



SemLang Summer University

Problems and solutions for the mobility of language teachers  
in the EU

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## 1. Introduction

Before I start, please allow me to thank you for this invitation to the SemLang summer University. It is an honour for me to be able to discuss with you the findings of a report that we prepared for the European Commission in 2006, the main findings of which are, I am sure, perfectly valid today.

One of the key ideas behind the process of European integration is that Europe will be more competitive to the extent that its labour force is more mobile. As early as 1968 the European Council began to regulate the freedom of movement for workers within the Community, in order to break down barriers to mobility.

Yet as integration proceeded, very little actual mobility took place, beyond a boom in tourism once air transport was liberalised and low cost flying became an everyday affair for many Europeans.

Since we are talking in this presentation about teachers, it might be thought that teacher mobility, in general, is a long-standing objective of the Union. That is not the case. Not until 14 years after the Treaty of Rome was signed did the ministers of Education of the member states first meet. At that time the Treaty did not envisage action in the field of education (which was to be incorporated into the Maastricht treaty in 1992). Nevertheless, that 1971 meeting began to set the ball rolling for developments in this field. The Janne Report (1973), drafted by a 34-member group of experts and coordinated by a former Belgian minister of Education, said that there was a need to *reinforce foreign language proficiency* (Siedersleben & Dahl 2003). The following year (1974) the ministers of Education adopted a Resolution on cooperation in the field of education. Among the "priority spheres of action" that cooperation was to relate mainly to the "encouragement of the freedom of movement and mobility of teachers, students and research workers, in particular by the removal of administrative and social obstacles to the free movement of such persons and by the improved teaching of foreign languages". In their view (or within their spheres of responsibility) freedom of movement was thus to involve a two-pronged approach: the removal of administrative and social obstacles to the free movement of teachers and others; and the improved teaching of foreign languages. As yet, though, no one seemed to be thinking of the mobility of foreign language teachers!

Let us return to labour force mobility in general. A special Eurobarometer survey (European Opinion Research Group 2001<sup>1</sup>) looked into this issue in more detail and found that just 4.4% of EU citizens<sup>2</sup> had moved house at least once to another EU country. This figure was slightly higher than average in France

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_148\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_148_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Which at that time had 15 members.

(5.6%) but only significantly so in several of the smaller countries: Luxembourg (20%), Ireland (13%), and Austria (13%), all of which share a feature: the relevant dominant language is spoken in another EU country.

Q. 37.d. "... And have you moved house at least once to another country, but one within the European Union?"

Data in percentages.

País	Yes	No	No sap
B	6.4	86.4	7.2
DK	5.2	93.3	1.5
DE	3.4	89.7	6.8
GR	2.4	97.6	0.0
E	2.8	95.7	1.5
F	5.6	91.7	2.7
IRL	13.4	80.4	6.3
I	2.1	97.9	0.0
Luxembourg	20.4	73.4	6.2
NL	6.6	91.3	2.1
A	13.0	86.6	0.4
P	4.2	95.6	0.2
FIN	5.8	85.5	8.7
S	4.6	94.8	0.6
UK	4.2	91.1	4.6
EU 15	4.4	91.9	3.7

Copied from European Opinion

Research Group 2001, Table 37.d

(p.108)

Even worse: Europeans did not seem very enthusiastic about the prospect:

Q. 47: *Dans quelle mesure seriez-vous disposé(e) à vivre dans un autre pays de l'Union européenne où la langue est différente de votre langue maternelle ?*

Country	"Very willing" / "Tout à fait disposé"
Luxembourg	18.4%
Belgium	14.9%
<b>France</b>	<b>14.1%</b>
Denmark	12.0%

United Kingdom	11·9%
Sweden	11·7%
Finland	10·8%
Ireland	9·6%
Netherlands	9·3%
Austria	9·2%
<b>EU-15</b>	<b>8·7%</b>
Greece	7·5%
Germany	6·3%
Portugal	5·6%
Italy	5·4%
Spain	3·9%

A High Level Task Force was set up to prepare a report, with recommendations, on skills and mobility, and devoted a whole section to the issue of labor mobility. The recommendations in its final Report (2001) make good reading:

### **1. Expanding occupational mobility and skills development**

*1.a Ensure that education systems become more responsive to the labour market and to an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society*

*1.b Introduce and consolidate effective lifelong learning strategies for workers*

*1.c Lower the barriers between formal and non-formal learning and introduce Europe-wide validation of qualifications*

*1.d Redouble efforts in less-advanced Member States and regions*

### **2 Facilitating geographic mobility**

*2.a Remove remaining administrative and legal barriers*

*2.b Develop language skills*

*2.c Promote cooperation between education systems and recognition of qualifications*

*2.d Develop an EU-wide immigration policy*

### **3 Enhancing Information and Transparency of job opportunities**

Note that one element singled out for **facilitating geographic mobility** (item 2.b) is to **develop language skills**, that is, the lack of these skills is seen as an obstacle holding up greater levels of mobility from one state to another.

However, the High Level Task Force was still not thinking of the mobility of foreign language teachers! Before moving into the issue, let us point out that it is taken for granted that mobility is a good thing for foreign language teachers. However, I for one have been unable to track down even a single controlled

experiment to compare the outcome in professional skills of investment in aiding the geographical mobility of teacher trainees or serving teachers, with teachers trained in their own country with the best pedagogical equipment and techniques.

The closest approximation to such a study is offered by an important report that I am sure you are all familiar with: **European Profile for Language Teacher Education: A Frame of Reference**, by Prof. Michael Kelly et al. They regard teacher's training as needing to incorporate at least four relevant elements:

- a) Experience of an intercultural and multicultural environment
- b) Participation in links with partners abroad, including visits, exchanges or ICT links
- c) A period of work or study in a country or countries where the trainee's foreign language is spoken as native
- d) The opportunity to observe or participate in teaching in more than one country

Their conclusion is clear:

"Whether the extended stay abroad is carried out before or during teacher education, the **benefits to** the trainee, both **personally and professionally**, are very real. Besides the obvious improvement in language ability, trainees are given insight into the **culture and every day life of another country**.

"Meeting people and participating in events and activities are also beneficial to trainees and increases their **communication skills and cultural awareness**. **These experiences will be passed on to** the learners, making the language more tangible and relevant." (Kelly et al: p. 12)

As early as 1976 the Council (and the Commission) stated their belief that it is "good" for foreign language teachers, and trainees, pass a period of time in the country where the language they (will) teach is spoken.

<i>Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education</i>	<i>Resolution du Conseil et des Ministres de l'Education, réunis au sein du Conseil du 9 février 1976 comportant un programme d'action en matière d'éducation</i>
17. In order to enable the greatest possible number of students to learn the languages of the Community, the attainment of the following objectives shall be encouraged :  [...]	17. Afin de permettre au plus grand nombre possible d'élèves d'apprendre les langues de la Communauté, la poursuite des objectifs suivants sera encouragée :  [...]
- the principle that before qualifying as a foreign-language teacher a student should have spent a period in a	- le principe que tout futur professeur de langue accomplisse un séjour dans un pays ou une région parlant

country or region where the language he is to teach is spoken ...	la langue qu'il enseignera ...
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In its meeting on November 29 2001, the European Council adopted a Resolution, on “Linguistic diversity and language learning in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages” which included the following invitation to the Member States “within the framework, limits and priorities of their respective political, legal, budgetary, educational and training systems:

<i>Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages 2001</i>	<i>Résolution du Conseil du 14 février 2002 sur la promotion de la diversité linguistique et de l'apprentissage des langues dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre des objectifs de l'année européenne des langues 2001</i>
... (6) to encourage future language teachers to take advantage of relevant European programmes to carry out part of their studies in a country or region of a country where the language which they will teach later is the official language;	... (6) à encourager les futurs professeurs de langue à profiter des programmes européens pertinents pour faire une partie de leurs études dans un pays ou une région d'un pays où la langue qu'ils vont enseigner plus tard est la langue officielle;

So the Council is convinced of the advantages of experience abroad, which explains why, in the DG Education & Culture's ***Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006***, one of the studies envisaged was to be specifically on the ***Obstacles (real and/or perceived) for the mobility of teachers of foreign languages.***<sup>3</sup>

The team I represent today won the tender for the study, and I shall devote most of the rest of the time allocated to describing some of the results of the study, hopefully those you will find most relevant to the topic of this summer school. First though, while we are on the subject, allow to jump ahead and to give the opinion of the 6250 foreign language teachers from across Europe who participated in our on-line survey, on the subject of the value of mobility for their profession. We asked them the following: “Do you believe that all foreign language teachers should work for an academic year in a country where this language is spoken?”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Other studies commissioned included the following:

*The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners*

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/young\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/young_en.pdf)

*The effects on the European Union economy of shortages of foreign language skills in enterprise*

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/doc423\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/doc423_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> v.24 (52)

Over two-thirds replied that it is either “essential” or “highly desirable”.

Answers to item “Do you believe that all foreign language teachers should work for an academic year in a country where this language is spoken?”

It is essential	1790	28,6%
It is highly desirable	2483	39,7%
It is desirable	1566	25,1%
It is not necessary	339	5,4%
No reply	72	1,2%
	<b>6250</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

We might imagine that those who have had direct, first-hand experience of working abroad will have a special opinion about this. But there are no significant differences:

Answers to item “Do you believe that all foreign language teachers should work for an academic year in a country where this language is spoken?” by answers to item “Did your studies to become a language teacher include an obligatory period in a foreign country?”<sup>5</sup>

	Studies did include an obligatory period		Studies did not include an obligatory period	
It is essential	282	30.3%	1508	28.4%
It is highly desirable	355	38.1%	2128	40.0%
It is desirable	228	24.5%	1338	25.2%
It is not necessary	56	6.0%	283	5.3%
No reply	11	1.2%	61	1.1%
	<b>932</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5318</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is clear (and perhaps disappointing for some) that those who did spend a compulsory period in a foreign country during their training as future teachers do not have, as a result, a different opinion from those whose training didn't include such a period abroad.

Let us return to the main thrust of the paper. We have seen that the Union regards the lack of language skills as an obstacle to mobility. Given the pressure on the school timetable, and also for pedagogical reasons, the EU began to encourage member states to increase the teaching of languages in schools, from an early age. This was stated in these terms in the Presidency Conclusions, Barcelona European Council (15 and 16 March 2002):

<sup>5</sup> v.25 (46)

<p>“The European Council calls for further action in this field [...]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age ...”</li> </ul>	<p>« Le Conseil européen demande de poursuivre l'action dans ce domaine comme suit [...]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- améliorer la maîtrise des compétences de base, notamment par l'enseignement d'au moins deux langues étrangères dès le plus jeune âge ... »</li> </ul>
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The Action Plan referred to above was aware that the rapid increase in demand for primary and secondary school teachers of foreign languages that the objective of 1+2 entails, means that in-service measures were urgently needed. Thus it was that the Commission decided it needed a report on obstacles to the mobility of foreign language teachers.

## 2. Method

Our project was aimed on collecting and collating, and contrasting, data collected from three separate sources:

The first consisted of desk research which sought to identify legislative and implementational developments, with the support where necessary of official contacts in each State (usually ministries, sometimes contacted through embassies). Several reports commissioned or published by Eurydice and /or the DG for Education and Culture were helpful sources.

The second involved focus groups of the main stakeholders associated with language teaching. These were conducted in four states selected in relation to a heuristic model involving different orientations to teacher mobility. The focus groups were to be organised in a necessarily limited number of countries. We chose two in the west and two in the south, in each case one in the north and one in the south: Riga (Latvia) and Sofia (Bulgaria); and Dublin (Eire) and Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain). In each case we endeavoured to bring together representatives of educational authorities, trades unions, professional associations, school inspectorates, organisations of private school owners, pedagogical renovation movements, etc.

The third component consisted of an on-line survey of language teachers in the 31 target states. We shall describe this in more detail below.

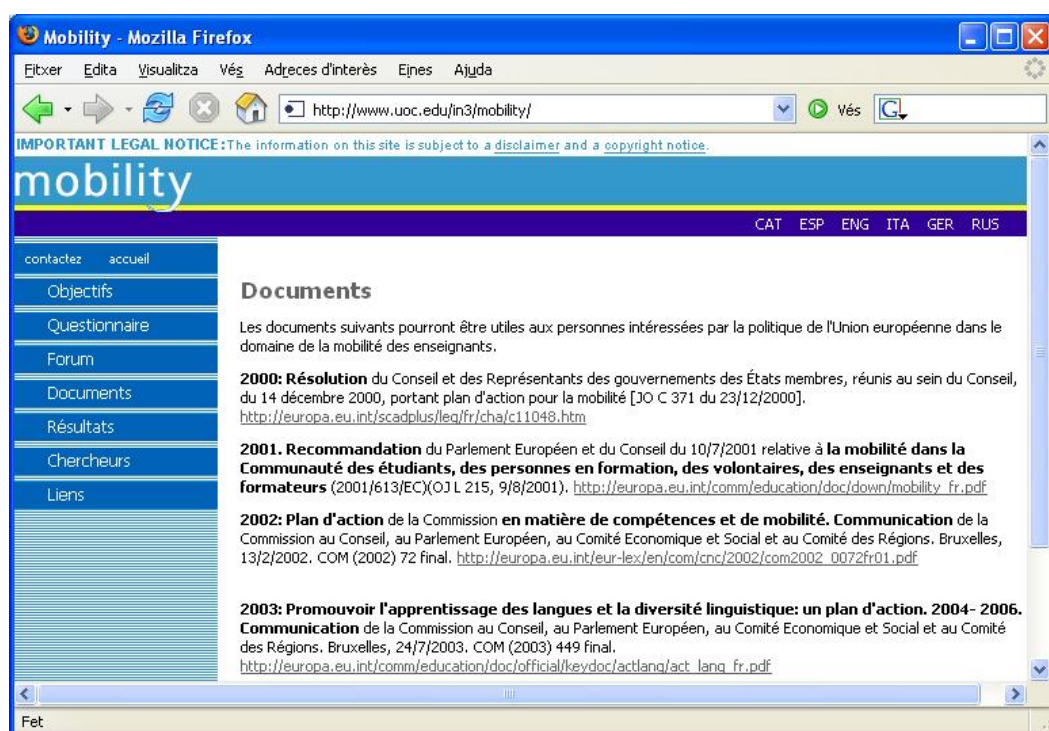
- The countries included in the study

The countries to be included in the study were defined by the Commission call for tenders: all member states, including newcomers Roumania and Bulgaria; the European Economic Area countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway); and the applicant country, Turkey. This was not to prove a problem as far as official sources were concerned, or for the teacher survey itself (except for the existence of micro-states where it was unlikely that we would be able to obtain a sufficiently large sample).

We were instructed to regard “mobility” as covering the medium-term: from one term to a couple of years. It was not therefore to be confused with short-term Comenius exchanges, or with changes in lifestyle.

- The website

The project needed its own website<sup>6</sup>, not just to inform about the on-going work, but also, and importantly, to allow teachers to access the on-line questionnaire we designed. Moreover, both website and questionnaire were in seven languages, including the main foreign languages taught across Europe (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian) as well as the team's main working language, Catalan.



- The questionnaire

The contents of the questionnaire were devised so as to seek answers to the main experimental questions: “What factors are perceived by foreign language teachers as acting as obstacles to their participation in trans-European mobility?” and “What factors explain the willingness or otherwise to take part in trans-European mobility, among foreign language teachers?”. A thorough search through the relevant literature (in which Kelly’s publications proved invaluable) allowed the team to detect the main obstacles that were foreseen.

It starts with a section on personal issues:

1. Gender
2. Age (years)

<sup>6</sup> [www.uoc.edu/in3/mobility/](http://www.uoc.edu/in3/mobility/)

3. Place of birth
4. Country where you (normally) work
5. Mother tongue
6. Marital status
7. Family circumstance
8. Number of children:
9. Age of child in your care (years)
10. Age of children in your care (years)
11. Spouse's / partner's employment:
12. Spouse's/Partner's occupation

In second place there is a section on professional information:

13. Employment status:
14. Status of the establishment:
15. Type of educational institution where you are currently employed:
16. Education level that qualifies you to teach a foreign language
17. Education level attained in other University studies completed (more than one response is allowed)
18. Year in which you began working as a teacher
19. Language you currently teach
20. Other languages which you are qualified to teach as a foreign language
21. Do you hold a qualification to teach a subject, e. g. maths, other than a foreign language?
22. Which subject(s) are you qualified to teach?
23. Are your academic qualifications valid to teach languages throughout Europe?
24. Did your studies to become a language teacher include an obligatory period in a foreign country?
25. How long was this obligatory period?
26. During your studies to be a teacher, how long did you spend in total in a country where the foreign language is spoken?

27. During your teaching career, have you taught for at least a term in another European country?

And thirdly, there is a long section on the teachers' opinions:

28. Do you believe that all foreign language teachers should work for an academic year in a country where this language is spoken?

29. What are the main attractions that (would) lead teachers to work abroad?

- It would improve their promotion prospects in their own country
- It would improve their knowledge of the language that they teach
- They would learn about the culture associated with the language
- They would learn about the education system and teaching practices of that country
- It would give their family a chance to learn the language
- They would have a break from their routine

30. What are the main obstacles that (would) lead teachers not to work abroad?

- Their absence would cause problems for the school.
- The financial costs would be too great.
- Their social security and pension rights would suffer.
- They have no/little job security at home.
- It would not enhance their career prospects.
- The education/work situation would be too different
- It would interfere with family responsibilities.
- Their spouse's/partner's employment would make it difficult.

31. Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?

32. If you could choose, which European country would you teach in?

33. Suppose that you were given the chance to teach for an academic year in a school in a European country. Which of the following options would you prefer? Choose one.

34. What is the ideal period you could seriously contemplate working in another European country?

35. For each of the following indicate if the item would be Highly / Somewhat / Not really or Not at all applicable:
- a. Working conditions at home (Loss of salary and pension or social security benefits; non-recognition of professional experience abroad; lack of support of superiors; loss of present post or of work status; difficulty of finding replacement; worsened relationship with colleagues)
  - b. Conditions in the host country (problems obtaining information about legal and social security requirements and/or recognition of professional status; problems with social security rights, medical costs, and/or insurance cover; adapting to education system and teaching practices; finding place to live and/or a school for children)
  - c. Personal and domestic circumstances (partner could not give up current job; interference with relationship with (i) my family, and/or spouse/partner; what to do with current home)
  - d. Financial issues (having to pay out of pocket part of the costs attached to moving abroad)
  - e. Mobility services (vague and opaque selection procedure; inflexible administrative services; no specialized services for foreign teachers in the host country)

Interviewees were offered the opportunity of adding a final comment on these or other obstacles (max. 80 words).

They were also asked for their email address, if they were willing to take part in a second phase of the study.

As well as questions asking for answers to a series of items, some of the items offered multiple replies. As a result, the data base has 148 variables to process.

The questionnaire was designed using a multilingual product, NetQuest<sup>7</sup>, licensed to the coordinating university (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya). Designing a questionnaire which is to be available in seven versions, but has to be understood in the context of over thirty European countries, proved to be a daunting task:

- Phrasing the questions so as to render the replies comparable
- Working with seven languages
- Coping with 31 different education systems
- Varying criteria for filling jobs, recognising diplomas...
- Varying ages of primary- secondary transition
- Divergent terminology ....

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.netquest.es>

- Member state correspondents

A network of member state correspondents was needed both to assist us in official contacts and also to ensure participation by foreign language teachers in each country's schools. They were to access, wherever possible, discussion lists and circulars. A measure of their success is that even today, over three years later, Google detects more than 310 websites which refer to the acronym of the study: DROFoLTA.

In the event, it proved impossible to cover all countries, and despite many attempts France, Denmark and Greece did not have a correspondent. In spite of this, in Denmark we managed to mobilize a very high number of teachers.

The work of these Member state correspondents was formalised through a contract, with remuneration on a sliding scale broadly in line with the population of each country.

- Focus groups

We focussed on seven themes which were of relevance and which were presented as topics which would guide the ensuing discussion. Each focus group had up to twelve participants and lasted up to two hours. With the consent of the participants the oral proceedings of each of the four meetings were taped, transcribed and analysed independently of one another.

### 3. Results

The report, available on the internet, gives a full coverage of our findings. What I shall concentrate on here primarily are the results of our on-line survey. The on-line survey was open from December 2005 to March 2006, and we obtained full answers from 6250 foreign language teachers from across Europe, distributed as follows:

Austria	412	Liechtenstein	34
Belgium	179	Lithuania	78
Bulgaria	150	Luxembourg	4
Cyprus	9	Malta	45
Czech Republic	189	Netherlands	98
Denmark	672	Norway	80
Estonia	52	Poland	325
Finland	182	Portugal	126
France	158	Romania	195
Germany	198	Slovakia	41
Greece	37	Slovenia	122

Hungary	312	Spain	323
Iceland	53	Sweden	101
Ireland	20	Turkey	312
Italy	1457	United Kingdom	180
Latvia	70	<i>Other countries</i>	37

It is clear that the rate of response varies by country, and that the variation cannot be explained by the size of the country. Teachers in Italy, Denmark and Austria provided by far the highest rate of responses in numerical terms, followed by Poland, Spain, Hungary and Turkey. Given that it proved impossible for us to ascertain the number of full-time foreign language teachers in each country, we were unable to weigh each subsample so as to build a representative sample. We were careful, nevertheless, to check that the largest subsamples did not unduly bias the results to individual items.

#### Language(s) taught

Other studies have looked into this issue specifically (Strubell et al 2007; see also various Eurydice publications and the Eurostat database). As explained elsewhere (Strubell 2009) 70% of those taking part in our survey taught English, followed by 18% who taught German, 17% who taught French, 7% who taught Spanish, 3% Italian and 2% Russian. It is evident by adding these percentages<sup>8</sup> that some teachers in the sample taught two or more languages at the time of the survey: the overall average was 1.27 languages per interviewee. In some countries their average was only slightly over: France (1.03), Malta (1.04), Turkey (1.05), Poland and Bulgaria (1.06), and Lithuania (1.08). At the other end the small samples in Ireland and Liechtenstein averaged 1.75 and 1.65 respectively; in Sweden it was 1.71; and in the UK, 1.65. This finding needs to be duplicated and ratified in other studies, for it is of great importance and can help break the stereotyped image of the teacher of a single foreign language. It is unquestionable that the extra investment (in terms of time and expense) required to extend the teaching capacity of an existing foreign language teacher to a new foreign language is much smaller than the cost of providing complete initial training for a future foreign language teacher. Our impression moreover is that in a number of countries where demand for English has exploded in a short space of time (former Soviet bloc countries; but also Spain, for instance), the demand has largely been covered by teachers of other languages the demand for which has declined. Fortunately, in most countries the increase of English has not been at the expense of the teaching (and learning) of other foreign languages.

We make no claim that the proportion of teachers of each language in our survey can be extrapolated to the universe of foreign language teachers in Europe. Our system to encourage teachers to take part in the survey included individual associations of teachers of specific foreign languages, and their different effectiveness in dissemination and encouragement may well have introduced biases in some countries.

#### Type of educational establishment

<sup>8</sup> And many taught other languages in smaller numbers, including the national language as a second language (to immigrant pupils, for instance).

It could be foreseen that the willingness to take part in mobility would not be the same in a primary or a secondary school, for instance.

Answers to “v.64 - Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?” by answers to “32.Type of educational institution where you are currently employed”

	willing		not willing
Preschool	11	84.6%	2
Primary school	862	67.4%	416
Secondary school	2286	70.2%	970
Vocational college	206	71.3%	83
Adult education college	303	77.3%	89
Language school	295	85.3%	51
Others	503	74.9%	169

$\chi^2 = 56.4$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = 0.000$

The hypothesis is confirmed. Willingness varying according to the type of educational establishment, though it may be noted that there are no differences between the three types of establishment the study was designed for: Primary school, Secondary school and Vocational college.

The main results can be summarised as follows:

1. Willingness to take part in mobility was very high (just over 70% said they were willing to take part in mobility “next year”), and there were no gender differences; the latter emerged in the assessment of the applicability of various obstacles to the personal circumstances of each respondent.<sup>9</sup>

We can look and see whether previous experience abroad leads to a greater or smaller willingness to take part in mobility.

Answers to “v.64 - Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?” by answers to “v.25 - Did your studies to become a language teacher include an obligatory period in a foreign country?”

	% that said they were	% that said they

<sup>9</sup> The question was put in a very direct way in the survey: “Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?” (Yes / No). Its direct nature led some of our interviewees to contact us a few months later, to complain that they still hadn’t received any offers for the mobility they had said they were keen to be involved in. We had to explain the difference between a research team and an administrative office!

	willing	were not willing
Interviewees whose studies to become a language teacher included an obligatory period abroad	664 (71.2%)	268 (28.8%)
Interviewees whose studies to become a language teacher did not include an obligatory period abroad	3806 (71.6%)	1512 (28.4%)

$\chi^2 = 0.04$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.5$

It is clear that an obligatory period abroad during initial training has no bearing upon the willingness of teachers to take part in mobility.

We can next look at the respondents' replies to experience in teaching abroad.

Answers to "v.64 - Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?" by answers to "v.70 - During your teaching career, have you taught for at least a term in another European country?"

	% that said they were willing	% that said they were not willing
Interviewees who have taught for at least a term in another European country	569 (78.3%)	158 (21.7%)
Interviewees who have not taught for at least a term in another European country	3901 (70.6%)	1622 (29.4%)

$\chi^2 = 18.39$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.001$

In this case there is a clear and significant difference. Interviewees who have taught for at least a term in another European country are significantly more willing to take part in (for them, further) mobility.

2. Sex was a crucial variable in assessing the relative importance of each obstacle. Five out of six respondents were women, and personal obstacles in their case were often highlighted as more important than other kinds of obstacle.

3. Obstacles were least and motivation highest among the younger school teachers who were not encumbered by family responsibilities.

Answers to "v.64 - Having considered the advantages of teaching abroad and the obstacles you would have to overcome in order to accept such a position during the next academic year, would you accept the offer?" by Age (years)

	Willing	Not willing
Under 30	752 81.0%	176
30-39	1275 72.3%	489
40-49	1351 67.8%	643
50-59	986 69.8%	427
60 or more	105 71.9%	41

$\chi^2 = 57.8$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $P = 0.000$

It is clear that the younger group, aged under 30, are more willing to take part in mobility abroad.

4. Willingness of foreign language teachers to accept a position during the next academic year in another EU country was clearly higher in new (or candidate) countries (see Strubell 2009) where there were also differences in the importance attached to the obstacles:

	% that said they were willing	N
Poland	87.1%	325
Turkey	86.5%	312
Hungary	84.9%	312
Italy	73.6%	1457
Spain	69.0%	323
Denmark	60.9%	672
Austria	41.0%	412

$\chi^2 = 322$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $P = 0.000$

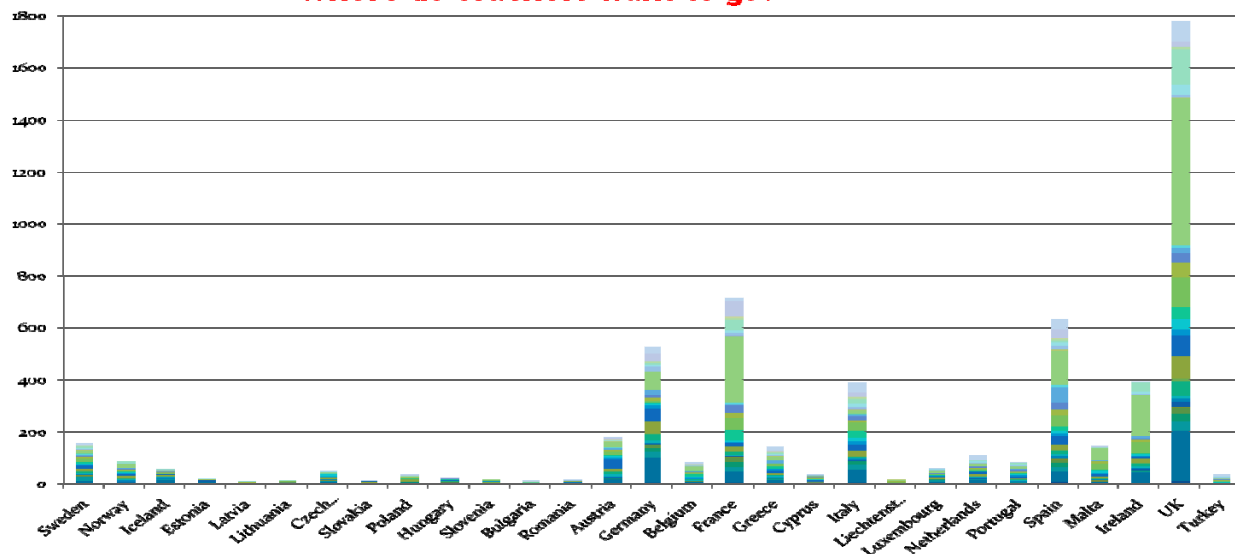
5. There was widespread agreement in (a) the concern that mobility could interfere with domestic responsibilities, and (b) the perception that teachers engaging in transnational mobility will end up having to invest in net terms.

Let us look in turn at some of the main obstacles detected.

#### **a. Few opportunities for foreign language teacher mobility**

We detected a serious structural problem, when it came to looking at what countries were chosen by our sample:

## Where do teachers want to go?



Far and away the most popular country was the United Kingdom. This is not surprising, given that 70% of our sample taught English (often alongside another foreign language). Coupled with other English-speaking countries (or at least with a strong English-language tradition), Ireland, Malta, and Cyprus, over 2300 of our sample (over 35% of the total) aimed at countries whose total population is probably less than 15% of that of all the countries studied. Overbooking, or at least over-demand, is very clear in this case, and is especially serious given that the United Kingdom and Ireland are the two European countries where foreign languages are least in demand.

This structural problem is not serious in the case of languages where the other main foreign languages are spoken natively: Germany + Austria, Italy, France (+ Wallonia) and Spain. Russian is the odd man out, because the main country in which it is spoken natively was not included in the study.

A further problem arises from the fact that the native language of most foreign language teachers is not one of these six. The native German who is qualified as a teacher of French (say) will be expected to teach German in France; but what about the native Czech, or Portuguese, or Latvian, or Pole, who is likewise qualified as a teacher of French: it is unlikely that there will be any substantial demand for these languages, so what language would they be expected to teach in France?

Secondly, we found that there were few bilateral and multilateral teacher exchange agreements, covering an extremely limited number of teacher placements. Moreover, in some countries there were doubts about the objectivity of the selection procedures, or even about the appropriateness of the criteria applied (for instance, surely a greater return can be expected by choosing young, well-qualified teachers than highly experienced teachers close to retirement). The schemes we tracked down involved the United Kingdom ("Teacher

Exchange Europe”), Germany (“Bilateraler Lehreraustausch”), Spain (Programa de Intercambios “Puesto por Puesto”), and France (« Échanges poste pour poste », including exchanges with Austria and Ireland).<sup>10</sup>

Thirdly, many teachers commented that the nostrification procedures for recognising the validity of foreign language teachers’ qualifications were still complicated and lengthy, despite EU directives simplifying them.

#### **b. Lack of information on opportunities for mobility of foreign language teachers**

A generalised complaint was the lack of information about opportunities for working abroad. In our report we pointed out that the European EURES portal<sup>11</sup> was hardly used at all by schools or educational authorities to advertise their posts (what few jobs for foreign language teachers that were advertised were outside the brief of our study: mainly private language schools, or enterprises). We suggested that a specialised website, along the lines of the European Researchers’ Mobility Portal<sup>12</sup>, might be an interesting initiative.

#### **c. Relevance of personal circumstances**

Personal circumstances rated high in the questionnaire answers, as well as in the open-ended space for comments at the end of the questionnaire. In our opinion, this was due to the fact that we are dealing with a highly feminine workforce: 83% of respondents were women. Though we were not able to be certain about this, we concluded that in some countries the percentage of women foreign language teachers is higher than in the teaching profession as a whole.

Typical comments were:

- “Je ne suis pas intéressée de partir à l'étranger a cause de la famille.”
- « Mon mari n'est pas en mesure de travailler en allemand (connaissances de langue insuffisantes) et mon salaire seul ne suffirait pas à nous nourrir tous les 4! »
- „Ich habe alte Eltern (zudem ist mein Vater ein Pflegefall), die derzeit meine Unterstützung brauchen.“
- “My 15 year old son would find it difficult to go to Germany as he does not speak that language and my husband would certainly not go and live abroad, so personal difficulties are even bigger than professional ones”.
- “Estic pagant una hipoteca, tinc una filla de 27 anys que viu amb mi, tinc dos animals de companyia.”

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<sup>10</sup> During the session, it became clear from the interventions of several speakers that such exchange schemes have been dropped altogether, largely because of the lack of candidates.

<sup>11</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/eures/>

<sup>12</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm)

#### **d. Relevance of economic considerations**

Another bloc of obstacles concerned salary, taxation and pension scheme contribution differences. Though 25% were not sure to what extent they would be relevant, just over 50% of our survey interviewees that did have an opinion described economic considerations as highly relevant (“I would have to pay out of my pocket part of the costs attached to moving abroad”).

Typical comments were:

- “Es gibt keinen finanziellen Anreiz - weder im Gastland noch bei der Rückkehr sondern nur finanzielle Einbußen!,,
- “Non si parla di salario e questo è importante, poichè le scelte verrebbero molto condizionate dall'entità del salario proposto”
- “Es ist unmöglich, im ausland zu arbeiten und in beiden ländern den finanziellen verpflichtungen bezüglich unterkunft nachzukommen, besonders wenn man ein eigenheim besitzt“
- “Otro obstáculo sería el financiamiento, si es que no cuento con mi salario y no consigo alguna beca para financiar mi estancia en otro país”

#### **e. Few facilities to encourage mobility**

Finally, there was the general feeling that mobility abroad went against the system, and was not contemplated. Thus prerequisites were cited as an obstacle:

- “In Denmark, for temporary employment only, the decision about language competence is up to the school boards. There are no legal distinctions in the rules of recognition of teachers of FL and other subjects”

So too were job security and professional advancement:

- “Sono stata contattata to insegnare a XXX e dopo una prima valutazione in Italia di quanto sarei stata penalizzata come stato di servizio, penalizzazioni assicurative e pensionistiche, perdita di diritti acquisiti, ho deciso di rinunciare”
- “If I were invited to apply for a teaching job abroad, I would only accept if it could be dealt with within my current contract and would never quit my job, just to be able to teach abroad. This for social security reasons”

Specific training requirements are also described as an obstacle:

- “I believe a Danish teacher training is somewhat different to most other countries'. ... I therefore find it difficult to relate my qualifications to requirements in many other countries”

## France

Specifically in France, though the sample was small (only 158 replies) three items did stand out, compared to the overall picture:

- « Les services administratifs qui se chargent de ces mutations sont rigides » : over a third (as against 22% of the total sample) stated that this was “totally” applicable in their case.
- « Travailler à l'étranger pourrait interférer dans ma vie de famille » : over a third stated that this was “totally” applicable in their case, a much higher percentage than in the whole sample (20 %).
- « Mon conjoint/compagnon/ma compagne ne pourrait pas laisser son emploi actuel » : over half the subsample stated that this was “totally” applicable in their case. No other item received such a high percentage of such replies, though at the same time we may argue that travel in Europe is so straightforward these days that perhaps there would be no need for the partner to leave his/her job, while the teacher is working abroad for a relatively short time.

## 4. Conclusions

It seems clear that despite an extraordinary level of willingness to take part in mobility to another country, foreign language teachers do not have specific European-level policies to support them. The EU Lifelong Learning programme does offer opportunities for teacher trainees<sup>13</sup> to spend periods of 3 months to one school year as assistants, and in-service training (IST) is available for teachers who want to can attend a course or shadow a colleague to learn about language or non-language related jobs in a partner school.

It also seems evident that any policies devised will need to take into account the fact that most teachers are women, and thus to focus their offer on the periods within teacher's professional lives in which they are most likely not to have domestic commitments.

Perhaps the best example to follow is that of several countries the respondents in which said that they had had to spend a period abroad as part of their compulsory initial training. Overall this figure was only 15%, as we say above. Leaving out the smallest samples in our survey, 87% of our interviewees in Finland stated they had had to study abroad, as well as 54% of our sample in the United Kingdom; while only 5% of our Danish sample, 7% of our Italian sample, 8% of our Turkish sample, and 9% of our Austria sample stated likewise.<sup>14</sup> We believe that if the whole of Europe can move towards this goal, while bearing in mind that the English-speaking countries cannot be expected to cope with the likely demand, then the experience of working in another country's education system, while learning or perfecting a foreign language, will be achieved by future generations of foreign language teachers.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, COMENIUS assistantships, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/eu-programmes/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/eu-programmes/index_en.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Our Liechtenstein result (59%) is not surprising, given that the country offers potential teachers no higher education facilities at all (see Strubell 2009).

An important conclusion involves the perception among teachers of both bureaucratic obstacles to mobility, and also of some degree of financial sacrifice in engaging in mobility. It is true, of course, that widely differing salaries from country to country are largely compensated by similarly differing costs of living in different EU countries. Nevertheless, it might be in Europe's interest to assign to the European Commission a budget to help compensate, on an objective yet case by case basis, for the real loss in income that mobile foreign language teachers may experience.

The team was disappointed by the widespread perception that bureaucracy is a highly effective deterrent to mobility. It must be borne in mind that the process of European integration is still very young, and comes behind several centuries of state policies to build self-contained educational systems designed, in part, to produce a citizenry loyal to the State and regarding all neighbouring countries as a potential threat. The selection and training procedures to ensure that the professionals in charge of the system (the teachers) would undertake their task efficiently have changed only very slowly, and it is precisely among foreign language teachers that this tension is most acute.

In this context, in some countries it is private schools, who are in general not subject to the same constraints as state schools, that have moved forward most in the employment of foreigners for foreign language teaching.

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