FACTS.

1B/2018 Facts and figures



Quality and competitiveness

International activities of vocational education and training staff and the effects of these activities on their vocational institution

Three perspectives to internationalisation:

What do statistics tell about the international activities of VET staff in 2017?

What do the participant reports in the Erasmus+ programme tell about the benefits of VET staff mobility?

What do staff interviews reveal about the effects of internationalisation on VET?

FINNISH NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EDUCATION







SIRU KORKALA:

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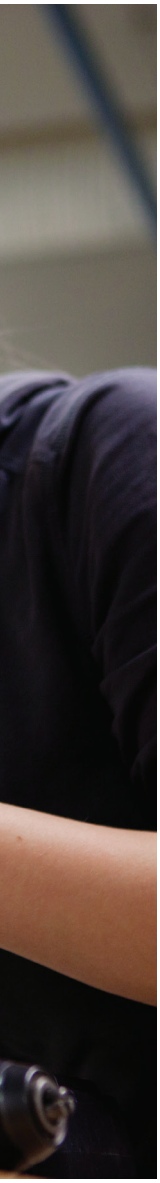
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What do the participant reports in the Erasmus+ programme tell about the benefits of VET staff mobility?

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BACKGROUND

International activities and international mobility periods of persons working in vocational education and training (VET) create important networks for vocational institutions and develop the staff's own competence. The importance of the international activities of staff in terms of the development of the VET sector was already emphasised in the development plans for education and research between 2011 and 2016.

The vocational education and training reform has brought new requirements for the competence of staff as work-based learning is becoming increasingly common. The internationality of staff also promotes the international mobility of students when internationally active teachers encourage students to complete their work-based learning period abroad. Furthermore, at best, international activities improve the vocational institution as an organisation when new influences and operating practices are adopted.

Three perspectives to internationalisation: statistics on mobility, participant reports and staff interviews.

This publication looks at the internationalisation of staff from three points of view. First, an overview of the activities is provided in the light of the statistics gathered on mobility by the Finnish National Agency for Education: the number of international mobility periods completed, the developments in mobility and its regional distribution. The statistics are from 2017.

The Finnish National Agency for Education participates in an international project surveying the effects of participation in the mobility projects of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020). Information is gathered using a questionnaire sent to persons who have completed an international mobility period. This publication briefly goes through the questionnaire's material concerning Finland, giving a picture of for example how participation has contributed to the professional development of teachers and other staff in VET.

A third perspective to internationalisation is gained through interviews conducted with staff from vocational institutions. Among other things, the interviewees were asked about how international activities were at the time visible in the everyday life of vocational institutions and what the staff's attitude towards the activities was. They were also asked to think about the concrete effects of international activities on students, teaching and the cooperation of vocational institutions with working life. Ten vocational institutions, all of them actively engaged in international activities, participated in the interviews. The study was a qualitative interview study, the results of which describe the situation from the point of view of the interviewees and cannot therefore be generalised to apply to the entire field of VET. The objective of the study was to describe the impact of an active approach to internationalisation of organisations in the best of situations – how these activities inspire both staff and students in new ways.

What do statistics tell about

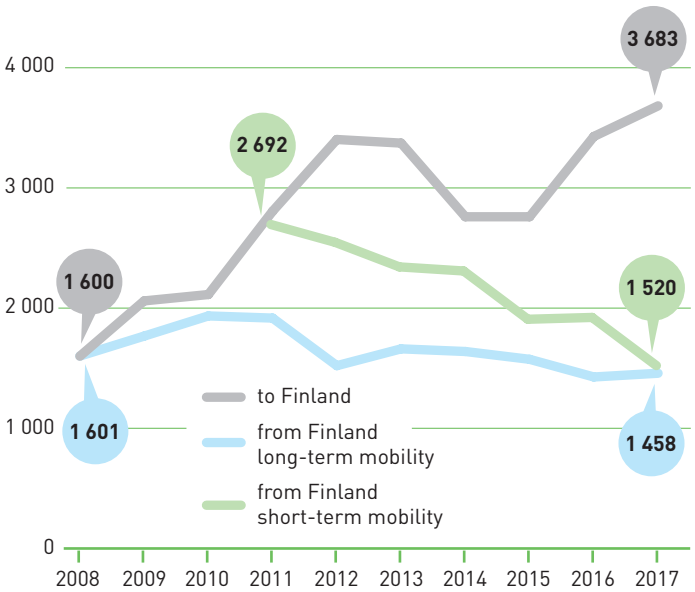
the international activities of VET staff in 2017

The Finnish National Agency for Education annually gathers and publishes statistics on international mobility in VET. Statistical information has been compiled since 2008.

International mobility periods – teacher exchanges, other professional development placements and trips related to collaboration projects and development projects and their preparation – are a central part of the international activities that VET staff engage in.

From a statistics point-of-view, the international mobility periods of outgoing VET staff are divided into long-term mobility periods lasting more than 5 days and short-term mobility periods with a duration of less than 5 days. The duration of the mobility period has not been defined for incoming VET staff. More detailed personal information is gathered on the long-term international mobility periods completed by Finns, whereas short-term mobility periods and all mobility periods of incoming staff are reported only as total numbers by country. In this publication, statistics on the last group are discussed only when developments in the number of international mobility periods and their regional and country-specific distribution and the type of educational institution are examined.

FIGURE 1. LONG-TERM, SHORT TERM AND INCOMING MOBILITY PERIODS OF VET STAFF 2008–2017



The number of incoming staff continues to grow

The number of long-term international mobility periods of VET staff has remained stable, no significant increase or decline has been observed. In 2017, slightly under 1,500 teachers and other staff from Finland completed a long-term international mobility period, an increase of just over 2 per cent from the previous year.

The number of foreign teachers and experts visiting Finland, on the other hand, has been on the increase: it has grown by more than one third from 2015. In 2017, the number of incoming staff was almost 3,700, which is about 7.5 per cent more than the preceding year. For example, in terms of mobility in the Erasmus+ programme, Finland is one of the most popular European destination countries among VET staff, when you take into account the size of the countries.



The number of Finns completing a long-term mobility period has remained stable, but the number of short-term mobility periods continues to decline.

Statistical information on short-term mobility periods of VET staff has been gathered since 2011. The number of short mobility periods has been declining since this. Short mobility periods are generally financed by the institutions themselves through funding the amount of which varies from year to year. In 2017, the number of outgoing VET staff totalled slightly more than 1,500, a decline of more than 20 per cent from the previous year. The state budget savings targeted at the VET sector would seem to be reflected particularly in the short-term mobility periods of staff.

A typical person completing an international mobility period is a woman involved in project work

Amm Mobility among VET teachers and other staff is very female-dominated: 62 per cent of outgoing staff are women. Although the aim of Erasmus+ and other programmes has been that international mobility periods should primarily be professional development placements and teacher exchanges, more than 60 per cent of them were other trips related to development projects or supporting student mobility in 2017.

The vast majority of outgoing staff, 90 per cent, work in general vocational institutions. Mobility is relatively low among staff working in specialised VET institutions, special education institutions and apprenticeship offices. Almost 70 per cent of outgoing staff work with the basic vocational qualifications and very few with adult learners. Slightly over one fifth of outgoing staff are members of administrative staff or workplace instructors.

Based on absolute numbers, staff mobility is very evenly distributed among different VET sectors. The largest number of international mobility periods are, however, completed outside the actual VET sectors themselves as one third of all mobility periods were recorded to the category "other training" meaning probably administration or general management. This group of outgoing staff includes language teachers, administrative staff, workplaces instructors and teachers and other staff working with special qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications.

More than one half, or 56 per cent, of the international mobility periods completed by VET staff were funded by the Erasmus+ programme. The share of the programme has grown by 14.5 per cent compared with the previous year. The proportion of vocational institutions' own funding has fallen slightly, which is visible especially in short-term mobility periods.

TABLE 1. FUNDING OF LONG-TERM MOBILITY PERIODS OF VET STAFF IN 2017

Mobility programme	Teachers and other staff	%	Change %
Erasmus+ for VET 2014–2020	815	55.9	14.5
Erasmus+ for general education or adult education 2014–2020	62	4.3	–8.8
Nordplus	17	1.2	–60.5
Funded by Finnish National Agency for Education	159	10.9	–7.0
Funded by the vocational institution	257	17.9	–14.3
Other funding	148	10.2	11.3
TOTAL	**1 458**	**100**	

TABLE 2. TOTAL NUMBERS IN VET STAFF MOBILITY AND CHANGES BY COUNTY BETWEEN 2016 AND 2017

County	Outgoing teachers and other staff (>5 days) in 2017	%	Change %	Outgoing teachers and other staff (<5 days) in 2017	%	Change %	Incoming teachers and other staff in 2017	%	Change %
Central Finland	134	9.2	14.5	77	5.1	–45.8	104	2.8	–24.6
Central Ostrobothnia	26	1.8	–39.5	53	3.5	47.2	21	0.6	–64.4
Etelä-Savo	23	1.6	–51.1	70	4.6	40.0	37	1.0	–68.1
Kainuu	24	1.6	–27.3	15	1.0	–37.5	32	0.9	–3.0
Kanta-Häme	54	3.7	86.2	87	5.7	–20.9	133	3.6	137.5
Kymenlaakso	54	3.7	8.0	73	4.8	–18.9	79	2.1	–16.8
Lapland	24	1.6	–44.2	54	3.6	–8.5	145	3.9	253.7
North Karelia	37	2.5	–21.3	27	1.8	–50.9	141	3.8	74.1
North Ostrobothnia	142	9.7	–16.5	72	4.7	–31.4	284	7.7	–17.2
Ostrobothnia	67	4.6	6.3	126	8.3	16.7	142	3.9	79.7
Pirkanmaa	148	10.2	35.8	130	8.6	13.0	714	19.4	38.4
Pohjois-Savo	61	4.2	190.5	30	2.0	–53.8	62	1.7	40.9
Päijät-Häme	33	2.3	13.8	39	2.6	2.6	104	2.8	19.5
Satakunta	64	4.4	18.5	59	3.9	7.3	103	2.8	45.1
South Karelia	13	0.9	62.5	12	0.8	–66.7	33	0.9	–13.2
South Ostrobothnia	58	4.0	5.5	26	1.7	–38.1	92	2.5	–64.2
Uusimaa	385	26.4	–11.1	453	29.8	–37.7	1 351	36.7	4.1
Varsinais-Suomi	111	7.6	46.1	117	7.7	85.7	106	2.9	39.5
TOTAL	**1 458**	**100**	**2.2**	**1 520**	**100**	**–20.8**	**3 683**	**100**	**7.4**

The role of the EU's Erasmus+ programme in the funding of staff's international mobility periods has strengthened. Almost 60 per cent of mobility periods receive support from the programme.

The numbers of outgoing and incomig staff per county vary from year to year

The largest number of both outgoing and incoming staff is seen in the county of Uusimaa as the region has many vocational institutions, some of which are also large ones. In 2017, the proportion of outgoing staff in the county was slightly over one quarter of all staff completing a long-term mobility period and almost one third of those completing a short-term mobility period. However, the number of outgoing staff in the county was lower than the previous year. Incoming staff in Uusimaa accounted for almost 40 per cent of all incoming staff.

MOBILITY OF VET STAFF BY CONTINENT IN 2017

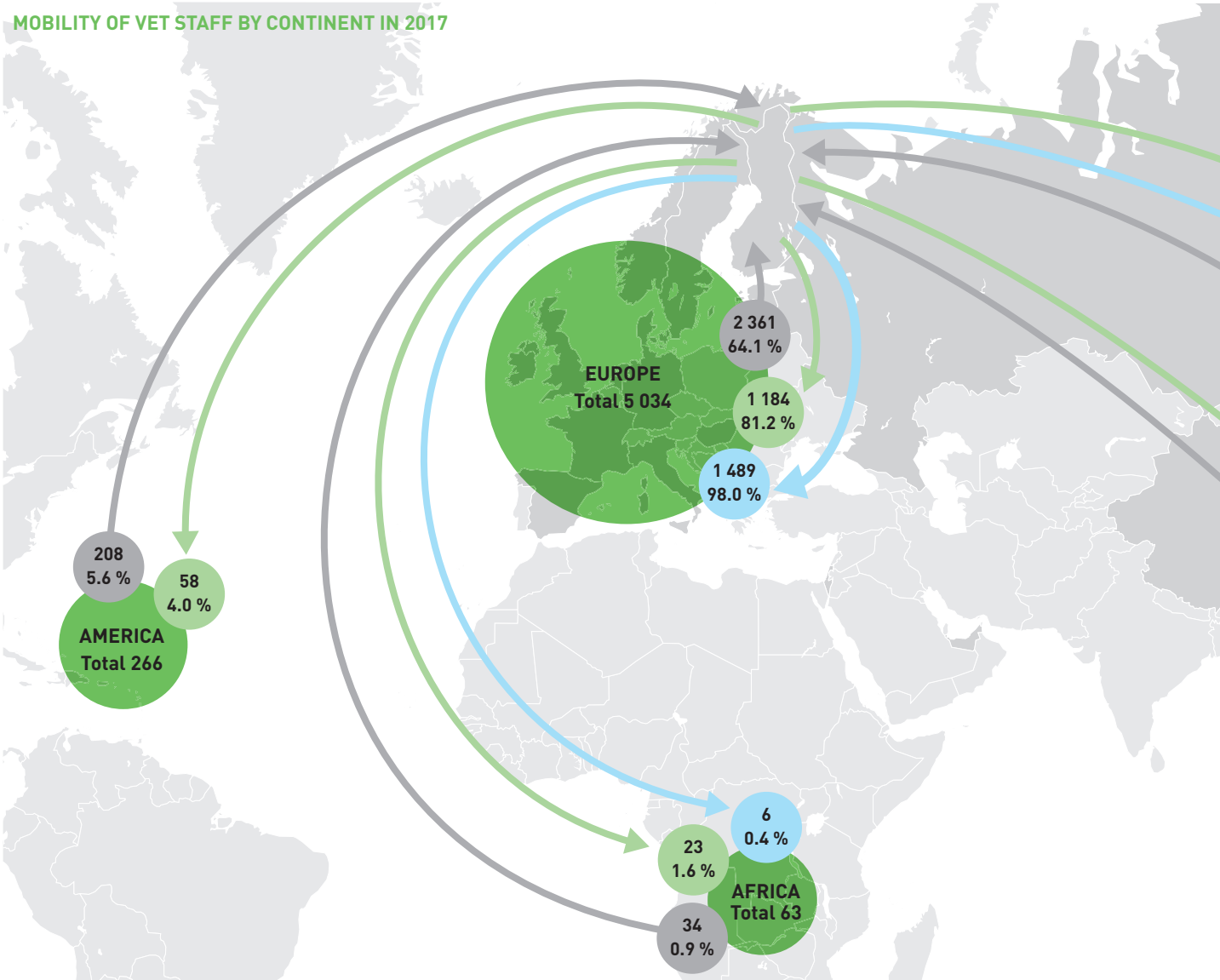
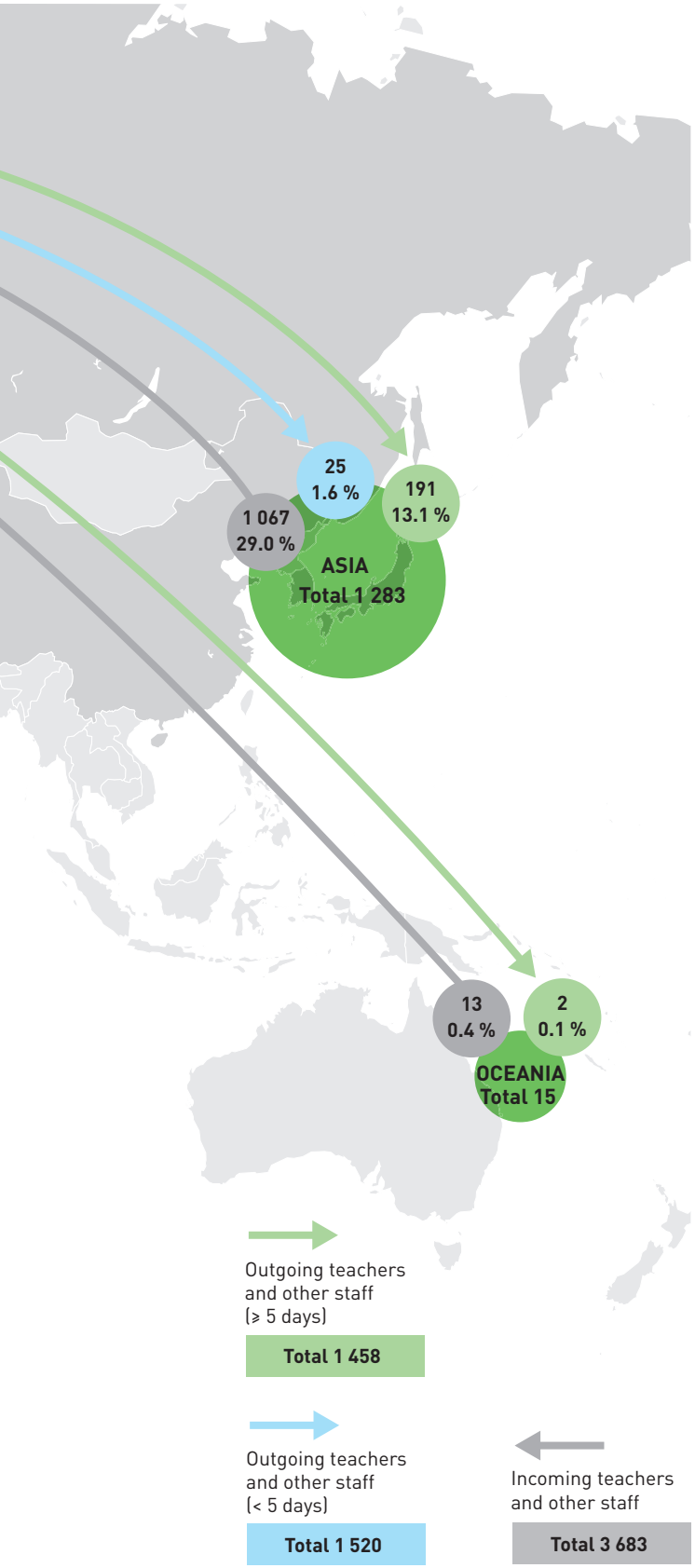


TABLE 4. TEN MOST POPULAR DESTINATION COUNTRIES AND COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF VET STAFF

Destination	Outgoing (≥ 5 days)	Destination country	Outgoing (< 5 days)	Country of origin	Incoming
Spain	152	Sweden	264	China	348
United Kingdom	144	Estonia	237	Spain	323
Germany	121	Germany	149	Germany	303
The Netherlands	78	Russia	142	The Netherlands	249
France	71	The Netherlands	109	Republic of Korea	182
Italy	68	United Kingdom	83	Japan	176
China	63	Spain	71	France	151
Hungary	48	Denmark	68	Russia	128
United Arab Emirates	43	Latvia	62	Estonia	113
Ireland	43	Norway	41	Israel	112



One third of incoming staff come from Asian countries. The largest number of them come from China.

The county of Pirkanmaa saw a large number of outgoing and incoming staff: the percentage of staff from the county completing a long-term mobility period was about 10 per cent and the percentage of those completing a short-term mobility period slightly less. About one fifth of all incoming staff to Finland heads for Pirkanmaa. The numbers saw a considerable increase compared with the previous year. Staff mobility also increased in Varsinais-Suomi and Satakunta, while it declined in Etelä-Savo. Lapland has seen some decline in the number of outgoing staff, but the number of incoming staff was clearly higher than the previous year. When staff mobility is looked at by county, the numbers display considerable variations from year to year.

Staff mobility is Europe-centred, but more and more people also come to Finland from Asia

he mobility of Finnish VET staff focuses heavily on Europe: more than 80 per cent of those completing a long-term international mobility period and almost all of those completing a short-term mobility period head for other European countries. On the other hand, an increasing proportion of incoming staff arrive from Asia. In 2017, Asians accounted for one third of all incoming staff, while they accounted for 15 per cent the previous year. Vocational institutions increasingly conduct bilateral and network collaboration with vocational institutions in Asian countries. The largest number of incoming foreign staff come from China and the fifth largest number from the Republic of Korea.

What do the participant reports in the Erasmus+ programme tell

about the benefits of VET staff mobility?

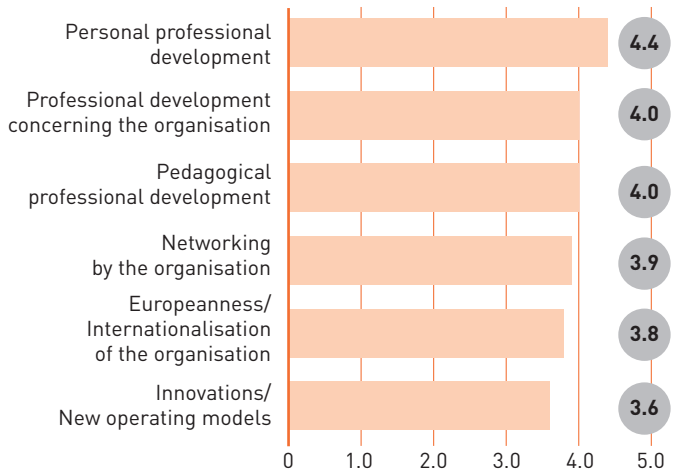
The Finnish National Agency for Education and eight other national agencies in the Erasmus+ programme participate in a project studying how VET staff perceive the effects of international mobility periods. The experiences of the participants are gathered with the help of a survey filled in by everyone participating in an Erasmus+ mobility period.

The objective of this study is to develop a model for the Erasmus+ programme that will describe the effects of the programme on students and teachers. The first stage has focused on VET mobility projects, but the intention is to also include other fields of education in future. The project is coordinated by the National Erasmus+ Agency of Austria.

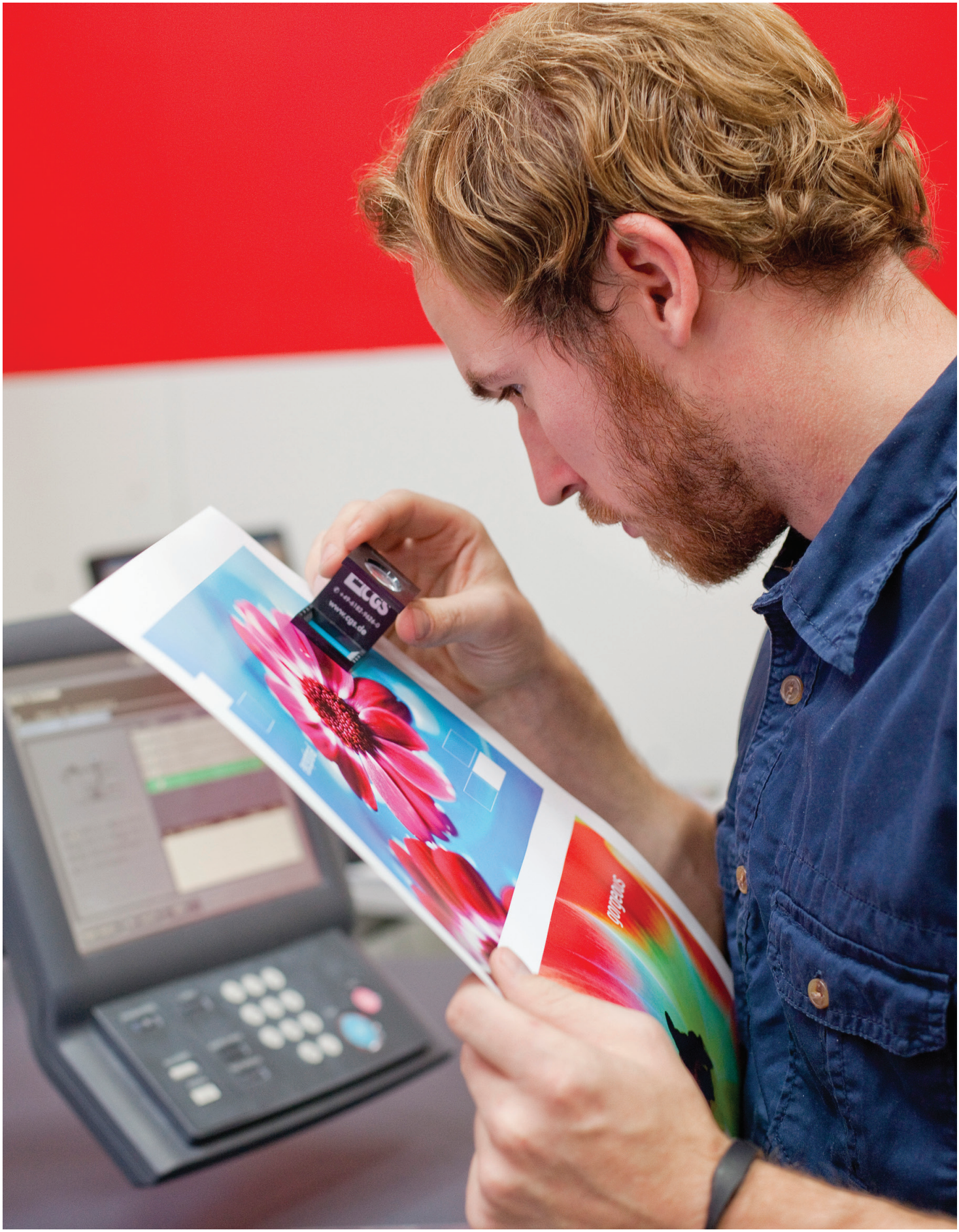
Next, the answers given by Finnish participants working in VET are looked at through the MIA-Q model developed in the study. The questionnaire contains statements which the respondent must evaluate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1: completely disagree, 5: completely agree). The higher the value given to the statement, the better the statement corresponds to the respondent's views.

The averages of the answers given by Finnish participants to the different groups of statements have been compiled in Diagram 3. Based on them, Finnish participants seem to be of the opinion that the biggest impact of international mobility periods is on the person's professional development. Also, in the answers given by the participants from other countries in the study, professional development is placed high. All participants also consider the networking of their own organisations an important outcome.

FIGURE 3. EXPERIENCES OF FINNISH RESPONDENTS IN THE SURVEY MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY PERIODS IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME
(average 1 completely disagree – 5 completely agree)



Personal professional development is considered the most central benefit of international mobility periods.





How is MIA-Q calculated?

In the MIA-Q model, the statements of the participant report have been classified into four categories with the help of a factor analysis. The categories are innovations and new operating models, Europeanness and internationalisation in the organisation, professional development, and the organisation's participation in networks. The values given to the statements vary between 1 and 5 (1: completely disagree and 5: completely agree).

An average is calculated for each statement selected to be included in the model. The averages of the statements in the groups described above are added up and divided by the number of statements in the group. This means that the value for the category Professional development concerning the organisation is calculated in the following way: 3.78 + 3.71 + 3.92 + 4.52 = 15.93 / 4 = 4.0

STATEMENTS MEASURING INNOVATIONS AND NEW OPERATING MODELS

My participation in the Erasmus+ programme had the following effects on my background organisation:	avg.
My participation has led to new teaching content being introduced	3.87
My participation will lead to new teaching methods being used in the sending organisation that I work in	3.85
My participation has led to new teaching methods being used in the sending organisation that I work in	3.51
My participation will lead to new teaching content being introduced	3.16

STATEMENTS MEASURING INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE ORGANISATION

My participation in the Erasmus+ programme had the following effects on the sending organisation that I work in:	
My participation has led to internationalisation in the sending organisation that I work in	3.81

STATEMENTS MEASURING NETWORKING BY THE ORGANISATION

My participation in the Erasmus+ programme had the following effects on the sending organisation that I work in:	
I have reinforced cooperation with partner organisations	4.40
It has resulted in an increase in cooperation with other organisations	3.82
I have created collaboration relationships with representatives from working life	3.51

Professional development has been divided into three parts: personal development, pedagogical development and the development of the organisation.

STATEMENTS MEASURING PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By participating in the Erasmus+ activities, I have improved the following skills:	
Cultural awareness and self-expression	4.51
Development of personality and social skills	4.41
Social, linguistic and cultural skills	4.40
Emotional skills (more confidence)	4.08

STATEMENTS MEASURING PEDAGOGICAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By participating in the Erasmus+ activities, I have improved the following skills:	
Analytical skills	4.15
I have acquired practical skills related to my current work and professional development	3.98
My knowledge of my vocational field has increased	3.91
My ability to use IT tools has improved	3.88

STATEMENTS MEASURING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING THE ORGANISATION

By participating in the Erasmus+ activities, I have improved the following skills:	
My professional network has expanded and I have gained new contacts	4.52
Practical skills (e.g. planning and leadership, project management)	3.92
Initiative and entrepreneurship	3.78
My organisation and leadership skills have improved	3.71

What do staff interviews reveal

about the effects of internationalisation on VET?

INTERNATIONALISATION HAS BECOME PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN ACTIVE VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The aim of the Finnish National Agency for Education's case study was to supplement the picture provided of the current state of internationalisation in VET by mobility statistics and indicators similar to the participant reports of the Erasmus+ programme.

The following chapters discuss the interviewees' views on how vocational institutions have changed along with international activities. The general impression gained at least through these institutions is that VET in Finland is profiled increasingly clearly as an operator at an international level.

"The increase in interest is visible in that so many teachers and students are involved in different projects. In reality, we do not really make a distinction between whether a project is an international or a Finnish one."

More and more people participate in international activities

According to the interviewees, the number of teachers participating in international activities had in their vocational institutions increased compared with the previous year. Although very little increase is visible in mobility statistics, other kinds of participation have increased. People are now more interested in international projects, their outcomes and also internationalisation at home. More and more teachers were themselves prepared to teach in a foreign language, which the institution also encouraged them to do by organising language training for the staff.

VET providers have realised how important it is for vocational institutions to participate in international projects and that way keep up to date with the new trends in teaching. International activities are also increasingly visible – internationalisation was referred to as part of everyday activities in all of the interviewed vocational institutions.

Foreign actors are also interested in Finnish vocational institutions, which results in the creation of important international cooperation networks.

Mobility has become goal-oriented

The interviewees found that international mobility of students as well as international mobility of staff had in their institutions become goal-oriented: systematic efforts



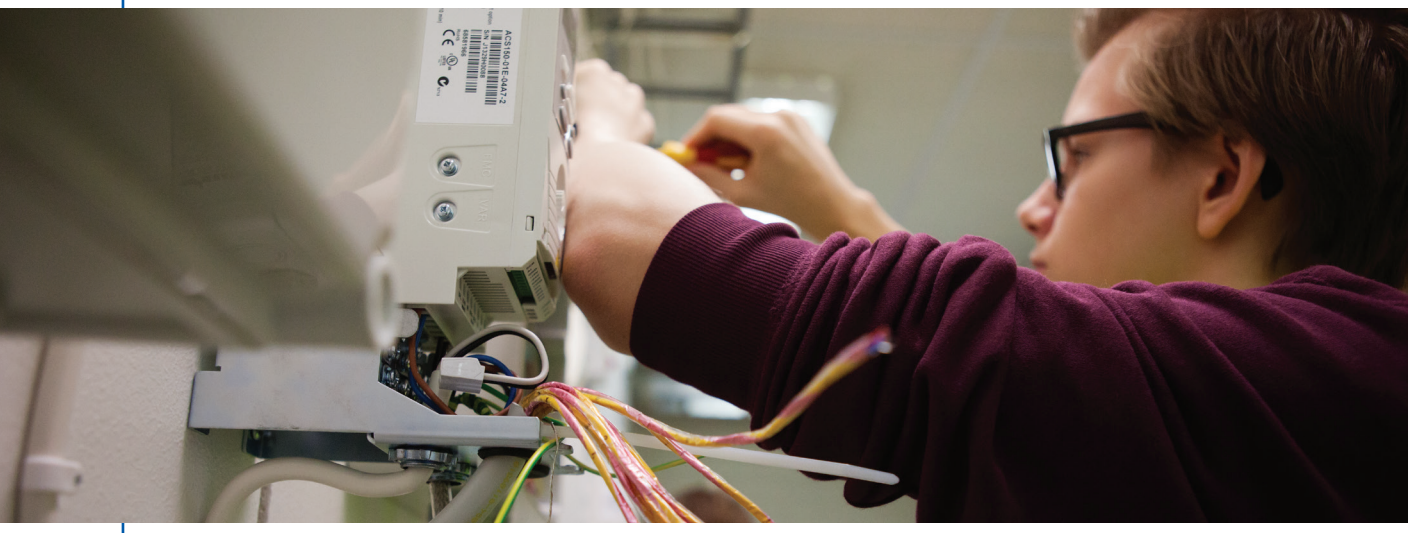
What was studied and how?

The vocational institutions selected to the study were internationally active institutions in which the mobility of staff and students had remained at a good level. The sizes of the institutions varied: more than 2,000 students started studying in the largest ones every year and fewer than 100 in the smallest ones. Vocational institutions from Uusimaa, Ostrobothnia, North Ostrobothnia, Varsinais-Suomi, Satakunta, Kymenlaakso and Central Finland participated in the study. Two of them were vocational special education institutions and one was a Swedish-speaking institution.

The management, coordinators of international affairs, teachers participating in international activities and other staff of the institutions were interviewed. A total of 44 people participated in the interviews: 10 principals, 1 development manager, 6 coordinators of international affairs, 5 heads of international affairs, 17 teachers, 4 heads of education and training and 1 employee from administration. Three of the interviews were group or pair interviews and the rest were individual interviews.

The interviews sought answers to the following main questions:

- How is internationalisation visible in the everyday life of VET institutions?
- How are international activities currently paid attention to in the strategies of VET institutions?
- Have new ideas resulted from international activities, for example, for the development of teaching?
- Has the teaching changed along with internationalisation?
- What kind of influence have new ideas had on students, staff or partners?
- What are the direct outcomes/benefits from international activities for the educational institution?





were made to develop the institution and to open up new opportunities for students to enrich their competences and the content of their qualification. Also the teachers who did not complete international mobility periods themselves encouraged their students to go abroad for their work-based learning period.

Staff mobility is a central part of the vocational institutions' international profile. Increasingly often, also teachers who did not teach languages, and also coordinators of international affairs completed international mobility periods. Some of the interviewed vocational institutions had even encouraged the administrative staff to be mobile. The experiences gained from this showed that when administrative staff went abroad, the prejudices concerning international activities among other staff declined and general interest in internationalisation grew.

Everyone is encouraged to internationalise

According to the interviewees, getting to know foreign cultures and learning from them was a central part of vocational skills. None of the interviewed staff groups considered international activities glamorous or a privilege, but hard work that required their input also outside the official working hours. The attitude of the management was considered to be central: the involvement of representatives of the management made international activities more goal-oriented. The managements of all the vocational institutions interviewed regarded the planning of international activities as important as the strategic planning of other activities.

The general principle of the vocational institutions participating in the study was that everyone was given the opportunity to complete an international mobility period and the senior management was strongly committed to supporting mobility of the entire staff. The management of these vocational institutions understood that networking is always valuable and that their internationally active staff served as an example that encouraged

"The international affairs team consists of representatives of different sectors and projects but other staff are also encouraged to participate in activities such as organising visits. It is part of the working life skills and basic task of every VET teacher."



The large international affairs team at WinNova works on increasing the visibility of international activities

WinNova Länsirannikon Koulutus Oy Ltd organises multidisciplinary VET in Satakunta and Vakka-Suomi. It has about 6,000 students: two thirds of them study in education leading to a vocational upper secondary qualification and the rest in adult education.

WinNova was born when four vocational institutions merged and international activities were first the responsibility of a few people. However, the visibility, effectiveness and consistency of quality had to be improved, which the institution decided to aim at by expanding the international affairs team. In addition to the persons engaged in international affairs full time, the team now also includes representatives of international projects, student affairs and the management and around a dozen teachers serving as sector-specific contact persons in international affairs. Furthermore, practical matters such as financial reporting and the compilation of statistics are performed by a secretary for development services.

It was also felt that expanding the team would provide students and teachers of different sectors with equal opportunities to participate in international affairs. This has happened as a result of the better flow of information, among other things. The quality of international activities has also improved in other respects. A large team makes it possible to carry out shared development work. The processes have been clarified and uniform practices have been created.

others. One of the vocational institutions used a quality assurance system through which the management group inspired the management teams of different units in international activities. Staff members' interest in international activities was also discussed in development discussions. To maintain student mobility, staff must also be mobile. This is how the quality of international activities is improved.

The interviews convey a very positive picture of the participation of staff and the efforts to engage them in international activities. However, it should be remembered that VET has recently undergone a major reform and many vocational institutions have conducted time-consuming reorganisations taking up resources that could otherwise have been used for internationalisation. Especially the representatives of the managements admitted that different sectors of VET may also have different practices. Many of them still emphasised that vocational institutions had begun to realise that international activities did not pose a threat to other activities but were an important part of the institution's development.

International activities are well organised

The vocational institutions interviewed had invested in the organisation of international activities. All of them had a full-time coordinator of international affairs, something that could not be taken for granted a few years ago. According to one principal, the teams managing international affairs, the organisation of mobility and network projects were an equally important part of the basic activities as the actual teaching. The international affairs teams may sometimes be very large – they may have representatives from different sectors or even from different educational levels, such as vocational upper secondary education or adult education.

The role of internationalisation at home is increasingly visible

It is now increasingly common that internationalisation at home is visible in the voca-

tional institution. The multicultural students already studying in vocational institutions increase the knowledge of other cultures among both staff and the students belonging to the native population. However, the interviewees admitted that the institutions did not always remember to take this valuable resource into account.

Incoming foreign students who come to complete an work-based learning period can already be a natural part of the institution's everyday life and participate in normal instruction for a week before starting work at the workplace.

One of the vocational institutions interviewed had piloted an operating model in which foreign students were integrated into education leading to a qualification. This way, the benefits resulting from their presence did not remain only at the workplace, but their active participation in the lessons also enriched teaching.

PROJECTS ARE PART OF STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES TODAY

The managements of the vocational institutions interviewed and the teachers engaged in the international activities saw internationalisation as part of the institution's everyday life but also talked about internationalisation as part of the institution's project activities. Participation in projects seemed to be the most common way to engage in internationalisation, at least for the vocational institutions that participated in this study.

Sources such as the Erasmus+ programme provide funding for network and development projects and the interviewed vocational institutions had taken advantage of this funding to a great extent.

Seven of the institutions had also been accredited, which means that they had been accepted to the Erasmus+ programme in a manner that ensured them permanent funding to improve their student and staff mobility. The interviewees found that projects were what brought internationalisation closer to all staff groups, even if not



Cultural diversity is visible in teaching at Omnia

Omnia Joint Authority of Education in the Espoo Region provides vocational education and training to slightly over 10,000 students. About one half of them are studying for a vocational upper secondary qualification.

The authority has a large number of students with a migrant background. The mother tongue of more than one quarter of the students studying for a vocational upper secondary qualification is not Finnish or Swedish and almost one sixth of them are not Finnish citizens. The group consist of speakers of a total of 75 different mother tongues and representatives of 84 different nationalities.

The cultural diversity of this group of students has been utilised in the teaching in a variety of ways. It is fairly natural to integrate it into courses such as Knowledge of cultures, in which it is possible to compare the practices and customs of different countries and discuss matters such as the position of women. Cultural diversity has also been visible in the education provided in different vocational sectors: in the sector of beauty care, students have familiarised themselves with different techniques and students studying for a qualification in cookery have familiarised themselves with the food cultures of different countries. The diversity of food cultures has also been enjoyed in the institution's staff canteen which serves as a training kitchen and in which students have had the opportunity to design menus and implement international theme weeks.

everyone participated in the actual mobility. For example, one vocational institution had ensured that each member of the pedagogical group was in some way connected to international projects.

Institutions communicated information on the projects actively and made efforts to engage as many members of staff as possible in them. Participation in projects was part of the strategic activities of vocational institutions. The aim was to involve the entire staff and all sectors of VET in the international activities so that the participants would not always be the same group of active teachers.

In addition to project activities, internationalisation became more concrete in curriculum development. One of the teachers interviewed considered it important that every teacher know how to apply the principles of ECVET, the European credit system for vocational education and training, to draw up training agreements for international mobility periods.

Separate internationalisation strategies are not necessarily required any more

The institutions' strategy documents were not reviewed in this study, but the interviewees were asked how internationalisation was visible in the institutions' strategies. None of the institutions interviewed had a separate internationalisation strategy, nor did they find it necessary. The institution's strategy may have remained at a very general level but, on the other hand, it did not exclude anything, either. The strategic focus areas had been defined and the international activities supported these focus areas.

Especially the managements of the institutions were of the opinion that internationalisation was increasingly a part of normal strategic activities and integrated in all of its elements, such as financial planning or flexible personal study paths. According to several

"When representatives of different staff groups go on a trip together – a teacher, guidance counsellor, secretary, someone from the project – we get different perspectives to how we could do things. Everyone will spread further, within their reference group, the knowledge they have gained during the trip."





The level of internationalisation within VET has already been examined before

This is not the first time the Finnish National Agency for Education (CIMO until 2016) has investigated the level of internationalisation of VET.

In a report on VET networks carried out in 2010, it was discovered that almost one half of vocational institutions promoted their internationalisation by networking and that networking played an important role in international activities. A networked way of working was found to be well-functioning and the institutions had a high level of trust in their networks. Small vocational institutions in particular also found networking a cost-effective operating practice.

However, a 2012 report examining international activities in the Finnish counties as well as their internationalisation strategies revealed that although internationalisation already was an integral part of education and training, it was highly dependent on how active individual teachers or entire vocational institutions were. Internationalisation was seen as vital for the working life and business of the counties.

A 2016 survey of the level of internationalisation of VET in turn showed that internationalisation had become an increasingly important part of the activities of vocational institutions and this was visible as stronger strategy work. One of the key results was also the finding that it was a good idea to listen to the needs of working life and businesses when drawing up internationalisation strategies for vocational institutions. Taking into account internationalisation in the development of the local curriculum was also considered important.

FURTHER INFORMATION

FAKTAA 1/2010: Verkostot ammatillisen koulutuksen kansainvälistäjänä. Selvityksen keskeiset tulokset ("Networks contributing to internationalisation in VET. Key results of the study.

FAKTAA 2/2012: Hyväkin strategia tarvitsee toteuttajansa! Selvitys maakuntien kansainvälisestä toiminnasta ("Even good strategies need to be implemented by someone! Report on international activities in the counties")

FAKTAA 1A/2016: Kansainvälisyys strategiassa ja oppilaitoksen arjessa. Selvitys ammatillisen koulutuksen tilanteesta ("Internationalisation in the strategy and everyday life of vocational institutions. Report on the state of VET")







interviewees, internationalisation had often been included in the institution's general strategy in great detail.

Many coordinators of international affairs said that internationalisation is today integrated in strategies and is therefore not separately mentioned in them. For example, when personal study paths are referred to, it is already taken for granted that studying abroad is included. Internationalisation is included in the new qualification requirements and qualification units. Education exports are also an integral part of discussions on strategies.

"Internationalisation is visible in the pedagogical part of the general strategy and it is paid attention to in all activities."

TEACHERS' OWN EXPERIENCES ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO INTERNATIONALISE

How do international activities of VET staff affect students? All of the staff groups interviewed were of the opinion that when the teachers are internationally active, the entire vocational institution is international. Internationalisation spreads to different sectors and to instruction efficiently through networks and experiences. Internationally active and mobile teachers are better able to guide students in matters related to work-based learning abroad: at best, they have themselves visited the workplaces in which students complete their work-based learning periods. Improvements have been observed in the quality of students' international mobility periods when it has been possible to ensure through cooperation networks that students learn the necessary skills during the mobility period.

The encouragement given by teachers of vocational subjects as well as teachers of languages or coordinators of international affairs is particularly important from the students' point of view – when the teacher of vocational subjects has positive international

experiences of his or her own, students are also better able to find the courage to participate. The teacher's experiences may inspire the students and everyone is better aware of the opportunities of internationalisation when language lessons are not the only context in which they are brought up. Many of those interviewed welcomed especially the increasing mobility of teachers of vocational subjects. According to statistics, the staff's professional development placements and teacher exchanges account for just over one third of the overall mobility of staff. Although the proportion grows every year, there is still room for improvement.

Both staff and students of vocational institutions understand the value of gaining competence at workplaces abroad. For example, international experiences have been seen to increase motivation to study. The teachers interviewed had observed that students who participated in international activities completed their studies faster and found employment more successfully than students who were not interested in internationalisation. On the other hand, students who wanted to study abroad were often motivated to study anyway. Outgoing students also included those to whom the new motivation and confidence found during the international mobility period meant a turning point in their previously slow progress in studies. In the interviews, especially staff working in special education institutions emphasised

"Definitely, those who have international experience will be better equipped when they graduate and enter the world of work."



Gradia offers opportunities for internationalisation to all staff

Jyväskylä Educational Consortium Gradia has about 25,000 students. Vocational educational and training has about 15,000 students, of whom 11,000 are studying for a vocational upper secondary qualification.

Internationalisation has been recorded as a focus area in the educational consortium's strategy and international activities have been developed systematically and in a goal-oriented manner for years. High-quality student and staff mobility also has a long-standing tradition as Gradia was already an accredited vocational institution during Leonardo da Vinci, the predecessor of the EU's Erasmus+ programme. Accreditation has for its part streamlined the planning and monitoring of international activities and the continuous improvement of their quality.

About 200 VET staff members from Gradia complete an international mobility period every year. The target set for mobility is that mobility periods – staff training, teacher exchanges and quality assurance visits to partner institutions – support the professional development of outgoing staff and update and internationalise education and training. Over the years, the number of outgoing staff has grown slightly, but what is more important is that their profile has widened: while mobility periods were previously completed by a small group of people only, outgoing staff now includes representatives of all staff groups and sectors of VET.

The change has been achieved by offering opportunities for all staff to engage in international activities as widely, equally and transparently as possibly. The guiding role of managers is important. An operating plan for internationalisation is drawn up by unit and objectives are determined for it. Internationalisation is also discussed in development discussions. The aim is that every year, one quarter of outgoing staff members complete a mobility period for the first time..

the importance of the empowering effect of international experiences for students.

The intention is that international activities are carried out in multidisciplinary cooperation at many levels within vocational institutions. Today, guidance counsellors and secretaries for student affairs also participate in them. According to one teacher, if guidance counsellors complete international mobility periods, they will be better able to guide their students to go abroad. Different actors such as coordinators of international affairs and teachers participate in guidance counselling together with guidance counsellors. The teacher interviewed said that the starting point was to encounter the student as a customer.

In a project of one of the vocational institutions interviewed, the guidance counsellors of the international partner institution familiarised Finnish guidance counsellors with a pedagogical model that was used to support work carried out with young people coming from other cultures and their families. The Finnish guidance counsellors had themselves visited the country in question to familiarise themselves with local guidance counselling and this gave them the idea to plan the training in question together with their international partners.

”The student’s mother said she was happy that, although studying had been a struggle, the student had been able to go abroad, gained all those experiences and had also grown as a person.”



Luovi has noticed that all international mobility periods completed by staff benefit students

Luovi Vocational College is a nationwide vocational special education institution. It is also the largest vocational special education institution in Finland and provides preparatory training and vocational education leading to a qualification in 22 different localities. It has around 1,700 students.

A total of about 700 people work at Luovi. According to the institution’s strategy, staff are encouraged to develop their competences by completing international mobility periods, and between 60 and 70 people do so every year. The mobility periods are expert exchanges, professional development placements, development related to project activities, and conferences, seminars or fairs. Especially teaching and guidance staff also accompany students on international mobility periods.

Luovi has noticed that all international mobility periods of staff benefit the student either indirectly or directly, depending on the staff member’s position in the vocational institution. During expert exchanges and professional development periods, staff familiarise themselves with the operation of the partner organisation, learn about good practices and methods, prepare students’ mobility periods or create entirely new partnerships. When the tasks offered by a foreign organisation, its operating practices and the people working in the organisation are familiar, it is also easier to inspire, choose and coach for international mobility periods students who need special support.

The experiences of support persons have also been valuable in the development of student mobility practices. The skills, methods and materials gained by teaching and guidance staff on their mobility periods are visible in their own institution’s everyday life and also benefit those students who do not go abroad.



The VET reform strengthens the importance of guidance provided to students

Work-based learning has been an integral part of VET in Finland. The VET reform strengthens the role of work-based learning even more. The interviews were conducted when the institutions were preparing for the reform. All interviewees believed that the reform would have a positive influence on the internationalisation of the institutions and would not threaten staff's international mobility periods. They were certain that increasing staff's international competence would be important in connection with the reform.

The interviewees were of the view that international mobility periods would become an increasingly natural and worthwhile part of the studies as the reform emphasised work-based learning, personal study paths and a competence-based approach. The basic idea in the reform is that training at workplaces and personal study paths speed up graduation because the student only studies what he or she is not capable of doing yet. Prior learning is identified and also recognised. The ways in which the student will acquire the missing competences are recorded in the student's personal competence development plan.

The institutions believe that acquiring and demonstrating international competence will become more flexible in the future. Personal development plans also make visible the opportunities to learn abroad and the competences acquired abroad. As work-based learning may increase, the duration of international mobility periods may also become longer because there is a desire to gain knowledge and skills abroad, in particular. Extending the length of international mobility periods is also an objective in the development of VET at the level of the EU.

Vocational institutions also consider it likely that they will invest more resources in international mobility periods and expect collaboration with working life to strengthen. The increase in the EU funds available to internationalisation will support this. The globalisation development and, as a result, the needs of the changing working life are naturally also affecting in the background. Competence that cannot be acquired in Finland and that will benefit Finnish labour markets can be acquired abroad. International mobility periods also provide more alternatives for learning that takes place at workplaces.

The interviewees were concerned about how lessening contact teaching hours would affect students' capabilities: for example, students should be able to prepare themselves for international mobility periods by gaining sufficient language skills. Attention has been paid to this, however, as common units strengthening the basic skills required in working life are part of all vocational upper secondary qualifications and, as necessary, also part of the studies of those completing further and specialist vocational qualifications.



QUALITY AND COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION

What kind of concrete benefits have international activities provided? What kind of effects have international activities had on the education provided in the vocational institutions that participated in the study?

In the interviewees' opinion, the most important effect of international activities and internationalisation is raising the profile of the institution – the institutions are marketing themselves as international operators that keep their finger on the pulse. Internationalisation is seen as a competitive factor in student recruitment as international mobility periods strengthen students' working life skills and are also a pathway to employment abroad. It is easier for the vocational institution to attract new students as all development projects, both national and international, renew the institution. The interviewees see their institutions as pioneers that have a wider overall understanding. Furthermore, international contacts are required in surveying the competence needs of the future.

"Education exports forced us to rethink many things. They provided insights and good practices related to online pedagogy. These have been introduced in contact teaching, as well."

New operating models to improve teaching

Internationally active teachers bring new operating practices and models to their institution. Through them, the institution learns how VET is implemented else-

where. For example, some of the vocational institutions interviewed had introduced team teaching models developed by their foreign partner, in which a teacher of vocational subjects and a teacher of languages worked in close cooperation and taught lessons together. This way, new operating practices were adopted in teaching.

Local curricula and teaching content in different sectors of VET have been modified in international cooperation. For example, as a result of project activities, study units taught in English have remained a permanent part of the institutions' operation. One vocational institution had imported a curriculum for sustainable development. According to the interviewees, international activities have also provided new ideas for the institutions' strategy work. For example, a few of the institutions had found a model for drawing up their internationalisation strategy from abroad. International and national development are thus used simultaneously and complement each another.

International influences are not adopted only through project activities. One of the interviewed vocational institutions has carried out pedagogical reforms as a result of education exports. Among other things, the institution has developed online instruction and opportunities for digital learning as a result of new ITC competences acquired abroad. Mobile devices have become a more integral part of teaching.

One of the vocational institutions has started to organise, what they called, interactive lessons and group bonding exercises. Another institution has brought teaching material and new ideas related to multiculturality from abroad to be used in teaching entrepreneurship. The role of nonformal learning is also better understood now thanks to influences from abroad. Competence tests for immigrant students are another example of practices resulting from international cooperation.



Sataedu provides coaching to outgoing students through the Tiimiakatemia method

Satakunta Educational Federation Sataedu provides vocational upper secondary education and training, vocational further education and training, and continuing education. A total of about 3,000 students study at the institution's nine locations.

Outgoing students from Sataedu participate in a training camp, the theoretical framework of which is the Tiimiakatemia method ('Team academy'). The purpose of the camp is to get students from different sectors familiar with one another and form groups consisting of students travelling to the same destination country in advance.

During the camp, students have familiarised themselves with the culture of the destination country and drawn up a presentation that they give in English to the other outgoing students. In addition, the teams have drawn up CVs in English, discussed the documents needed for the exchange and learned safety practices. The formation of groups is also enhanced through free time activities on the camp, such as preparing the evening snack together and heating the sauna. Students who have completed an international mobility period earlier have also joined the camp to talk about their experiences.



Lean thinking brought from a visit to the Netherlands

Lean thinking is a management philosophy that focuses on removing unproductive activities. It is used to improve customer satisfaction and quality, to diminish the costs of the operation and to shorten turnaround times in production. In Lean thinking, services are produced fast and flexibly, correctly at first attempt and at every attempt, at the right time, in the right place and according to the customer's needs. In practice, unproductive activities and activities that slow down graduation are removed.

Vamia, the vocational college of Vaasa, got the idea for Lean thinking from its Dutch partner. Vamia is now engaged in a project funded by the ESF, in which Vaasa Adult Education Centre coordinating the project and YA! Vocational College of Ostrobothnia also participate. The project improves the suitability and quality of education and training and enhances operating models through LEAN expertise and methods. During the project, project tools for teaching in the sectors of tourism and catering, media, metalwork and construction are developed in cooperation between various sectors.

The Lean method is well suited to the world of vocational institutions. The student acquires precisely the knowledge he or she needs and graduates fast. The thinking model is also well suited to the spirit of the VET reform.

New content and motivation for own work

Especially teachers said that international activities were a challenging and time-consuming factor, but also one that motivated them and enriched their area of responsibility. Many teachers with a long career behind them had indeed found new energy and motivation through taking on international activities. Their job description had gained a new perspective and diversity, which improved coping at work.

International activities also gave confidence and they motivated staff to take part in language studies. This in turn contributed to the provision of study units in foreign languages in the vocational institution. In addition, one teacher experienced a sense of security in her teaching work when she realised that students were the same whichever country they were from.

People do not go abroad only to learn something new. Through international activities, pride in one's own advanced teaching methods increases when people realise that the level of vocational education and training in Finland is high. In Finland, the support targeted at students is also of high quality: for example, we take care of school dropouts better than many other countries. It was even observed by some, that e.g. in Central Europe where the system has largely been based on apprenticeships only, students are often left with nothing if the company suddenly cancels the apprenticeship agreement.



COOPERATION WITH WORKING LIFE AND NETWORKS

How have the international activities of vocational institutions been visible in their area of operation and in their work with stakeholders? In the interviews, especially the managements of the institutions highlighted cooperation with local working life when they were asked about the effects of internationalisation. The institutions found that their profile had improved in the eyes of the employers in the region because needs such as SME's needs for internationalisation had been considered better in the education and training content. Companies operating in the export sector need staff that know languages and have international experience. Students' international mobility periods improved these skills.

Cooperation with working life was also strengthened by education exports which were well underway in some vocational institutions. Local companies had been involved in education exports and the Finnish model of close cooperation between vocational institutions and companies had been disseminated abroad. Companies' participation in international projects and mobility had intensified cooperation with working life. International activities improved contacts with working life also at a national level – the companies in the region have provided helped in finding work-based learning places for students abroad.

How do incoming international trainees find employment in companies in the region? According to the interviews, they have found employment successfully as international competence is valued. It may be difficult to find work-based learning places for foreign students in certain sectors, such as business and administration, but otherwise it has been relatively easy. In some regions,







it had been more difficult to find workplaces for work-based learning for students with a migrant background than for foreign students.

Collaboration networks also between vocational institutions

Based on the interviews, it seems that international activities do not only intensify collaboration between vocational institutions and companies, but also create valuable collaboration networks between VET providers.

> ***"There are sectors in which launching international cooperation is not easy. I have been able to use my own networks to help them to establish cooperation relationships. My networks have paved the way for others."***

Alongside collaboration projects, different pilot projects may also arise in cooperation with international or national partner institutions. Transparency in the operating methods has increased; institutions do not keep new information only to themselves. Cooperation between vocational institutions promotes pedagogical development and reduces competition between institutions. Many teachers said that their own professional networks had contributed to the launching of international cooperation in that sector of VET. The principal of one institution describes how personal networks made him take a favourable stand to staff's international trips – the importance of international experiences became more concrete.

The interviewees found it valuable that they did not need to experience everything themselves, but useful information spread through the networks. As cooperation between vocational institutions strengthened, foreign students could be sent to partner institutions or the other institutions gave tips for available work-based learning places. International networks increased knowledge of different countries and cultures, which made it easier to send one's own students to these countries.

International and national networks also improved the operational quality of the vocational institution and the institution could profile itself as a good cooperation partner. International activities of individual vocational institutions raise the profile of the entire field of VET. Especially the interviewed principals were of the view that international activities made the institutions trusted and valued operators at the level of the county. In addition to the vocational institutions, third-sector actors were often also involved in the projects. Furthermore, cooperation networks helped to engage small municipalities in project activities.

In the light of the statistics gathered by the Finnish National Agency for Education, a typical feature in international activities has been that the same institutions are active from one year to another. International activities indeed require time and resources, which are not available to the same extent in all institutions. By networking with one another, vocational institutions can share their experiences so that the benefits of internationalisation spread widely in the education sector. Although the majority of projects are implemented with European partners, the networking of vocational institutions is also increasingly expanding outside Europe. This is also visible in the statistics on international mobility.



Kouvola Region Vocational College supports internationalisation of companies in the region

Kouvola Region Vocational College (KSAO) is a multidisciplinary vocational institution operating in five locations. The institution has about 200 employees and slightly over 3,000 students.

Through international cooperation, KSAO has become part of competence area-specific cooperation networks in which shared competence entities are developed and new shared learning environments are planned. Networks have enhanced the organisation of students' international mobility periods and improved their quality. The institutions in the network have a shared understanding of the competence acquired during the international mobility period and its level, so it has been possible to define the objectives of the mobility periods in more detail.

KSAO's international activities have influenced cooperation with the stakeholders in its operating area. For example, the institution has organised for its local working life partners familiarisation trips to foreign partner institutions and companies that offer work-based learning places to Finnish students. Representatives of foreign companies have reciprocated with a visit to Finnish companies and as a consequence, the companies have formed their own cooperation network. This way KSAO has helped the companies in the region in their internationalisation.

We know that international activities of VET staff benefit vocational institutions in many ways: networks and competences are created and they provide new influences and operating practices. Internationalisation also increases internationalisation as teachers' experiences inspire the students to try their wings abroad, as well.

This publication looks at the internationalisation of staff from three topical points of view. First, an overview of statistics is provided: how actively do VET staff complete mobility periods, what kind of developments have there been over the past few years, and how is mobility distributed by region. Next, the benefits of Eramus+ mobility periods to VET staff are discussed on the basis of the material from the Finnish survey about the concrete impacts of international activities on students, learning and teaching, and the institutions' cooperation with working life.

Faktaa – Facts and Figures is a series of publications presenting the findings of studies, reports and statistics produced by the Finnish National Agency for Education in a compact form. The publications are available both in print and as PDF documents.

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