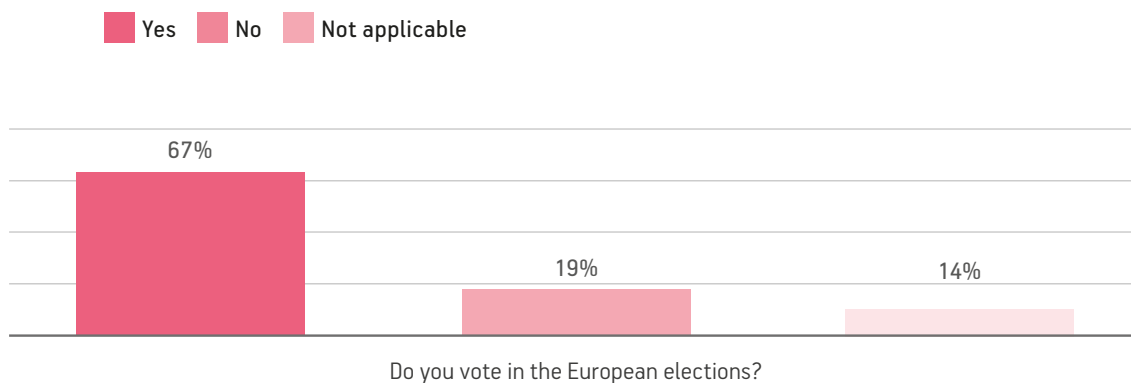
European citizenship means... (with multiple choice options on this question)



Most respondents agreed on the statement that the idea of European citizenship is associated with the right of free movement within the EU area. For more than half of the respondents, European citizenship means the free choice of residence in Europe. 47% of the

respondents stated that for them European citizenship is defined by one's place of birth. A little fewer of them stated that in their opinion the idea of European citizenship was associated with the right to vote in EU elections.

Figure 18: Voting in EU elections (N = 126)

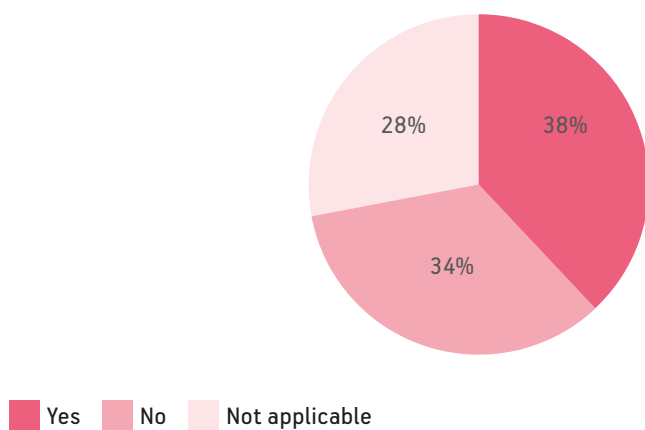


The vast majority confirmed that they would go to vote in the upcoming EU elections.

In this respect, it has to be noted that in Luxembourg voting is not only a right but also an obligation. Any citizen over 18 years of age and holding the

Luxembourgish nationality is automatically registered on the national and European electoral rolls. By contrast, European Union nationals residing in the Grand-Duchy have the right to vote in EU elections, but are not obliged to do so, as long as they didn't choose to be registered as voters.

Figure 19: Active European Citizenship (N = 125)



Responses are more mitigated concerning the question on active European citizenship. In fact the participants were asked if they consider themselves being active European citizens.

The results of the survey also showed that 62% of the respondents consider themselves first and foremost as citizens of their own country. But 46% of them think of themselves as European citizens at the same time. It is thus not easy to assess whether the mobility experience has changed the trainees' perceptions and mentalities with regard to identities.

V. FURTHER EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHS

This chapter focusses on the further education and career paths of former VET learners who had carried out a traineeship abroad. One of the objectives of the study was to find out in which way the competences acquired and developed during transnational VET mobility had turned out to be useful on the labour market, and to what extent the experience abroad had influenced the choices made by VET graduates in their transition from school to higher education studies or to the labour market.

This part of the present VET Tracer report comes as the result of the analysis of statements made by respondents who had graduated from upper secondary education. The respondents were thus professionally active persons at that time, or having decided to continue their education at higher education institutions or to take further training courses.

As already mentioned in the second section of this publication (see "Methodology"), specific interviews had been collected with heads of VET schools and their staff having managed the VET mobility projects. These statements complement the analysis of the opinions issued by the respondents who had graduated from upper secondary education.

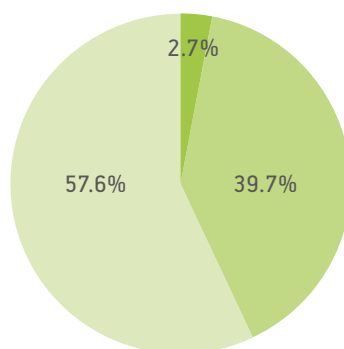
Current educational or professional status of the research target group

Out of 125 respondents, 43.2% were VET school pupils at the moment of filling in the questionnaire for the present study. Of the remaining 56.8%, students at a

higher education institution represented 2.7%, whereas 39.7% of this group had already graduated from higher education.

Figure 20: Level of qualification (N = 73)

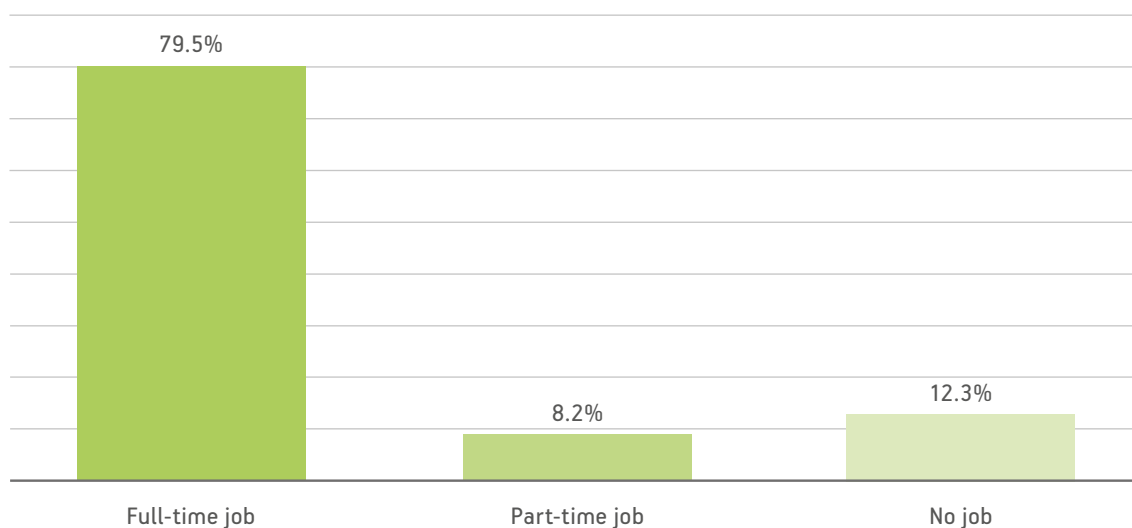
Have you studied for a degree or equivalent qualification at a higher or further education institution?



■ I am currently studying ■ Yes, but I have finished my studies ■ No

Out of 73 respondents, 87.7% were already active on the labour market. 79.5% were in full-time occupation

and 8.2% in a part-time job; the remaining 12.3% were unemployed.

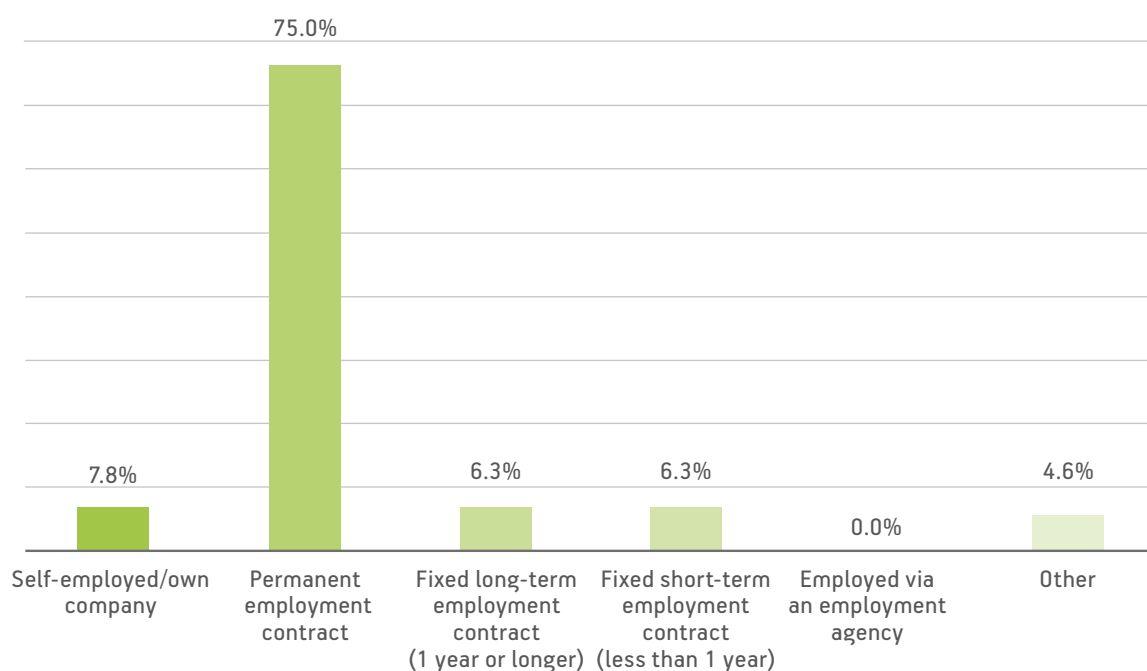
Figure 21: Professional status – Employed or unemployed (N = 73)

Among the 31 answers given to the subsequent question about their future outlook regarding higher education studies, only 13% stated that they intended to continue academic studies or to undertake postgraduate studies.

Employment situation

Figure 22: Professional status – Type of contract (N = 64)

Which of the following best describes your employment situation?

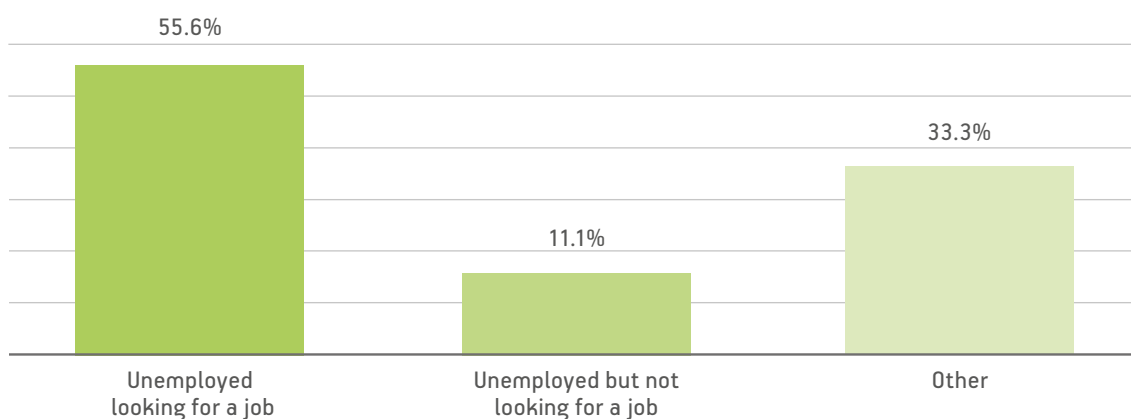


75% of the 64 respondents already active on the labour market had a job with a permanent employment contract; 7.8% were self-employed and 12.6% were employed on a fixed-term contract. One respondent indicated "other" to answer the question on employment situation, as this person was carrying out an apprenticeship in a company.

Out of the 9 respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey, 55.6% had been looking for a job for less than 3 months.

Figure 23: Situation of unemployed respondents (N = 9)

What describes your current situation best?



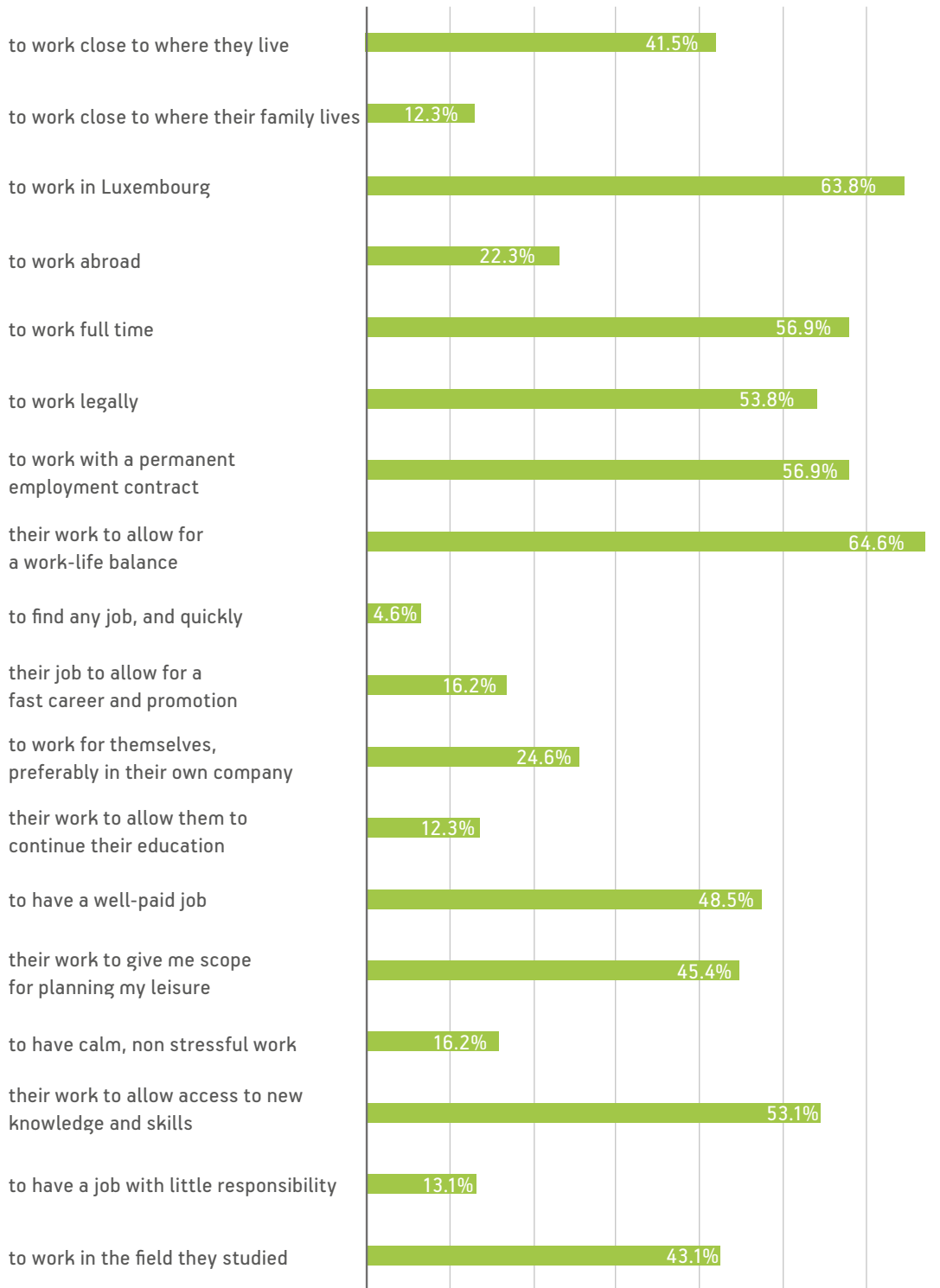
9 respondents confirmed that they were unemployed at the moment of the present study, of which 5 were actively looking for a job.

Out of 6 respondents to another question, 83.3% stated they had never been working since they completed their education, and 16.7% said they had finished secondary school education without having obtained any qualification. None of them had graduated from higher education.

Respondents' motivation while looking for employment

Figure 24: Motivation of respondents while looking for employment (N = 130)

The respondents stated that they would like:



46.9% of the 130 respondents stated that they wouldn't want their job to get into their way at the moment in life when they would like to start a family.

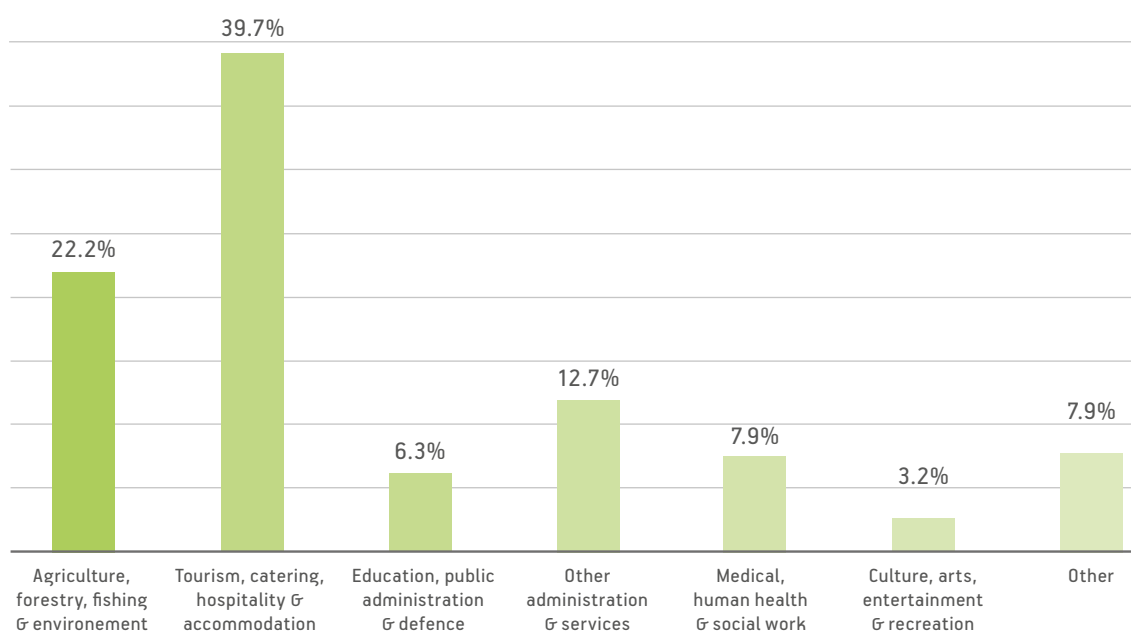
The majority of respondents wish at best to find work in a full-time job (56.9%) allowing for a work-life balance

(64.6%) in Luxembourg (63.8%) based on a permanent employment contract (56.9%) and linked to their VET or higher education studies (43.1%).

Only 22.3% of the respondents would be keen on working abroad.

Occupational sectors of the respondents active on the labour market

Figure 25: Occupational sectors of the respondents active on the labour market (N = 63)



The most important group, i.e. 39.7%, of the respondents already at work at the time of the survey, was made up of employees in the sectors of tourism, catering, hospitality and accommodation. The second largest sector in which the respondents were working was agriculture, forestry, fishing and environment.

This situation may easily be explained by the fact that those two sectors represent the specialisation fields of the major beneficiary VET schools of European mobility programmes in Luxembourg. These schools had been

participating in European programmes from the beginning and had thus acquired a thorough experience of the participation procedures. They consequently were able to obtain the biggest share of granted mobilities per project and per yearly call of both LLP and Erasmus+ Programmes. There is evidently a direct link between the specialisation sectors of these VET schools and the occupational sectors of the VET and higher education graduates.

Impact of the VET mobilities on the participants' current situation and career choices

Impact on the choice for further studies

The large majority (85.7%) of those respondents who had chosen to continue their studies at an institution of higher education after having graduated from VET school, confirm that their study subject in higher education was directly related to the profession they had been learning in the course of their VET studies.

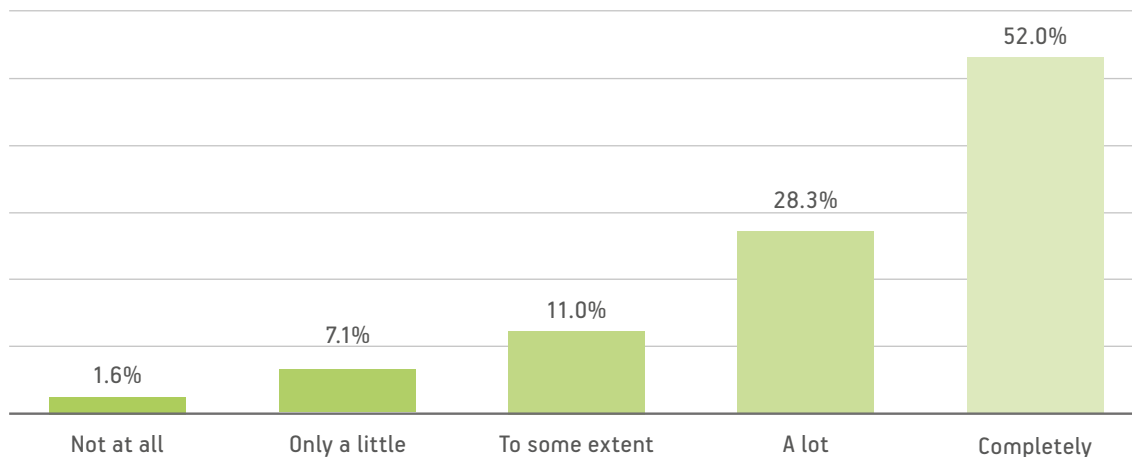
Most respondents agreed that the VET transnational mobility they realised had influenced their choice of study subject (80.8%) and had helped them obtain better grades during their VET studies (79.3%).

69.2% of the participants stated that thanks to their VET placement abroad, they became more able to read materials in a foreign language. 89.3% lost their shyness about the idea of studying abroad. In other words, the VET placement abroad proved to be a real incentive for VET graduates to allow themselves the self-confidence for considering to pursue higher education studies abroad.

Impact on the choice of career

Out of 127 respondents, 91.3% stated that they had gained important practical professional experience during their VET placement abroad.

Figure 26: Gain in hands-on professional experience (N = 127)



Out of 119 respondents, 73.1% think that their VET traineeship abroad had a positive impact on their employability in Luxembourg. Asked about their potential employability in another country, 80% of 110

respondents agree more or less strongly that the transnational VET traineeship also made it easier to find a job abroad.

Figure 27: Likelihood to find a job in Luxembourg, according to former VET mobility participants (N = 119)

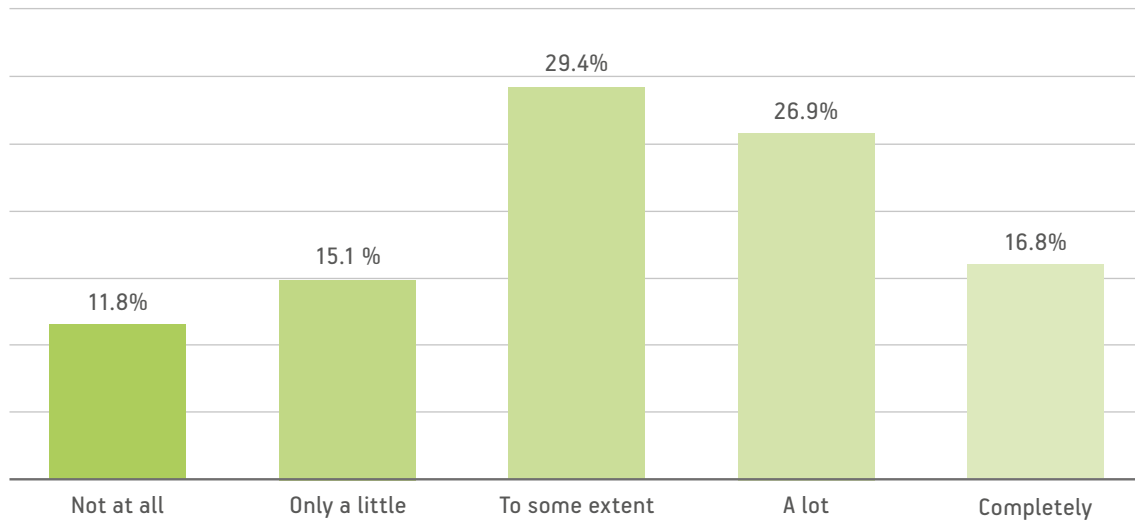
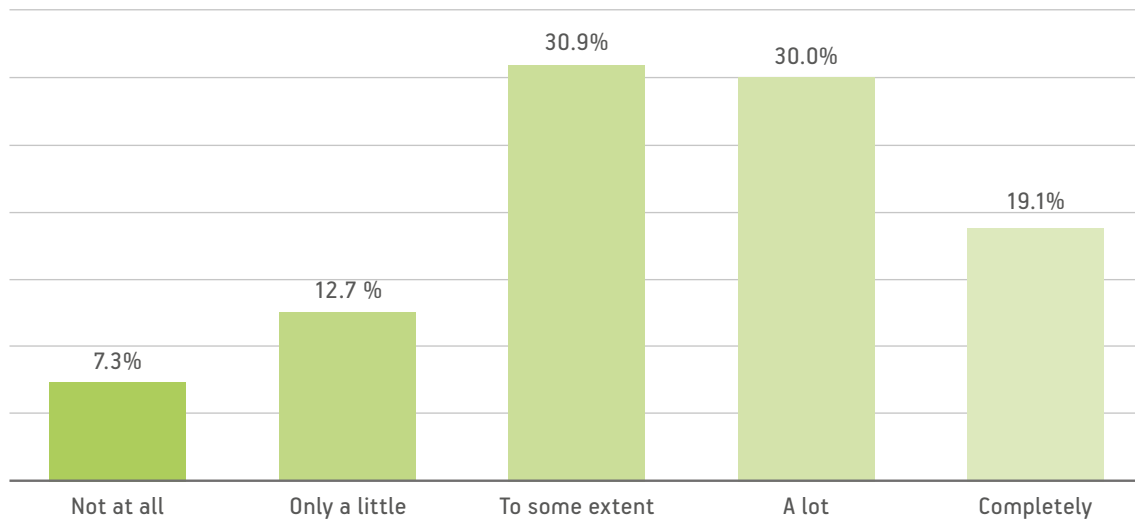


Figure 28: Likelihood to find a job abroad, according to former VET mobility participants (N = 110)



Impact on working conditions and salary

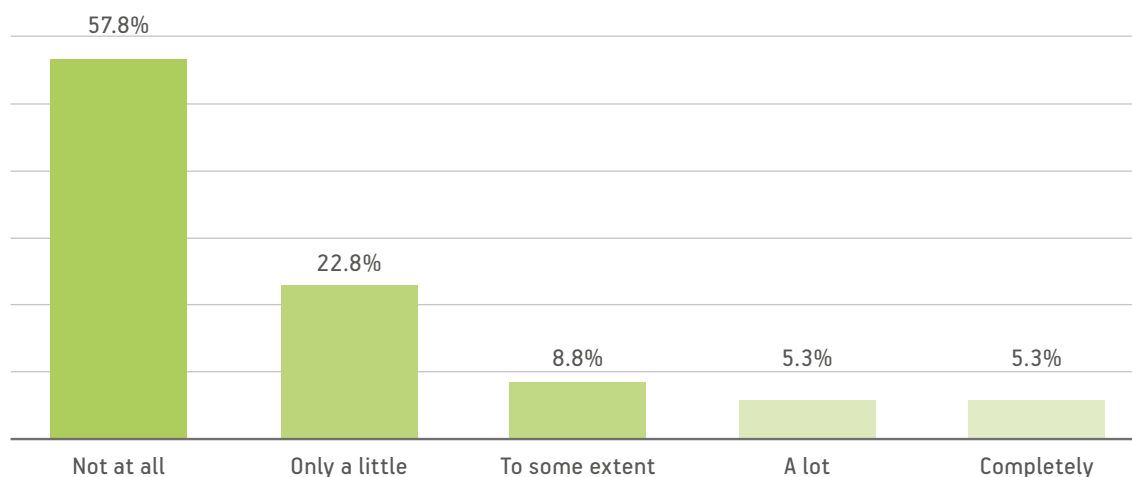
70.3% of the survey respondents who were active on the labour market at the time of the survey were remunerated more than the national minimum wage for skilled employees, which amounted to 2,070 euros per month in 2018.

At this point, it may be of interest to specify the legal provisions applicable to skilled employee's minimum wages in Luxembourg. According to the Labour code (Code du travail, Art. L. 222-4), employees holding professional certifications are to be paid 20% more than the minimal social salary, which is set by the law and indexed to the living costs. To be considered as a skilled employee, a person needs to fulfil one of the following conditions:

- + Hold, for the profession concerned, a certificate officially recognised or deemed equivalent to the Luxembourgish vocational skills certificate (CATP; certificat d'aptitude technique et professionnelle) respectively the vocational aptitude diploma (DAP; diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle)
- + Hold a Luxembourgish certificate of manual skills (CCM; certificat de capacité manuelle), respectively a certificate of vocational ability (CCP; certificat de capacité professionnelle), and additionally provide evidence of at least two years' professional experience in the trade or profession of the certificate
- + Hold a certificate of technical and vocational initiation (CITP; certificat d'initiation technique et professionnelle) and at least 5 years' practical experience in that trade or profession
- + In the absence of any certificate, provide proof of at least 10 years' practical professional experience (if a certificate exists for the required qualification)
- + For a trade or profession where there is no official certificate but which requires progressively increasing technical skills, provide proof of at least 6 years' practical experience.

19.4% of the respondents who earn more than 2 070 euros think that their VET traineeship abroad has positively impacted the level of their salary as well.

Figure 29: The VET traineeship abroad has positively impacted the level of salary (N = 57)



75.8% of the respondents state that their salary and working conditions match their competences and

professional experience and most of them, notably 79.8% deem them satisfying.

The respondents who own a company or who are self-employed think that their VET placement abroad has positively affected their:

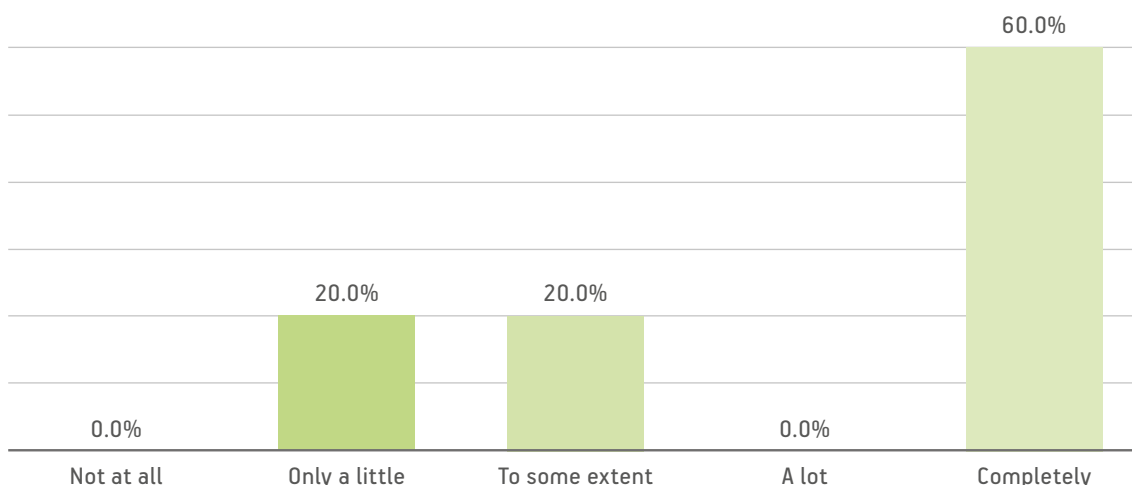
- + Entrepreneurial spirit (80%)
- + Decision to set up their own company (75%)
- + Ability to manage their own company (60%).

“The more businesses you see, the faster you become in detecting the problems in your own business, you will have a deeper insight. And you will be able to think more about best practices and optimisation of processes. For this end, you also need to see what errors are to be avoided.”

The same respondents think that their VET traineeship abroad had only a moderate impact on their professional activity itself, even though in most of the cases (80%)

the subject and field of traineeship had been within their business area.

Figure 30: Subject and field of past VET traineeship abroad corresponding to the area of their business (N = 5)



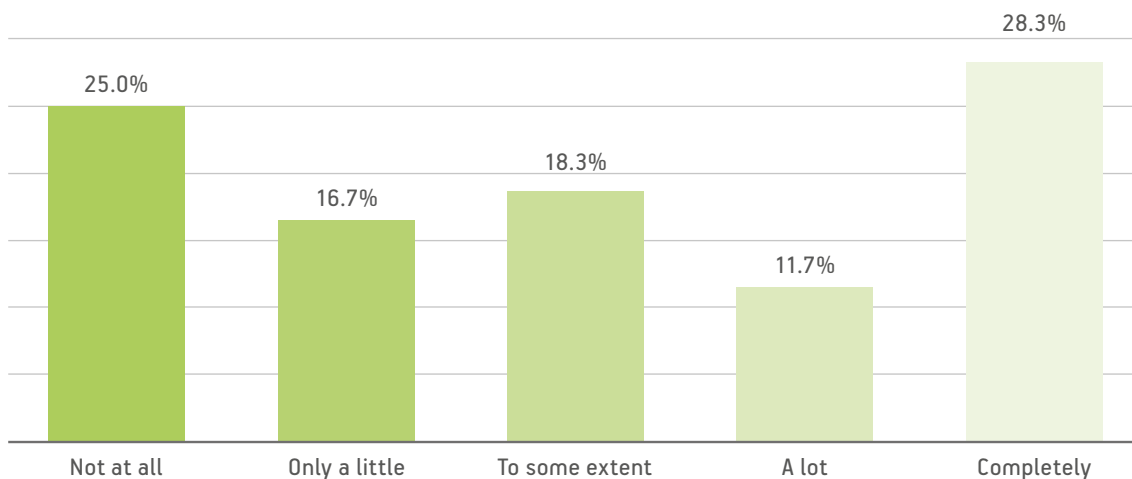
As for the respondents working as employees, 88.8% of them said that they were satisfied with their present professional situation. 58.3% also stated that the field of their job was directly related to the field in which they had carried out their VET traineeship abroad in the past, while no less than 60.9% were still using the competences and skills they had acquired in the course of their traineeship.

It is interesting to note that 81.7% of the respondents employed had told their current or previous employers

about their traineeship experience abroad at the time of their job application process. This may be taken as a testimony to confirm the positive effect of traineeships abroad on employers, or at least to show the respondents' expectations of the enhanced employability of graduates having achieved an international work experience.

Furthermore, 80% of the respondents in employment confirm that thanks to their VET traineeship abroad they had lost their apprehensions about working abroad.

Figure 31: Participants' current job directly related to the field of their former VET traineeship abroad (N = 60)



Impact on employability

The questionnaire responses have confirmed that there is a real impact on employability for young people having previously participated in a transnational VET mobility:

48.3% of 58 respondents stated that their participation in a VET traineeship abroad had helped them get a job. 68.9% out of 61 respondents even thought that carrying out internships abroad generally facilitated young people's access to the labour market. 79.7% out of 64 respondents confirmed that their trainee placements abroad could likely have a beneficial impact on their future career development, whereas 75.4% out of 61 thought that young people could find work abroad more

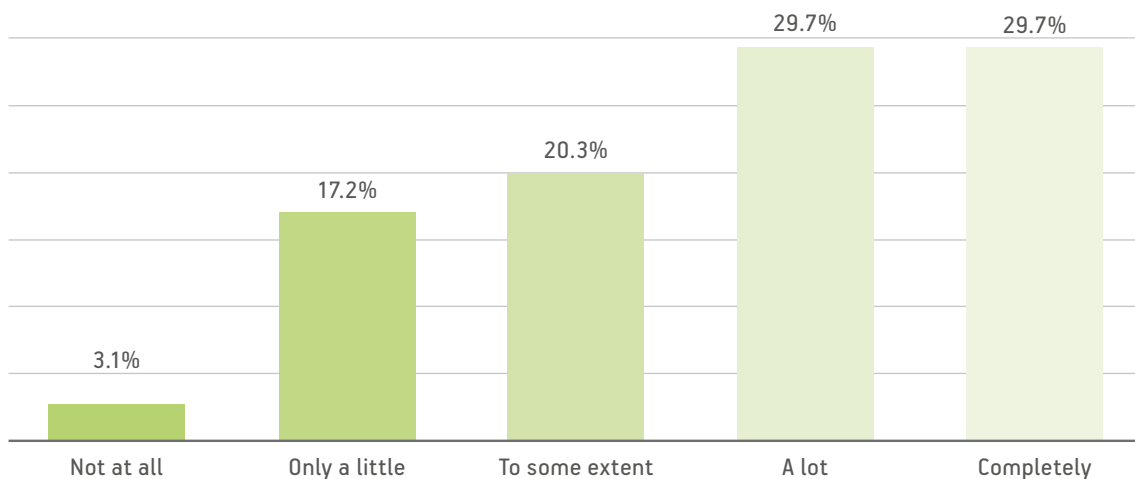
easily if they had previously performed an internship in another country.

Even if reinforcing their own employability was a major initial motivation for only 31% out of 100 respondents having carried out a placement abroad, the majority of them largely agreed that their experience abroad had had a positive impact on their further career development and employability.

"It's a very valuable experience because your diploma is one thing, but if you're not able to work together with other people, that's a problem in the hospitality sector. If there is a job application from someone without any experience abroad, and another one of somebody who has had an international experience, the second application is likely to be chosen."

"In the hospitality sector, it is particularly important to go abroad. It's an asset many employers appreciate. As a learner, you need to get this diversity and multiplicity of experiences."

Figure 32: Traineeships abroad have a real impact on future career development (N = 64)

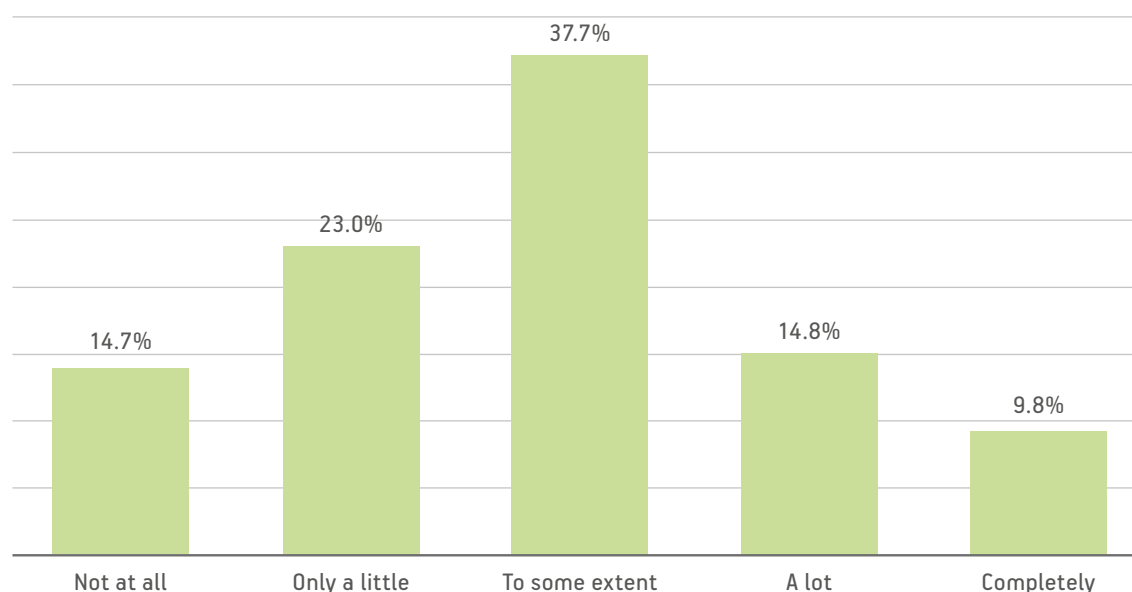


Concerning the recognition of the VET placements abroad, 39.6% out of 53 respondents stated that the Europass mobility certificate obtained through their VET placement abroad had a positive impact on their employability. In addition, the certificates which their employers delivered to them at the end of their

transnational internship helped 41.5% of the VET learners to find a job.

79.8% of 61 respondents confirmed that the certificates they had obtained for their traineeship abroad were useful in their further professional career.

Figure 33: Certificates obtained for the traineeship abroad are useful in the further professional career (N = 61)



Opinion and views of VET teachers and staff organising VET mobility projects

From the perspective of the VET teachers interviewed in the framework of this study, the major result of the VET placements abroad was the learners' increased employability. The teachers insisted on the fact that the placements abroad helped their learners validate their own professional choices and improve their employability. But at the same time, they were sceptical about the ability of these placements to help learners gain a better understanding of the labour market as a whole.

The VET teachers nonetheless stated that they believed VET placements abroad to have a very positive impact on the VET graduates' potential employers, given the fact that the latter are known to take into consideration aspects such as their future employees' sense of autonomy and adaptability, which are valuable assets learners may have gained through their experience abroad.

“Such a mobility shows that these young people are ready to leave their parental “nest” in order to explore unknown regions, to get out of their comfort zone.”

“After graduating from their VET studies, the learners often receive a permanent employment contract in the host country where they accomplished their internship in mobility.”

“We’ve already had feedback from VET graduates who said ‘I think they have accepted my job application because I had been abroad.’ ”

“Having accomplished a placement abroad makes a positive impression on their CV. Employers really take note of it.”

In their interviews, the VET teachers confirmed that traineeship certificates and Europass mobility

certificates related to placements abroad had improved the VET graduates’ employability.

“A document attesting a VET mobility [experience] of several weeks abroad is a very positive thing. Several of my VET graduates have already received job offers from a few companies.”

“A Europass mobility certificate for a traineeship accomplished abroad, that also makes a good impression on the CV.”

According to the VET teachers, potential employers appreciate the new ideas gained abroad that VET participants in transnational apprenticeships may bring

up, as well as those learners’ motivation, which is likely to foster their employment.

“They [employers] are interested in the fact that a young person has gone abroad, taken up such a dare by learning new things, being open to a new experience and facing new challenges.”

“An internship abroad is linked to more effort and personal investment than an traineeship in Luxembourg.”

“A job applicant with interesting experience abroad is more convincing than someone with good marks.”

In addition, VET mobility indirectly promotes employability, and indirectly acts against school dropout while helping the VET learners in their search of professional orientation.

“VET learners who have accomplished their placement abroad often gain motivation for staying in education.”

“Speaking of orientation, we tell young people to do traineeships in order to see what commerce really means in practice. A traineeship abroad can only help them. They learn what awaits them, both in positive and in negative terms.”

“Traineeships abroad help them to see if they have chosen the right path.”

Finally, traineeships abroad also give everyone implied the opportunity to become aware of their own working conditions and thus to take a step back.

“...experience that the world is not just about private day nurseries with the best equipment.”

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The VET schools' generally positive feedback confirmed that the learning mobilities, as well as their overarching mobility projects, had actively contributed to increase these institutions' level of maturity regarding internationalisation and had helped them to enhance the quality of their vocational education and training programmes.

The purpose of the present study was to better understand the impact of transnational mobilities on VET learners having undertaken a traineeship abroad. The data collected from the surveys and interviews allowed the Luxembourg National Agency in charge of the European mobility programmes to identify the competences that former VET trainees had been able to develop in the framework of their placements abroad and the extent to which these competences proved useful in their personal development, further learning and professional careers.

It was clear from the beginning that learning mobilities abroad had the potential to be most valuable experiences for VET learners, to whom they offered opportunities to improve their language skills, to discover other approaches to learning and acquiring

vocational skills and to experience training methods different from their national ones. Last but not least, the learners were getting to know the culture of the host country and appreciate the differences as well as the common features.

The VET teachers also stressed the fact that VET learners gain a better understanding of their future profession through an experience abroad. Having come into contact with different learning contexts and training methods in companies and training centres abroad, these future professionals turn out to be more flexible about new ideas and practices. Their prospective employers will most likely tend to view this broader practical experience as an important asset.

1. International mobility experience fostering employability

Thanks to their learning mobility abroad VET learners enjoyed a better employability and a smoother transition to the labour market. Half of the respondents working as employees stated that they believe their traineeship abroad has helped them get a job. A large majority of them were convinced of the fact that an internship abroad facilitates young people's access to the labour market, both on national and international levels. Even if 2/3 of the VET learners weren't initially motivated by considerations about the potential reinforcement of their own employability at the moment they carried out their placement abroad, a majority of them largely agree on the VET mobilities' positive impact on future career development and employability.

Most of the respondents currently employed had told prospective employers about their traineeship abroad when they had been looking for a job – which might be an indicator of Luxembourg employers' positive perception of employees' experience abroad.

The fact that there were just a few former trainees remaining unemployed at the time of this study, and the circumstance that all of them had only been looking for a job for less than 3 months, may lead to the conclusion that VET graduates who have carried out a traineeship abroad are at an advantage in finding a job rather quickly after graduation.

Concerning the recognition of the VET placement abroad, a large majority of respondents confirm that the certificates obtained in mobility had been useful in their further professional career. Such statements demonstrate that international VET mobility is highly valuable and needed, and that these opportunities should at best be integrated in the teaching offer of all VET schools in Luxembourg.

2. Impact on career choice and further education

In the opinion of former trainees, the placement abroad had enabled them to gain and enhance important practical professional experience. For those owning a company, the subject and field of the traineeship corresponded to the area of their current business. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents who were employed at the moment of this survey stated that their current job was directly related to the field of the traineeship they had carried out abroad. The majority of respondents employed underlined that they kept using the competences and skills they had acquired in the course of their traineeship abroad.

These considerations have led to the conclusion that traineeships abroad enable VET learners to test and validate their own educational and career choices. This finding was also supported by the interviews with VET teachers, who stated that the mobility experience abroad was helping learners see whether they had chosen the right path for their professional future.

Some of the respondents already active in the labour market even thought that their VET traineeship abroad had also positively impacted the level of their salary.

As to those former VET trainees who decided to go study in higher education, the mobility experience abroad also had proved to be very useful. The findings of the study show that the experience abroad had helped these learners choose their academic area and subjects. It had even contributed to better grades and marks during their subsequent VET studies.

First of all, the mobility experience abroad resulted in helping a vast majority of VET learners lose their apprehension of studying and living abroad. This had been confirmed by most responses given by the participants to this study who were currently employed at that time. From this perspective, the VET mobility experience abroad not only facilitated the transition to working life, but was also able to offer a connection towards further studies which learners would possibly want to undertake.

3. A learning experience beyond formal education

Most evidently, the traineeship period was mainly focussed on gaining vocational qualifications to enable the learners to work in specific industries. But the findings of the present study also demonstrate that former trainees view their mobility as a valuable experience which extends well beyond the framework of formal education. The trainee placement abroad had generally challenged their views and attitudes, not only from a professional but also from a personal perspective.

Respondents agreed with the fact that their stay abroad had contributed to the development of their soft skills, and in particular interpersonal competences. The early and often first experience of autonomy in a new cultural context is also an important feature of the trainee placements abroad, which potentially enhances their intrinsic motivation to keep learning throughout life.

4. Importance of effective tutoring

The end-to-end support of young trainees throughout their stay abroad is a special feature of the European mobility projects. In addition to the financial support from the European Union, the provision of adequate tutoring resources is considered as critically important to the mobility experience.

Consistent and close tutoring relationships with both school and company tutors are strong quality indicators of the VET training outcomes. The tutors' main focus is set on overseeing the trainees' development and education at different levels while helping them accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently.

In Luxembourg, the VET schools' traineeship offices play a key role in the successful implementation of mobility projects. They provide ongoing support to the trainees while remaining in close consultation with the school tutors.

Ideally, the quality assurance mechanisms are meant to go hand-in-hand with the conviviality of a work environment. Some respondents stated they had experienced more social interaction within the tutoring relationship, as a result of their practical learning through dialogue. Nonetheless, only a small number of participants stayed in touch with their former supervisors.

5. Overcoming language barriers

In Luxembourg, multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. Still, a majority of respondents to the survey agreed with the statement that their mobility had resulted in improving their "foreign" language skills – bearing in mind nonetheless that most traineeships were undertaken in French or German-speaking countries. As both of these languages are taught at school, they can only be considered as "foreign" to a limited extent.

More interestingly to note, VET learners' transnational mobility had served as an excellent opportunity to overcome their uneasiness about language competences. Study participants were nearly universal in their view that the mobility experience had positively contributed to their communication as well as their team-working skills. It can thus be assumed that an experience abroad and multilingualism are positively correlated.

6. No significant impact on migration decisions

The majority of respondents more or less strongly agreed that their transnational VET traineeship also made it easier for them to find a job abroad. But even if this mobility abroad might have had an impact on their readiness to look for a job abroad, only one fifth of all respondents said they would in fact be interested in getting a job abroad. More than half of respondents

stated that they would rather remain in Luxembourg for work. This result highlights the fact that VET traineeships abroad didn't have a significant impact on VET graduates' migration decisions. This may also be explained by the vast offer of interesting jobs based in Luxembourg.

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