



EUROPEAN PLATFORM ON LEARNING MOBILITY IN THE YOUTH FIELD

Mission, Scope and Framework of Action December 2020

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. The scope of the EPLM | 3 |
| Definition of Learning Mobility | 4 |
| 2. The EPLM - What does it aim for? | 4 |
| The Vision of the EPLM | 4 |
| Our Mission | 4 |
| The Aims and Objectives of the EPLM | 5 |
| 3. The EPLM Steering Group | 5 |
| EPLM Steering Group | 5 |
| EPLM Resource Group | 7 |
| EPLM Thematic working groups | 8 |
| 4. EPLM - how it began and how it's supported by European Institutions | 9 |
| Starting Phase | 9 |
| Recent European Institutional support for Learning Mobility | 10 |
| Council of Europe | 10 |
| European Union | 10 |
| 5. EPLM Framework of Action | 12 |
| Core transversal principles of EPLM | 12 |
| The importance of the triangle (or pyramid) | 12 |
| Inclusion & Diversity | 13 |
| Supporting others to link practice, policy and research | 13 |
| Competences and training | 13 |
| Providing information and guidance | 14 |
| EPLM Seven Areas of Action - things we DO | 16 |
| 1) Bring research closer to the practitioners, young people and decision makers. | 16 |
| 2) Link youth work, value-based education and learning mobility | 16 |
| 3) Ensure quality and recognition | 18 |
| 4) Evaluation, learning transfer and community/personal impact | 18 |
| 5) Informal learning and more flexible formats of learning mobility | 20 |
| 6) Digital Learning Mobility | 20 |
| 7) Sustainability | 22 |
| Appendix | 23 |
| EPLM recent activities | 23 |
| Quality in Learning Mobility | 23 |
| Quality Ambassadors | 23 |
| Community Impact | 24 |
| Sustainability Conference, foreseen for autumn 2021 (tbc) | 24 |
| Online mobility, COVID-19 and research on its impact on learning mobility | 25 |

1. The scope of the EPLM

The European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field (hereinafter EPLM) is a **space for exchange and cooperation** of youth organisations, researchers, policy makers and practitioners, such as trainers and youth workers. It primarily considers activities in the field of international youth work.

Continuous co-operation of these parties is seen as an added value for the further impact, relevance, development, visibility and recognition of Learning Mobility in the youth field. Moreover, the work of the EPLM is conducted in a participatory way, involving other stakeholders such as European NGOs and networks representing young people's interests and concerns.

The 'Europe' definition used in the EPLM acronym is understood to include the countries and actors represented in the Council of Europe¹ and the European Union².

The EPLM focuses on non-formal learning with links to informal learning. Learning mobility in this framework aims to improve the following areas of young people's lives: participation, active citizenship and democratic engagement, access to rights, social inclusion, intercultural and intergenerational learning and dialogue, individual competency development including digital competence, European cohesion, global solidarity, value-based learning, peace, diversity, sustainability and impact on the community. This list is not exhaustive.

By considering and supporting the combination of youth work practice, policy and research, the EPLM fosters quality youth work at all levels, its attractiveness and accessibility for all young people, its impact on the individual and the sending and hosting communities, as well as its longer-term sustainability, visibility and recognition.

The EPLM not only considers European/International youth mobility policies and programmes but is also more generally interested in learning mobility as a set of complex social processes transforming the conditions of growing up in Europe and young people's identity. The EPLM focuses on physical learning mobility, primarily in cross-border and international settings. However, with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and limitations on physical mobility, it should also consider online or blended formats, connecting through digital tools.

Online learning is seen by the EPLM as organised facilitated distance learning using internet tools, often with multiple learning pathways for the individual. It can have a much wider reach, especially for those with less opportunity to travel.

Blended learning mobility combines both online and in person (face to face) activities. Both online and offline elements should complement each other with their own strengths. Often the online elements allow for more flexibility on where and when the learning happens and is frequently used for preparation before (and follow up activities after) a physical learning

¹ 50 signatories to the European Cultural Convention

² 27 member states

mobility project. Blended learning can also be effective to combine physical and online elements during the project stage of a mobility.

The EPLM is an open network and is conducted in a participatory way. Thematic working groups may be formed and supported with means available and depending on the needs and developments related to learning mobility in the youth field. A Steering Group guides the work of the EPLM. The members of the Steering Group represent a wide variety of stakeholders, programmes and formats in the field of learning mobility, a balanced mixture of the respective fields of work and a regional diversity within Europe. The EPLM Steering Group and Resources Group is coordinated by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

The EPLM connects several different international mobility Programmes, including representation from Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies, regional and bilateral programmes, and also others that offer workcamps, youth exchanges, volunteering, school exchanges, youth worker mobility, vocational apprenticeships etc. The strength of the Platform lies in its diversity, its reach, and its ability to react flexibly to the needs of the field.

Definition of Learning Mobility

The EPLM defines learning mobility in the youth field as *mobility of young people (transnationally, regionally or online) undertaken freely and voluntarily for a specific period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes, to impact on the local community or to acquire new competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes or values). It encompasses a wide variety of project formats and activities, and can be implemented in informal or non-formal education settings.*

2. The EPLM - What does it aim for?

The Vision of the EPLM

To create conditions for **the development of high-quality and sustainable learning mobility for all** in the youth field in Europe.

Our Mission

In order to achieve this vision, the EPLM is working to pursue quality, impact, knowledge, inclusivity, participation, sustainability, visibility and recognition of learning mobility (including blended or online) in non-formal and informal education and learning in Europe.

The Aims and Objectives of the EPLM

The European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field aims to

1. provide a platform for cooperation and exchange of competence among researchers, policy makers, youth workers and organisations representing young people;
2. create and maintain a collective, professional voice from the youth field around learning mobility;
3. provide a space for communication between structures and actors of non-formal and informal learning in relation to learning mobility;
4. deepen knowledge and understanding of learning mobility in Europe and provide a mapping of existing research, related to the priority areas of the EPLM's Framework of Action;
5. work on a number of themes, decided by the EPLM SG, as described in the 'Framework of Action';
6. support the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda, notably in the area of international youth work;
7. follow-up and implement the outcomes of EPLM conferences, linking them to relevant policy discussions in Europe.

3. The EPLM Steering Group

The EPLM is an open network. It is not an organisation. It links different stakeholders related to the youth field in Europe to connect practice, policy, research and the needs of young people together, with an aim of increasing the quality and sustainability of learning mobility for all.

Up until 2020, the Steering Group has consisted of approximately 35 members. This is a large number that makes both participation and decision-making unwieldy. A new format for guiding the direction and work of the EPLM has been proposed, taking into account all the feedback and contributions of the 7th October 2020 Steering Group meeting:

EPLM Steering Group

A Steering Group permanently guides the EPLM, in a cycle of 2 years. The Steering Group decides on the themes, priorities, actions and activities of the EPLM direction of the next two-year cycle, setting itself concrete targets that can be monitored and measured. Priorities should be directly linked to the EPLM conferences and guided by the EPLM Framework of Action.

Members of the EPLM Steering Group will have the opportunity to directly shape the work and activities of the EPLM, including the research agenda on Learning Mobility in Europe. They will share a platform that includes decision-makers in the field and will be closely connected and informed regularly about updates from institutions.

The Steering Group should consist, ideally, of between 9-12 members. There should be balance in the group - geographical, sectorial and institutional. Each entity (organisation/institution) should have only one representative in the Steering Group. If the representative leaves their role, the entity should appoint a replacement.

The EPLM Steering Group should include at least:

- National Agencies, as organisers of the EPLM conference - both the previous and the future ones, as well as former coordinating NA
- Representatives of EU and the Council of Europe
- A member of the Advisory Council of Council of Europe, to connect to the co-management principle with young people
- European Youth Forum
- Practitioners (trainers etc)
- Researchers (PEYR, etc)
- One of the youth Information networks
- One representative of SALTO (possibly linked to priority theme)
- The EU- Council of Europe youth partnership as coordinators of the EPLM

A call for volunteers is opened and managed by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, as coordinator of the EPLM. This is done by Spring of the first year of the new cycle. The expectations for participating in the EPLM Steering Group are clear. Members of the EPLM Steering Group should:

- actively contribute to concrete measures that implement the EPLM Framework of action, including the next EPLM conference;
- identify and support the organisers of the next EPLM conference. Representatives of the conference organisers are incorporated as members of the Steering Group themselves;
- follow up on the outcomes of the conferences, proposing specific thematic working groups to build on within further work programmes and link outputs or recommendations to relevant policy discussions in Europe;
- act as a representative of their side of the triangle, transferring knowledge and expertise between practice, policy and research in the youth field in Europe, and pass that back to their own networks;
- help plan, organise and facilitate the twice-yearly EPLM Resource Group Meetings;
- With support of their organisation or institution, allocate time and resources for their work on EPLM, considering the Steering Group Meetings, Resource Group Meetings, and the concrete actions to implement the EPLM Framework.

At the end of the two-year cycle, the previous Steering Group includes an evaluation phase, and a research phase with the wider Resource Group around changing needs of the field. It then creates a proposal for the priority theme(s) for the subsequent two-year cycle, as well as any ideas for improving the practical working approach of the platform. The youth partnership then continues its responsibility of coordinating the EPLM by a new call for volunteers. It is possible for some participants to continue as Steering Group members in a new cycle, if they also have experience or expertise in the new priority focus.

EPLM Resource Group

The members of the Resource Group (maximum 40 people) represent a wide variety of areas of competence, educational programmes and actors in the field of learning mobility in Europe. They mirror regional diversity within Europe. The EPLM Resource Group consists of a balanced mixture of researchers, policy makers, practitioners from the youth work field, as well as youth organisations. Only one person per entity (organisation/institution) should sit on the Resource Group. Their role is to contribute to the EPLM from their perspective, to share current needs, progress, resources and competences and in return spread the combined knowledge, updates and outputs of the EPLM back through their networks. The aim is to strengthen the 'triangle' of actors in the youth field in Europe, and thereby tighten their cooperation and interdependence for the benefit of young people's mobility opportunities in Europe.

Representation on the EPLM Resource Group may include:

- Young people's representatives and youth NGOs, appointed by the European Youth Forum among their staff of member organisations and by the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe among its members.
- The European Commission and the Council of Europe.
- National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps that are concerned specifically with the activities of the EPLM, notably the organisers of the immediate-past and forthcoming biennial conferences.
- Researchers from the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR);
- Representatives of the trainers' community.
- Regional organisations engaged in learning mobility, such as the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO);
- European youth information networks: Eurodesk, EYCA, and ERYICA.
- SALTO Resource Centres: Inclusion and Diversity, Training and Cooperation, European Solidarity Corps.
- Upon invitation from the youth partnership coordination office, individuals who are involved in different activities of the EPLM.
- The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, with a role of coordination of the EPLM.

The EPLM Resource Group will meet twice per year - one physical meeting and once online, in Spring and Autumn. These Resource Group events will be a chance to share updates, discuss current challenges and connect the sectors. They will be a sounding board for input and feedback on current Thematic Working Group progress, as well as identifying possible future themes through future-mapping of policy, practice and research directions. Some preparation and follow-up work can be required for Resource Group meetings (preparing responses to a position paper, compiling practice relating to a specific theme etc).

Participants of the EPLM Resource Group can benefit from the networking connection that membership gives and use it for other needs outside of meeting times. They are also a pool of resource that can be called upon for contribution to EPLM Thematic Working Groups, depending on their interest and expertise.

EPLM Thematic working groups

Thematic working groups may be formed and supported, depending on the needs, resources available and developments related to learning mobility in the youth field in Europe. This can be for any priority area within the EPLM Framework of Action, not necessarily the one chosen by the Steering Group. Any member of either the EPLM Resource Group or Steering Group may become the 'Co-ordinator' of a thematic group by: proposing its topic, taking responsibility for the resources, defining a remit for its purpose and outlining the competences needed for those to take part. The Steering Group may well set up a thematic working group(s) related to the current priority theme of the EPLM that links to the biennial conference.

Participation in the working group is through an open call by email to all members of both the EPLM Steering and Resource Groups, with a two-week window for application to participate. On occasion, due to necessity, there may be shorter lead-in time for responding to these open calls. It is hoped most members of the EPLM who join Thematic Working Groups do so in the interest of the organisation they represent. Occasionally, a Coordinator may make a budget available to support the work. The Co-ordinator of the thematic working group will then select the members and organise the next steps.

Some examples of thematic working group outcomes could be:

- Researching a topic to create a mapping of existing practice or research (e.g. Research reflection group on the impact of COVID-19 on learning mobility)
- Writing an EPLM position paper on a topic, to include the angles of practice, policy and research
- Develop and disseminate learning resources or publications
- ...

Progress and/or results of thematic working groups are shared and given feedback during the twice-yearly EPLM Resource Group meetings.

4. EPLM - how it began and how it's supported by European Institutions

Starting Phase

Since 2010 there has been a wish to have an international cooperation between sectors related to the youth field in Europe, articulated around the common needs. In May 2011 a first exploratory conference was held in Budapest: '*Framework, quality and Impact of Young European's Learning Mobility*'. One of the main outcomes was that a sustainable cooperation platform should be created. Six months later a network was drawn together of key actors, coordinated by Transfer e.V. together with the German National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme.

The logo, website, mission statement and first position paper were drafted in 2012, as well as the publication of the first newsletter. These original documents can be found on the youth partnership's website here.

The first official conference of the EPLM tackled the six main themes according to the EPLM's mission statement. It was held in March 2013 in Berlin: '[Mobility Spaces, Learning Spaces - Linking Policy, Research and Practice](#)'. Building on the recommendations of this event, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership's role became clearer in the platform, taking over the coordination on an international level, and supporting the publication of different Knowledge Books that bring together texts of an academic, scientific, political and practical nature for all stakeholders in the youth field.

The Platform has built since then, encouraging contribution and ownership from different stakeholders. With the strong involvement and support of different National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme, two more biennial EPLM conferences have taken place, building on the changing priorities of the field:

- [Learning mobility in the youth field: towards opportunities for all](#), with a focus on inclusion. Istanbul, Turkey, October 2015.
- [The Power of Learning Mobility - changing lives, changing society](#). This had a focus on the impact of projects and the balance between personal and societal gain. Ostend, Belgium, April 2019.

The next proposed conference is planned in Finland in 2021, with a focus on sustainability.

Many other practical outputs, tools, resources and events have built on the strength, connection and networking that the EPLM gives - see the last section of this document for current activities.

Recent European Institutional support for Learning Mobility

Council of Europe

In 2017, the Council of Europe adopted two documents which have an influence in the field of learning mobility, namely the framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC)³, and the Recommendation (2017) on Youth Work⁴. The CDC provides a clear indication to formal education systems on how to develop competences that are the key objective of learning mobility programmes, and therefore can be seen as a useful resource for improving the quality of youth mobility. The Recommendation on youth work aims at providing guidelines on how to strengthen the youth work sector, where youth mobility programmes are rooted. Finally, in 2017 the CDEJ (European Steering Committee for Youth) has adopted its self-assessment tool on youth policy⁵ where youth mobility is one of the six major areas of youth policy.

On 23 January 2020, the Council of Europe launched the Youth sector strategy 2030⁶, through Resolution CM/Res(2020)2. This has thematic priorities, including young people's access to rights, with special emphasis on: increased mobility and youth work; improving the quality of youth work delivered by both volunteer and paid youth workers; and on extending the access and attractiveness of youth work and non-formal education/learning for the benefit of wider populations of young people.

European Union

The Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020⁷ with its 14.7 billion budget aims at reaching 4 million people, and its main objectives are to reduce youth unemployment and promote participation of young people in democratic life. Moreover, the Juncker Commission in 2016 launched the 'New Skills Agenda'⁸ and the initiative 'Investing in Europe's Youth'⁹ which covers key areas which are cross-sectoral and are of critical importance for young people: better opportunities through education and training, solidarity, participation, learning mobility, and employment. This initiative includes the European Solidarity Corps programme¹⁰ which was adopted in October 2018.

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/recommendation-on-youth-work>

⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/self-assessment-tool-for-youth-policy-english/16808d76c5>

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-strategy-2030>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/young-people-and-youth-workers_en

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=950>

¹⁰ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

Another recent initiative by the European Commission, which aims at expanding access to mobility, is the preparatory action [DiscoverEU](#)¹¹, providing 15,000 Interrail tickets each year to young people turning 18 years old.

The EU Youth Strategy¹² is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. According to the Strategy, “EU youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy's potential”. It fosters youth participation in democratic life; it also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. The EU Youth Strategy was based on the 11 Youth Goals¹³, results of the 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue - Youth in Europe: What's next? which took place in 2017/2018.

The Strategy directly refers to mobility at its heading Connect, whereas ‘Member States and the European Commission are invited to enable access for all young people and youth workers to cross-border mobility opportunities, including volunteering, by eliminating obstacles and implementing support measures with special attention to young people with fewer opportunities’.

This increasing attention to social inclusion and EU common values led to a Commission Communication on Education and Culture to strengthen European identity in November 2017, which is announcing a ‘European Education Area by 2025’¹⁴ and setting the key principles and targets on which the Erasmus+ programme post 2020 will be built.

¹¹ https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu_en

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/eu-youth-strategy-adopted_en

¹³ <http://www.youthconf.at/youthgoals/>

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

5. EPLM Framework of Action

In line with the policy developments at European level that are presented above, and based on the outcomes of the 2019 conference in Ostend, as well as on previous biennial conferences, the EPLM envisions to prioritise a series of priority topics and related actions or recommendations. These are detailed below, with some description of current challenges and details of how the EPLM proposes to contribute to that area of action. These are merely some ideas and proposals, not a fixed list, and other directions or actions are possible.

The EPLM Framework of Action is not a workplan - there are no allocated resources, ringfenced budgets or agreed targets to reach. What follows is a framework that provides priority directions for the Platform of Stakeholders to contribute their competences, energy and networking power towards the development of higher quality and more sustainable learning mobility for all in the European youth work field. As such, the SG has made a distinction between the areas and priorities that the EPLM can support with other actors, and what the platform can do or achieve as a platform themselves.

It should also be underlined that most of the following areas of action are inextricably linked to many of the others. Areas such as Quality or Digital, for example, should be promoted and recognised in many of the other areas too. However, they are artificially separated here for ease of explanation.

It is hoped that once a specific priority has received focus and attention through one or two cycles of the EPLM Steering Group process, it could be promoted to become a transversal principle of the platform, paving the way for a focus on a new and upcoming need. This has happened with Inclusion & Diversity. Several years of EPLM focused on this topic, including the biennial conference in Turkey in 2015. As priorities change, inclusion has now become a transversal principle, paving the way for foci with more exigency.

NB: It is acknowledged that the impact of Covid-19, the restrictions to travel and the effects of lockdown, all reduce the opportunity and possibility for much of the following. Emphasis on online and blended learning will help with this, but the work of the EPLM for the near future will necessarily be in a different guise, and perhaps with different impact, than when this Framework was first envisaged.

Core transversal principles of EPLM

The importance of the triangle (or pyramid)

The EPLM exists to support the youth field in Europe, providing added value mainly in its promotion and linking between the sectors of practice, policy, research and needs of young people. The strength and niche of the EPLM is in connecting these sectors more closely together - building trust, understanding, and developing awareness and competence of all three sides of the triangle together; making sure that they are equally present and represented in different actions and policies for the mutual benefit of all. As such, the connection guides the work of the EPLM, and provides the fundamental foundation to the practical concrete tasks that it works on in all priority areas.

Inclusion & Diversity

Learning mobility schemes and projects in the youth field aim at creating a unique learning experience accessible to all young people, regardless of social, economic, or geographical background, by promoting and supporting professional and personal development of young people and their social transformation. These schemes should facilitate mobility for all young people, providing equal opportunities. Unfortunately, too many young people remain excluded from taking part in learning mobility initiatives, due to social, legal, economical, personal and geographical reasons, among others. Even though the mobility of young people is considered a vital contribution to intercultural learning both in Europe and internationally, in the context of cross-border learning mobility, many administrative, bureaucratic and financial barriers remain a real obstacle. Even for blended and online learning opportunities, although theoretically reaching a much wider audience, there can still be barriers, particularly to those young people facing multiple disadvantages (e.g. access to technology etc). More people from diverse realities need to be included into learning mobility activities. The gap between those who participate and those who are left behind also needs to be addressed.

[Supporting others to link practice, policy and research](#)

There are many other networks and bodies in Europe that work with specific areas of expertise, and are seen as leaders in the field. The EPLM does not presume to take on work or ambitions on their behalf, but rather to encourage the connection between practice, policy and research in what they do, and to augment the quality, reach and impact of their work. There are two main areas this concerns at the moment:

Competences and training

One of the key objectives of learning mobility schemes and projects in the youth field is to promote and contribute to the personal development of young people with a particular focus on competence development. Taking as reference the glossary of the set of competences for trainers working at European and international level (2013) developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, competence is to be understood as an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully. Other dimensions such as inner readiness, self-confidence, motivation and well-being are also considered as important pre-requisites for a person to be able to act out the developed competences.

Developing actions with regard to training and competences will first require analysing and examining the training needs and approaches in preparing and training actors involved in learning mobility projects and to pay a particular attention to the quality of the pedagogical and educational approaches as well as of the training mechanisms - before, during and after the mobility. It will also mean to identify further steps to improve the quality of training in a European learning mobility context with a focus on strategic initiatives. Highlighting the competence developed through learning mobility experience and its link to employability, especially for young people with fewer opportunities and those that work with them, is an important angle to support.

Providing information and guidance

Youth information and guidance consist of a wide range of services, activities, projects and frameworks that provide young people with necessary information, counselling and support for learning mobility opportunities. Since each learner has different needs, skills and competences, there is a need to provide access to learning mobility initiatives as well as work towards a conscious match-making between activities and potential participants. Youth information and guidance are therefore significant mechanisms to ensure tailor-made and targeted initiatives in supporting young people to make grounded and informed decisions about their personal choices and which programmes or projects to take part in.

However, problems in accessing the information, the quality of information services, limited tools and channels, language barriers, and visa obstacles discourage young learners. By providing a framework of what learning mobility is, with elaborated learning objectives, by encouraging translation and working with others to open up access to information and guidance to young people with fewer opportunities inside and outside the EU, by promoting the use of social networks and media, by promoting mechanisms to share practice (including on procedures and regulations for visa issues and work and residence permits), the EPLM will prioritise its support in this area.



SEVEN AREAS OF ACTION

European Platform on Learning Mobility

2021 - 2030

BRING RESEARCH CLOSER TO PRACTITIONERS, YOUNG PEOPLE & POLICYMAKERS

Support knowledge-building and evidence-based policy

LINK TO YOUTH WORK AND VALUE-BASED EDUCATION

Mobility as a more accessible tool for youth work at grass roots, promoting specific values

ENSURE QUALITY AND RECOGNITION

Ensure the mobility is fit for purpose. Link to competence frameworks and recognition of youth work achievements.

EVALUATION, LEARNING TRANSFER & COMMUNITY/PERSONAL IMPACT

Measuring the difference a mobility project makes

INFORMAL LEARNING & MORE FLEXIBLE FORMATS

Allowing for the unplanned, unintended or the unexpected.

DIGITAL LEARNING MOBILITY

Online and blended learning through digital tools

SUSTAINABILITY

Climate crisis, and other longer term thinking (social, cultural, economic levels)

EPLM Seven Areas of Action - things we DO

1) Bring research closer to the practitioners, young people and decision makers.

“[When demonstrating the impact of policies, interventions, programmes, projects and activities] sound evidence on and from young people offers a better base than ideology or intuition” (Petkovic et al, 2019).

In all the EPLM activities that brought together the different stakeholders of the international youth work field over the past decade, there was a clear indication that research could support the policy-makers, practitioners and young people, by providing knowledge and evidence that echoes the voice of the youth field directly, in order to support evidence-based policy decision-making. The role of research would be to bridge the gap between policy-makers, practitioners and young people. Practitioners could also support (and benefit from) research processes in order to provide more and better data on the impact of learning mobility projects in Europe.

The EPLM could contribute to this area of action by:

1. Creating a new (online?) platform for exchanging information and data between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. This would not only benefit the practitioners by providing them with evidence on which they can base their activities, but also give researchers insights on what data exist, what is missing, and what is important for the practitioners to know. Moreover, more possibilities for common activities and cooperation between research, policy and practice fields would be created;
2. Increasing awareness and competence for practitioners in the basics of research, to increase the quantity and quality of impact assessments done with young people and within communities across Europe;
3. Supporting and investing in knowledge management and translation, in order to ensure that research results are presented in a format which is attractive to all audiences (e.g. podcasts, infographics, illustrations, videos, etc.)

2) Link youth work, value-based education and learning mobility

Youth work is a breeding ground for innovation and non-formal learning, allowing the acquisition of skills. It facilitates young people’s social integration, personal and professional development, participation and allows for their voices to be heard. A number of youth workers add learning mobility to their regular activities as an essential tool that reinforces the quality of their work, opening the door to skills, behaviours, knowledge, attitudes and values that local youth work alone cannot bring. They not only make use of European programmes (and many other existing forms of co-funding) but also have a proven ability to create and generate new forms of and approaches to learning mobility. In contrast, other youth workers still very much resist the idea of explicitly tackling learning mobility, either for conceptual reasons or for educational ones. This might limit the number of young people who could benefit from learning

mobility opportunities, who could be involved in processes that very often trigger positive changes and personal, social and societal transformation¹⁵. In other words, reality shows that youth work can be either a facilitator or a barrier to enhancing learning mobility as a means.

Moreover, mobility programmes are charged with the values that are transmitted to the participants of a learning mobility activity, are shared with the involved organisations and communities, and have a potential to change the society in the long run. In this, learning mobility overlaps with youth work, its function and purpose. Learning mobility can be used as a powerful tool to promote values such as active citizenship, democracy and pluralism, empathy and generosity, human rights, inclusion and diversity, solidarity, sustainability and environmental awareness. Values-based education, as a goal of learning mobility, is tightly connected with the development of mobility programmes, with setting their priorities and with the decisions to change a certain attitude of young people (and in the long-perspective – society). This is why it is important to widely ask and discuss with all the stakeholders the following questions:

- Which are the values that youth work should promote?
- At which point does youth work promote its own values and at which point is it exploited to promote a given political agenda?
- Does youth work within the EU have a certain political direction?
- The political discourse is changing the narratives and youth work needs to be adapted to certain political trends: how to handle this?

It is important to note that learning mobility is not only about youth work, and youth work is not only about learning mobility. Although non-formal education connects them both, they are two much bigger concepts. Indeed, it's possible to do value-based learning mobility without any youth work (for example, traineeship in Solidarity Corps).

The EPLM can contribute to this area of action by:

1. Developing a better understanding of the links between youth work and learning mobility.
2. Working in partnership with the organisers of the 3rd European Youth Work convention and with those of the 2nd European Academy on Youth Work to explore overlaps of learning mobility and youth work.
3. Exploring the impact of learning mobility on youth work, to which extent youth work considers learning mobility as an instrument and how learning mobility contributes to policy and practice-related developments.
4. Improving and promoting the aforementioned links and cooperation through analysing all forms and models of learning mobility used and applied by young people and youth workers and studying their impact.
5. Ensuring analysis of young people's learning mobility path from an inclusion perspective.
6. Highlighting and communicating identified knowledge gaps in situations and contexts where youth work is conducted without any focus on learning mobility.
7. Supporting research initiatives on the impact of youth work on learning mobility projects (and reciprocally).

¹⁵ See for example: <https://www.researchyouth.net/reports/>

8. Clarifying concepts and paradigms observed in different European countries. The entire process will also have to ensure visibility of youth work in Erasmus+ and in relevant European policy development processes.
9. Editing a Training Kit from the T-kit series of the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership on 'Value-based learning in mobility' and promoting the T-kit to a wide audience;
10. Organising training courses on value-based education, addressing also transversally issues of quality and impact of learning mobility and community engagement.

3) Ensure quality and recognition

Quality, when clearly understood in a learning mobility context, is a significant factor when considering how to tackle, reflect and apply non-formal education principles in youth learning mobility schemes and projects. Mainstreaming quality into learning mobility opportunities includes ensuring that the outcome is fit for purpose. Quality needs to be an integral part of the design, implementation, execution and monitoring and evaluation of a given learning mobility experience. Thus, the EPLM created and promoted in the past years, two major tools for supporting quality in learning mobility: a **Q-App** and a **Handbook on Quality in Learning Mobility**. Moreover, a group of Ambassadors and Multipliers has been created, and two training courses took place in 2019 and in 2020. The EPLM should further reflect upon the notion, understanding and developments of quality in learning mobility projects in youth work and through non-formal education; explore and research on the link with competences and assessment; and link recognition of learning outcomes in learning mobility schemes to the recognition of the achievements of youth work. Quality should also be interwoven with any parallel work on digital developments of learning mobility.

The EPLM can contribute to this area of action by:

1. Promoting and improving the tools on quality in learning mobility, i.e., the Handbook and the Q-App, among the European youth sector.
2. Strengthening the role and the activities of the Ambassadors and Multipliers by regularly organising training courses and events, with a role and mandate agreed among the Steering Group and clearly presented to the Ambassadors.
3. Monitoring the usage and relevance of the tools for quality in learning mobility for projects, and the links to discourses on learning mobility from a practice perspective.
4. Actively contributing to the development and the promotion of training projects and/or related initiatives aiming at the recognition of competence acquired by youth workers, youth leaders and youth trainers involved in international learning mobility projects.
5. Supporting reflection processes on the recognition of competence development processes from an inclusion perspective and on assessment (self and external).

4) Evaluation, learning transfer and community/personal impact

When looking at quality in the field of learning mobility for young people, the questions of impact analysis, assessment and evaluation are of utmost importance. Linked not only to training and competences development but also to the diversity of projects and their

geographical scope, it seems essential to identify adequate approaches, criteria, indicators and more generally, pertinent measures to properly evaluate existing learning mobility initiatives. Despite major developments and the emergence of different approaches and methods, there is still an ongoing debate on whether it is even possible to precisely evaluate the impact of non-formal education and related mobility projects. If so, further working on this aspect will first require exploring existing approaches and methods to evaluation and then assessing the impact of non-formal education in learning mobility schemes and projects. Such an approach should be seen from both short term and long-term perspectives. In this context, in 2019 the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership mapped the existing impact studies and tools available in Europe. The results of this mapping exercise serve as a basis for further work on this topic.

This should revolve also around the impact of learning mobility on different levels (individual, community, society), aiming at

- closing the gap between knowledge and practice for bigger impact on community and society levels, as well as at
- increasing the capacities of the practitioners and the researchers to grasp and evaluate it.

The EPLM can contribute to this field of action by:

1. Conceptualising individual, organisational and societal impact, including unplanned or unintended impact and translating that in practical terms for beneficiaries of mobility programmes
2. Mapping existing impact assessment methodologies and tools.
3. Creating indicators to assess (societal) impact.
4. Ensuring better links with the RAY and PEYR networks, ensuring that the results of their work are better interlinked, known and supported.
5. Introducing periodical data collection on the impact of learning mobility at the community level, and to have more longitudinal studies to measure long-term impact.
6. Identifying existing quantitative and qualitative criteria and indicators that support measuring mobility within nonformal education schemes.
7. Advocating the need for formal and nonformal mobility indicators in Eurostat.
8. Advocating evidence-based policies.
9. Exploring qualitative as well as quantitative approaches
10. Emphasising the need for more of a balance between short and long-term analysis (i.e., longitudinal studies: cohort studies)
11. Promoting the development of impact analysis on biographies, on the acquisition of new competences, on employability, with a focus on the differentiated impact on young people with fewer opportunities, age, gender, cultural minorities, social background, etc.
12. Promoting the development of impact analysis on sending and host organisations, and on youth workers.

5) Informal learning and more flexible formats of learning mobility

One of the topics that needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand the connection between learning mobility and societal impact is the impact that is unplanned, unintended or unexpected and therefore rarely measured. The unplanned, unintended or unexpected impact is tightly connected to informal (unplanned and unstructured) learning and the importance of it is growing as learning mobility formats are also changing into less organised and more flexible. In this context, ensuring a positive learning dimension linked to mobility is crucial, and therefore cooperation among experts of learning mobility, such as youth workers and the developers of the new programmes or initiatives are important to develop the tools that could be used on individual level for self-evaluation and reflection. Moreover, evaluation tools (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups) would be necessary to grasp the impact on participants of learning mobility and the informal learning of communities that were in one way or another affected.

The EPLM can contribute to this area of action by:

1. Maintaining a link with youth programmes and support frameworks that have a strong element of informal learning (such as DiscoverEU). Experience, practice, research and advice is to be shared in an open and constructive way, so as to provide a common understanding and appreciation of the opportunities of informal learning.
2. Ensure that informal learning has its place in EPLM products and activities.
3. Collate changing needs of the field relating to the demand of more flexible formats of learning mobility, and channel them to appropriate parallel meetings, working groups and processes.

6) Digital Learning Mobility

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced a greater use of digital tools in international youth work: it has been the breakthrough moment for online mobility. It has helped some organisations and young people to adjust their use of digital tools not only for fun and entertainment, but also for more meaningful projects and ideas. The switch to digital tools means that more opportunities are online, and many organisations are being creative in how to use that for learning purposes. There has been great innovation in how services are provided, and flexibility/adaptability to reach a diversity of people's needs. Online facilitation has meant many trainers and facilitators had to adapt fast, learn new skills and share practices between them, adapt and rethink their roles as professionals. Going digital also brings challenges. Some organisations and young people do not have access, cannot afford it, or don't have the confidence or skills to work online.

Digital tools have existed for some time, but the pandemic has caused a huge digital influx – people have been forced to use technology, and have had a crash course to develop their digital skills (whether they wanted to or not).

Online activities have started to be accepted and recognised by some policy makers, but not always matched in support or resources by all funding programmes. Several physical events

were translated to be delivered remotely online, and the focus on development of digital tools over the past years has been reinforced. Many of the learning mobility activities which were planned for 2020 were moved online, or have (had) online elements to them. Many questions have been raised related to this possible online future of learning mobility:

- How is the quality of international connection and learning maintained through online projects?
- Can we consider online learning a learning mobility? If a learning experience is online, is it always a learning mobility experience?
- How can we achieve the same depth of learning, the same objectives, through online mobility?
- How to keep the non-formality of learning methods through digital tools? How to 'learn through doing' or experientially when framed in the digital online environment?
- Can we keep up the learning outcomes if physical mobility will not be a possibility for a long time?
- How can we best facilitate this type of learning? Do we have enough know-how on how to do digital activities?
- How skilled are the actors in the youth field to deliver online learning? What competences should be supported/recognised?
- How can we maintain quality of online learning mobility? Is there recognition for what is needed for that? Are there enough support and resources for that?
- How to research digital learning mobility in terms of evaluation and impact analysis?
- When we get back to learning mobilities, what safety measures will be imposed? How to use nonformal methods and keep physical distance?
- What will be the future relationship between online and physical mobility? How will blended learning be adapted to suit that?
- Do we need to consider a 'Re-Launch' strategy for after-corona times, to revitalise the field, reconnect people and reinvigorate the physical learning mobility?

The EPLM can contribute to this area of action by:

1. Define and explore the opportunities of online/blended environments for learning mobility to increase understanding by different stakeholders in the field
2. Sharing updates, innovations and good practice related to online learning mobility possibilities, both between members of the Platform and through the external newsletter
3. Looking at how to support quality in online and blended learning, disseminating good practice and options to the wider field
4. Map, connect and contribute to developing European policy about digital/online youth mobility work
5. Research the effects of COVID-19 on learning mobility in Europe
6. Work with the results of the above research to support the youth field in Europe to adapt, living with the effects of COVID-19, and to become more resilient and better positioned for any future crises.

7) Sustainability

As people become more aware, and more activated by the impact of pollution, production, consumerism etc, the effect of these at the social, economic, cultural and environmental levels are important to consider.

Sustainability is often linked in people's mind to questions on climate issues and in international co-operation even more closely to travel and carbon emissions. For a Platform whose focus is Learning Mobility, the travel aspect is a crucial priority to consider. The choices available for the practice field to take, the flexibility in any programme or policy to allow for more environmentally friendly options, the information and support given for individuals to have power over the impact of their decisions, the recognition of the proactive choice - these are all challenging areas that this topic covers.

There is also a need to address the topic of sustainability in a wider context including the financial framework, social and community aspects (such as the benefit and need for social capital on community level), cultural and other matters. It is expected that sustainability will become more and more a priority topic over the coming years.

Responding to the effects of COVID 19 has also brought more emphasis on sustainability. It brings into question the need to travel, and the proof of reduced environmental impact during lockdown provokes thinking about whether the field should return to that same level of travel.

The EPLM can contribute to this area of action by:

1. Developing a conference in 2021, in cooperation with the Finnish NA, with sustainability as the main theme
2. Committing to follow up from the recommendations and outcomes of the conference
3. Connecting to the Green Agenda of the European Commission
4. Supporting as one of three priority areas of the European Programmes (Inclusion, Digital and Green)
5. Connecting and learning from the network of environmental youth organisations across Europe (Youth and Environment Europe) <https://yeenet.eu/>
6. Lobbying European programmes, as well as other programmes, to incorporate green choices as the easier positive choice, from preparation, implementation and follow up of mobility activities.

Appendix

EPLM recent activities

Quality in Learning Mobility

The focus of the EPLM, since 2015, shifted towards creating a quality framework including principles, indicators and material for their implementation. This idea was one of the core topics of the EPLM already since 2011. From that moment on, it took different names and was represented in the successive conferences (“quality and recognition” in the Budapest conference, “quality of learning mobility” in the Istanbul conference).

The EPLM has combined its competence and reach to create a quality framework of learning mobility projects in the youth field, which has included:

- Principles and indicators for quality in learning mobility in the youth field (created with contributions from the field through surveys, working groups, expert contributions etc)
- Expert Seminar on the quality framework, Lille, France, May 2018. The main concepts connected to the quality of learning mobility were discussed and the development of the quality framework was presented.
- A Quality Handbook and the Q! App to support the field, building on the feedback on those principles and indicators.

Quality Ambassadors

In 2019, a group of Ambassadors and Multipliers met to support the work of these EPLM Quality Tools.

Different representatives were chosen, by JINT (NA-BE-FL) and SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, to give balance to national and European level, and making sure there was a spread of beneficiaries of different grant funding schemes (European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, Erasmus+ (youth), the European Solidarity Corps and other funding scheme). The ambassadors have the potential to spread the EPLM Tools through networks and umbrella organisations in their own countries and regions.

The role of the Quality ambassadors is to act as advocates of the importance and relevance of the quality of learning mobility and quality tools at different levels; to make the quality tools more known and used as widely as possible; to provide feedback to the Steering Group of the EPLM (through the coordination office of the youth partnership) on possibilities and opportunities linked to these tools; and to seek and create opportunities for promoting Quality in Learning Mobility using the quality tools among all interested parties.

The Steering Group of the EPLM will be kept updated on the work of the ambassadors, a list of which is kept by the coordination office. A working group within the Steering Group could be tasked with the direct cooperation with the quality ambassadors and to make the bridge with the EPLM’s Framework of Action.

Community Impact

The Principles for Quality in Learning Mobility in the youth field underline that local communities (or the so-called 'hosting environment') are equally important in the preparation and implementation of learning mobility projects: "a programme of activities rooted in the hosting environment and local community gives an added value to the mobility project increasing the social impact and the possibilities for the integration of your participants. At the same time, it helps local people to benefit from the intercultural learning experience improving a positive communication with different people backgrounds and mentalities and increases the commitment from all the parts involved."

Communities and broader society are getting more attention in the discussions on the quality of learning mobility. The EPLM conference in Ostend (2019) was one more indication that it is time to acknowledge that learning mobility impacts on many more players than the individual participants and their personal or professional development. The description of the conference urged to pay more attention to a "more cohesive society, the altruism that comes with making a community a better place, impact of volunteering on host communities, internationalisation at home, providing opportunities for all, increased contribution and gain through the interchange that learning can bring" (EPLM 2018).

As the expectations for learning mobility activities and the number of people who benefit from them are growing, it is important to ask the questions: what constitutes impact? What do we already know and what do we need to know in order to improve? What is feasible? How is impact ensured and evaluated? The conference in Ostend focused discussions held confirmed that there are still plenty of uncertainties and the answers to what we mean by impact, community, society in the context of learning mobility in the field of youth are not known yet. Since the emphasis on the role of the community in learning mobility is growing, we often need evidence that the value of learning mobility for and impact on the community is there.

A mapping of the existing research and practices has been done to evaluate and approach the assessment of social impact as individual, organisational and community levels. The EU-CoE youth partnership is currently supporting the development of social (community) impact indicators for international youth work, to be realised in 2021. The European Solidarity Corps SALTO Resource Centre is producing a Practical Guide to Community Impact for youth organisations.

Sustainability Conference, foreseen for autumn 2021 (tbc)

Working together with the National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth in Action in Finland, the EPLM is looking to bring together practitioners, researchers, policy makers and young people to discuss this important topic – with a focus on the environment, but also including its wider connotations. With the impact of Covid-19, this is likely also to have newer angles.

Online mobility, COVID-19 and research on its impact on learning mobility

Learning mobility in Europe has been significantly affected by COVID-19. Lockdown and travel restrictions have reduced, cancelled and nullified many learning mobility opportunities for thousands of people.

A research group on the impact of COVID-19 on the youth sector has been set up by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, to encourage structured discussion. It will connect to the RAY research that was carried out during the summer of 2020, as well as to other research projects and activities conducted by other stakeholders.