

L'Observatoire Erasmus+

{notes}
in partnership with pluricité
GRUPE

Company participation in the Erasmus+ programme: motivations and contributions

{ Editorial }

THE Erasmus+ programme, through its mobility and cooperation actions, is designed to contribute to young people acquiring the qualifications and skills necessary to their social and professional integration. Relevant actions in Erasmus+, involving higher education students, apprentices and vocational trainees, enable financing of company traineeships, which represent 40% of mobilities.

Relations with the world of work are therefore of crucial importance to the programme in relation to its mission of promoting personal employability. Moreover, European companies are confronting the challenge raised by competitiveness and are increasingly searching for talents that will allow them to build their innovation capacity. The Erasmus+ programme is also an instrument serving innovation in terms of both training and research and development in all areas of activity. Thus, some companies among those most active in the programme are now seizing the opportunities offered by Erasmus+ in their innovation and human relations policies.

The upcoming 2021-2027 programme will prompt emergence of more projects relating to both mobility and cooperation. The place held by companies in the programme will therefore be all the more significant since traineeship mobility will need to increase not only in vocational education and training, but also in higher education. More than ever, cooperation between players in education and training and the

world of work will be essential to developing a quality European education and training system.

The Erasmus+ France/Éducation Formation Agency wanted to conduct an initial study of the issues emerging from the participation of French companies in the programme in order to better understand the motivations, levers and benefits they derive from it. While this approach has proved ambitious in terms of the method because of the limits inherent to the available databases, the qualitative approach has allowed us to clarify in detail the strategies of French companies, which have taken part in the mobility or cooperation projects in recent years.

We are delighted to offer you these Notes n°15, which report on the main lessons of the study and in which we address the case of companies that received European Erasmus+ trainees, sent French apprentices to another company in Europe and those that took part in a cooperation project with European partners. A variety of projects that will surely be of relevance tomorrow to ever more players in France's economic sphere.

Laure Coudret-Laut,
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Director*

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{ Introduction }

In a context marked by completion of the Erasmus + programme for the 2014-2020 period and in consideration of the fact that programme guidelines for the 2021-2017 period foresee an expansion of the programme, the Erasmus+ France/Éducation Formation Agency wishes to consider in hindsight the role played by companies in the different elements of the programme, in particular to fuel its thinking on levers to be implemented to further encourage companies to participate therein.

While multiple assumptions can be made on company motivations to take part in Erasmus + projects and on the benefits they can derive therefrom, these initial intuitions deserve to be not only confirmed/qualified, but also clarified (e.g. through typologies) and illustrated by concrete examples.

This study therefore aims to analyse the outcomes of French company participation in different elements of the Erasmus+ programme, whether they be mobility (receiving and sending trainees) or coordination projects and sharing of practices

(strategic partnerships, sector skills alliances, knowledge alliances, etc.).

In these Notes, analyses allow us to clarify different dimensions, namely:

- French company motivations to take part in an Erasmus+ project:
 - Whether it is a mobility project (receiving students, receiving apprentices, receiving vocational education and training staff, sending apprentices, etc.)
 - Or a European cooperation project (strategic partnership, sector skills alliance, knowledge alliance, etc.)
- Advantages/Benefits derived from French company participation in these projects
- Obstacles and difficulties encountered and levers to be implemented to mobilise more companies.

A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF FRENCH COMPANIES WITH VARIED PROFILES ARE INVOLVED IN ERASMUS+

Significant number of French companies mobilised in the Erasmus+ programme



companies mobilised in receiving European trainees



companies mobilised in Erasmus+ cooperation projects since 2014

Highly varied company profiles

- > **In terms of business sector:** multiple economic sectors represented (hotels and restaurants, agriculture, industry, services, etc.)
- > **In terms of company size:** mostly SMEs (including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises) but also very large companies represented
- > **In terms of location:** companies from every part of the national territory.

«RELAY PLAYERS» ENSURING A KEY ROLE IN MOBILISING FRENCH COMPANIES

Main players mobilising companies

- > Mobility referral officers at apprentice training centres
- > Intermediate organisations



Different services offered to project holders

- > Company prospecting to find traineeship locations
- > Full organisation of residencies (accommodation, travel, insurances, etc.)

- > Higher education institutions



- > Circulation of traineeship offers to students

VARIABLE MOTIVATIONS TO TAKE PART IN THE PROGRAMME

Main motivations to receive an Erasmus+ trainee

- > Dynamise one's team through the curious, willing nature of a trainee from another European country
- > Take advantage of certain skills, especially linguistic ones, which are difficult to find

Main motivations to take part in a cooperation project

- > Stepping back by allocating time to a collective project
- > Opening up to new partners
- > Benefitting from an enriching experience professionally and personally

BENEFITS DERIVED FROM PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION

Benefits of receiving an Erasmus+ trainee

- > Traineeships normally go well and generate few constraints
- > Enriching experience on a human level
- > Significant contribution to company activity

Benefits of taking part in a cooperation project

- > Development of knowledge, skills and resources that impact company practices in the long term
- > Establishment of long-term partnerships with project partners
- > Development of new business opportunities

{ Method }

- Exploiting all available documents relating to French companies involved in the Erasmus+ programme

The first stage of the study involved exploiting all the available data on the companies taking part in the programme. This approach was mainly based on:

- Processing European Union databases (Mobility Tool and EPlusLink) covering all types of mobility action and strategic partnerships, which enabled us to obtain information especially on the profile of each company involved
- Manually identifying sector skills alliances and knowledge alliances¹ including French companies and acquiring available information on these companies.

Note.

The results of this quantitative processing should be analysed with caution insofar as the company-related data and indicators (e.g. SIRET business identification number, company size) are only partially included on the databases, which limited the quantitative processing possibilities.

- Holding qualitative interviews with various players including 50 companies

The analyses described in this report are mainly based on information collected within the framework of semi-structured qualitative interviews held with:

- Erasmus+ France/Éducation Formation Agency staff
- Education and training players (chambers of trade, intermediate organisations, job centres, local missions, craftsman guilds, etc.)
- 50 French companies (profitable private sector establishments) including:
 - 40 companies that had already taken part in mobility actions
 - 10 companies that had taken part in cooperation projects
- 10 cooperation project holders.

- The table below details the number of interviews carried out with each type of player:

TYPE OF PLAYER	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS
Erasmus+ agency and partners	
Erasmus+ Agency staff	5
Education and training players	10
Companies	
> Mobility actions	
Higher education	18
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	22
> European cooperation projects	
Companies in strategic partnerships	8
Companies in knowledge alliances	2
Project holders	10

¹ Centralised actions led by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

{1}

Profiles of French Companies involved in the Erasmus+ programme

The various profiles of companies that have taken part in the Erasmus+ programme bear witness to the programme's remarkable adaptability. Among the companies involved, we effectively find both start-ups and major groups, and a wide range of business sectors are represented. However, it has to be said that there is still a significant lack of knowledge on the part of employers in relation to the Erasmus+ programme and the possibilities it opens up in terms of receiving European trainees and participating in transnational cooperation projects; this somewhat limits its outreach on a wider scale.

{1.1}

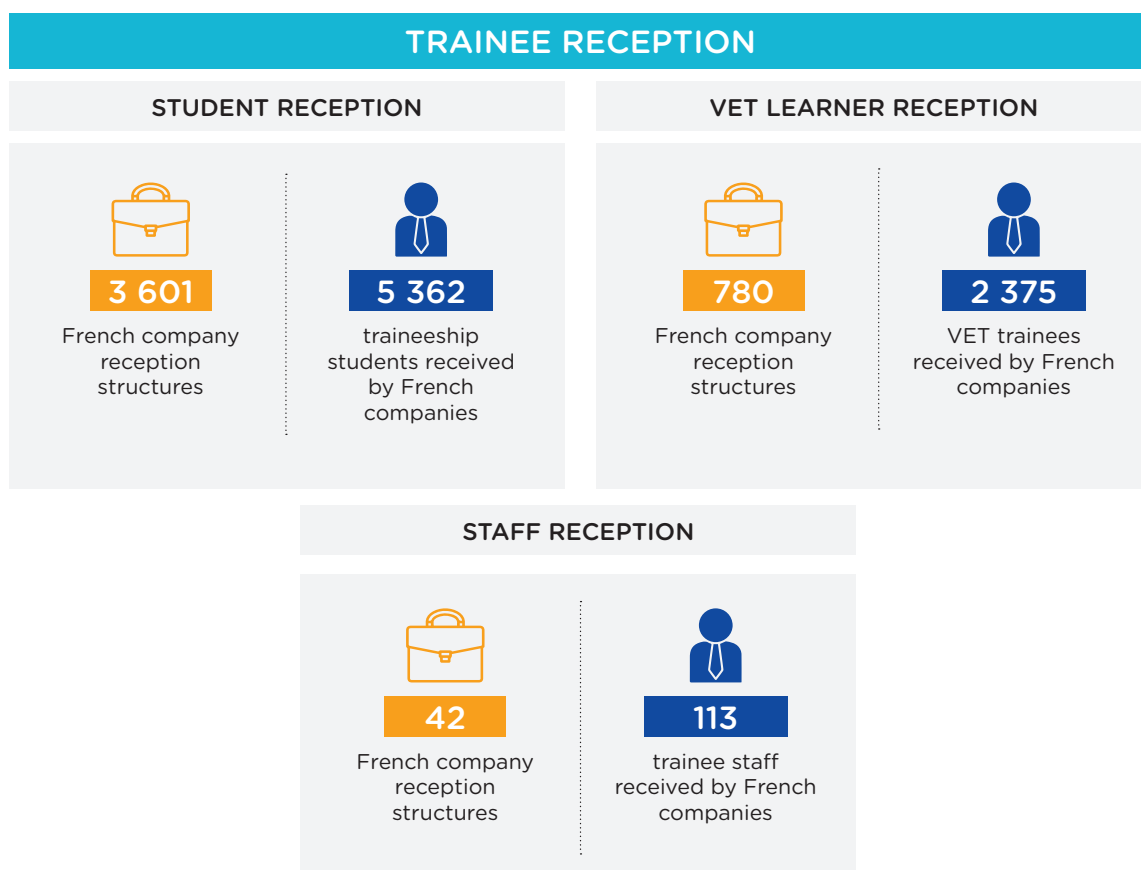
A significant number of companies involved

- More than 4 500 French companies receiving Erasmus+ trainees since 2018

During the period covered by the 2018 and 2019 Calls for Projects, more than 4 500 French companies received at least one Erasmus+ trainee. In 80% of cases, they received higher education students (3 601 companies) but a significant

proportion of trainee reception involved vocational education and training learners (VET - 780 companies). On the other hand, reception of staff from higher education institutions or training organisations, which is also promoted within the scope of the Erasmus+ programme, remained fairly marginal (42 companies).

- Key figures for trainee reception by French companies:



- **Nearly 100 French companies have taken part in cooperation projects**

During the 2014 to 2019 Calls for Projects period, 96 French companies were involved in European cooperation projects. Among these projects, it was the strategic partnerships that mobilised

the greatest number of French companies (71), followed by knowledge alliances (18) and sector skills alliances (7). Since 2014, the trend has been towards a regular rise in the number of companies engaged in European cooperation projects as shown by the increase from 11 companies in 2014 to 27 companies in 2019.

- **Key figures for French company participation in cooperation projects:**



Finally, it is important to stress that, beyond the companies directly involved in European projects, we also note the participation of a number of players that, without being companies themselves, have especially close relations with the corporate world: sector skills and professional federations, consular chambers, skills operators,

or competitiveness clusters. Their participation in cooperation projects thereby contributes to company involvement in the Erasmus+ programme since it can prompt companies in their respective networks to take part in certain actions of these projects.

{1.2}

Varied profiles

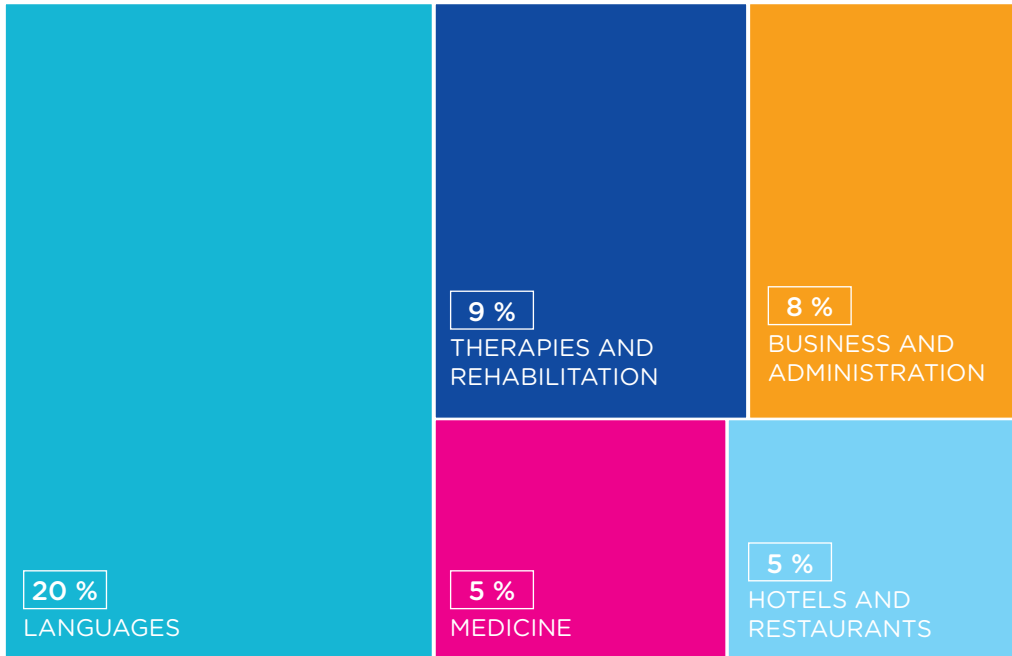
The profiles of companies involved in the Erasmus + programme are extremely varied, which bears witness to the remarkable openness and accessibility of the programme.

Firstly, we find that a very wide range of business sectors represented (agriculture, industry, hotels and restaurants, services, etc.), which shows that the programme has been able to attract different areas of the French economy. However, some sectors remain overrepresented: in receiving trainees, for example, we find a relatively high proportion of hotel and restaurant companies, health sector or services-to-the-individual companies, while in cooperation projects, we find more companies operating in the areas of education, research and industry.



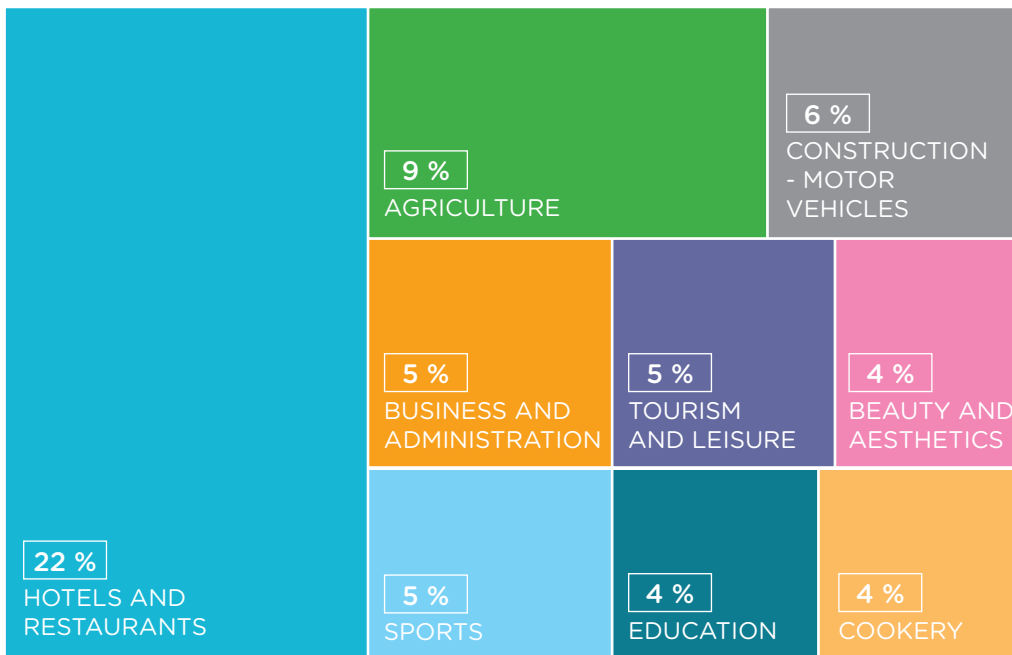
- Main study areas of the trainees received by French companies per education sector (students and VET learners):

• DISTRIBUTION OF TRAINEESHIP STUDENTS RECEIVED BY FRENCH COMPANIES IN 2018-2019 BASED ON THEIR AREA OF EDUCATION



Source: Mobility Tool

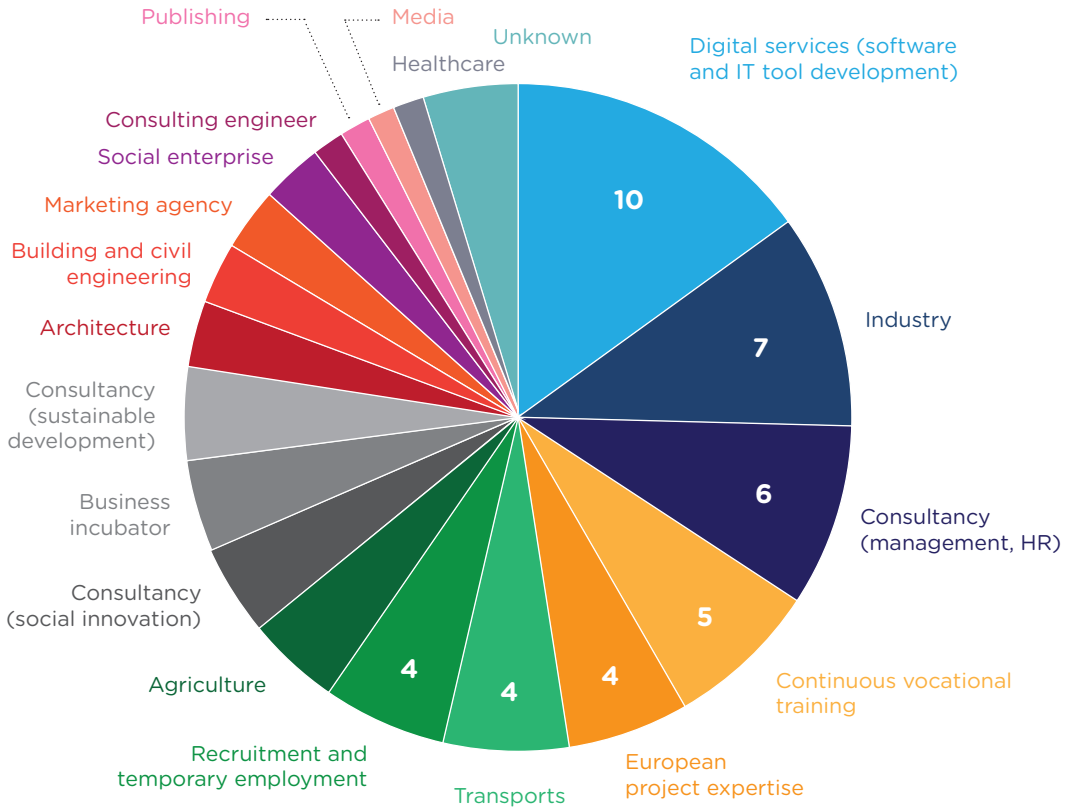
• DISTRIBUTION OF VET LEARNERS RECEIVED BASED ON THEIR AREA OF EDUCATION



Source: Mobility Tool

• Business sectors of companies that have taken part in strategic partnership projects:

• DISTRIBUTION OF COMPANIES BASED ON THE BUSINESS SECTOR

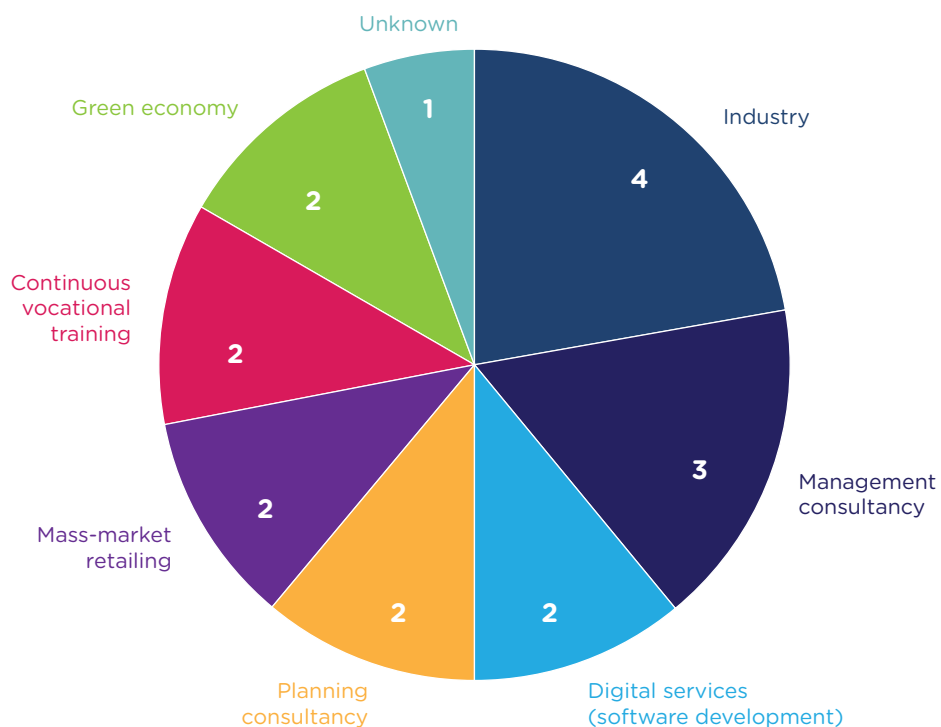


Source: Mobility Tool



• Business sectors of companies that have taken part in knowledge alliances:

• DISTRIBUTION OF COMPANIES BASED ON THE BUSINESS SECTOR



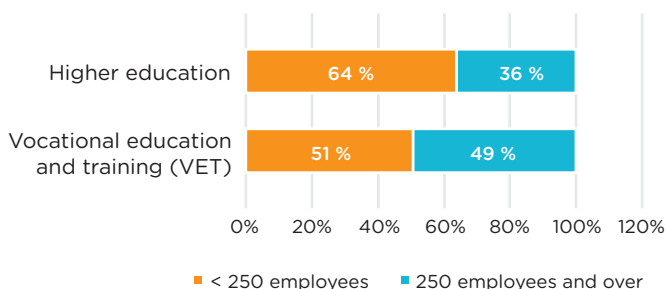
Source: Mobility Tool

We also find companies of very different size. While the majority of companies receiving Erasmus+ trainees or taking part in cooperation projects are SMEs, including micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, reflecting the French economic structure comprising itself a very large majority of SMEs, major groups are also represented in both receiving trainees and taking part in cooperation projects (e.g. Bayer, Lactalis, LCI, SNCF Mobilités, La Poste, Safran, LAM France, Décathlon, Auchan, Suez Group, GE Energy

product France SNC, Safran Electronics & Defense, etc.).

It should be noted that, while major companies (> 250 employees) make up only 0.1% of companies in France, they nevertheless employ 51% of the national payroll (INSEE national statistical data). Thus, in Erasmus+ higher education mobility, micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises appear overrepresented (64%) compared with the national situation, while their proportion converges with the national situation in VET².

• DISTRIBUTION OF COMPANIES BASED ON SIZE



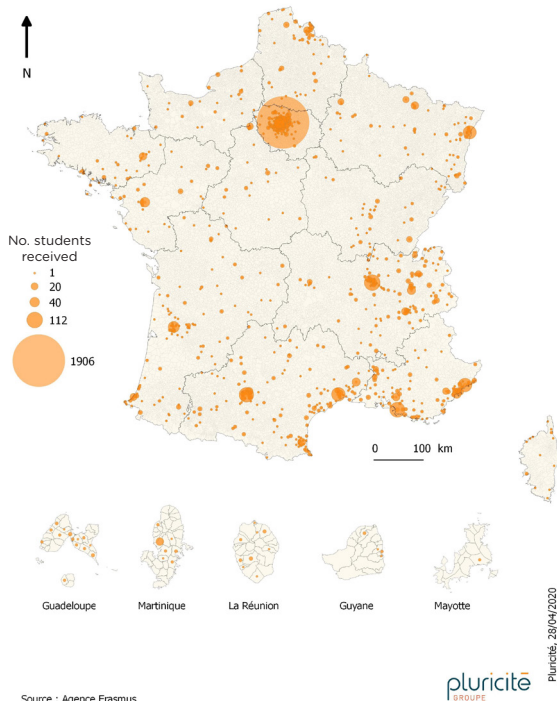
Source: Mobility Tool

² Data on the size of companies in the programme should be viewed with caution insofar as the number of non-responses to this question is high (37% for VET and 51% in higher education). It is the project holders that complete the databases and their level of information on host company characteristics is limited.

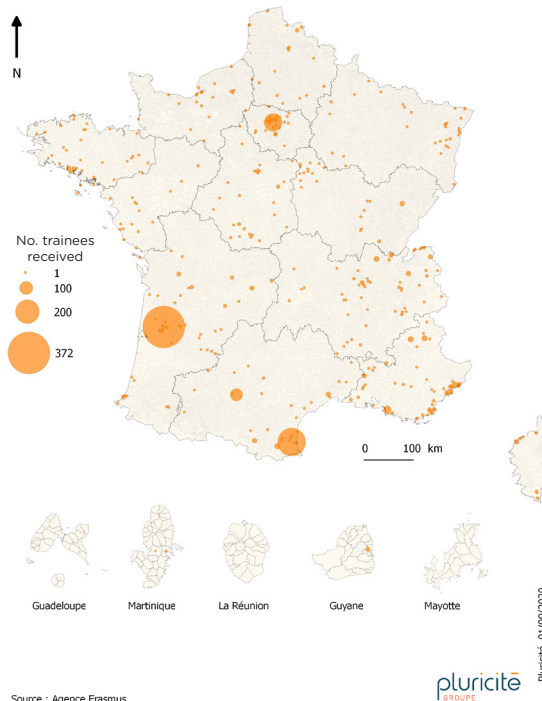
Finally, in terms of location, we note that companies taking part in the programme are located in every part of the national territory. Naturally, the major cities of Paris, Lyon, Marseille,

Toulouse and Bordeaux appear specially represented but small towns and rural areas have also committed to the programme.

CITIES AND TOWNS RECEIVING HIGHER EDUCATION TRAINEES



CITIES AND TOWNS RECEIVING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) TRAINEES



{ 1.3 }

A programme that remains relatively unknown to companies

• **The Erasmus+ programme remains relatively unknown to employers, which limits its outreach on a larger scale**

In general, we note that the Erasmus+ programme remains relatively unknown to company managers, who, in common with the general public, usually only know of the programme through the university exchanges it allows. On the other hand, they do not know of the possibilities it offers in relation to companies receiving and sending trainees or taking part in cooperation projects. It is normally only when an external candidate or partner lodges an application that company managers become aware of the programme conditions. This situation curtails programme outreach on a larger scale and cultivates a form of partitioning insofar as only companies that are

strongly integrated into player networks close to Erasmus+ or have already received trainees in this format are informed of these possibilities.

• **Companies continue to devote themselves little to projects that involve sending their apprentices and apprenticeship instructors abroad**

It should also be noted that, while the Erasmus + programme offers apprentices and their instructors the chance to benefit from mobility internships abroad, employers continue to involve themselves only little in these initiatives.

Despite a significant number of French apprentices acquiring mobility experience abroad each year within the scope of Erasmus+, the study shows that these actions are most often

supported by apprentice training centres (ATC) rather than employers, whose involvement in these projects remains relatively limited. Apart from a few exceptions, the role of the company is limited to giving the ATC its approval to enable the apprentice to fulfil the mobility, but employers only rarely take part in prospecting work and, more generally, preparing their apprentices' mobility.

Similarly, while the Erasmus+ programme opens up the possibility of organising foreign mobility projects for apprenticeship instructors, these initiatives remain rare. Mobility of this type have

been occasionally organised by certain ATCs but they remain fairly marginal insofar as they face a number of obstacles (complexity in terms of organisation, reluctance of employers at the idea of several days' absence, etc.). However, it should be noted that some of these curbs could be removed by certain developments in the regulatory context and the new Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programming guidelines, which could encourage company involvement in these other forms of mobility.

• Regulatory and legislative developments that should remove certain curbs to these forms of mobility

Several recent or forthcoming developments could encourage company involvement in the Erasmus+ programme:

- Firstly, professionalisation and financing of mobility referral officers at ATCs, which is permitted under the French Act of 5 September 2018 relating to the freedom to choose one's professional future could provide a springboard for European mobility in the apprenticeship world since each ATC now has a mobility referral officer, whose job is to organise mobility internships mainly for apprentices, but also for professionals.
- Secondly, the French Act of 5 September 2018 relating to the freedom to choose one's professional future also made it possible to include a liability suspension clause in apprenticeship contracts. This allows employers to have their legal responsibility towards their apprentices lifted when the

latter are fulfilling a mobility abroad for one or two months. Maintaining employer liability had been effectively identified as one of the obstacles to the mobility of French apprentices abroad.

- Recent creation of company ATCs could represent a significant lever for increasing apprentice outward mobility insofar as these companies invest and commit to vocational training often to meet their own skills needs. In this case, the benefits of mobility in an apprentice's training path are easy to see and can enable the removal of generally observed obstacles.
- Finally, new Erasmus+ 2021 - 2027 programming guidelines open up the possibility of going on mobility, if these employees play a part in implementing the training path of VET learners. These new provisions could generate an increase in the number of mobility activities of private sector professionals.

{2}

Role of Relay Players in Mobilising Companies

Company participation in the Erasmus+ programme, whether it be within the scope of mobility actions or coordination projects, often remains dependent on and external request, which can come from different players. Within a mobility framework, the requesting party will usually be an ATC, an intermediate organisation, a university or the candidate himself or herself, while in cooperation projects, the requesting party will usually be a partner from the area of vocational education, training or higher education. This observation leads us to emphasise the importance of network dynamics in mobilising companies and often depends on the prospecting undertaken by players external to the company. However, we note that some, although a minority of, companies adopt a more proactive approach to the programme and initiate certain actions.

{2.1}

Receiving Erasmus+ trainees

• **Leading role of relay players in setting up links between VET learners and companies**

Mobility activities organised for VET learners are in most cases driven by establishments that do not themselves have a corporate network in France. Hence, these project holders very often depend on so-called relay players based in France, which offer them essential support in setting up links between learners and French companies.

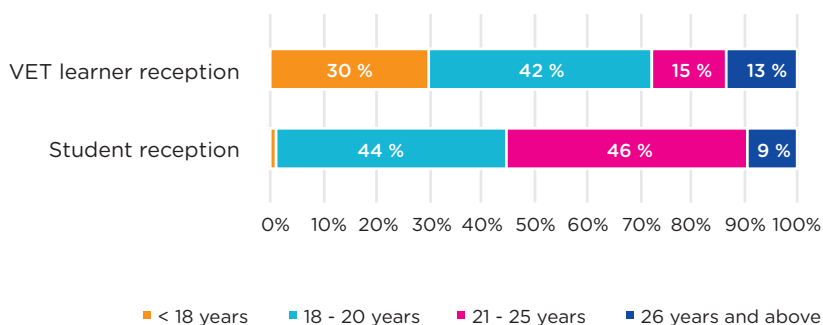
We distinguish mainly two types of player able to fulfil this relay role:

- **ATC mobility referral officers**, who partner sending institutions by offering their help in organising the mobility internship in France. They specifically solicit their own company's network to find traineeship locations and can also facilitate organisation of the internship in relation to other aspects (accommodation, transport, etc.)

- **Intermediate organisations (IO)**, which are private companies specialised in establishing contact and organising international mobility internships. In the case of Erasmus+ mobility, they are solicited by sending institutions and they undertake company prospection to prompt traineeship openings; moreover, they are usually responsible for the entire organisation of mobility internships.

Intervention of these ATC or IO «relay players» is really essential to accomplishing VET mobility activities and all the more so since the learners in this sector are often young (1/3 are minors), which requires handling a series of tasks - not only company applications, but also actions relating to accommodation, transport, insurances, etc.

• **DISTRIBUTION OF LEARNERS BASED ON AGE AND TYPE OF MOBILITY**

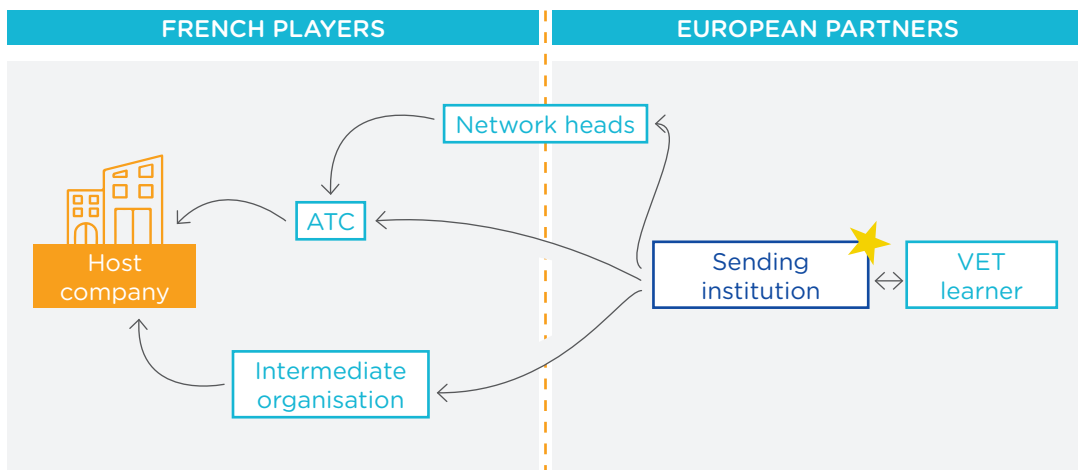


Source: Mobility Tool

The action of the «relay players» is also seen as reassuring for host companies, which then have a local correspondent in the event of difficulties and can therefore concentrate only on accompanying trainees professionally. Relay players thereby

contribute to safeguarding mobility projects and many companies highlight that their intervention played a primary role in their decision to take part in the programme.

• CHANNELS FOR SOLICITING FRENCH COMPANIES IN VET COLLECTIVE MOBILITY



★ Mobility project initiator

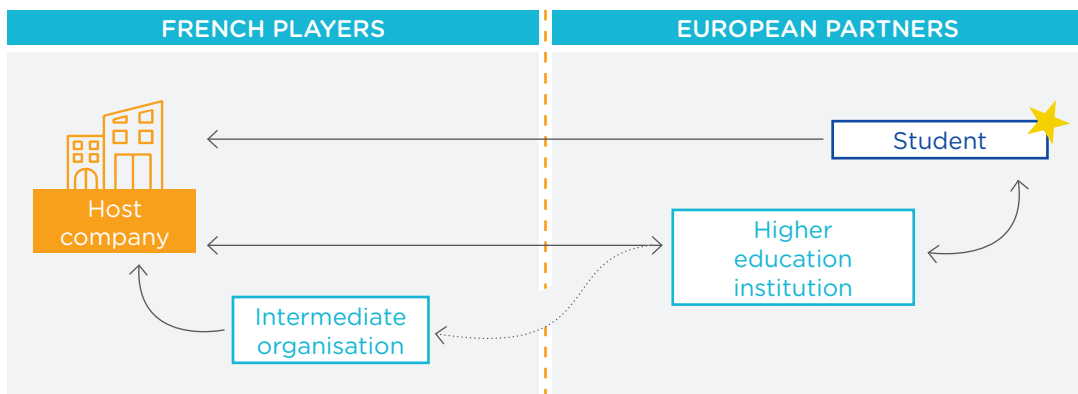
• A more limited role for relay players in setting up links between higher education students and companies

On the other hand, within the framework of higher education student mobility, it would appear that company traineeship applications are mainly lodged directly by the students themselves without the intervention of a relay player. These applications are usually made spontaneously or in reply to a traineeship offer circulated by the company (on its own website or via a dedicated platform).

It should be noted, however, that higher

education institutions can play a more or less important role in establishing contacts between students and French companies by circulating traineeship offers forwarded by companies to their students. In some cases, it would even seem that true informal partnerships can be established by some institutions and companies, the latter receiving very regularly students from the same partner institution. Furthermore, while apparently remaining fairly rare, it would appear that certain higher education institutions call upon intermediate organisations to set up trainee internships at French companies on behalf of their students.

• CHANNELS FOR SOLICITING COMPANIES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION FIELD:



★ Mobility project initiator

{2.2}

Cooperation projects

Initial commitment of companies to a European project - when it is a first participation - is most often the outcome of an external solicitation since it would seem that Erasmus+ cooperation projects are little known in the corporate world. This is why, among the companies questioned, a significant number had previously developed links to partners already committed to the Erasmus+ programme (e.g. Higher education institutions, ATCs or vocational colleges, consular chambers, professional federations, local authorities, etc.) and these links had formed their point of entry into an

initial Erasmus+ cooperation project.

Subsequently, when companies commit long-term to taking part in European projects, they usually develop their own partner network and are regularly invited to take part in new European projects. This network dynamic therefore contributes to conserving these companies' logic of participating in projects and maintaining contact with certain partners especially in relation to sharing prospects and opportunities for developing new European projects.



The project we're referring to is itself born of resoliciting partners with whom we had developed links within the scope of an old European project. These are links that endure because confidence is established and we remain watchful of new project opportunities.

company, training organisation, micro-enterprise, strategic partner |



{2.3}

More proactive approaches to the programme

We note that some companies, although a minority, adopt a more proactive approach to the programme. Some do not hesitate to circulate specifically traineeship offers to higher education institutional partners or dedicated platforms in order to target European students for Erasmus + traineeships. Other companies are initiators

of cooperation projects and can even become coordinating parties. These companies have integrated the Erasmus+ programme as a tool in their internal policy relating to management of human resources and/or innovation and therefore no longer hesitate in independently soliciting partners in order to benefit from the programme.



We have a hard core of companies that very frequently return to us. At the start, it was us that sought them out, but now there are more and more that seek us out and tell us that they have the possibility of receiving an Erasmus trainee and that we can contact them, when there are opportunities.

An intermediate player |





We have longstanding experience of working with Erasmus+ and a partner network that we've built up during the course of the different projects we've taken part in. Being a project holder requires a little work but, when one provides the initial idea, one possesses the long-term vision of the project and its follow-up, so this generally prompts one to become the project holder. This is no problem for us since it's also the condition that allows us to develop projects in our image.

company, training organisation, micro-enterprise, strategic partnership | 



{3}

An Attractive Programme for the Opportunities It Offers

For companies, taking part in the Erasmus+ programme represents the chance of an original experience on both professional and personal levels. For companies receiving trainees, this means above all injecting a new dynamic through «curious», «willing» trainee profiles, but also taking advantage of trainee skills, especially linguistic ones, in some cases. Regarding participation in cooperation projects, companies are also guided by the opportunity of «stepping back» by giving more time to a collective project with new partners; something that many SMEs can only rarely allow themselves. As for the financial support offered by the programme, this represents a significant but not determining factor in a company's decision to invest in the project.

{3.1}

Activities that generate team dynamics and skill acquisition

• **A positive image of the young people in Erasmus mobility, who are perceived as possessors of soft skills and who can provide an advantage in the company's team dynamics**

Firstly, the fact of receiving a trainee from another European country is generally perceived as an interesting experience on the human level and one that is likely to offer an additional element in relation to team dynamics. This perception

reflects, in particular, a positive image that a number of employers may have of young people, who take part in an Erasmus+ mobility project; «curious», «willing» or again «resourceful» and thus possessors of the soft skills, to which companies are especially sensitive. In general, the human dimension appears to be a central point in company motivations with regard to participation in the Erasmus+ programme.



We were delighted to receive young people arriving from another country. We naturally wanted to show them what was being done in France but we also wanted to discover their culture. [...] They came from Cyprus, a country I don't know at all, and I wanted to chat with them and learn more. I was very excited by this prospect.

company, agriculture, micro-enterprise, receiving a VET trainee | 



- **Specific, especially linguistic, skills valued by certain employers**

The Erasmus+ programme may represent an attractive outlet for companies seeking personal profiles offering specific, especially linguistic, skills that may be difficult to find in France. This expectation concerns companies with highly varied profiles (e.g. a French-English bilingual nursery school seeking a bilingual educator; an international company wanting to adapt its communication in several languages; an Austrian company operating in France requiring mastery of the German language to ensure good communication with its headquarters, etc.) but

which share the view that mastery of a specific foreign language is a significant asset.

The professional skills of Erasmus+ candidates are also valued by some employers such as, for example, certain hotel companies, which will favour students from hotel schools, or communication companies, which will favour candidate profiles with specific skills that are valued in this sector. However, this requirement for technical skills is not specific to Erasmus+ candidates.

It should nevertheless be noted that, in general, employer expectations of Erasmus+ trainees tend to involve soft skills rather than technical skills.

- **Employers expectations:**

 <p>SOFT SKILLS</p>	> Independence and willingness of young person
	> Ease of integration into team
	> Curiosity and capacity for discussion including outside a work framework
	> Adherence to work rules (punctuality, politeness, internal regulations, etc.)
 <p>KNOWLEDGE</p>	> Knowledge of, even experience in, sector
 <p>KNOW-HOW</p>	> Capacity to perform simple tasks independently
	> Progress in mastering the French language
	> Mastery of one or more foreign languages

{3.2}

A lever for supporting innovation and assessing activity

Cooperation projects reaching a smaller number of companies are most often attractive to structures specifically oriented towards innovation and experimentation, which want to fuel thinking on their own practices and, in particular, HR topics (recruitment, training, etc.). These are usually companies that are already closely involved in the field of education, training or research and for which cooperation projects represent a chance to «step back» by dedicating time to a collective project; something that many SMEs can only rarely allow themselves.

By common understanding, Erasmus+ cooperation projects have several advantages: their

accessibility (via an application system considered fairly simple), the original work format they offer (cooperative, European dimension, alternating collective and personal working times) or, again, flexibility of their content (especially in terms of topics, contents and resources that can be covered and developed).

For some companies, these projects therefore represent an opportunity to «getting away from their daily routine» and give themselves interesting prospects from both professional (work on topics related to their activity) and personal (meeting European partners, foreign travel, etc.) standpoints.



My GM was interested in stepping back and working in another way on the subject of psychic handicap. For me, I was very honestly not the originator of this project participation but I was enthusiastic as soon as the offer was made. I like stepping out of my comfort zone! This forms part of my motivation for go to work every morning.

company, IEA, >250 employees, strategic partnership | 



The Erasmus+ programme is pretty flexible, which leaves the door open to quite a lot of project types and expectations are not very rigid. To my knowledge, it's one of the only programmes that allows one to undertake non-technological innovation, i.e. innovation in methods, training supports, approaches or usages. This is attractive because it's not the habitual technological innovation; it nevertheless allows one to work on in-depth subjects.

company, consultancy, micro-enterprise, strategic partnership | 



{3.3}

A major but non-determining financial contribution

Most companies that have received trainees do not showcase the Erasmus+ scholarship awarded to them as being a specific lever in relation to their decision to turn towards the Erasmus+ programme and several of them even state that they were not aware of the scholarship sum. However, the existence of this scholarship, which forms an additional income for trainees, can also serve the interests of some companies, especially those that are unable to provide their trainee with a significant gratuity. The Erasmus+ scholarship therefore constitutes additional income that may render their traineeship offer more attractive

and allow candidates to perform their mobility under better conditions; this is appreciated by employers.

Within the framework of cooperation projects, financial support represents no less than a condition necessary to these companies' involvement, while not being a determining factor in their decision to take part in such projects. Companies - especially micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises - indeed could not commit to such projects without this financing, which is a lever for safeguarding work time dedicated to the project.



The idea of these projects is not to make money but to develop engineering. You have to use these projects as laboratories. This is super-important for micro-enterprises because we don't have the resources to develop these kinds of things otherwise. [...] This project allowed us to launch and test some engineering. So, yes, one doesn't make money from it and one even loses a bit, but that was the condition governing development of this project close to our hearts.

company, training organisation, micro-enterprise, strategic partner | 



{4}

Benefits of Programme Participation

Most companies appear to be satisfied with their experience as participants in the Erasmus+ programme, in which they gained a variety of benefits. While mobility actions mainly provide benefits in terms of team dynamics, additional skills and activity support, cooperation actions, for their part, provide contributions to innovation, resource development, sharing of practices and enhanced visibility. Although the specifically European nature obviously imposes a number of constraints, which can sometimes nurture fears among employers (language barrier, lack of knowledge of foreign trainee training contents, fear of administrative complexity, etc.), we observe that, in practice, these obstacles remain limited and are very often largely compensated by the advantages that companies enjoy when taking part in the programme.

{4.1}

Effects of receiving Erasmus+ trainees in mobility

- **Traineeships that generally take place without difficulty despite a few specific Erasmus+ features**

In terms of implementing an Erasmus+ traineeship, the supervision methods adopted by companies are much the same as the methods used with «ordinary» trainees. The persons appointed as tutors are usually experienced professionals, who have been regularly asked to supervise trainees, and who apply their methods without specific distinction based on the type of trainee.

Among the companies questioned, we note that a large majority did not have specific HR tools for monitoring and supervising Erasmus+ trainees. At best, they had resources for all trainees such as job descriptions or monitoring interview charts. However, we observed that, generally, informal approaches tend to prevail in supervising and accompanying Erasmus+ trainees (regular informal discussions during coffee breaks, practical learning, etc.).

Nevertheless, we observe two elements that do characterise supervision of Erasmus+ trainees:

- The main point of distinction relates to the in-company integration phase: several employers stated that supervising an Erasmus+ trainee may require a little more involvement than usual at the start of a traineeship because one has to take the time to be especially instructive regarding technical terms, tasks to be performed and organisation, and to perhaps be ready to repeat certain things several times, if the young person does not sufficiently master the language.
- We also note that some tutors perceive their accompanying mission not only on the work level, but also to an extent on the human level: they can be particularly considerate especially regarding possible difficulties of acclimatising to a new environment, and some do not hesitate to also accompany their trainees during times pertaining to life outside work (e.g. visiting the host city, friendly outings, etc.).

• **The language barrier, an easily avoided obstacle**

One of the main fears that companies may have in relation to receiving Erasmus+ trainees involves the level of competence in the French language of young trainees and that, if this is insufficient, their capacity to perform certain tasks may be limited. This fear is all the stronger since many companies consider that they are under-resourced internally in relation to confronting these situations: most often, both internal documents and work tools are only in French, customer relations are conducted in French, etc.

However, company testimonies reveal that, in practice, the language barrier can easily be avoided for several reasons: firstly, we observe that companies receive an Erasmus+ trainee in full knowledge of this and those specifically seeking trainees competent in French are usually able to specify this as a firm recruitment criterion. Secondly, we observe that companies themselves develop compensation measures, such as substituting French as working language by English (the most common case when both parties possess sufficient basics to communicate), and using online translation tools allowing communication of sufficient quality for co-working to be established.

• **Receiving an Erasmus+ trainee is a dynamising experience for work teams and is enriching on human and cultural levels**

Regarding the benefits drawn from receiving an Erasmus+ trainee, the majority of companies prioritise the fact that the experience comprises a particularly strong human dimension encouraged by the fact that the young people come from far away and this tends to favour their motivation and involvement: being outside their normal environment, they often set themselves apart by possessing greater curiosity and a tendency to make special efforts to adapt, which is especially appreciated by employers.

Furthermore, the presence of a trainee from another European country gives rise to fruitful and often enriching discussions with team members, who, for their part, are often particularly interested

in receiving these young people with widely varying specific profiles and accompaniment needs. Discussions are therefore based on issues relating to both work (job practices, working hours, work attitudes, etc.) and life outside work (foreign cultures, culinary customs, etc.).

Finally, this especially strong human dimension manifests itself in times outside the confines of the company that work team members are sometimes prompted to spend with Erasmus+ trainees within the scope of friendly and/or cultural outings. It should also be noted that, with a VET framework, young people are often accommodated with their tutor – a more frequent situation in rural areas, in which the accommodation offer is more limited. This informal environment is particularly conducive to discussion, sharing and inter-knowledge.



H. stayed with us and he was great! He knew how to place himself, take part in family life by helping out at meal times and by chatting with us. He enabled me to learn about Spain since we had time to chat in the evening. He told us a lot about his country; they were really interesting conversations.

company, agriculture, micro-enterprise, receiving a VET trainee | 



- **Know-how transmission and exchange, a rewarding process for work teams**

First, we observe that companies that accept to take in an Erasmus+ trainee are usually those that are already very accustomed to receiving trainees in general and that consider they have a part to play in training young people. Receiving young people within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme therefore reflects a continuity of these practices. This approach reveals a certain «attitude» that some employers do not hesitate

to qualify as the company's social or civic duty and which therefore forms part of the company culture.

Receiving an Erasmus+ trainee can also point to a certain recognition of French know-how abroad - especially in craft-based trades such as culinary trades, for example. For some employers, receiving young people, who are ready to travel from afar to learn from others therefore constitutes a means of motivating and bringing value to their work teams.



We already receive apprentices every year. It's part of the company's outlook; we like helping young people to discover the trade and showing them the ropes. For us, it's really necessary; apprenticeship is the best training [...]. For Erasmus+, it's the same and we told ourselves that, if we did it for young French people, then we could also do it for young Spaniards! It reflects our attitude and viewpoint on the world of work.

company, agriculture, micro-enterprise, receiving a VET trainee | 



Each country has its standards, regulations and also its special characteristics. [...] Young people are delighted to come here because they discover goose and duck farming, which is ultimately a specific characteristic of not only our region, but also of France. We show them the operation of not only a family farm, but also the short supply chain, which is far less developed in their country. They're more accustomed to very large farms and automation. Here, we show them how to get back to a hands-on operation and direct selling. This prompts some interesting discussions!

company, agriculture, micro-enterprise, receiving a VET trainee | 



Finally, it is important to emphasise that this is not a one-way sharing of know-how and that companies can learn from the presence of an Erasmus+ trainee, which, for the company, also represents a beneficial opportunity to stand back. Through his/her culture or education, the Erasmus+ trainee can in some cases contribute to putting the company's activities and practices into perspective, especially in craft-based trades

in which job practices and techniques can vary significantly from one country to another. Thus, we observe employers and their work teams that reveal themselves to be particularly curious in relation to comparing their practices with those of a foreign trainee and even drawing from certain methods learnt from the trainee (e.g. sharing know-how around the culinary specialities of the trainee's country in the restaurant sector).

• **Trainees' variable contribution to the company's economic activity**

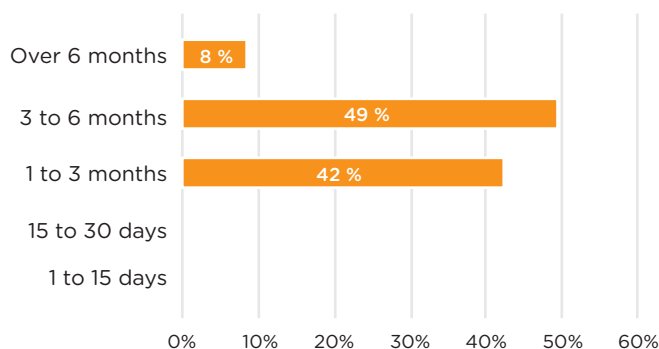
Trainees take part in company activities through the tasks they perform but the added values they bring depend on various factors, in particular the length of the traineeship, the responsibilities placed on them and the skills they manage to mobilise.

In general, effective contributions are mainly derived from long-term traineeships (more than

3 months). Several employers refer to cases of trainees who quickly found their feet and provided an effective contribution to company operations; in some cases, these positive experiences even resulted in contract proposals. On the other hand, in short-term traineeships, which are more frequent in the VET field, the added value derived from participation on the company operation remains more limited; these traineeships tending to provide discovery and observation experience.

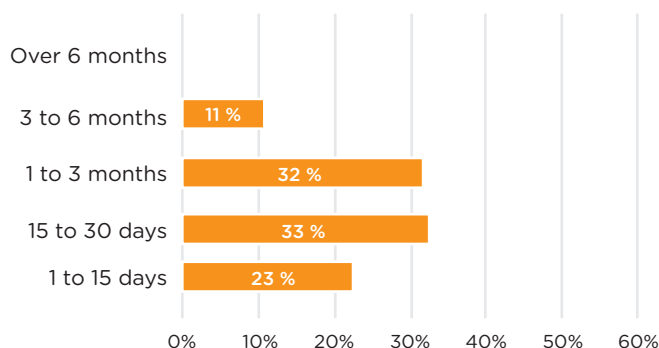
• **Length of student and VET learner traineeships**

• **DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS RECEIVED BY A FRENCH COMPANY IN 2018-2019 BASED ON MOBILITY DURATION**



Source: Mobility Tool

• **DISTRIBUTION OF VET LEARNERS BASED ON MOBILITY DURATION**



Source: Mobility Tool

{4.2}

Effects of cooperation project participation

• **Companies fully integrated into cooperation projects, taking part in each project stage and providing different types of added value**

Companies usually play an active role in the cooperation projects, in which they take part and are most often involved at every project stage from preparation to dissemination. The cooperation projects are usually monitored by an in-house referral officer, who is willing and able to speak English correctly: a prerequisite to taking part in discussions with European partners. The project referral officers questioned have very different profiles and jobs and, usually, are only dedicated to these projects for part of their work time.

Within the scope of these projects, companies are able to contribute added value elements such as:

- Operational knowledge of their business sector allowing them to consider the relevance of the project contents and conditions
- A direct link to certain project target audiences (employees of their business sector), which can enable them to test the developed tools
- A capacity for developing technical solutions (e.g. Development of an online platform, a mobile application, a VR module, a website, etc.).

Company time invested in cooperation projects varies widely from one project to another. Most stress that the level of investment in time depends on the assignment calendar - with more or less heavy periods - and the tasks for which they

are responsible. However, in general, they stress that they have significant leeway to organise themselves since the projects usually take place over long periods.

• **Development of knowledge, skills and tools that impact company practices in the long term**

For companies taking part in European projects, participation in developing contents offers different benefits such as:

- Practical skills acquisition: creative work represents a chance to develop ones practices and to implement techniques and approaches, which might not necessarily have been used otherwise (videos, VR, MOOCs, interactive platforms, open-badges, storytelling-based teaching approach, etc.)
- Knowledge acquisition: research and discussions between partners conducted within the scope of developing contents are enriching for companies and allow them to gather knowledge related to a variety of topics associated with their sector
- New in-house resources: European projects generate training resources and supports intended for concrete integration into company practices.

Their participation is therefore a source of developments in terms of representations, practices, skills and knowledge. The impacts of these projects are therefore generally perceived in the long term.



Today, we're aware of the added value. Thirteen years ago, we had our noses to the grindstone working on European projects and we didn't realise their impact; we were moving forward! Yet, over the years, we've become aware of how we've been affected, of the methods being implemented and of the ideas that would never have arisen without this participation. It's essential for small companies like us. But, it's long-term!

company, training organisation, micro-enterprise, strategic partnership | 





For a company like ours, one of the major attractions of an Erasmus project is the chance to experiment new technologies. Thanks to this project, we've been able to do things we had never done before, such as creating an interactive platform, run a training course based on mixed reality, work on storytelling, videos, etc. It really offered us the chance to innovate.

company, training software editor, micro-enterprise, strategic partnership | 



- **Long-term partnerships that become established with project partners but remain closely linked to the European project framework**

Taking part in a European project often prompts development of a new partnering dynamic for companies. Many companies assert that they have conserved links with some of their partners after projects, in which they have taken part and, for them, this represents a real European opening, a chance to continue exchanging, compare practices and develop resources and contents. The longstanding nature of these relations between partners often depends on the prospect or opportunity of taking part in new European projects again together.

- **Project participation that occasionally contributes to developing new commercial opportunities for companies**

For most of the companies questioned, participation in a European project had no commercial intent to the extent that the resources, contents and supports developed within the scope of these projects are made freely available. However, we note that a few companies drew on an Erasmus+ cooperation project in order to develop marketable products or services and/or extent their client base. The European project framework can effectively lead to technical innovations or more visibility, which can be converted into sales opportunities as witnessed by the following three examples.

- **EXAMPLE 1 :**

A company that has developed highly specialised training courses on the topic of biological control using an attractive video format obtained several requests from organic agri-food sector players in relation to developing new training courses for other topics based on this format. With this mind, the company managers decided to develop a subsidiary specifically dedicated to developing video-based training courses to be able to market them for companies in the agri-food sector.

- **EXAMPLE 2 :**

A company that had developed an online interactive training platform for audiences with apprenticeship difficulties was identified

by relevant players, when the tool had gone online. It was then called upon to develop similar resources especially on behalf of a French university.

- **EXAMPLE 3 :**

A start-up specialised in biotechnology had worked with research laboratories at several universities within the framework of a cooperation project. Within the scope of their common work and discussions, several project team members co-developed an innovative hypothesis related to new ways of producing energy. While the project remains in its infancy and is confidential, the partners are currently pursuing their research in this area and envisage creating a new start-up to implement this discovery.

pluricit 

GROUPE

Pluricit  is an SME forming an independent research and consultancy practice dedicated to analysing, evaluating and clarifying changes in public action, organisations and territories. The practice currently boasts 20 consultants, who are complemented by external partners (research laboratories, teacher-researchers, other practices) specialised in specific topics or business sectors. Pluricit  belongs neither to a group or interested organisation nor does it depend on public subsidies.

Today, Pluricit  offers consultancy services and decision-making assistance to public stakeholders in different countries and on territories:

- Ministries, agencies and devolved services, territorial authorities, semi-public

companies, social landlords, etc.

- Employment and training operators, trade unions, branches and associations, skills operators, social dialogue players
- International lenders, European Commission, Council of Europe
- Companies, major groups, micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, consular bodies, subsidiaries, competitiveness clusters, economic development players

To date, we have conducted over 500 consultancy, technical assistance, research and evaluation assignments on international, national and local levels.

{ Notes }

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WHO ARE WE?

Agence Erasmus+ France / Education Training promotes and manages the Erasmus+ programme and its initiatives for the education and training sectors.

The Agency is actively involved in developing the Erasmus+ programme, as well as national and international challenges in the fields of education, higher education and vocational training.

Agence Erasmus+ France / Education Training is a public interest group (PIG) placed under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Youth, the Ministry of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation and the Ministry of Labour. It is located in Bordeaux and employs 130 people.

Erasmus+ is the European programme for education, training, youth and sport launched in 2014. It is structured around three main pillars: individual mobility, partnerships with key players and supporting political reforms.

The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) is the first funding scheme to democratise mobility, with special attention paid to vulnerable groups.

agence.erasmusplus.fr



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