Community impact indicators for learning mobility – research results and list of indicators

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Introduction – research on the impact of learning mobility

The work on the indicators of the impact of learning mobility on the community stems from the previous research and activities of the EPLM network in this area.

The conference "The Power of Learning Mobility", held in Ostend in April 2019, focused on the impact of learning mobility on different levels – the impact on the individual level, on the organisational level and on the community level – as well as their connections and mutual influence. The preparation for this conference highlighted the lack of profound research and material on the impact of learning mobility on the community level.

In a follow-up to the conference, two research papers were developed, one on social impact tools and resources and another on indicators of social impact. Those works made it evident that there is a lack of coherent research approaches to assessing the impact of learning mobility for communities or society, although effects of learning mobility programmes at the community level exist, as was identified by Desk research – The value of learning mobility and its impact on communities (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska 2018).

All these different steps into mapping and understanding the links between learning mobility and community impact made it clear that it was necessary to develop the assessment tools to measure the impact in host and sending communities, which could provide a common assessment framework at the European level. In line with these conclusions, a desk research on Community impact indicators for learning mobility (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021) followed.

Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. (2021) identified five areas of impact of learning mobility: **A) participation and active citizenship; B) social capital; C) skills and competences; D) (inter)culture; and E) (return) migration**. While the impact of learning mobility is mainly noted on the individual level, indirect and/or a mediated impact can be also expected on the individual's networks – the family, peers, organisations, municipalities. Community impact can be found on the micro level (family and friends), meso level (e.g. organisations, schools) and the macro level (e.g. municipalities, religious congregations).

In order to assess the impact of learning mobility on communities, data needs to be collected in several steps: 1) before the learning mobility activity, in order to establish a baseline for measurement; 2) during the implementation; and 3) after the learning mobility activity, ideally following a timespan of 12 months.

The impact assessment model can use the indicators categorised by the thematic area (as identified above), the level (micro, meso and macro), and the time of aggregation (before, during or after learning mobility activity). (For more details about this model see Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021: 53.)

Based on this model, the following examples of proposed indicators for measuring outcomes and impact of learning mobility activities on different levels were suggested. The formulation of those indicators was not exhaustive, mandatory or exclusive, and the initial formulation was indeed reconsidered and readapted for the testing phase (as can be seen in the Annex). The initial list departed from an adaptation of the existing indicators – not exclusively linked to community impact of learning mobility but with connections to it – to provide an indicative (example-oriented) framework, which can be seen below.

General learning mobility indicators needed in macro level surveys and statistics (e.g. ESS, Eurostat):

- *Number of young persons involved in programmes abroad by type* (formal, non-formal, informal) and the length of the programme *(by age, gender, socio-economic background, education etc.)*
- *Number of young persons involved in programmes within the country in specific local community by type* (formal, non-formal, informal) and the length of the programme
- *Number of young persons from abroad involved in programmes within the country region/local community by type* (formal, non-formal, informal) and the length of the programme
- *The ratio between long-term ingoing and outgoing learning mobilities*

Examples of community impact indicators by thematic area

Active citizenship and participation

- New project for host community developed by young person(s) from outside **(A,ii,2)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- Existing programme/project is expanded due to the involvement of young person(s) from outside **(A,ii,2)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- Local networks of institutions/organisations are established (fostering co-operation in host community) **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* new initiatives carried out in the community as follow-up of the mobility (e.g. youth centre is established after a youth exchange) **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* projects organised in the community as follow-up of the mobility (e.g. multicultural street food festival) **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations are established as follow-up of mobility (e.g. NGO for youth with special needs) **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)** or ex post: **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations recognition after the mobility **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase of* NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations outreach through the mobility attracting more volunteers **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**

- *Increase/decrease of* new initiatives carried out in the community as follow-up of the mobility (e.g. youth centre is established after a youth exchange) **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* projects organised in the community as follow-up of the mobility (e.g. multicultural street food festival) **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* membership of NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations
- *Increase/decrease of* democratic initiatives, workshops and activities as follow-up of the mobility **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of protests/boycotts* **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of ethical consumption or climate emergency related initiatives, projects, campaigns* **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- More young people from the sending community apply for mobility project **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- More youth NGOs in the hosting community apply for mobility projects **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)**
- *Increase/decrease of* turn-out in elections **(A,iii,1)** and **(A,iii,3)**

Citizenship education: all **(A,ii,1)** and **(A,ii,3)** and **(A,iii,1)** and **(A,iii,3)**

- *Increase/decrease of* democracy-related initiatives, workshops and activities as follow-up of the mobility
- *How important is it for a citizen to vote. Disaggregated by: (1) Unimportant; (2) Slightly Important; (3) Moderately Important; (4) Important; (5) Very Important*
- *How important is it for a citizen to obey laws. Disaggregated by: (1) Unimportant; (2) Slightly Important; (3) Moderately Important; (4) Important; (5) Very Important*
- *How important is it for a citizen to develop an independent opinion. Disaggregated by: (1) Unimportant; (2) Slightly Important; (3) Moderately Important; (4) Important; (5) Very Important*
- *How important is it for a citizen to be active in a voluntary organisation. Disaggregated by: (1) Unimportant; (2) Slightly Important; (3) Moderately Important; (4) Important; (5) Very Important*
- *How important is it for a citizen to be active in politics. Disaggregated by: (1) Unimportant; (2) Slightly Important; (3) Moderately Important; (4) Important; (5) Very Important*

Community engagement: **all (A,ii,2)** and **(A,ii,3)**

- *Community goals for participation are identified and achieved. Disaggregated by: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree*
- *The project enhanced community member's awareness of mechanisms for participation. Disaggregated by: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree*

- *Community member's positive experiences of participation increased. Disaggregated by: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree*

Social capital

A suggestion is to focus not only on the macro level of trust and co-operative norms of civic engagement (via macro level data like World Value Survey, European Value Survey or European Social Survey) and community level (via community members), but also on the individual assessment of both the social network support and the personal relationships.

Macro indicators (B,iii,1) and (B,iii,3):
- *General trust in society*
- *Trust in institutions (government, parliament, democracy, policy, justice …)*
- *Participation (election turnout)*

Individual level (B,i,1), (B,I,2) and (B,i,3):
- *Structure of personal network (before and after learning mobility activity)*
- *Experienced social network support*
- *Size of the individual's network in the communities (bonds and bridges)*

Community member level (B,ii,1) and (B,ii,1):
- *Linking social capital (before and after learning mobility activity)*
- *Number of learning activities*
- *Mobility activities outside the community*

Skills and competences

Labour market indicators
- *The employment rate. Disaggregated by: (1) never involved, (2) short-term, (3) of medium duration and (4) long-term learning mobility projects (C,iii,1) and (C,iii,3)*
- *The unemployment rate. Disaggregated by: (1) never involved, (2) short-term, (3) of medium duration and (4) long-term learning mobility projects (C,iii,1) and (C,iii,3)*

- *The numbers of entrepreneurs (company owners). Disaggregated by owner (not) involved previously in learning mobility projects: (1) never involved, (2) short-term, (3) of medium duration and (4) long-term (C,ii,1) and (C,ii,3)*
- *The number of new companies per year. Disaggregated by owner (not) involved previously in learning mobility projects: (1) never involved, (2) short-term, (3) of medium duration and (4) long-term (C,ii,1) and (C,ii,3)*

Employers' assessment (Euro-flash barometer) of employee's skills. Disaggregated by: (1) never involved, (2) short-term, (3) of medium duration and (4) long-term learning mobility projects **(C,ii,1)** and **(C,ii,3)**

- Language skills
- Communication skills
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Ability to adapt to and act in new situations
- Decision-making skills
- Team-working skills
- Sector-specific skills
- Planning and organisational skills
- Good reading/writing skills
- Foreign language skills
- Computer skills
- Good with numbers

S*kills based on the memo© factors* **(C,i,1)** and **(C,i,3)**

- *Confidence* – To have confidence and the conviction of one's own abilities
- *Curiosity* – To be open and curious about new challenges
- *Decisiveness* – To know better what one wants and to reach decisions more easily
- *Serenity* – To be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses
- *Tolerance of ambiguity* – To be tolerant towards other person's values and behaviour
- *Vigour* – To be able to manage one's own career, to be better able to solve problems

The skills that individuals acquire during learning mobility projects can be measured in two ways:

1. through self-assessments indicators and scales,

2. with less robust measurement through the assumed acquired competences based on the aims of the programme mobility, or research findings.

Culture and intercultural dialogue

Indicators in this field can be applied to special projects but also to the individuals experiencing the learning mobility, or to the community.

- *The overall aim and the objectives of the activity are explicitly linked to intercultural dialogue and learning (D,ii,1)*
- *The diversity of those involved in the activity provides a possibility for intercultural dialogue and learning (D,ii,1)*
- *Facilitators use updated theoretical base and diverse methodologies of intercultural dialogue and learning to plan the programme (D,ii,1)*
- *Activities focused on understanding the functioning of stereotypes, prejudices and different forms of discrimination and social injustice are planned in the programme (D,ii,1)*
- *Contents of the programme related to intercultural dialogue are clearly connected to the daily life contexts of participants (D,ii,1)*

- *Increase/decrease of intercultural exchange and dialogue in the community outside of institutional structures (D,ii,1) and (D,ii,3)*
- *Increase/decrease of organisations/events for intercultural learning (D,ii,1) and (D,ii,3)*

- *The activity increases participants' awareness about global interconnectedness and the role of solidarity and co-operation in addressing global challenges (D,ii,2)*
- *Facilitators engage in conflict transformation in compliance with human rights principles (D,ii,2)*
- *The activity stimulates participants to develop their knowledge about historical and cultural background of the people they interact with and the social and political context in which they live (the local community (partners' associations, local government, etc.) participate actively in the programme) (D,i,2) and (D,ii,2)*
- *The activity stimulates the development of attitudes like empathy, solidarity, openness and respect for otherness (D,i,2) and (D,ii,2)*
- *The activity stimulates the development of skills like critical thinking, multiperspectivity and tolerance for ambiguity (D,i,2) and (D,ii,2)*
- *Attitudes towards diversity in the society changed sustainably (D,i,1) and (D,i,3)*

(Return) migration

In this field, indicators focusing on education in the household/social surrounding of the young person and networking in the long-term learning experience would provide information on the impact of learning mobility on the community.

- *New educational levels of non-migrant household members financed since learning mobility occurred in the household (E,iii,1) and (E,iii,3)*
- *Increase in length of school/university attendance of household members since learning mobility occurred in the household (E,iii,1) and (E,iii,3)*
- *Increase/decrease of members of same origin community at destination of the learning mobility; extension/decrease of social groups and networks (E,ii,1) and (E,ii,3)*
- *Impact of confidence in own household/social surrounding on decision to migrate (or to enter learning mobility) (E,iii,1) and (E,iii,3) or (E,ii,1) and (E,ii,3)*

Some of the proposed questions and indicators are aimed at individuals, while others are aimed at employers (e.g. indicators in the section on skills and competences) or organising of learning mobility activities (e.g. indicators of the section culture and intercultural dialogue).

Testing the indicators

Departing from the results and analysis of the previous desk research, and using the aforementioned framework and rationale, the authors developed a matrix of indicators. This matrix included a list of different indicators (see the Annex section) for various levels: **individua**l, **organisational**, **municipal**, whereas the formulation of indicators for the impact assessment of thematic areas was at times distinct to account for the aforementioned levels (e.g. participation assessment can have different expressions for individuals and municipalities).

The proposed matrix was assessed by various stakeholders in the field of youth learning mobility, through an online survey. Survey respondents could select the level they represent (individual participants of learning mobility programmes; organisations or municipalities) and give detailed feedback regarding the usability of the indicators, their formulation, and data availability.

Following the survey, a qualitative revision of the indicators by focus groups and interviews with stakeholders was carried out.

Quantitative data collection – online survey

The online survey was anonymous and conducted between October and December 2021 via the LimeSurvey platform as a follow-up to the desk research on Community impact indicators for learning mobility (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021). The survey resulted in 47 completed questionnaires, of which 10 were fully completed by individual participants and 22 completed by organisers and NGOs, while the participants who selected the municipality level did not fully respond to all the questions in the survey.

The purpose of the survey was to test the set of proposed matrix of indicators with the aim of measuring the outcomes and impact of learning mobility activities on different levels: individuals, organisations and municipalities.

The survey was completed by three groups of stakeholders:

> 1. learning mobility programme participants;

> 2. representatives of organisations that organise learning mobility activities; representatives of youth NGOs/youth associations;

> 3. representatives of local governments and municipalities.

Each target group had a set of specific questions, tailored to their role within the learning mobility activity. The questionnaire contained indicators in the areas corresponding to the thematic areas of the Community impact indicators for learning mobility (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021) except for the area of return

migration, which was too broad to test in this phase. For analytical reasons, a section on the socio-demographic background of the respondents (I) was added.

A) Active citizenship and participation
B) Social capital
C) Skills and competences
D) Culture and intercultural dialogue
i) Socio-demographic background

Key findings and research gaps

The survey results were useful in refining the final list of indicators and in reshaping the matrix. However, there were also some issues relating to the availability of data and survey design that impacted on the quality of the responses. Availability of data was particularly highlighted in questions aimed at organisations and municipalities which lacked information regarding young people's level of participation following the learning mobility activity (e.g. Has the number of new initiatives and/or projects developed in co-operation with/by young people increased/decreased in the follow-up of the learning mobility projects/activities implemented in your community in the last 12 months?). This lack of available data was especially evident for participants answering the questionnaire in an organisational/municipality capacity.

Furthermore, one of the other issues identified by respondents was the difficulty in defining and understanding the term "community", which was too indistinct for the participants of the survey.

The participants also found the formulation of some of the questions complex and many did not understand the rationale for the questions. Furthermore, the relevance of some of the questions to highlight the community impact of learning mobility was not always obvious.

Qualitative data collection – focus groups and interviews

Indicators were also tested through qualitative methodology, including three focus groups on learning mobility and two in-depth interviews with policy makers on the municipal level. The focus groups involved 11 participants with seven years' or more experience in the youth field, including representatives of national agencies for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, national youth councils and youth workers, youth organisation representatives and youth work trainers active in the international youth work field. All focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed according to the steps of thematic analysis.

Table 1: Participants

No.	Name (names are changed)	Role/organisation
F1	Linda female	Youth Council
F2	Beth female	Practitioner
F3	Greta female	Practitioner
F4	Clara female	National Agency
F5	Ana female	National Agency
F6	Nikola male	Practitioner
F7	Michal male	Practitioner
F8	Marta female	National Agency
F9	Kamila female	National Agency
F10	Rosa female	Practitioner
F11	Victoria female	Youth Council
I1	Anton male	Policy maker/administration
I2	Florian male	Policy maker/ex-practitioner

The majority of participants of the focus groups agreed that they believed that impact on the community level exists, and that it should be measured and highlighted. However, when it comes to the impact in specific thematic areas, they gave preference to some themes over others. For example, active citizenship and education was clearly highlighted as an area of impact, while the learning mobility impact on social capital was considered arguable. The main challenges they identified relating to the measurement of impact were the understanding of community and the (lack of) available data.

General importance of community impact (indicators)

Practitioners and policy makers confirmed that they are interested in evaluating and highlighting the community impact of learning mobility. For organisers of learning mobility programmes, the impact is in the spreading of the information, when returnees of learning mobilities are sharing their experience back home. But they also point to the fact that the returnees have to be invited by the local governments and other community actors (schools, youth organisations, etc.) to share their experiences. On the level of municipalities, it would be beneficial, from the perspective of return of investment, that citizens feel more accepted and supported in the municipality.

One of the challenges is that the indicators might be used as a means for assessing the success of learning mobility initiatives, beyond the learning outcomes for the individual participant. Participants consider, additionally, that only if the programme aims at a certain impact on the community level would this

approach seem justified. Furthermore, participants have also expressed the need for qualitative indicators that can be adapted to the needs of the various communities.

Generally, participants highlighted that many individuals could go through different experiences almost at the same time. Therefore, an attribution of any change to a specific experience of one particular individual at the community level seems rather ambitious. It is also this difficulty in establishing a causal relation between an individual experience that also highlights one of the challenges for community impact indicators to which the participants showed some level of scepticism.

Relevance of community impact (indicators)

When it comes to the relevance of the community impact indicators of learning mobility, the participants in the focus groups and interviews emphasised that not all projects should be evaluated and assessed with similar approaches: *"The question is what is the aim of the activity of the project? [What is t]he end result that you want to achieve? And then you set the indicators based on your situation, but it's really useful that you have this set list that maybe some I can use and with some I can become more creative"* (Linda).

The table below lists some of the aspects that need to be taken into consideration when planning and assessing the community impact of learning mobility.

Learning mobility initiatives are not always focused on community impact (or have it as its core aim), therefore indicators should reflect the diversity of objectives.

The duration and type of the learning mobility might also have a significant influence on the community impact. Finally, the participants of learning mobility initiatives are often involved in different communities, making it difficult to measure and assess the impact.

The following section provides an illustration of the participants' key reflections during the interviews and focus groups:

When asked about the community impact of learning mobility projects, focus group participants focused a lot on the diversity of the activities and the differences in community impact as a result. They expressed concerns regarding community impact measurement for short-term learning mobility activities, such as youth exchanges and youth worker mobility. These types of exchange are generally directed at personal and professional development and, therefore, the activities are targeting the group of individuals exclusively, often resulting in very little interaction outside the project group. Community impact, however, depends very much on interaction. The practitioners noted that not all projects achieve community impact, because not all projects involve the community members in the activities directly. If the local community members only meet the participants briefly, there might be no community impact at all. Accordingly, in many cases, if community impact is not one of the main topics of the project, it should

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be considered normal and acceptable that no community impact is produced. This could mean that practitioners seldom consider an indirect or mediated impact on the community.

Table 2: Factors influencing community impact

Theme	Subtheme
Topic of the activity	
Type of activity	Youth exchanges and youth worker mobility
	Volunteering
	Youth dialogue, strategic partnerships, youth initiatives
Duration of the activity	Short-term
	Long-term
Level of interaction with the local community	
Type of community	Rural vs urban
Target group	Disadvantaged young people

For the participants of focus groups and interviews it was important to note that learning mobility initiatives are not always focused on community impact (or have it as its core aim), therefore proposed indicators were considered as being too ambitious for a single learning mobility: "*from a mobility programme perspective, you will not achieve [… these indicators]. You will not achieve them with youth exchanges, nor with training, unless you do training [course] on how to establish a youth NGO*"[1] (Nikola). Accordingly, in many cases, if community impact is not one of the main topics of the project, it should be considered normal and acceptable that no community impact is achieved.

When asked about the community impact of learning mobility projects, research participants focused on the diversity of the activities and the differences in community impact as a result. This is also tightly connected to the duration of the activity. Individual short-term mobilities (youth exchanges, youth worker mobility), long-term volunteering, and other actions (youth dialogue, strategic partnerships, youth initiatives) were mentioned to have a completely different community impact potential. Most concerns

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1. The number of newly developed youth NGOs is one of the proposed community impact indicators in the piloting phase.

came up regarding community impact measurement **for short-term learning mobility activities**, such as youth exchanges and youth worker mobility. These types of activities are generally directed at personal and professional development and, therefore, the activities are targeting the group of participants exclusively, often resulting in very little interaction outside the group of the project: "[It is] *very ambitious. You really want a lot out of one little thing. I can't imagine [it] in short mobility*" (Michal); "*I wouldn't think of shorter projects. The question is to what extent this would actually be applicable to shorter projects that fail or do not have the time or depth to achieve one or the other impact in a shorter period of time*" (Victoria).

For **long-term learning mobility activities** such as volunteering or Erasmus+ programme actions that involve several learning mobilities (such as strategic partnerships), the practitioners are more open to the idea of including community impact and its measurement through indicators into the project plan: "*Measuring the impact of KA2 would make sense, and I see it for long-term programmes as well*" (Nikola); "*For longer projects, it would certainly be quite interesting to self-assess after the project and see after half a year, after a year of repetition on the same issues, … if there was an impact at the time, whether it happened, what was expected to be felt, [compared] to [what is] really achieve[d]*" (Victoria).

Direct connection of the level of community inclusion into the activities of learning mobility and community impact could mean that practitioners seldom consider an indirect or mediated impact on the community. In their perception the impact is on the individual level, and it is also on the level of the organisation. In both cases the only impact they seem to envisage and consider is **intended impact** (for the different types of community impact see Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021: 9-11).

Learning

Because of the underlined differences in the possible dimensions of community impact, the direction of future steps for development of indicators on community impact of learning mobility should be to differentiate between the indicators and provide separate lists and guidelines for measuring the indicators for individual mobility, group mobility, short-term and long-term mobility, volunteering, camps, etc., in the participants' perspective.

The practical use of indicators was very well illustrated by focus group participants.

The participants of the focus groups envision the practical use of indicators in the following way:

- **A list of choices.** Practitioners in the youth field would like to use the indicators as a list from which they can use what is the most suitable for their project: *"Before the project I am thinking which indicators I am going to use, because then it's going to be so much work and so much data [and it] won't be possible as an NGO to actually gather it all. So it means that I choose only a few of them … I think you should choose only what is relevant to your situation and it could be only two and*

that's super fine" (Linda). Since the list of indicators that was proposed in the piloting phase is an extensive one, participants of the study expressed a concern that assessing their activities in all the thematic fields would be too demotivating, especially for the short-term projects. According to Michal, the indicators can be useful *"if you can choose. If … you feel that the project has made an impact and then just click on one of the four – yes, then self-assess. But if you fill in everything, you need to write "there was no impact, there was no impact", then it slaps you on the face. But then maybe [it can be measured], according to the focus, according to the topic, according to the activities"* (Michal).

- **An open tool.** After reviewing the list of indicators, participants proposed that in order to be useful, the indicators *"shouldn't be … a set tool. The idea is that it should be dynamic, … [people shouldn't] spend the next years developing a perfect tool. It's better done than perfect, so make the tool as a suggestion that it's a webpage that it can be easily used and updated based on the input that people give after they use [it]"* (Linda).

- **Project planning.** A list of indicators for community impact of learning mobility could be used for improving the quality of learning mobility projects: *"Where I see the point, if we change a bit the way that we address projects and for example if we choose the indicators … that we want to reach through project … instead of having smart objectives in the programmes or the project applications, we write which kind of indicators I would like to achieve through your project"* (Clara). This proposal means a shift in which the project planning could be done, although limits the possible impact to the indicators and the thematic fields that are pre-developed. Having a list of community impact indicators can also help youth NGOs to understand their activities as a contribution to the processes happening on a bigger scale (national, international): *"In particular, it helps me, as an applicant, to provide some support for the project idea, both in terms of issues that we want to address and impact, relevance, to see if this project contributes to a more general goal"* (Victoria).

- **Individual arrangement.** Community impact indicators could also be used for planning individual mobilities and their expected impact: *"If a person wants to do such a mobility, and informs me about it, we could develop a common aim we – as municipality – want to reach. And afterwards we can see, what we gained out of it"* (Florian).

- **Inspiration** is a slightly different way to use the community impact indicators – approaching them not as a set tool, but as an encouragement for the organisations to develop their own indicators for measuring the community change that they want to support with their projects: *"That's good that we have a list of inspiration, but then I look at my situation and I understand that these don't apply, but this is interesting"* (Linda).

- **Self-assessment guide.** Community impact indicators could serve as a tool for self-assessment of the youth NGOs and the municipalities: *"I would see a very good opportunity for youth co-ordinators to self-assess their municipality and their activities"* (Marta). The community impact indicators could also inspire project assessment, broaden it to the community level: *"perhaps a*

little adaptation to the different realities and characteristics of the actions could give project promoters a survey as a feedback tool so that they can both reflect on what they can write in the final report and gather from their stakeholders and local community, conduct mini-surveys, volunteers themselves to go through these issues and collect that material" (Kamila).

- **Bargaining power.** Measuring and therefore knowing the community impact of learning mobility activities can be seen as bargaining power. As the representative of the National Agency underlines, for the youth affair co-ordinators data, collected on the community impact indicators, *"would be like bargaining power, why we as youth co-ordinators need to implement projects, why we need to encourage others to implement projects. Because [the projects] benefit our community. It seems to me that this would be a very important tool in the youth coordinators' work"* (Marta).

In terms of using the proposed indicators, the participants of the study agreed that it is important for them to use the indicators as long as they are a **flexible tool** that could be used according to the need, the topic of the activity or the relevance rather than as an indivisible, uniform tool. The practitioners saw the practical use of the indicators in the planning phase of the project to expand their thinking and get new ideas on how to strengthen the impact dimension of their activities. Additionally, all focus groups' participants shared that it was important to have the indicators as a self-assessment tool after the learning mobility experience.

Reflection, consequences and conclusions for the development of the final list of indicators

The two phases of the indicator testing showed three main challenges for the research group: understanding the concept and meaning of community, data collection and availability, and the various forms of impact.

Community

The participants in the focus groups and the interviews focused immediately on the understanding and usage of the term community, discussing which community should they consider and what is meant by "community".

Individuals do not necessarily belong only to one community and an impact of learning mobility may not necessarily be seen in all of them. Furthermore, the feeling of belonging to a certain community might not be as strong, which can pose additional challenges in terms of community impact assessment. One

participant told the story that upon return after a long-term learning mobility his attitude towards the home community, especially towards the organisation he was a member of, had changed strongly. "When I came back, I had the feeling I did not belong here because I saw something new, that I cannot share with the others." The newly acquired social capital did not support bridging with the community back home, but in fact diminished the old social capital. The new contacts proved to be of benefit for the individual but the bonding with the previously existing community decreased. This is per se an impact of the learning mobility, too: building new social capital and new communities and a sense of loosening ties with the old ones.

The concept of "community" means something different in different settings and languages. Community can be the (cultural) group where the participants come from, but it can also be the group of friends. For example, in integration research, community is used to describe entities of immigrants – even if there are no personal contacts between the immigrants; and in youth cultural research, community is also sometimes used in this sense, like a gamer community. Additionally, there are terminological and interpretative challenges related to the concept. In German, the word "community" is translated both as *Gemeinde* – which can be a local Christian congregation, or a village, district, or municipality – and *Gemeinschaft* – which can be anything from a family to the peer group or the school community – or very generally as *Gruppe* – which can be understood completely differently depending on the context. In Portuguese the translation of "community" is *comunidade*, which would entail both the meanings of *Gemeinde*, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gruppe* in German, but that can also be understood with bias and prejudice by certain people, when for instance is used to refer to a particular community, e.g. the Roma community (*comunidade cigana*).

The feedback during the qualitative research showed, indeed, that participants were not sure what was meant by "community", so they were not always sure what to answer.

Data availability

1. Lack of data

One main concern for the focus group participants was the availability of data for measuring the impact. Two of the policy makers interviewed pointed to the fact that, on the level of municipalities or districts, this kind of data does not exist. "It is wishful thinking to have that data. Firstly: We do not know who went to a learning mobility, and secondly we seldom see what happens on the level of small organisations – [we see it] only if they apply for funding." Accordingly, the main challenge in any comparison between before and after any learning mobility for purposes of community impact assessment is the lack of baseline and endline data.

2. Data collection

Although municipal officials consider community impact evaluation to be interesting, they also expressed concerns regarding the costs and feasibility of gathering such data. On the other hand, individual agreements with participants of learning mobility that allow concrete follow-up after the return could be cost-effective (since the participant and not administration personnel would do the work of follow-up for data collection).

It is difficult and cost-intensive to collect, gather and analyse the data, and it requires the involvement of the researchers. Whereas data on the level of the individual participant (learning experience, changes in social networking, increased employability etc.) can be generated by contacting the individuals, the communities – represented by organisations and municipalities – would need to establish data management tools to collect data of their members/inhabitants. Additionally, these data collection tools would need to comply with the GDPR during all the activities (e.g. elections, activities, number of organisations). Any form of data collection at the level of an organisation is only possible if the individuals taking part in learning mobility fill in data themselves. However, this requires commitment, willingness and consistency on the part of the participants. Other impacts on the community level – changes in work atmosphere, interest in activities – can be felt, but it should also be assessed by the researchers.

Forms of impact

Besides collecting the data on learning mobility events and activities there is also the challenge of considering the unintended developments/impact of learning mobility activities. Most interview and focus group participants focused on **intended impact**. After discussing various aspects – relating to social capital, intercultural competences or migration – the participants agreed that in some communities it might also be beneficial to assess unintended impact. However, this unintentional impact differs between the communities and cannot be generalised. This confirms that the community impact indicators, and their formulation, must respect the needs and interests of the different communities.

Conclusions from the qualitative assessment:

1. The community for which impact indicators are considered needs to be described for the assessment to be effective – there is a *tailor-made approach* to it.
2. Various descriptions of community need to be considered in the formulation of the indicators to ensure that a specific set of indicators can be used to accommodate the assessment needs.
3. In the planning phase of learning mobility projects, indicators for measuring intended community impact shall be designed through a participatory approach between sending community, hosting community and participants.
4. Data – for comparison purposes – can be provided by the participant voluntarily and the organisations involved. That data would be anonymised embedded in a database, and analysed afterwards.
5. Researchers can support participants, organisations and municipalities in collecting data and analysing the database.

Revised community impact indicators

This report presents a list of the proposed indicators, based on the desk research and the testing. Some changes were made to the initial set of indicators proposed in the desk research, reformulating and simplifying them, for easier understanding and use. Additionally, some of the indicators proposed with the initial matrix were deleted, as testing showed that the initial list was very long and some of the topics less relevant for practitioners. New indicators were added to incorporate the relevant contributions of the participants. The new coding of the indicators and thematic areas is therefore proposed. The initial list of indicators can be found in the adjoining document.

Indicators for participants of the learning mobility programme

A) <u>Active citizenship and participation</u>

This set of indicators aims to measure the degree to which young people have changed their forms and the degree of participation due to engagement in the learning mobility programme/initiative. Before-and-after design is proposed, where the same questions are presented to participants before the start of the learning mobility, immediately after the end of the programme and possibly also 6-12 months after the activities have ended. Questions aim to measure individual patterns of engagement in various forms of participation, links between community goals for participation and effects of learning mobility projects.

1. Are you a member of the following types of organisations? (yes/no)

- political parties
- trade unions
- professional associations
- churches or other religious organisations
- recreational groups or organisations
- human rights organisations
- environmental organisations
- activities of other groups or organisations.

2. Have you participated in the following activities implemented by any of organisations mentioned in the previous question in the last 12 months (yes/no):

- donating money
- undertaking voluntary work in the community
- signing a petition regarding community issues.

3. Have you undertaken any of the following activities in your community in the last 12 months, outside of the groups mentioned in previous question? (yes/no)

- · helped anyone in the community
- · taken part in lawful demonstrations addressing community issues
- · boycotting products that harm the community
- · taken action towards ethical consumption/community sustainability
- · contacted a politician/community representative regarding a community matter.

4. In your opinion, how important (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/cannot say) is it for citizens/community members to:

- · vote in local elections
- · participate otherwise in community decisions
- · be active in a voluntary organisation or community organisation or co-operative
- · obey laws
- · be otherwise active in the community/municipality/local government politics.

5. After your most recent learning mobility experience, have you been involved in the following activities? (yes/no)

- · in a new initiative and/or project for host community developed in co-operation with/by young people
- · in an existing programme/project that is expanded
- · in new local networks of institutions/organisations that were established in the host community
- · in NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations that were established and/or better recognised
- · in increasing community members' awareness of mechanisms for youth participation
- · in helping to solve issues identified through learning mobility projects/activities
- · in activities where a community demonstrates its ability to explore key issues, develop action plans, carry out action plans and evaluate results
- · in activities expressing community members' positive experiences, where they feel that they are included in the learning mobility project, they "own" the project
- · in youth NGOs in the hosting community applying for mobility projects
- · in events aimed at increasing turnout in elections in the hosting community.

B) Social capital indicators

The following set of indicators aims to identify the extent to which the social capital of individual participants changes as the result of participation in a learning mobility activity.

Please answer the following questions considering your most recent learning mobility experiences:

1. During the learning mobility programme I found social networks (i.e., a network of social interactions and personal relationships) to be ...

    very supportive
    supportive
    neither supportive nor unsupportive
    unsupportive
    very unsupportive
    cannot say.

2. During the learning mobility to what extent did you feel connected to the sending community?

    to a very large extent
    to a large extent
    to a moderate extent
    to a small extent
    to a very small extent.

3. During the learning mobility to what extent did you feel connected to the hosting community?

    to a very large extent
    to a large extent
    to a moderate extent
    to a small extent
    to a very small extent.

4. Have you ever organised a community event together with a person or several people whom you met through your learning mobility experience? (yes/no)

5. Do you feel more respected among your friends as a result of having participated in learning mobility projects/activities? (yes/no)

6. Do you feel more recognised and empowered in the wider circle of your acquaintances, because of having participated in learning mobility projects/activities? (yes/no)

C) <u>Skills and competences</u>

Indicators in this section intend to capture the extent and modalities of change of the participant's knowledge, skills and attitudes as a result of participation in the learning mobility project.

1. How did your skills and competences develop (improved a lot/improved somewhat/did not change/decreased somewhat/decreased a lot/cannot say) as a result of your most recent learning mobility experience?

- · teamwork skills
- · sector-specific skills
- · communication skills
- · decision-making skills
- · planning and organisational skills
- · analytical and problem-solving skills
- · ability to adapt to and act in new situations
- · self-awareness
- · foreign language skills
- · computer skills
- · other skills.

2. How did your personal features develop (strengthened a lot/strengthened somewhat/did not change/weakened somewhat/weakened a lot/cannot say) as a result of your most recent learning mobility experience?

- · confidence – to have confidence and a conviction in one's own abilities
- · curiosity – to be open and curious about new challenges
- · decisiveness – to know better what one wants and to reach decisions more easily
- · serenity – to be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses
- · tolerance of ambiguity – to be tolerant towards other person's values and behaviour
- · vigour – to be able to manage one's own career, to be better able to solve problems

D) <u>(Inter)cultural indicators</u>

This set of indicators aims to measure the extent to which the intercultural dialogue and learning principle is embedded in the design of learning mobility projects/initiatives and how it changes the patterns of behaviour and values of the individual participant.

1. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) the following statements refer to your most recent experience of learning mobility?

- the overall aim and objectives of the international/intercultural activity are explicitly linked to intercultural dialogue and learning
- the diversity of participants involved in the international/intercultural activity provides a possibility for intercultural dialogue and learning
- the activities focused on understanding stereotypes, prejudices and different forms of discrimination and social injustice are included in the programme.

2. Thinking of your most recent learning mobility experience, please characterise/describe to what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/cannot say)

- contents of the programme relating to intercultural dialogue were clearly connected to the daily life contexts of participants
- multilingualism was part of the international/intercultural activity
- there was a clear connection between intercultural dialogue and other main topic(s) of the programme
- the international/intercultural activity stimulated participants to develop their knowledge about the historical and cultural background of the people they interact with and the social and political context in which they live
- the local community (partners associations, local government, etc.) participated actively in the programme.

3. Thinking of your most recent learning mobility experience, please characterise/describe to what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/cannot say)

- … were participants supported to engage in intercultural dialogue
- … did learning mobility experiences and projects help to improve practices in youth organisations.

4. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/cannot say) the international/intercultural learning mobility activity/project that you have organised/participated in fostered the development of:

- attitudes such as empathy, solidarity, openness and respect for otherness
- skills like critical thinking, and tolerance for ambiguity.

5. Has the number of your friends and acquaintances increased through your most recent learning mobility experience(s)?

no, I did not make any new friends
1-2 more friends and acquaintances

3-5 more friends and acquaintances

more than 5 friends and acquaintances

I cannot say.

6. Have you made any friends during all of your learning mobility experiences?

no, I have not made any new friends

1-2 more friends and acquaintances

3-5 more friends and acquaintances

more than 5 friends and acquaintances

I cannot say.

7. Please indicate to what extent you agree (completely agree/mostly agree/slightly agree/slightly disagree/mostly disagree/completely disagree) with the following statements:

- · Migrants of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed to participate in the community
- · The cultural life of the community is enriched by immigrants
- · Immigrants make the community a better place.

8. Please indicate to what extent you agree (completely agree/mostly agree/slightly agree/slightly disagree/mostly disagree/completely disagree) with the following statements:

- · Migrants of a different race or ethnic group from the majority should be allowed to participate in the community
- · The cultural life of the community is enriched by immigrants
- · Immigrants make the community a better place.

i. Socio-demographic background

1. Gender

Male/female/other/prefer not to say

2. Highest finished educational level:

- · primary education
- · lower secondary education
- · upper secondary education
- · post-secondary non-tertiary education
- · short-cycle tertiary education

- · bachelor's degree or equivalent tertiary education level
- · master's degree or equivalent tertiary education level
- · doctoral degree or equivalent tertiary education level

3. Do you have prior learning mobility experience? Please tick all that apply and indicate the number:

- · no previous experience
- · only national
- · international
- · online
- · short-term (up to 3 weeks)
- · intermediate (1 to 3 months)
- · long-term (more than 3 months)

4. What is your age?

5. Which of the following best describes your situation (in the last seven days)?

- · in paid work (or away temporarily) – employee
- · in paid work (or away temporarily) – self-employed
- · in paid work (or away temporarily) – working for your family business
- · in education (not paid for by employer) even if on vacation
- · unemployed and actively looking for a job
- · unemployed, wanting a job but not actively looking for a job
- · none of the above

Indicators for organisers of learning mobility programmes/youth NGO/youth association/municipal authority

This set of indicators aims to measure effects in five dimensions among organisers, NGO members, and municipal employees to identify their experiences and perceptions of effects at the community level. The basic assumption was that these stakeholders would have direct experience with the programmes, but also with the effects of the programmes on the societal level. The same dimensions were examined as for the participants, with the questions adapted to their experience.

The testing phase gathered feedback regarding several issues with the indicators. First, several organisations reported that they faced challenges in understanding the questions fully, despite being passionate about the topic. This was partly because the scope of the questions was exceeding their organisational framework, or because it was too narrow.

Second, respondents who are experienced in this field were also unable to answer many questions due to the lack of understanding of different concepts outlined in the questions (such as the "community") or the links between different concepts (e.g., learning mobility and volunteering and political participation). Defining the scope of the "community" was particularly challenging for the organisations involved in co-ordination of learning mobility projects at the European level (this includes the National Agency of Erasmus+ and ESC).

Third, respondents from NGOs and municipalities struggled to reflect on the effects of learning mobility projects on the levels beyond their organisational scope, and on the impact of learning mobility on the individual young people.

Fourth, low response rate was noted in the questions requiring the exact number of users or measuring the perception of community changes.

Finally, the multiple-choice questions were "unclear, long and complicated" for the less experienced respondents, who were unable to choose among the answers proposed because the options provided did not clearly describe the type of learning mobility experience that they were familiar with. Some respondents coming from NGOs were also not sure whether they should express their opinion or provide the facts (data) that are available only to the managers. More experienced respondents (such as umbrella organisations) faced challenges to provide simple answers on the impact of learning mobility on their member organisations and networks.

Based on the feedback received during the testing, it was decided to completely reformulate this section and target it only at organisers of learning mobility initiatives (in NGOs, youth organisations or local communities). Indicators should be measurable (preferably quantitative) and based on their direct experience with a particular learning mobility programme. First, the indicators need to define the learning mobility programme :

- national
- international
- online
- short-term (up to three weeks)
- intermediate (one to three months)
- long-term (more than three months).

Second, the indicators need to define the communities involved in (or connected to) the programme. For each learning mobility activity a concrete scheme should be proposed by organisers). Below is a table that gives an example of what it could look like:

Table 3: Form and size of communities

	Who are members of the community?	How big is the community? (Be as accurate as you can)
1	Third-year students of the Faculty of Arts	80
2	University of Niš	4 500
3	Regional Erasmus+ club	120
	...	
x	London	8 902 000
xx	Young people aged 15-30 in Kosjerić, Serbia	250-300

How many participants were involved in the learning mobility programme: _____.

Using the previous information, it is possible to calculate the *penetration rate (PR)*, which is the measure expressing the number of programme beneficiaries in relation to the total number of community members:

Penetration rate = number of programme participants ÷ total number of community members

Higher PR for the same (type of) programme, and same socio-economic context, may mean a higher impact on the community. Since it is possible to define several communities, different figures of PR can be calculated. It is natural to assume that the impact of a learning mobility project will vary, depending on the number of participants and community size.

Socio-economic background of participants:

1. education level
2. gender
3. place of residence

4. age

5. subjective perception of their material situation.

The number of vulnerable young people/young people with fewer opportunities that were involved in the learning mobility programme: _____.

The project budget of a concrete learning mobility programme: _____.

The structure of the budget for that particular learning mobility programme. What is the share (%) of costs directly dedicated to participants? _____.

Questions about the content of the programme itself:

A. Active citizenship and participation indicators

1. Did the learning mobility programme include … (yes/no)

- · volunteering in the host community
- · boycotting products that harm the community
- · lawful demonstrations addressing community issues
- · action towards ethical consumption/community sustainability
- · contacting a politician/community representative regarding an important community matter

2. Do you recognise any of these as intended consequences of learning mobility programme (yes/no):

- · increased voter turnout in community elections
- · increased involvement in community decisions
- · increased involvement in a voluntary organisation or community organisation or co-operative
- · increased ability to develop an independent opinion
- · increased laws abidance
- · increased activism in community's politics

3. Have the following activities and initiatives took place after the learning mobility programme? (yes/no)

- · new initiative and/or project for host community is developed in co-operation with/by young people
- · the existing programme/project is expanded due to the involvement of young people

- · local networks of institutions/organisations are established in the host community
- · NGOs, religious organisations, other civil society/community organisations are established and/or better recognised
- · youth NGOs in the hosting community apply for mobility projects

B. Social capital indicators

1. To what extent does the programme involve daily and/or intensive interaction with the host community?

- · to a very large extent
- · to a large extent
- · to a moderate extent
- · to a small extent
- · to a very small extent
- · cannot say

C. Skills and competences indicators

1. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) the learning mobility programme that you have organised fosters the development of:

- · teamwork skills
- · sector-specific skills
- · communication skills
- · decision-making skills
- · planning and organisational skills
- · analytical and problem-solving skills
- · ability to adapt to and act in new situations
- · self-awareness
- · foreign language skills
- · computer skills
- · other skills

2. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) the learning mobility programme that you have organised fosters the development of personal features?

- · confidence – to have confidence and a conviction of one's own abilities
- · curiosity – to be open and curious about new challenges
- · decisiveness – to know better what one wants and to reach decisions more easily

- · serenity – to be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses
- · tolerance of ambiguity – to be tolerant towards other person's values and behaviour
- · vigour – to be able to manage one's own career, to be better able to solve problems

D. Inter-cultural indicators

1. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) do the following statements refer to the goal of the learning mobility programme?

- · The overall aim and objectives of the international/intercultural activity are explicitly linked to intercultural dialogue and learning.
- · The diversity of the participants involved in the international/intercultural activity provides a possibility for intercultural dialogue and learning.
- · The activities focused on recognising stereotypes, prejudices and different forms of discrimination and social injustice are included in the programme.

2. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) ...

- · ... are the contents of the programme related to intercultural dialogue clearly connected to the daily life contexts of participants?
- · ... is multilingualism used in international/intercultural activity?
- · ... is there a clear connection between intercultural dialogue and other main topic(s) of the programme?
- · ... does the international/intercultural activity stimulate participants to develop their knowledge about the historical and cultural background of the people they interact with and the social and political context in which they live?
- · ... does the local community (partners associations, local government, etc.) participate actively in the programme?
- · … are participants supported to engage in social change and intercultural dialogue?
- · … do learning mobility experiences and projects help to improve practices in youth field?

3. To what extent (to a very large extent/to a large extent/to a moderate extent/to a small extent/to a very small extent/not at all/cannot say) the (international/intercultural) learning mobility programme that you have organised fosters the development of:

- · attitudes like empathy, solidarity, openness and respect for otherness
- · skills like critical thinking.

Final conclusions from the testing process and next steps

Desk research on community impact indicators (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021) argues that development of indicators is not done with the purpose of judging or pressuring youth workers, practitioners and young people over their learning mobility projects, but to provide a structural framework for planning, implementing and following up after a learning mobility takes place.

The preliminary list of indicators for testing and the refined list proposed in this report, therefore, aim to respect that rationale and to contribute to evaluating the objectives and results, to recognise the challenges and obstacles, and to highlight intended and unintended impact of the activities. Additionally, it can hopefully contribute to improvement of future learning mobility projects and better inclusion of communities in learning mobility activities.

In the previous desk research, the following priorities were outlined as a strategy for the testing of the community impact indicators:

a) include variables that are important for learning mobility in **macro level** statistics and surveys;

b) test the indicators in **selected communities** with an **ex post approach** – to understand what are more relevant and what might need adaptations, so more communities can make use of them in a two-phase approach (i.e., ex ante – ex post) in the future;

c) test a number of indicators with individual participants of selected learning mobility projects (ESC, Erasmus+ youth) in the planning phase, during the project and 12 months after the project – here a co-operation with the RAY network and with the Youth Pass might be advisable (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021: 60).

The testing was able to address priority c) – although not within the set-out timeframes and phases – and to show the importance of priority a), but was not able to involve communities in b) to the extent desired due to time and contextual constraints (including the COVID-19 pandemic).

Community impact indicators have to cover a broad range of outputs, outcomes and goals of learning mobility projects (namely by building on existing theory and more specifically on the Theory of Change, see Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al. 2021: 10-11; 59). However, the testing reinforces the conclusion that it is important to underline that all these cannot always be thoroughly planned or always expected, and that there might be unintended impact that it is still worth measuring.

In order to be useful to the field, indicators require a high level of flexibility in order to accommodate different understandings and meaning of "community". The refined list proposed here should therefore be seen as an invitation and not a prescribed list of points to be included in every activity.

Research gaps The desk research on social and community impact of learning mobility and this testing indicate that there are still some remaining knowledge gaps.

First, although the meaning and understanding of "community" was thoroughly analysed, the concept still remains largely contested. Therefore, a thorough mapping of the meaning and definitions of the concept of community should be undertaken and used as a reference for community impact assessment/measurement.

Second, and in line with the previous research, "it might be useful to consider the development of a centralised online database with multi-actor (research, policy, practice), multi-level (individual, organisational and community) and multi-phase (planning, implementation, post mobility) indicators entry points. Such database, thoroughly promoted and disseminated, would ensure that solid, useful and meaningful data is available learning mobility" (Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al, 2021: 60).

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