# TRANSFORM4EUROPE:
## THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE ENTREPRENEURS

# Guidelines on seamless mobility

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# CONTENT

## 1. Aim of the Guidelines

The Transform4Europe European University Alliance brings together ten (and one associated university) universities with the main goal of becoming one integrated European University based on shared European values, a diverse and inclusive alliance deeply rooted in the respective regional ecosystems, educating and training knowledge-entrepreneurs as drivers of transformation for the benefit of sustainable and resilient European societies.

The document aims to guide participating institutions in designing and implementing mobility windows within the Alliance. Together the partner institutions worked on these guidelines to share their visions, definitions and to present new pathways for students to get international experiences. It defines the concept of mobility window to ensure clarity across the intuitions, presents other ways to promote international mobility and provides relevant information for ensuring credit recognitions.

Member institutions commit to adhering to the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, ensuring transparent mobility and commit to the automatic recognition of mobility study periods to facilitate seamless mobility among all members.

The guidelines will be regularly updated based on new information gathered from partners during the design and implementation of these mobility windows.


## 2. Relevance of international experience within the Alliance

The political emphasis on student mobility within the European Union has been strong for many years and remains a priority. According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, "European citizens need to be better equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competences necessary in a dynamically changing society that is increasingly mobile, multicultural, and digital". The guide also emphasizes that "spending time in another country to study, learn, and work should become the standard, and the opportunity to learn two additional languages besides one's mother tongue should be offered to everyone[1]".

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[1] European Commission. (2023). Erasmus+ Programme Guide. URL: 2024-Erasmus+Programme-Guide_EN.pdf (europa.eu)

In line with these goals, on 15 November 2023, the European Commission adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation "Europe on the Move" which sets a new target to increase learning mobility by 2030. The aim is for at least 25% of higher education graduates to have learning mobility experience, up from the current target of 20%[2]. This initiative reflects the EU's commitment to ensuring that its citizens are well-prepared for the demands of an increasingly interconnected world.

The goals for European University Alliances are even more ambitious, with a strategic target of 50% student mobility within the alliances. Our Alliance is committed to this goal, striving to boost all forms of intra-alliance mobility to a rate of 50% for students and 20% for staff. Additionally, our universities have united around a shared vision of creating an integrated, inclusive European higher education inter-university campus where T4EU staff and students can move seamlessly both in person and online. We believe there is a clear need to enhance mobility at all levels and for all categories of stakeholders — students, teaching staff, researchers, and technical and administrative personnel — among the partners to achieve the desired level of integration. To further support these objectives, our Alliance is aiming to establish a sustainable legal entity with efficient joint governance, common infrastructure and a joint strategy to act as role model with a strong societal impact and global outreach.

T4EU also aligns with the European Commission's goal by aiming to train European knowledge entrepreneurs who will be equipped to tackle the challenges of our societies. By enhancing cross-border cooperation and fostering mobility, we are not only contributing to the personal and professional growth of our students and staff but also contributing to the development of a more united, resilient, and innovative Europe.

## 3. Definition of Mobility Window

As stated, making mobility accessible for all members of the universities is one of the main goals of our Alliance. An improved, flexible and inclusive mobility framework offering equal conditions and seamless mobility opportunities will establish both physical and virtual mobility as the norm for the students and the staff of our European University with a substantial number of options with embedded automatic recognition[3].

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[2] European Commission. (15 November 2023). *Europe on the Move – a proposal on the future of learning mobility*. URL: Europe on the Move - a proposal on the future of learning mobility | European Education Area (europa.eu)

[3] Transform4Europe (2023). *Mission Statement*. URL: https://transform4europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2023-01-T4EU-Mission-Statement-UdS-final_4.pdf

With the automatic recognition schemes for seamless mobility, the administrative burden for the support staff and the bureaucratic procedures for the students will be simplified for the long run. Also, individual (physical or blended) student mobility will be covered by the Erasmus+ programme.

The "mobility windows" represent an attractive tool boosting the mobility flows within the Alliance and will be pivotal to reach the 50% target and establish a true seamless mobility environment. Mobility window fosters the internationalisation of study programmes with clearly defined objectives and outcomes that count towards or supplement academic qualifications. The MW is an explicit and integrated part of the home curriculum and study plan. Study achievements at the partner university as well as international experience gained by students during the MW must be fully recognized by the home institution, if the learning outcomes defined by the curriculum are achieved.

MW represent an amazing opportunity for students to enhance the quality of their study and to have new diverse and flexible learning pathways. It allows them to gain international and intercultural competences and improve access to the labour market. MW are also a great opportunity for the institution to enhance internationalisation and to strengthen the international character of a subject field. It also aims to implement institutional policies and to develop closer cooperation with partners, as well as to increase student mobility numbers to 50%.

The Transform4Europe Alliance understands mobility window as "[…] a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study program[4]".
To be more precise, curricular embeddedness is defined by two criteria:
- Firstly, the foreseen mobility period is an explicit part of the home curriculum and study plan. The latter detail at which point in the programme students have to, should or can go abroad and for how long[5].
- Secondly, the home curriculum and study plan create transparency about the possibility of recognising the stay abroad[6].

There are 4 different types of mobility windows[7]:

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[4] Ferencz et al. (2013). *Mobility Windows – From Concept to Practice*. Page 12. URL: ACA_2013_Mobility_windows.pdf (erasmusplus.at)
[5] Ferencz et al. 2013, 35
[6] ibid.
[7] Ferencz et al. 2013, 41

| Type 1: Optional with loosely-prescribed content (Op-Lop) | Type 3: Optional with highly-prescribed content (Op-Hip) |
|---|---|
| The most flexible type of mobility windows (e.g., Erasmus);<br><br>- Optimal part of the curriculum ("mobility path")<br>- Study content is open/flexible | More flexible in terms of the mobility experience and more rigid in terms of content.<br><br>- Optimal part of the curriculum<br>- Study content is fixed |
| Type 2: Mandatory with loosely-prescribed content (Ma-Lop) | Type 4: Mandatory with highly-prescribed content (Ma-Hip) |
| More rigid in terms of the mobility experience and more flexible in terms of content;<br><br>- Mandatory part of the curriculum<br>- Study content is open/flexible | The most structured type of mobility windows;<br><br>- Mandatory part of the curriculum<br>- Study content is fixed |

The Alliance focuses on implementing mainly MWs of type 3 (optional with highly prescribed content) lasting one to two semesters, also referred to as long-term mobility, but will be open to all types and durations.

Teaching staff and programme directors can implement MW by following the "Step-by-step manual for teaching staff and programme directors for designing and implementing mobility windows". Decisions and discussion during the process of developing MW should include all stakeholders (academics, administration staff, social partners and students) to attain best results.

## 4. Other ways for students to get international experience

Mobility windows are a great way for students to undergo long-term mobility of one or two semesters. However, other forms of mobility exist and are of great valued for students to get international experience. Here a few other innovative formats of mobility:

a) Short-term Mobilities: Short-term mobility, defined as less than two months, enriches students' international experiences and fosters both academic and personal development. This type of mobility includes formats such as field trips, conferences, and summer schools and is particularly relevant within programs that do not allow long-term mobilities. Short-term mobilities should also be fully

recognized in ECTS credits, either as part of or as an entire course.

b) Blended Intensive Programmes: Blended Intensive Programmes are short, intensive programmes that use innovative ways of learning and teaching. During these blended intensive programmes, groups of students will undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a compulsory virtual component facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. They aim at reaching all types of students from all backgrounds, study fields and cycles and can be open to student from any HEI, including local students [8] .

c) Practice/Internship/Traineeship: Incorporating practical experiences through training, internships, or placements in another country enhances students' competences for future careers. These experiences can be included as optional or mandatory modules in the curriculum.

d) Internationalisation at Home: Internationalisation at Home integrates international and intercultural dimensions into the curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments. It is also ensuring equal opportunities for student who do not / cannot go abroad to acquire and develop international and intercultural competences.
It could be achieved through:
- Virtual mobility and/or virtual exchange within an international classroom;
- Domestic practical training with an intercultural focus;
- Theories on inter- and transculturality and mobile cultural studies;
- Module(s) covering globality/culturality (historical dimensions, linguistic dimension etc.);
- Training of international and cross-cultural skills in general;
- Foreign language courses;
- ECTS credit points within free electives for "buddy activities" like mentoring activities/language tandems for incoming students;
- Summer schools and lectures covering international/transnational/global topics;
- Interactivity (group work, discussions, etc.) between "national" and "international" students during lectures.

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[8] European Commission. (2023). *Erasmus+ Programme Guide.* 2024-Erasmus+Programme-Guide_EN.pdf (europa.eu)

## 5. Credit accumulation and recognition of credit mobility

Establishing procedures for credit recognition earned during study periods abroad and their accumulation is a crucial step in designing MWs. These guidelines aim to enhance transparency in the procedure for the automatic recognition of credits during MWs, developed within T4EU and thus helping to build mutual trust between partner institutions. This approach aligns with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, study periods, and learning experiences, including non-formal and informal learning, is essential for supporting students' academic progress and promoting mobility. Effective recognition procedures depend on institutional practices that align with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This requires active cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies, and national ENIC/NARIC centers, which play a key role in ensuring that recognition is consistent across the country and that qualifications are understood and accepted internationally[9].

Moreover, the implementation of these recognition procedures must be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure they remain effective and responsive to the evolving educational landscape. This ongoing process is essential to maintaining the integrity of academic standards and supporting the seamless mobility of students across different education systems.

The Erasmus+ Inter-institutional Agreement and the MW bilateral agreement detail the study periods, outline partners' responsibilities, and specify contractual obligations. These agreements address various issues that need resolution and consensus, serving to regulate consortium activities and ensure the effective implementation of the MW.

Mobility periods are recognized by both partners as stipulated in the Erasmus Inter Institutional Agreement or in the Learning Agreement (in the case of Erasmus+ student mobility). The sending institution clearly specifies how the educational components taken abroad will be integrated into the home degree program. The receiving institution provides the sending institution and the student with a Transcript of Records (or an equivalent document) after the student's results have been issued. Upon successful

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[9] Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015). Brussels, Belgium. ESG_2015.pdf (enqa.eu)

completion of the agreed educational components, the sending institution fully recognizes the corresponding number of credits.

If students do not successfully complete the required number of credits at the receiving institution, institutional procedures are in place for the assessment of educational components. These procedures must be clearly communicated to students before the beginning of the mobility period.

The institution clearly defines responsibilities for monitoring credit mobility and ensures that application and selection criteria are transparent and fair. A staff member should be appointed and formally authorised to discuss the study program abroad with the student (and to sign the Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records if funded by Erasmus+).

European educational systems have developed different national grading scales, and even within the same country, these scales can be used differently. Mobile students have the right to fair treatment and transparency in the transfer of their grades between institutions. To ensure this, partner universities should provide a statistical distribution table of the passing grades awarded in the program, demonstrating how the grading scale is applied in practice. The grades conversion table, provided in Annex 2 of these guidelines, can be used to facilitate this process.

For additional transparency and to support students in their mobility, a template of a comparison table of the courses required at the host university, including the total number of ECTS credits, is provided in Annex 1. Any further relevant information can be included in the bilateral agreement for the mobility window.

## Sources

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Ferencz et al. (2013). Mobility Windows – From Concept to Practice. ACA_2013_Mobility_windows.pdf (erasmusplus.at)

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# Annex 1: Course Comparison Table

<table>
<tr><td colspan="6" align="center"><strong>Equivalence Table</strong></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center"><strong>University 1</strong></td><td colspan="3" align="center"><strong>University 2</strong></td></tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component code (if any) and page no. of the course catalogue</strong></td>
<td><strong>Component title</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of ECTS credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>Component code (if any) and page no. of the course catalogue</strong></td>
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<tr><td><strong>TOTAL ECTS CREDITS</strong></td><td></td><td></td><td><strong>TOTAL ECTS CREDITS</strong></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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## Annex 2: Grading Table

| U1 Marks/ Grades | U2 Marks/Grades |
|---|---|
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