

# Impact and Sustainability of the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 1 Mobility Projects for School Education Staff

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Finnish National Report

Satu Niemelä  
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# 1 Situation of Teacher Professional Development in Finland

## 1.1 Autonomy of Finnish teachers

Finnish teachers are generally highly educated, since the requirement for a permanent teaching position in basic and upper secondary education is a Master's degree. Teachers of vocational education and training also must have a higher education degree. High level of education is important for Finnish teachers, because their work is very autonomous.

Teachers in Finland are not formally inspected or personally evaluated at any level of education, but instead the quality assurance is based on self-evaluation of education providers and the external evaluations by national expert bodies. Teachers in Finland are obligated to follow the core curriculum as well as the local curriculum of the school, but they can freely choose the teaching methods they want to apply according to their own pedagogical consideration.

Learning materials and textbooks are chosen by the teachers and schools themselves, and there are no inspections of learning materials.

## 1.2 The National Core Curriculum reform

The general national objectives of basic and upper secondary education are decided by the Government, as well as the distribution of lesson hours for instruction in different subjects.

The National Core Curriculums, which serve as the basic guidelines of the Finnish education system, are drawn up by the Finnish National Board of Education. The Core Curriculum includes the objectives and essential contents of different subjects, subject groups, thematic subject modules and student counselling.

The Core Curriculums are reformed approximately every ten years. The newly reformed Core Curriculum for Basic Education and the Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education will take effect in August 2016, and because of this, in the recent years much of the in-service training of teachers and strategic development of schools has been focused on meeting the needs and requirements of the new Core Curriculums.

## 1.3 Assessment of pupils in Finland

In Finland there are no national exams in basic education. The assessment of pupils is done by the teachers, and it is based on the continuous assessment of the pupils' schoolwork and conduct as a whole, not only results and points awarded from exams and assignments. An important goal of basic education is also to develop the pupils' skills for self-assessment to support their self-knowledge and study skills.

## 1.4 Situation of Teacher Professional Development in Finland

In Finland, the teachers are required to participate in in-service training for one to five days each year. The main responsibility for the in-service training lies with the maintaining body of the educational institution, which usually is the local authority, has the primary responsibility for providing the in-service training.

Continuing teacher education is organized by different types of training centres, such as **university continuing education units, vocational teacher education colleges, university departments of teacher education, teacher training schools, summer universities** and various **private organisations**.

Finnish teachers have the freedom to choose most of their in-service training for themselves, and on the other hand they also have greater responsibility for developing their professional skills and expertise. Participation in continuing professional development activities (CPD) does not provide Finnish teachers with formal benefits, such as salary increases or promotions, but Finnish teachers nonetheless participate in CPD much more than they the minimum they are formally required.

Continuing teacher education that is important in terms of education policy and priorities is funded by the state. Most of the funding is channelled through the Finnish National Board of Education and the Regional State Administrative Agencies. In addition to the state-funded in-service training, many schools apply for funds from other sources as well, for example the ERASMUS+ programme.

## 2 Analysis and Results of Quantitative Research

### 2.1 Characteristics of the research sample

#### 2.1.1 Mobile staff

The research sample for the mobile staff consisted of 127 mobile staff members from 56 schools. A vast majority of the respondents were teachers (87,4 %), and the rest of them were either principals (6,3 %), vice principals or comparable (3,9 %), or other staff members (2,4 %). As can be seen on Table 1, the respondents had varying amounts of experience of pedagogical work, but most noticeably there were very few respondents who had less than 5 years of experience of pedagogical work. This may be at least partially due to the fact that in the beginning of their career, Finnish teachers very often have to work several years with fixed-term contracts, one school year at a time, before they get a permanent teaching position. This uncertainty and inability to plan their work more than a year at a time may prevent some of the less experienced teachers from participating in the mobility projects. Nearly a half of the respondents had 5 to 15 years of experience, a little more than a third 15 to 25 years, and about a quarter of the respondents had more than 25 years of experience.

Table 1: Professional characteristics of mobile staff (N=127)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Position	School Principal	8	6.3
	Vice Principal / Assistant Principal / Teacher Supervisor / Head Teacher	5	3.9
	Teacher	111	87.4
	Other (ex. Psychologist, Project manager, Librarian)	3	2.4
Experience of pedagogical work	Less than 5 years	5	3.9
	From 5 to 15 years	47	37.0
	From 16 to 25 years	44	34.6
	More than 25 years	31	24.4
Number of pupils in school	Less than 100	9	7.1
	From 100 to 300	22	17.3
	From 301 to 500	50	39.4
	More than 500	46	36.2
Type of school location	A village, hamlet, or rural area (fewer than 3000 people)	12	9.4
	A small town (3,000 to about 15,000 people)	17	13.4
	A town (15,000 to about 100,000 people)	55	43.3
	A city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people)	41	32.3
	A large city (with over 1,000,000 people)	2	1.6

The respondents were mostly from fairly large schools; over three quarters were from schools with more than 300 pupils. The majority of the respondents were from cities or medium-sized towns (32,3 % and 43,3 % respectively), and a little over a fifth of the respondents were from small towns or villages. A slight majority (54,3 %) of all the mobile respondents had previous experience of in-service training abroad, and for the rest it was their first time participating in a mobility project.

### 2.1.2 Non-mobile staff

Since one of the key aims of the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities is to **have an impact on the whole school** instead of only the individual staff members who take part in the mobilities, it was important to administer the survey also to the staff members who themselves did not participate in the mobility visits. The sample of the non-mobile respondents consisted of 123 staff members from 56 schools. Just as in the sample of the mobile staff, most of the respondents were teachers (89,4 %). The characteristics of the non-mobile sample follow a similar pattern as the mobile sample: most of the respondents are from medium-sized towns and cities, and from schools with over 300 pupils (see Table 2). Interestingly, teachers with less than 5 years of experience are a minority also in the non-mobile sample, although there is a considerably larger percentage of them (10,6 %) in the non-mobile sample than in the mobile sample (3,9 %).

**Table 2: Characteristics of the research sample of non-mobile staff (N= 123)**

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Position	School Principal	3	2.4
	Vice Principal / Assistant Principal / Teacher Supervisor / Head Teacher	7	5.7
	Teacher	110	89.4
	Other (ex. Psychologist, Project manager, Librarian)	3	2.4
Experience of pedagogical work	Less than 5 years	13	10.6
	From 5 to 15 years	38	30.9
	From 16 to 25 years	45	36.6
	More than 25 years	27	22.0
Number of pupils in school	Less than 100	0	0
	From 100 to 300	23	18.7
	From 301 to 500	52	42.3
	More than 500	48	39.0
Type of school location	A village, hamlet, or rural area (fewer than 3000 people)	4	3.3
	A small town (3,000 to about 15,000 people)	15	12.2
	A town (15,000 to about 100,000 people)	69	56.1
	A city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people)	34	27.6
	A large city (with over 1,000,000 people)	1	0.8

### 2.1.3 Pupils and parents

To get information on the impact of the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility projects on the whole school community, pupils and parents were also included in the survey. The sample of pupils consisted of 150 pupils of the age of 15 or more, and a majority of them (58 %) were from large schools with more than 500 pupils (see Table 3). There were, however, some respondents from small and medium-sized schools as well. All of the pupils in the sample had been in a class held by a teacher who had participated in a mobility. Most of the pupils (78,6 %) were from cities or medium-sized towns, and almost a fifth were from small towns. There were no pupil respondents from small villages, hamlets or rural areas.

**Table 3: Characteristics of the research sample of pupils (N= 150)**

Number of pupils in school	Less than 100	2	1.3
	From 100 to 300	22	14.7
	From 301 to 500	33	22.0
	More than 500	87	58.0
	Don't know	6	4.0
Type of school location	A village, hamlet, or rural area (fewer than 3000 people)	0	0
	A small town (3,000 to about 15,000 people)	28	18.7
	A town (15,000 to about 100,000 people)	56	37.3
	A city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people)	62	41.3
	A large city (with over 1,000,000 people)	4	2.7

The sample of parents included 109 parents, whose children had participated in at least one mobile teacher's class. Most parents (44 %) had their children in medium-sized schools that had from 300 to 500 pupils, and there were also many whose children attended a large school with more than 500 pupils. A clear majority of parents (63,3 %) were from medium-sized towns with 15,000 to about 100,000 people (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Characteristics of the research sample of parents (N= 109)**

Number of pupils in school	Less than 100	5	4.6
	From 100 to 300	20	18.3
	From 301 to 500	48	44.0
	More than 500	31	28.4
	Don't know	5	4.6
Type of school location	A village, hamlet, or rural area (fewer than 3000 people)	6	5.5
	A small town (3,000 to about 15,000 people)	11	10.1
	A town (15,000 to about 100,000 people)	69	63.3
	A city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people)	22	20.2
	A large city (with over 1,000,000 people)	1	0.9

## 2.2 Overall evaluation

This section presents the respondents' overall evaluation of their school's ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility project. The project is evaluated in terms of **general satisfaction** with mobility, **preparation for the visit**, **selection of mobility activities**, and **support from the National Agency**.

### 2.2.1 General satisfaction with professional development activities

As can be seen in Table 5, the mobile teachers are in general very satisfied with the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities in which they participated. **The organization and intercultural experience of the visit** met or even exceeded the expectations of nearly all of the respondents, as did the **responsiveness of the host institution**. **The content of the courses** was slightly less satisfactory, but even that one met the expectations of nearly 90 % of the respondents. In the open-ended responses some of the mobile teachers criticized the courses, saying that it is difficult to know in advance whether or not the course content is



suitable for one's needs. The need for choosing a right type of course was also emphasized in many of the comments:

*Try to find out the level of the course. The course is beneficial only if it is suitable for previous experiences. In our course there were attendants with very little experience in ICT and the course material was suitable for their use. For some teachers it was familiar already.*

*Choose the right course for yourself. Pay attention to program and aims of the course. Ask your colleagues who had attended those courses.*

*Make sure the venue of the course meets the expectations (good, reliable internet access, for example)*

*Sometimes it's difficult to find a good course.*

(Open answers by mobile staff to the question "What would you suggest to your colleagues who are going to develop and participate in ERASMUS+ KA1 staff mobility projects?")

**Table 5: General satisfaction with Erasmus+ KA1 project mobility visits (N mobile staff = 127)**

	Exceeded my expectations	Met my expectations	Didn't meet my expectations
The content of the courses	34.6	54.3	11.0
Visit organisation (schedule, place)	48.8	48.8	2.4
Intercultural experience of the visit	54.3	44.1	1.6
Responsiveness of the host institution	42.5	54.3	3.1

### 2.2.2 Preparation for the visit

A careful preparation is an essential part of the success of an ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility project. According to the survey results, nearly 70 % of the mobile teachers prepared for their mobility visits by studying material about the culture of the mobility country (see Figure 1). Other popular ways to prepare for the visit were to **read about the educational system** in the mobility country, to **search for additional information about mobility topic** and to **prepare teaching material** for the visit. All of these were done by 48 % of the mobile respondents. Very few respondents, only 7,1 %, took foreign language courses as a preparation for the mobility.

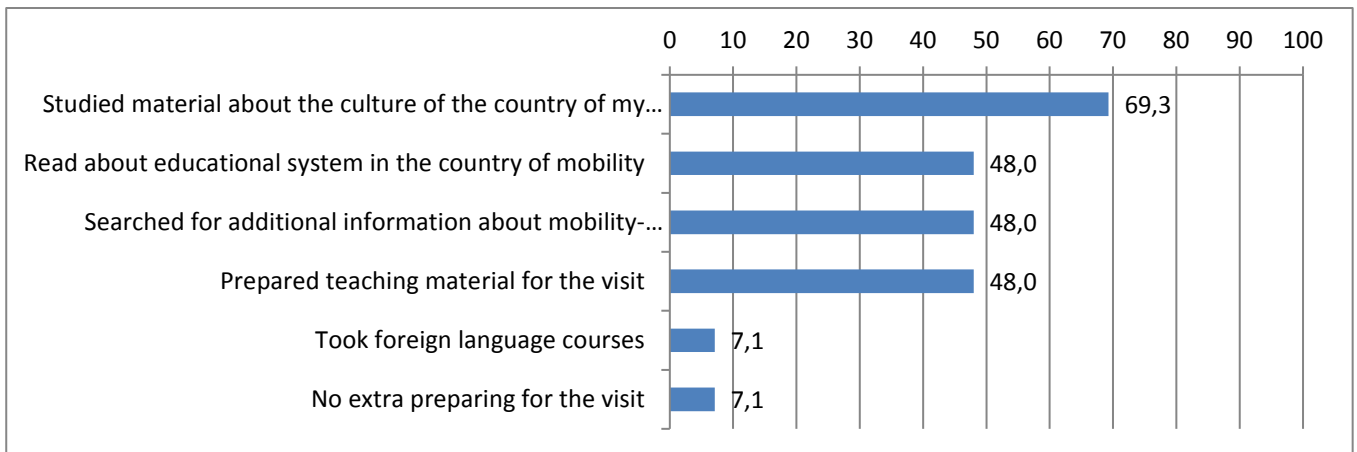


Figure 1: Preparation activities for mobility visits (percent, N mobile staff = 127)

In their responses to the open question “What would you suggest to your colleagues who are going to develop and participate in ERASMUS+ KA1 staff mobility projects?” several respondents brought up the importance of preparing well for the mobility:

*Take time and prepare in advance and you'll benefit even more!*

*Prepare yourself well for the visit by finding information about the country, institute or school of your visit*

*Prepare material to introduce your own school, country, the methods used in your school - this is a two-way experience.*

*Be open, prepare, enjoy.*

### 2.2.3 Selection of mobility forms

The ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities can be realized in three different ways:

1. Participating in structured courses or training events abroad
2. Spending an observation period (job shadowing) in a partner school abroad
3. Teaching abroad in a partner school

According to the survey results, the **structured courses** are the most popular form of mobility, as more than a half of the respondents have chosen to go on a course (see Figure 2). However, **job shadowing activities** are not far behind, with 45,7 % of the respondents choosing those. Teaching abroad was chosen only by 6,2 % of the respondents, and thus it was the least popular of the three mobility types.

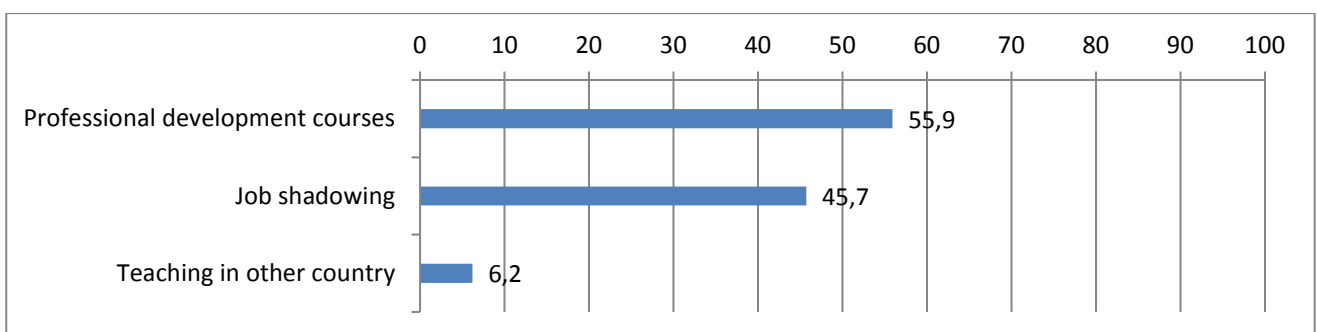


Figure 2: Selection of mobility forms (% , N mobile staff = 127)

When it comes to the evaluation of the usefulness of the different forms of mobility, the respondents' answers mirror the selection of mobility forms presented above. Professional development courses are seen as the most useful, followed by job shadowing, and teaching abroad is seen as the least useful (see Figure 3).

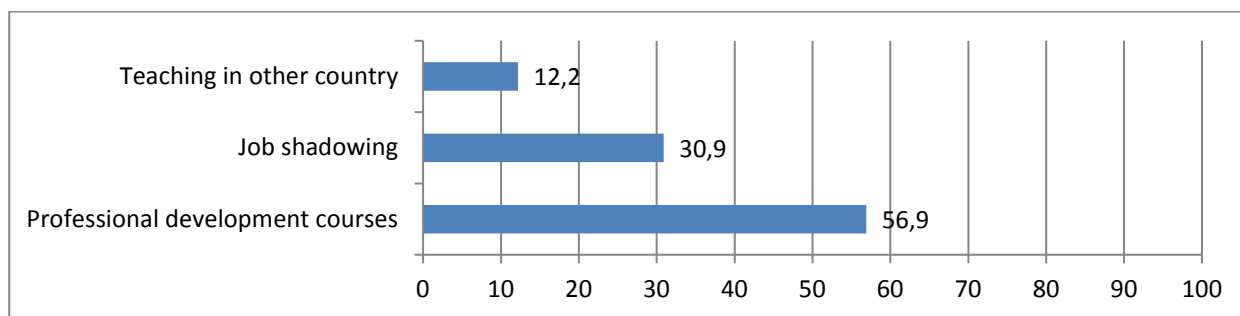


Figure 3: Assessment of a form of qualification development: opinions of non-mobile teachers (%; N non-mobile staff = 123)

### 2.2.4 Evaluation of NA support

As can be seen in Figure 4, most respondents are **generally satisfied with NA support**. A clear majority perceive the National Agencies' support as **helpful and timely**, and the **funding of projects as transparent**.

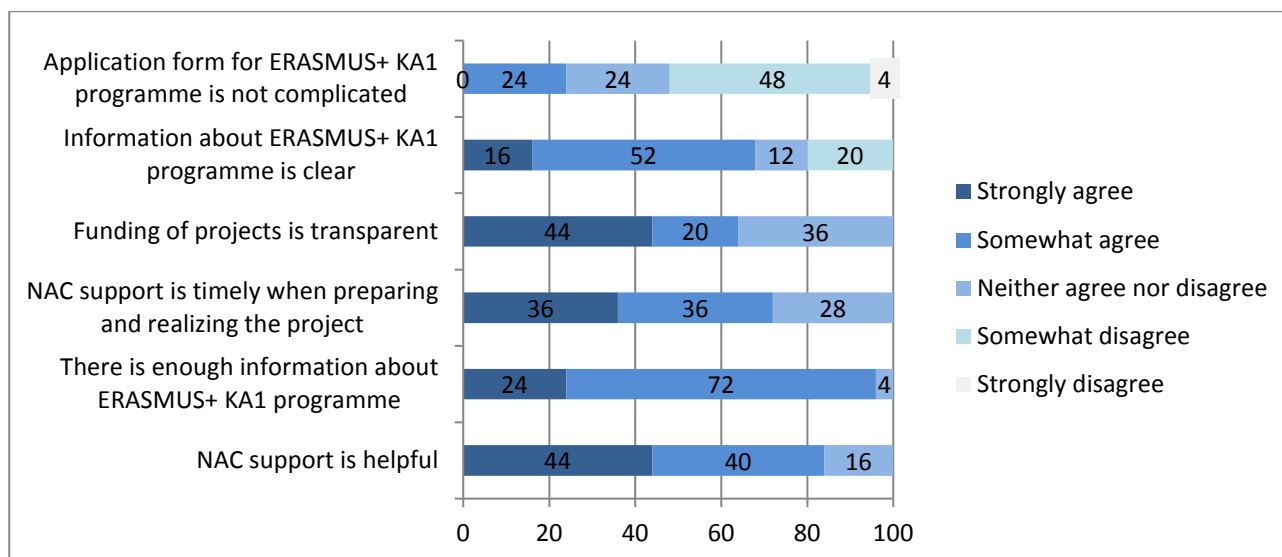


Figure 4: Assessment of National Agency support: project coordinators' point of view (N=25)

Nearly all of the respondents also agree that there is **enough information** available about the programme. The only aspects of the NA support that some of the respondents disagree with, are the **clarity of the information** about the programme, and especially the **complexity of the application form**. 20 % of the respondents think that the information about the ERASMUS+ KA1 programme is not clear, and as much as 52 % of the respondents think that the application form for the programme is complicated. Many of the respondents mentioned the complexity of the application form also in their open-ended responses:

*Be sure you have a lot of time to fill in the application forms before and after the mobility.*

*Make sure that you have a lot time to fill the grant application form and and the feedback form after the mobility.*

*You need a lot of time to fill in the application form. Actually it might be even better that you hire someone to do it. Too complicated!*

## 2.3 Impact of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility on teacher professional development: mobile staff's perceptions

The impact of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities are analyzed from two points of view: the **personal changes in competencies** (general, didactical or subject-related) that the mobile staff perceived after the mobility, and the **changes taking place in school**, regarding for example the education policy or pupils' learning process.

Changes in general, didactical and subject-related competences: perception of mobile staff

According to the survey results, it seems that the mobile staff noticed many types of changes in their professional competencies after their ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities. Changes were perceived in general competencies, didactical competencies as well as subject-related competencies, but as can be seen in Figure 5, the mobile staff noticed the **most significant personal changes in their general competencies**, including their social and communicative competence. More than 80 % of the mobile staff reported having **become more open to changes** and innovations, improved their **foreign language skills**, deepened their **understanding of other cultures and education systems**, as well as improved their **intercultural working skills**. More than three quarters (75,5 %) of the mobile staff reported that they had made many new contacts with foreign colleagues.

Over 70 % of the teachers did report having acquired **new teaching methods** from the mobility, but fewer teachers perceived changes in the other, more concrete didactical skills, such as **strategies for working with students** or their **ICT skills**. 44,1 % of the mobile staff reported that the mobility improved their ICT skills, and only 25,1 % of the respondents felt that they had developed their skills for dealing with pupils' behavioral problems or disciplinary issues.

It seems that even though the initial reason for most mobilities is to develop a specific professional skill, such as ICT skills or foreign language skills, the most common effects that the teachers experience from the mobilities have to do with more general competencies: making personal contacts, developing skills for working with other people, deepening the understanding of other cultures and becoming more open to new ideas. The mobile teachers' responses to the open-ended questions reflect the same thing; below are only a few examples of the comments:

*Projects are great for everyone: good for using languages, for meeting other teachers from different countries. The best way to know some country is co-operating and have new ideas for your own teaching methods. It is a good way for developing in your profession. We need co-operating in Europe in all sectors.*

*For me it was really great to get a chance to learn how some schools really can affect the whole society in a positive way!*

*It will improve the skills for working with people from different countries. It will also bring more enthusiasm to your school work.*

*Be open to new ideas and look for contacts in other countries/cultures.*

*Be open and get out of your comfort zone.*

*This is the best way to connect with people from other schools around Europe and it supports internationalization the best possible way. It's very good so see that even if Finnish schools are excellent, there are great ideas for e.g. lesson planning, supporting students with special needs etc. in other countries, too. We all can learn from each other.*

*It's always eye-opening to work and discuss with your colleagues abroad.*

(Open answers by mobile staff to the question “What would you suggest to your colleagues who are going to develop and participate in ERASMUS+ KA1 staff mobility projects?”)

It is noteworthy that a total of 37 respondents (out of 127) mentioned in their open-ended responses the importance of “**openness**” or being “**open-minded**” when participating in the mobility. Openness for new ideas is clearly a feature that the mobile teachers consider important for making the most of the mobility experience.

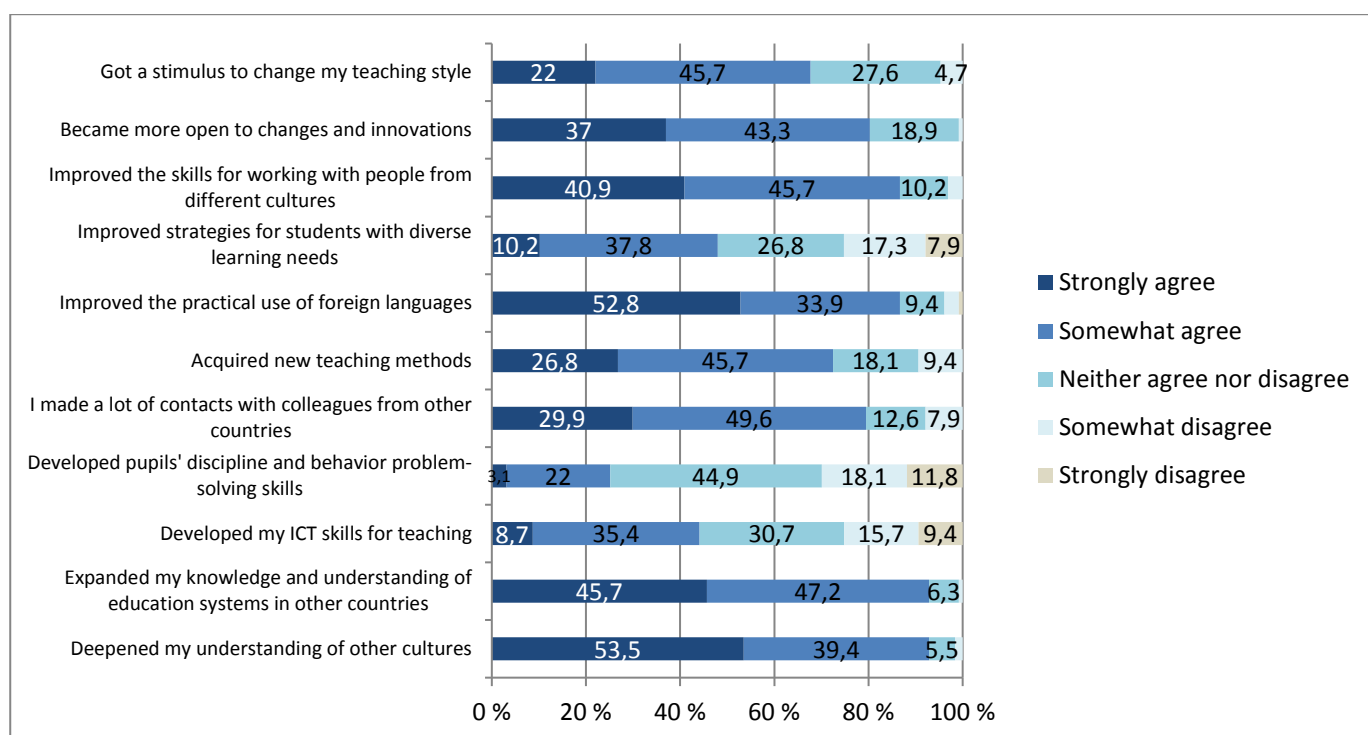


Figure 5: Changes in teachers' competences caused by ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility (N mobile staff = 127)

When looking at the correlations between preparation for the mobility and changes in teachers' competences, the survey results indicate that **studying materials about the culture of the mobility country** before the visit seems to help in gaining the most advantages as a result of the mobility (see Table 6). Teachers who studied culture-related materials before the mobility reported a deepened understanding about the cultures and educational systems of other countries more often than other teachers. They also reported making foreign contacts, becoming more open for change, improving the practical use of foreign languages and developing their skills for working with people from different cultures more often than those respondents who did not study the culture beforehand.

**Table 6: Dependence of outcomes of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility on preparation for the visit. Average on the scale of 1 (=strongly agree) to 5 (=strongly disagree)**

	Preparation for the visit				
	Studied material about the culture of the country of my visit	Read about educational system in the country of mobility	Took foreign language courses	Searched for additional information about mobility-related topic	Prepared teaching material for your visit
Deepened my understanding of other cultures	1,4**	1,44	1,33	1,64	1,48
Expanded my knowledge and understanding of education system in other countries	1,49**	1,43*	1,33	1,69	1,54
Developed my ICT skills for teaching	2,76	2,64	2,78	2,75	2,77
Developed pupils' discipline and behaviour problem-solving skills	3,07	2,97	3,11	3,05	3,03
I made a lot of contacts with colleagues from other countries	1,88*	2,02	1,89	1,85	1,74*
Acquired new teaching methods	2,1	2,07	2,44	1,97	2,18
Improved the practical use of foreign languages	1,45**	1,67	1,11*	1,7	1,56
Improved teaching strategies for students with diverse learning needs	2,63	2,64	2,67	2,7	2,7
Improved the skills for working with people from different cultures	1,59**	1,7	1,56	1,79	1,56*
Became more open to changes and innovations	1,68**	1,7	1,78	1,87	1,59**
Got a stimulus to change my teaching style	2,09	2,1	2,44	2,1	2,2

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

**Reading about the educational system** of the mobility country before the visit had, quite predictably, a significant correlation to the understanding of the educational system in other countries, but unlike **studying the culture** of the mobility country, it did not correlate significantly with any of the other mobility outcomes. The situation was also similar with **taking foreign language courses before the mobility**; foreign language skills were improved significantly more often than without taking a course, but there were no significant correlations with the other mobility outcomes.

Interestingly, **searching for additional information about the mobility topic** did not significantly correlate with any of the mobility outcomes.

These results suggest that careful preparation before the mobility does help in developing different professional competencies during the visit. Especially getting to know the culture of the country of mobility beforehand seems to be very beneficial.

## 2.4 Impact of the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility on school: perceptions of mobile and non-mobile staff

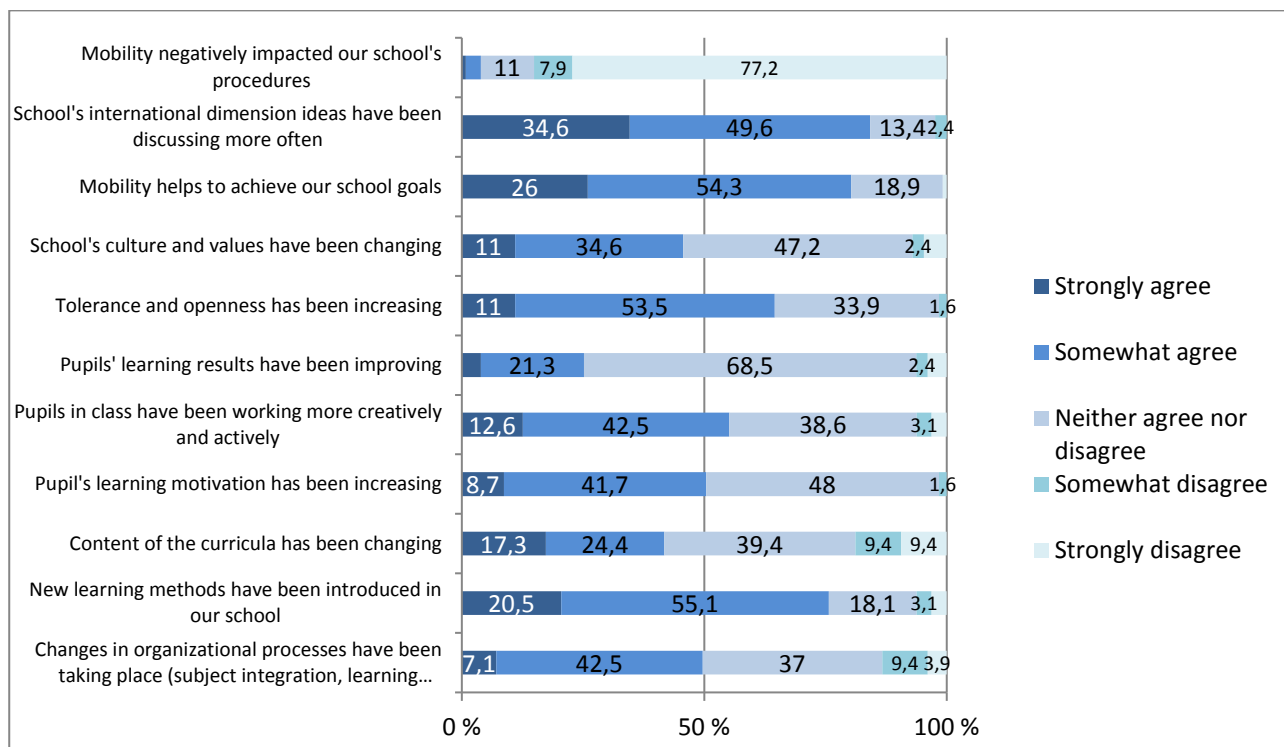


Figure 6: The impact of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility on school (N mobile staff = 127)

One of the key goals of the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility programme is to maximize the impact of the mobility on **the entire school** instead of just an individual teacher. The mobility should be linked to the school's strategic development and meet the specified needs of the school. It is thus very important to find out how the impact of the mobility on school is perceived, not only by the mobile staff, but also the non-mobile staff who did not participate in the mobility. The survey results suggest that mobilities are generally seen as beneficial in achieving school goals. Over 80 % of the mobile staff agreed that mobilities help to achieve school goals, and while only 58,5 % of the non-mobile staff agreed with the statement, only 7,4 % disagreed with it. More than a third (34,1 %) of the non-mobile respondents did not want to take a stance one way or the other.

The survey dealt with three types of change taking place in schools:

1. Changes in school's culture
2. Changes in curriculum
3. Changes in pupils' learning process

According to the survey results, the mobile staff perceived the most mobility-related change in the **school culture**; that is, the **internationality, openness and tolerance** in the school. 84,2 % of the mobile respondents agreed that the international dimension of school had been more under discussion after the

mobility. 64,5 % of the respondents had noticed an increase of tolerance and openness in the school culture.

Apart from changes in school culture, another impact that was quite widely recognized among the respondents was the acquisition of **new learning methods**. 75,6 % of mobile staff and 50,4 % of non-mobile staff perceived that new learning methods had been introduced in their school after the mobility.

**Curricular and organizational changes** were noticed much less than cultural changes. Nearly half of the mobile staff and 34,1 % of non-mobile staff had noticed changes in organizational processes, such as subject integration or learning outside of school, and even less respondents (41,7 % of mobile staff and 21,2 % of non-mobile staff) had noticed changes in the content of the curricula.

Both the mobile and non-mobile respondents are quite reluctant to give an opinion regarding the impact of the mobility on the **pupils learning process**. While more than a half of the mobile respondents do perceive that the mobility has **increased the pupils' motivation** as well as **creativity and active participation in class**, a large number of mobile staff (48 % and 38,6 %) neither agree nor disagree with these statements. Reluctance to take a stance is especially strong in the case of the impact of the mobility on **pupils' learning results**, where as much as 68,5 % of the mobile staff and 74 % of the non-mobile staff chose to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Standardized tests and exams are used very little in Finland, and the assessment of the pupils is largely based on continuing assessment of the individual pupil's work at school, not only test and exam results. Thus it is more difficult to notice a change in all of the pupils' learning results at once. This may in part explain why the teachers could not, or did not want to comment on the pupils' learning results, especially on how the mobility has affected the results.

In general, the mobile teachers perception about the impact of the mobilities on school is very positive. Only 4,7 % of mobile teachers thought that the mobility had a negative effect on their school.

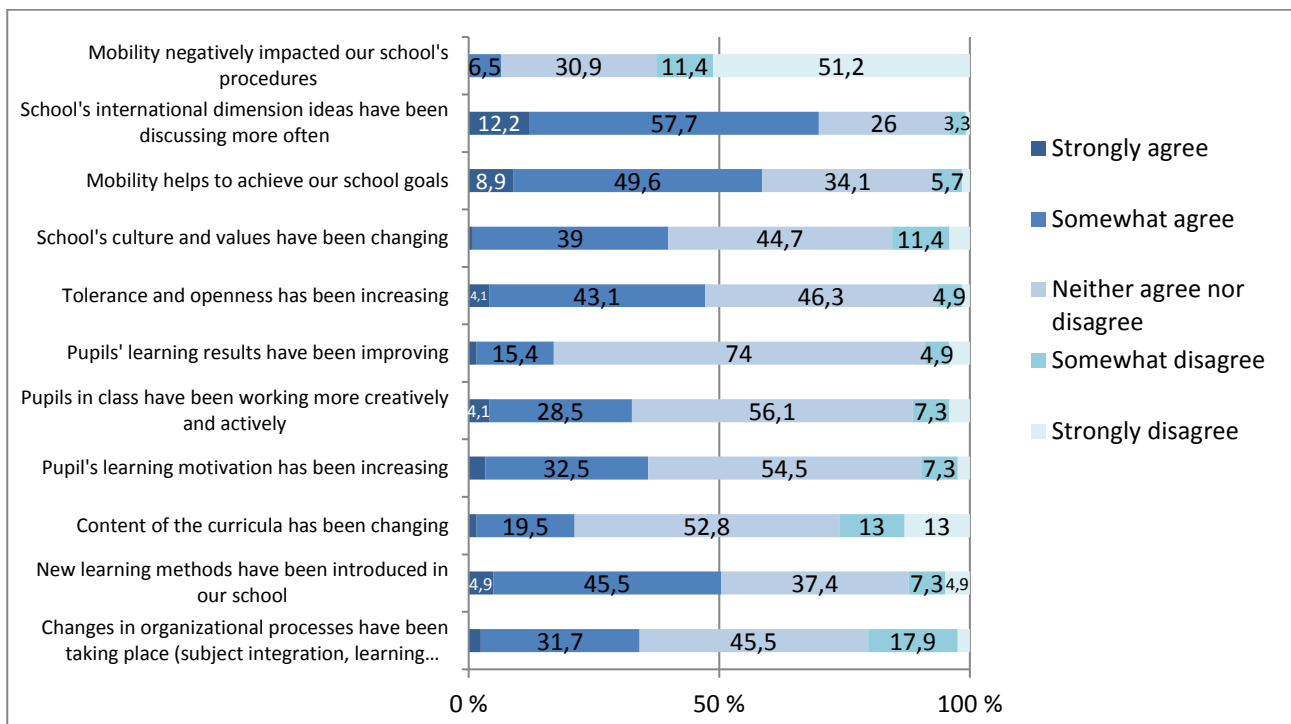


Figure 7: The impact of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility on school (N non-mobile staff = 123)



When comparing the answers of mobile and non-mobile respondents, one can see that the teachers who did not participate in the mobilities generally did notice the same types of change in their schools as the mobile teachers did. However, in all of the questions about mobility-related change in schools, a larger percentage of mobile teachers than non-mobile teachers report to have noticed those changes.

It is interesting to see that in the mobile and non-mobile teachers' answers about **mobility-related change in their schools** there is a large number of respondents who have chosen the option "neither agree nor disagree", thus **not giving an opinion one way or the other**. The non-mobile respondents have chosen the option especially often: in all of the questions, at least a quarter of the respondents have chosen to neither agree nor disagree. More than a half of the non-mobile teachers have chosen that option in the question about changes in the curriculum, as well as in all three questions about the impact of the mobility on pupils' learning process. Nearly three quarters of the non-mobile teachers did not take a stance in the question about changes in the pupils' learning results.

These results seem to suggest that many of the non-mobile teachers are not very well aware of, or perhaps not interested in, the mobility projects in their schools, and thus do not want to give an opinion about the changes that may or may not have taken place after the mobility of their colleagues. Since all three questions regarding the pupils' learning process received a "neither agree nor disagree" from more than a half of the non-mobile respondents (74 % in the question about learning results), it does seem that the non-mobile teachers do not feel that they can actually claim that they notice mobility-related change in their own pupils' work. The open-ended responses also reflect the notion that some of the non-mobile teachers do not feel that the mobility project has much effect on them:

*I just heard for the first time about this Erasmus –project.*

*I suppose it must be useful but only for those who participate.*

*This has really been the project of one individual teacher who has done her best to introduce the new ideas at school. The other teachers who participated in mobilities have done very little.*

*I don't really know what it is or what is happening in these projects. Only few people are involved but they do not share their experiences.*

*It's a great possibility for the teacher to see and learn how others are doing this job. But I think the significance is not so big for school society and other teachers. Honestly I don't know what does it mean for teaching. Maybe some changes happen.*

On the other hand, the open-ended responses included some very positive comments from the non-mobile teachers as well, so it can be said that there are also non-mobile teachers who feel that the mobility project has had an impact on them, too:

*Erasmus has brought a lot of joy into our school!*

*The project increased the discussion between special class teachers and "normal" class teachers.*

*It has been extremely beneficial to have teachers visiting other schools in order to really understand different teaching cultures so that we can learn from them. The international dimension of these visits is also extremely valuable for both our staff and pupils.*

*I found out in what way our school methods and those of Britain differ in general. For instance pupils' activity during classes, the amount of projects, teaching methods etc.*

(Non-mobile teachers' responses to question: What are your other comments about ERASMUS+ KA1 (staff mobility) project implementation in your school?)

Even though many non-mobile teachers do not want to take a stance regarding the changes that the mobility may have brought to the school, the non-mobile teachers' overall attitude towards mobilities seems to be positive, as only 6,5 % of the non-mobile respondents perceived the mobility as having a negative effect on their school.

## 2.5 Pupils' expectations

The results of the pupils' survey suggest that pupils have high expectations for the teachers' professional competence and internationality. A majority of the pupils agreed with all but one statement seen in Figure 8. **Use foreign language to teach non-language subjects** was the only statement that was not agreed with by more than 50% of the pupils, and even that one was very close with 48,6%.

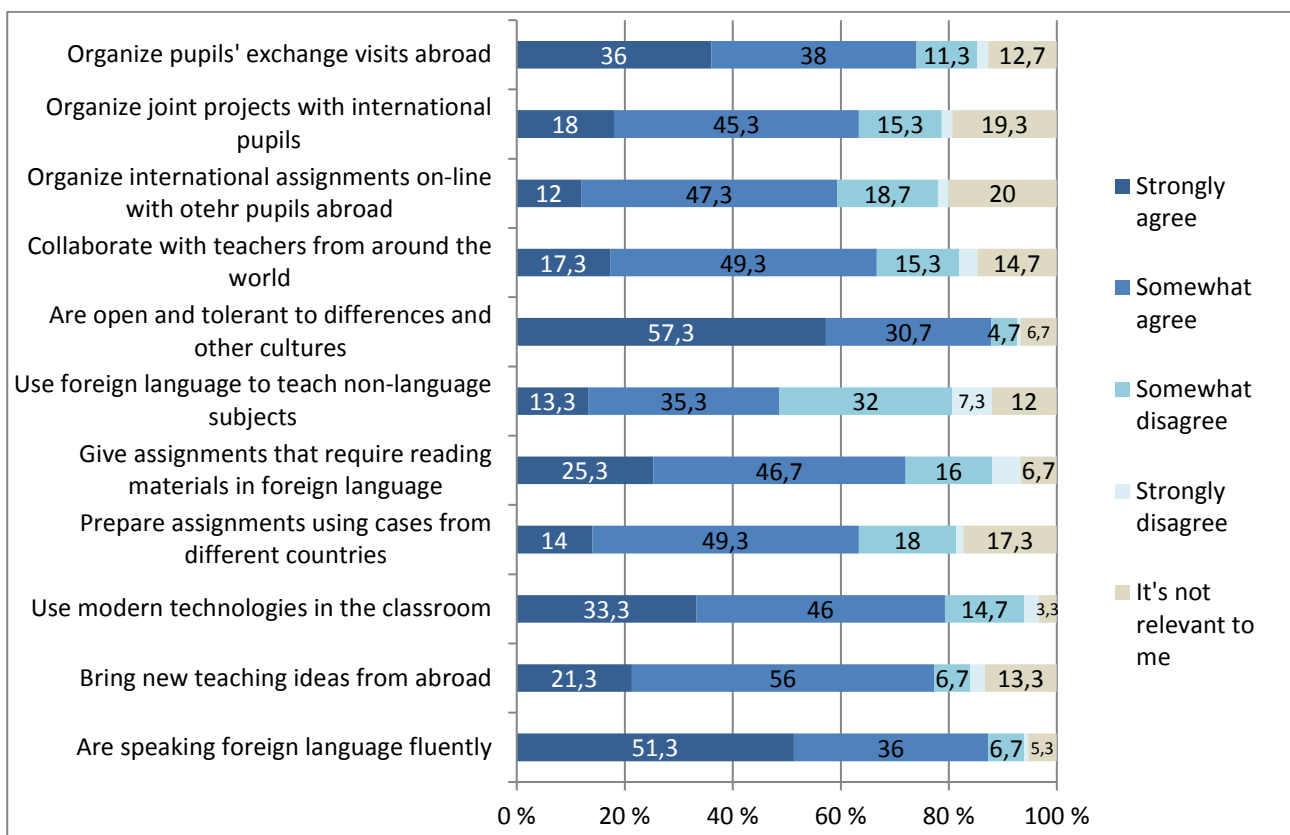


Figure 8: Pupils' expectations for teacher professional competencies, school's internationality (N pupils = 150)

According to the results of the pupils' survey, pupils value the teachers' **openness and tolerance towards other cultures** (88% agree), **fluent use of a foreign language** (87,3%), as well as **use of modern technology** (79,3%) A clear majority of the pupils who answered the survey also wished that the teachers would **bring new teaching ideas from abroad** and **organize pupils' exchange trips abroad** (77,3 % and 74 % respectively). When it comes to actual collaboration with foreign pupils or teachers, more than a half of the pupils did consider online **assignments or joint projects with foreign pupils** to be important (63,3 % and 59,3 % of the pupils agreed), but even more pupils (66,6 %) thought that it is important for teachers to collaborate with other teachers from different countries.

The pupils were also asked about the changes that they have noticed in the performance or activities of those teachers who have participated in professional development abroad.

The most significant changes that the pupils noticed in teachers' performance after mobility visits also had to do with the areas that the pupils reported as important to them: the use of technology and sharing of knowledge about other countries (see Figure 9).

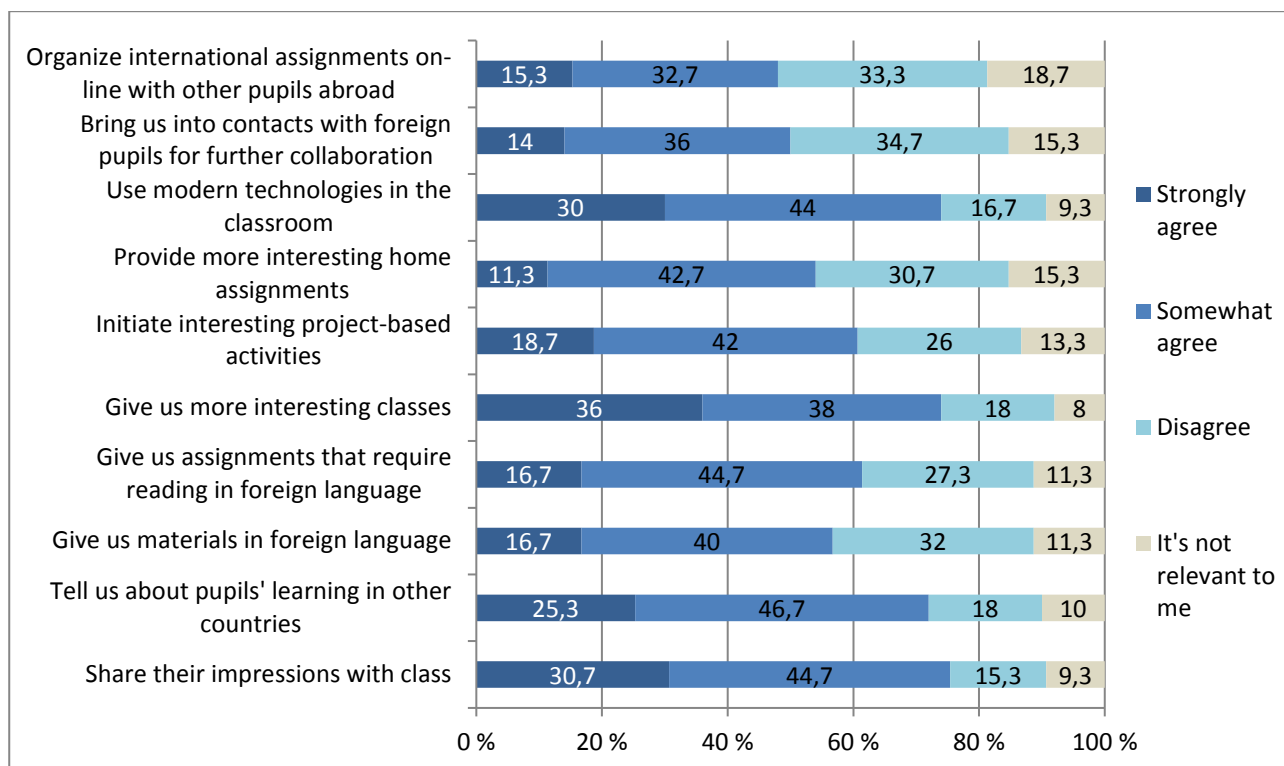


Figure 9: Changes in teachers' performance after mobility visits (N pupils = 150)

75,4 % of the pupils agreed that the teachers had **shared their impressions** of the mobility experience with the class, and 74 % thought that teachers **gave more interesting classes** and **used modern technology** in the classroom after the mobility. 71 % of the pupils agreed that the teachers had **told them about pupils' learning in other countries**. Thus it can be said that according to the survey results, the mobilities seem to affect teachers' performance in areas that are also considered important or highly valued by the pupils. A majority of pupils also thought that the teachers provided them with more interesting classes, projects and homework after professional development mobility abroad. Thus the mobilities may have a positive effect on the pupils' learning motivation as well.

## 2.6 Parents' attitudes

The results from the parents' survey indicate that parents consider the schools' international projects to be useful and that the schools inform parents about the projects fairly well (see Figure 10). While a little less than 10 % of the parents did think that teachers' visits abroad **cause the education to suffer**, a clear majority (71,6%) did not think so. Furthermore, 82,6 % of the parents agreed that their school emphasizes international connections. The parents feel that the school does **provide information about international projects** and teacher mobilities (78% agree), although the **aims and benefits** of those projects and mobilities are a bit less clear (56,8 % agree).

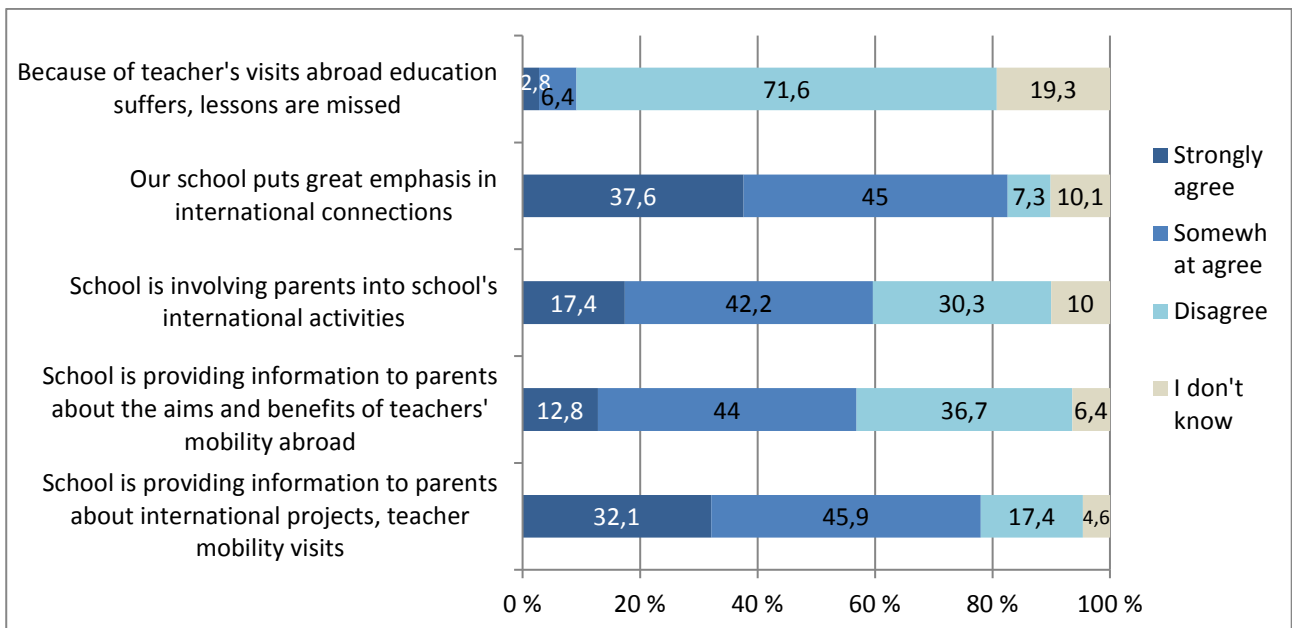


Figure 50: Assessment of school's international activities (N parents = 109)

When it comes to the parents' opinions on school internationality and teachers' mobilities abroad, the survey results clearly suggest that the parents appreciate and think very highly of them both. As can be seen in Figure 11, nearly all of the respondents (97,2 %) agreed that teachers' visits abroad **stimulate school improvement**. A clear majority of the parents also perceived that **international projects improve pupils' learning results** and that the children's **teaching is improved** by teachers' visits abroad. The parents also considered it very important that **children get international competences at school**, and that their **school applies the best international practise**. Teachers' visits abroad were considered important for the development of teachers' competences.

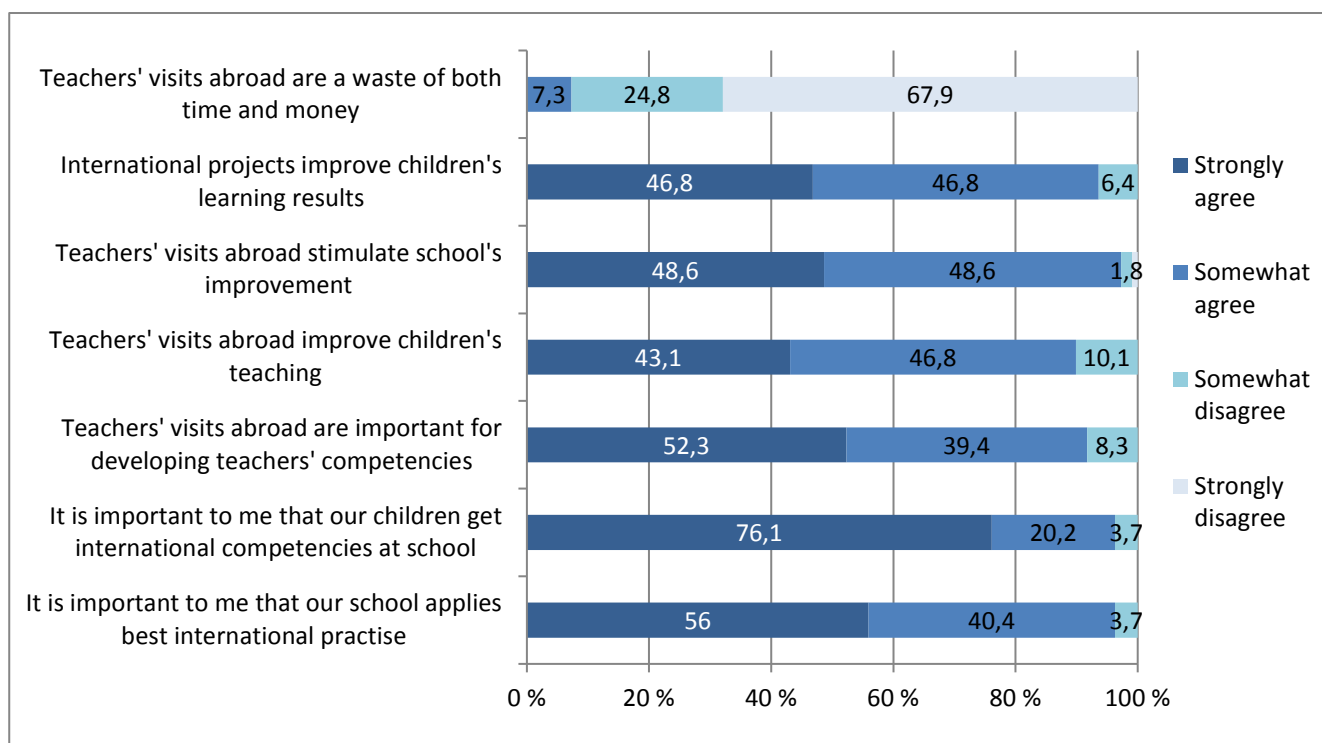


Figure 11: Parents' opinions concerning school internationality, teacher professional development abroad (N parents = 109)

## 2.7 Dissemination and sharing of experience, teacher leadership (perception of mobile staff)

For an ERASMUS+ KA1 project to have a lasting and sustainable impact, dissemination and sharing of the project experience and results, both within and outside the school, is an integral part of the project's success.

As can be seen in Figure 12, the survey results indicate that **sharing information and experiences orally with colleagues** was by far the most popular form of dissemination; 86,6 % of the mobile respondents gave some kind of an oral report or speech in teacher teams or teachers' council. Other forms of dissemination were used much less; 37,8 % of the mobile teachers **invited colleagues to observe their class**, and 33,9 % **gave a presentation** at a teachers' conference. The results show that a majority of mobile teachers do apply their new knowledge into their work: 55,9 % of the mobile teachers did **prepare new material for their subject**, although it cannot be said whether or not they only use the new material with their own classes, or share the material with colleagues. Since only 26,2 % of the non-mobile teachers were aware of their mobile colleagues' new teaching material, it is likely that some of the new material was made only for the use of the individual teachers. Only 26,8 % of the mobile teachers **made the prepared material available on-line**.

Almost a third of the mobile teachers had **shared their new knowledge with parents**. Although the percentage seems quite small, the results from the parents' survey showed that parents feel quite well informed about the international projects at their children's school (see section 2.7).

According to the survey results, dissemination of mobility-related knowledge and ideas **outside of school** is not very common. Only about a tenth of the mobile teachers said they shared their knowledge in the media or to other colleagues outside of school.

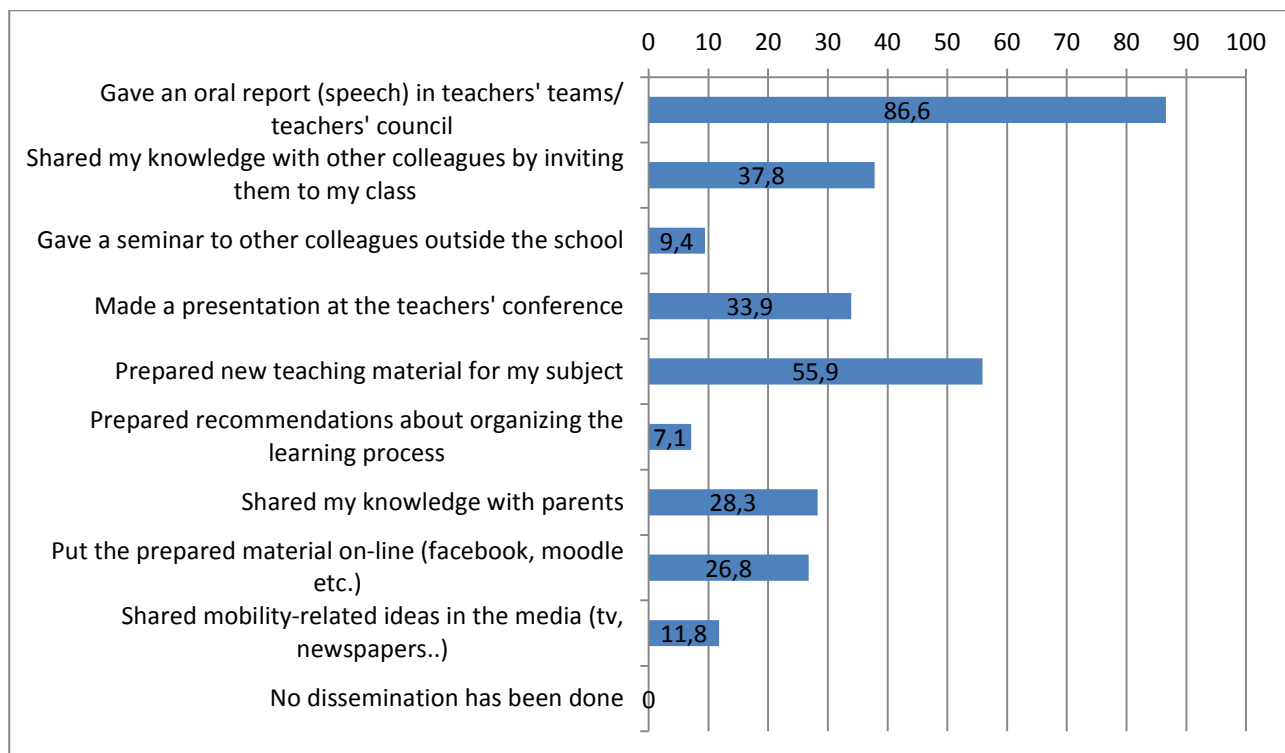


Figure 12: Dissemination and sharing of experience on ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility: **mobile teachers'** perception (% , N mobile staff = 127)

The non-mobile staff were also asked about the dissemination practices that they had noticed at their schools after the mobilities. The survey results show that the answers of non-mobile staff correspond well with the answers of the mobile staff; oral presentations or discussions are the form of dissemination that the non-mobile teachers have noticed the most, and sharing information outside the school is not seen to happen very much at all (see Figure 13). In general it can be said that the mobile staff reports more dissemination practices than is perceived by the non-mobile staff, which could indicate that the dissemination is not spread to the whole school, but perhaps to only smaller parts of the staff (e.g. within subject teacher teams).

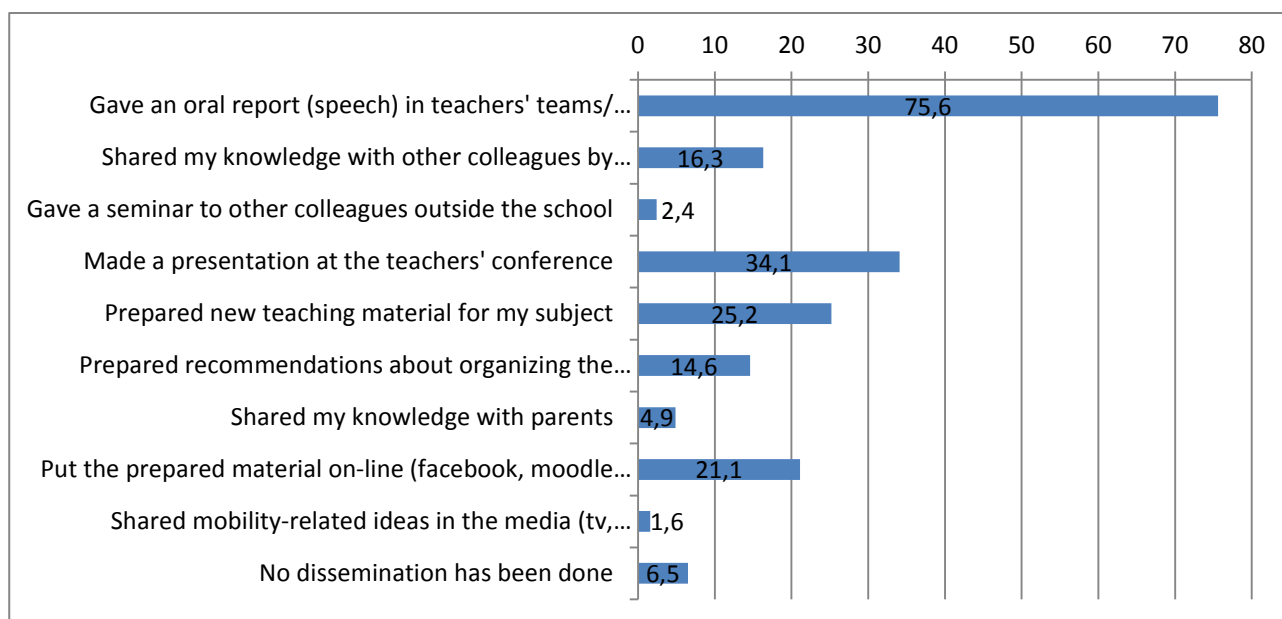


Figure 13: Dissemination and sharing of experience on ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility: **non-mobile teachers'** perception (% , N non-mobile staff = 123)

In the **open-ended questions** many mobile teachers mentioned the **importance of dissemination** and sharing new ideas with colleagues:

*Disseminate Your knowledge of new methods and applications strongly to all your colleagues at your school.*

*Share your experiences at once.*

*Start implementing the new ideas when you return to work.*

*Share the achieved knowledge and try to actively use the learnt methods in your work.*

*You will get a lot if you step out from your daily routines. Be open minded, make contacts and disseminate afterwards.*

(Open answers by mobile staff to the question "What would you suggest to your colleagues who are going to develop and participate in ERASMUS+ KA1 staff mobility projects?")

Although dissemination is seen as very important by the mobile and non-mobile teachers, in the responses to the open-ended question the non-mobile respondents brought up the issue of the **hectic nature of teachers' work**; many said that they would like to learn more about the mobilities, and the knowledge and ideas acquired there, but there simply is **not enough time or resources** to do as much dissemination as the teachers would like to:

*Great project, only problem is the sharing ideas inside the school, not because of the teachers but because of maximum fulfilled working days: I don't feel to have time for discuss ideas and etc...*

*My opinion is that there hasn't been enough time or possibilities to discuss about this (or any other) projects with attended teachers. NOT enough appreciation towards this (or any other)*

*project from leaders of our school so that we who didn't attend, would have had some time to this.*

Other issue raised by the non-mobile staff was that although the mobile teachers did disseminate their experiences and ideas within the school, the dissemination was **limited to only a small part of the school community**. There were also comments about the **different levels of interest** in the projects; not all staff members are willing to participate or actively learn from other colleagues experiences:

*I suppose it must be useful but only for those who participate.*

*This has really been the project of one individual teacher who has done her best to introduce the new ideas at school. The other teachers who participated in mobilities have done very little.*

*These kinds of projects are very inspiring for the teachers who are willing /offered to participate in school visits abroad. It's not so easy to involve all colleagues...*

*The project itself and visits to other countries have been properly presented by teachers and pupils who have been involved in the project. I am not aware of exactly how ideas from the project have been implemented, but then again I haven't been paying enough attention either I guess. There has been Erasmus related activities in the school, but I haven't been involved in them myself.*

Despite the issues mentioned above, there were also many non-mobile teachers who were happy with the dissemination of experiences by their mobile colleagues:

*It was a very good and encouraging experience. Had a lot of new ideas from the other teachers. Learned new ways to think and develop my own professional teaching skills. More about these things!!!*

*I am convinced that KA1 gives a lot of new ideas for the teachers who have participated in the project. When you are able to see the methods and the atmosphere in the other countries it gives you perspective for your own job.*

(Non-mobile teachers' responses to question: What are your other comments about ERASMUS+ KA1 (staff mobility) project implementation in your school?)

The mobile teachers were also asked how they implement the ideas they have acquired from their mobilities. The most common way of implementing the new knowledge was, quite predictably, to **apply the new ideas in the mobile teacher's own work** (see Figure 14). Almost 90 percent of the mobile teachers reported doing that. However, the implementation was not merely restricted to the teachers' own work, but instead as many as 70,6 % of the mobile teachers reported that they have also **inspired other colleagues** to apply those ideas in their work. Inspiring other colleagues was by far the most common form of teacher leadership in implementing mobility-related ideas; 38,6 % of the mobile teachers feel that they **give initiatives which help in fostering the school's culture and values**, and about a quarter of the mobile respondents **build teams** and **organize learning of other colleagues** to implement new ideas. 17,3 % **sought support from outside of school**, and less than a tenth (8,7 %) **involved parents** into the realization of new ideas.



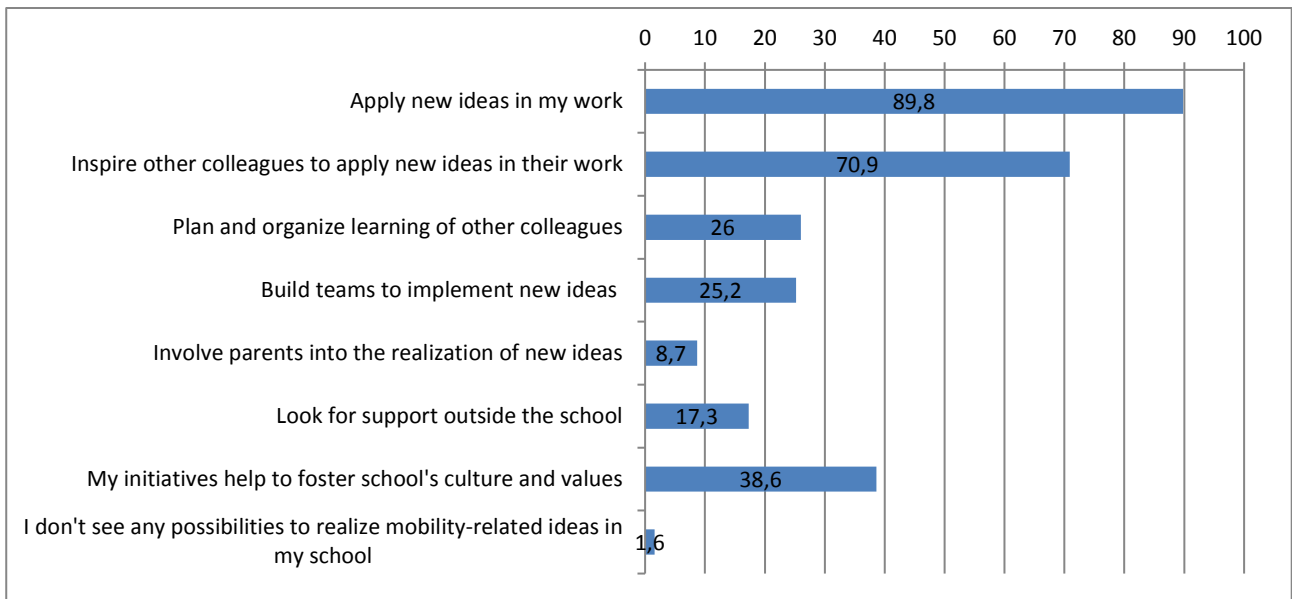


Figure 14: Leadership when implementing ideas of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility: perception of mobile staff (%; N mobile staff = 127)

The non-mobile teachers' responses verify that the staff that did not participate in the mobilities did observe manifestations of teacher leadership among their mobile colleagues (see Figure 15). Over 60 % of the non-mobile staff noticed that the mobile colleagues did inspire their colleagues to apply new ideas in their work, and although the other forms of teacher leadership were not observed as much, a fifth of the non-mobile respondents did report that teams were built to implement new ideas and that new initiatives were introduced to foster school culture.

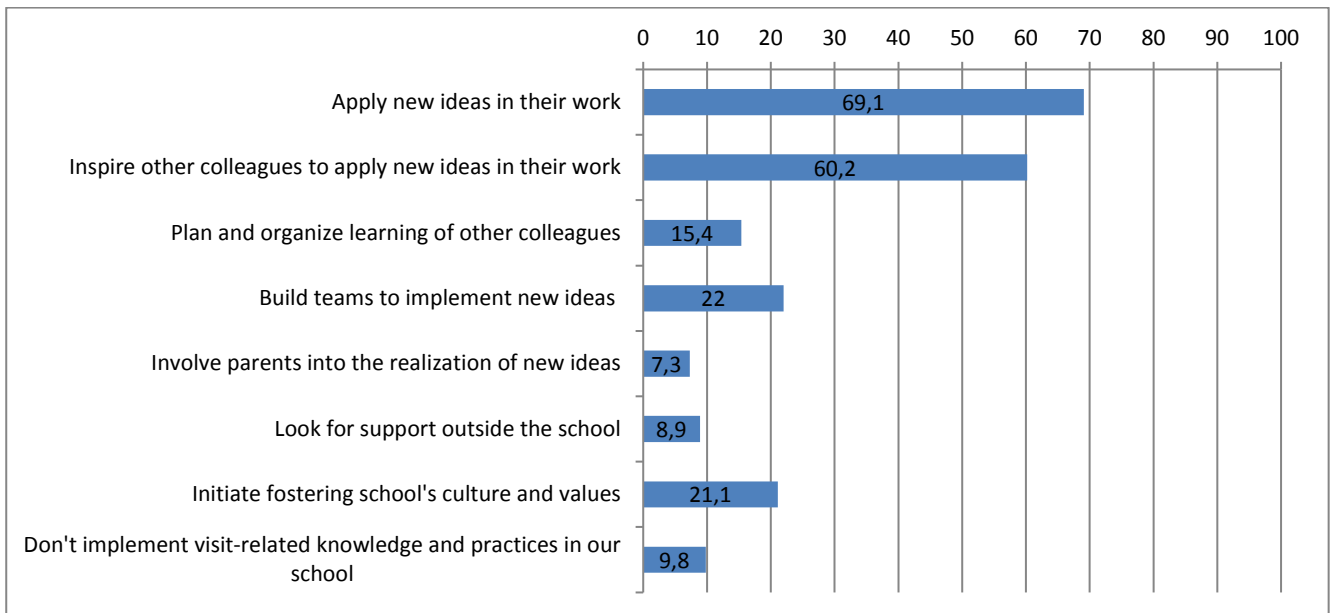


Figure 15: Leadership when implementing ideas of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility: perception of non-mobile staff (%; N non-mobile staff = 123)

Mobility-related teacher leadership is at least partially recognized in all of the schools that participated in the survey. In all schools, a majority of non-mobile staff did recognize that the mobile teachers inspired their colleagues to implement new ideas acquired from the mobility. The mobile teachers' application of new ideas in their own work was also recognized in all participating schools. **Involving parents** into the

implementation of new ideas, and **looking for support from outside of school** were not very common (10,7 % and 12,5 % respectively).

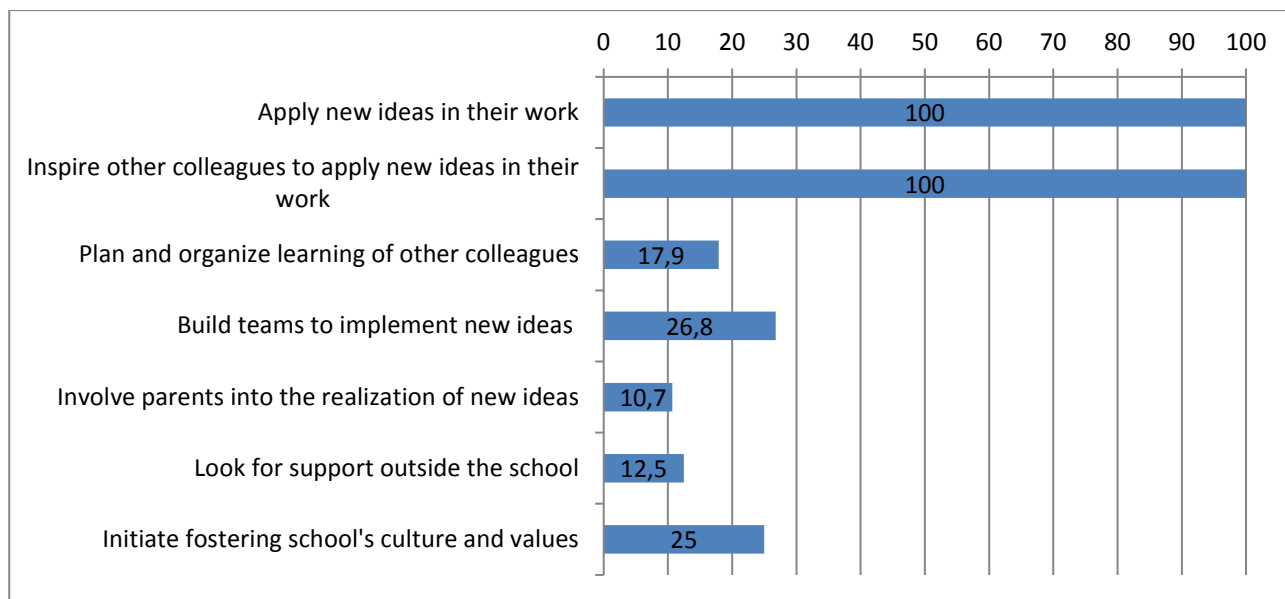


Figure 16: Recognition of teacher leadership. Percentage of schools where more than half of the non-mobile staff notice leadership activities (N schools = 56)

## 2.8 Perceptions of school culture as a condition for sustainability of project outcomes

Support from the school community is essential for the outcomes of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities to be sustainable. In this study, two aspects of school community support were investigated: (1) support from school leader and (2) support from colleagues.

The results of the survey indicate that a vast majority of both the mobile and non-mobile respondents are happy with the support of the school leader in realizing the mobility project (see Figures 18 and 19). The support of the colleagues is not evaluated quite as high; only 47,3 % of the mobile teachers and 40,6 % of the non-mobile teachers agree that non-mobile colleagues are involved in the projects. However, it is important to note that about 40 % of the respondents in both groups chose the option “neither agree nor disagree” on the statement about the non-mobile colleagues’ involvement. Thus it may be that they did not consider the non-mobile colleagues’ involvement in the process even necessary.

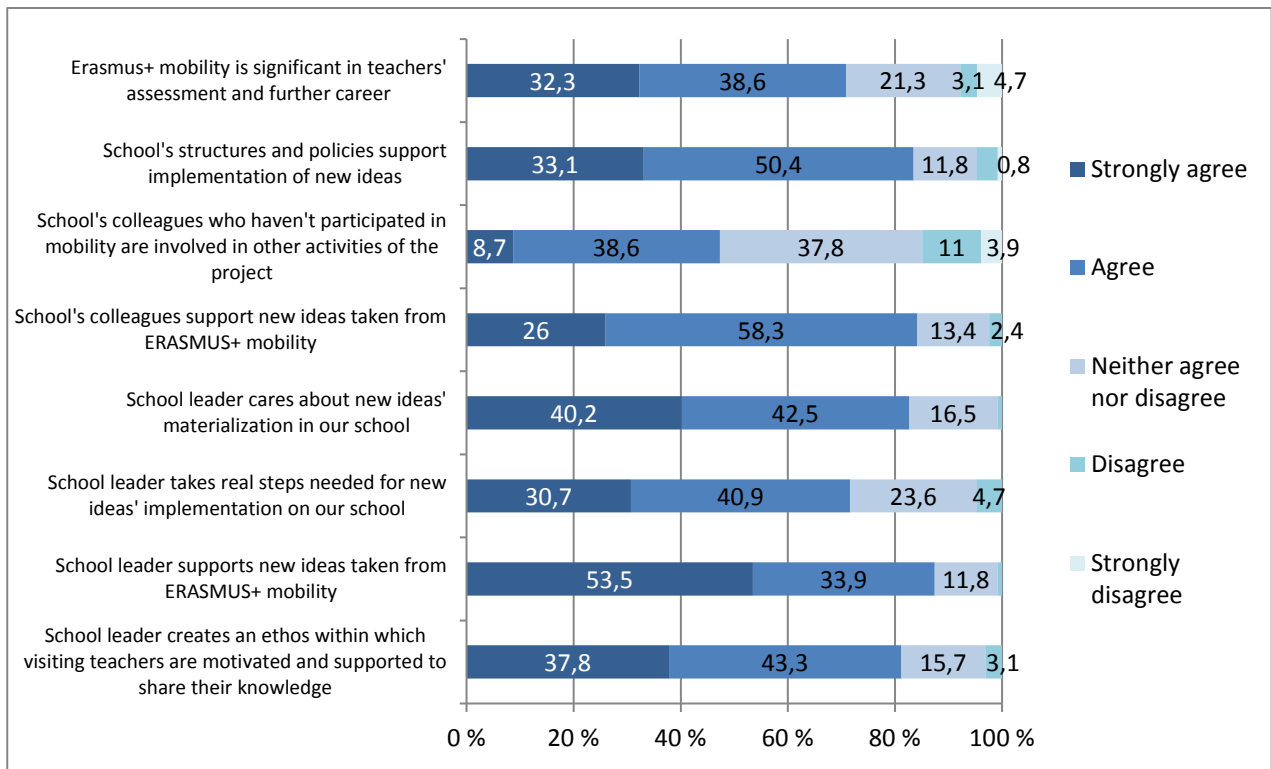


Figure 17: Favourability of school environment for implementation of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility experience (N mobile staff = 127)

70,9 % of the mobile teachers and 56,9 % of the non-mobile teachers agreed that ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility projects are **significant in teachers' assessment and further career**. However, about a fifth of the mobile teachers and a third of the non-mobile teachers did not want to take a stance about that statement but chose instead the option "neither agree nor disagree". This may be due to the fact that in Finland teachers are not officially evaluated or assessed at all, but instead they have a great autonomy to choose their own pedagogical methods as they see fit. Finnish school system also does not have almost any hierarchical "career" for teachers; there are no "senior teachers" or other titles that the teachers are promoted to. Thus some of the respondents may have felt reluctant to comment on the assessment or career of teachers, since in Finland those things are mostly not applicable.

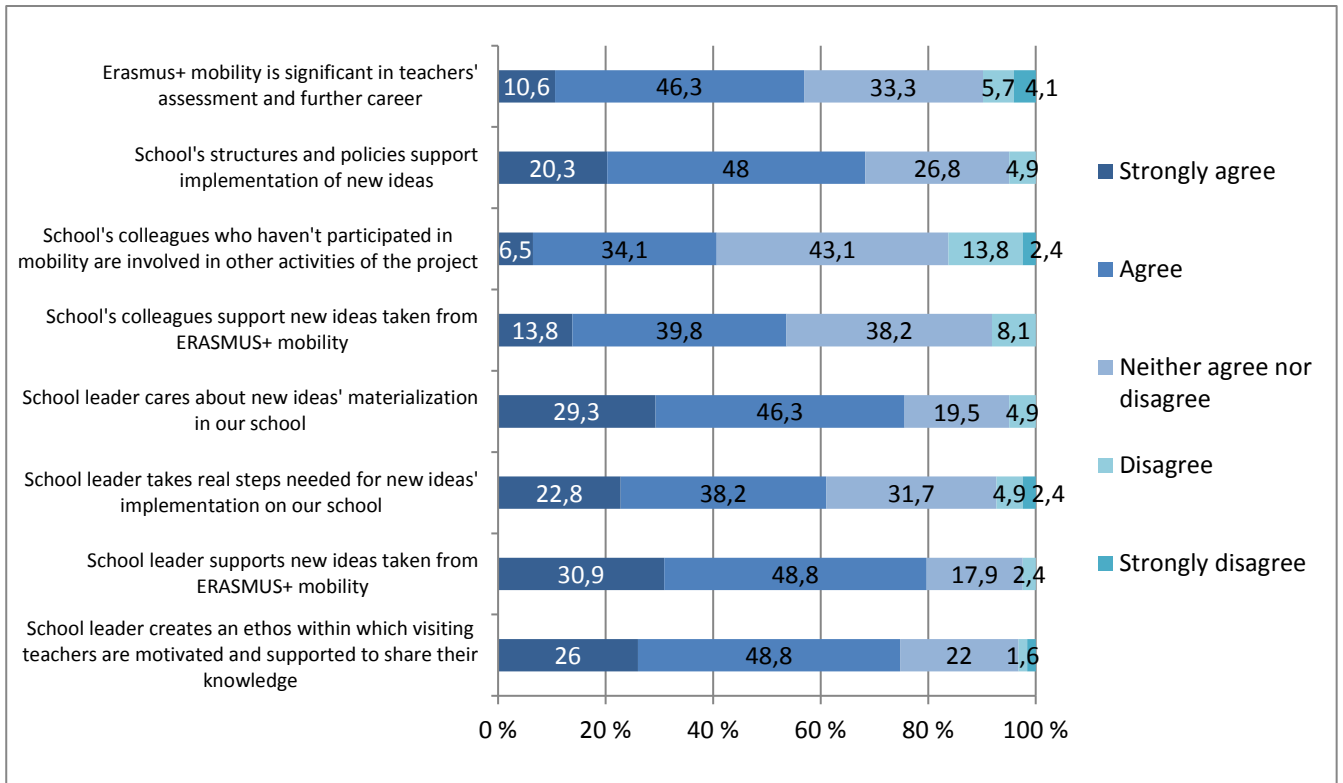


Figure 18: Favourability of school environment for implementation of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility experience (N non-mobile staff = 123)

### 3 Results of content analysis of focus groups with mobile staff and school leaders

To get a more detailed idea of the impact and sustainability of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility projects in Finnish schools, three focus groups were organized: one with mobile staff, and two with school leaders. The participants of the focus groups were from schools that received funding for projects in 2014 or 2015. All three focus group interviews were organized as on-line video conferences, using Adobe Connect Pro. The results of these focus group interviews are presented in the next sections.

#### 3.1 Focus group with mobile staff

The focus group with mobile staff included 8 teachers from different levels of educational institutions, and from different parts of Finland. All of the participants had been involved in **job shadowing activities**.

According to the focus group participants, the **TEACHER SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE MOBILITY VISITS** follows generally similar procedures in different schools. The selection is open and transparent, and in most schools all teachers are welcomed to express their interest in participating in the mobility. Many schools have a special team for organizing international projects, and some of those schools give priority to the members of the team when selecting participants for mobilities. Generally the most important factor in the selection process is the **TEACHERS' OWN MOTIVATION AND ACTIVE INTEREST**. In many schools all interested staff members have been able to participate:

***Priority for designated team of teachers who organize international projects:***

*In our school we have an internationality team which is formed at the beginning of each school year. The team has about 8 members, and basically all teachers who are interested are welcome to join. We have made a decision that in the teachers who are part of the internationality team have priority when choosing the mobility participants. The basic idea was that the same teacher would not go twice, but we now have a situation where we have run out of interested teachers who have not participated before, so now the idea is that as long as a teacher is interested and active in the international activities, they are welcome to participate. Luckily all the willing teachers have been able to participate.*

***A selection team chooses participants:***

*We have a selection board team that also includes the principal and vice principal. All staff members are informed of the possibility to apply, and the board selects participants for mobilities according to written applications, which are given points and the applicants with the highest points are chosen to participate.*

*The selection process was fair and transparent. All members of the staff had a chance to apply, and the management committee chose the participants. Everyone who applied got chosen to participate.*

*We also have a team for international activities. There has not been so many applicants, so the teachers who have been active and interested all had a chance to participate. We have not needed written applications.*

The focus groups participants emphasized the meaning and **IMPORTANCE OF NEW PERSONAL CONTACTS MADE DURING KA1 MOBILITIES**. The contacts with colleagues from other countries had resulted in increasingly international school culture, and even further international projects. The contacts and cultural experiences were valued even higher by the discussion participants than the more concrete teaching skills:

***Personal contacts and getting to know people of all ages:***

*The best thing about my mobility was to meet people of all ages, and to be able to join the actual classes and observe authentic teaching and learning moments with the students. We were really welcomed to join the classroom, and we got to work in pairs with the school's teachers. It was also wonderful that the school had organized activities, such as book clubs, also with parents and grandparents, so we got to meet some of the families as well. That was the best way, through the interaction between people, to really get an authentic impression of the school life in the country.*

***KA1 mobility leading to further collaboration and making new projects easier to realize:***

*We had planned a joint project with a teacher from Italy, whom I had met earlier in an Erasmus course. I must say that it is so much easier to start a common project with a foreign school after you have first visited the school, and spent a week there. It really strengthened the contact we had made in the course, and it was so easy to start the project together now, after having actually visited the school. Personally the job shadowing activity really met my expectations!*

*I think that the job shadowing activities are especially good for establishing lasting personal contacts and friendships with colleagues from other countries, which in turn makes it much more simple to continue the cooperation with different joint projects. I believe that the personal friendships make it considerably easier to "tolerate the workload", especially when planning and writing a new application, which is hard work.*

*As a result of the job shadowing, we have now started to plan a KA2 application. Without the KA1 experience it probably would not have happened. Having more experienced partners brings confidence and courage to apply.*

*Each and every one of our school's international contacts and projects have started from personal contacts and friendships. That the participants are sort of friends together first. I don't believe that the projects would work as well as they do without the personal contacts!*

The discussion participants brought up another important aspect of the success of a mobility: **THE CAREFUL ORGANIZATION OF THE VISIT AND HOSPITALITY OF THE RECEIVING INSTITUTION**

***Importance of the hospitality of receiving partner:***

*I have participated in two job shadowings in two countries, and they were like night and day. In one country they were very enthusiastic in showing me their school, and all the teachers participated actively; every day someone had baked a cake or something, and they were really interested in learning about Finland. In the other country...it was unbelievable. I am an English teacher, but I could not visit any English classes. One mathematics teacher agreed to take me to observe their class. None of the teachers asked to go anywhere with them, and the most upsetting thing was that we found out that the school had had a big festival one night, and we were not even told about it but found out about it the next day.*

***The number of schools to be visited should be in proportion to the duration of mobility; too many schools may result in less effective outcomes:***

*I visited four different school during my week-long visit, and it was in was way quite tiring, because you needed to introduce yourself and the school you come from, and tell the main points about the project all over again every time you go to a new school. It is quite hard work to learn the job over again four times in one week. You can focus on the schools much more if you visit only one or two schools in a week. Another negative point of having multiple schools to visit is that none of the schools is really responsible for you. Each school will receive you, but when you leave, that's that. The visits are left a bit thin in my opinion.*

***Benefits of travelling alone vs. in a group:***

*-In a way I really value going on the mobility alone, because then you will truly work hard. You will really immerse yourself in the subject and take in the ideas and influences. You will also truly need to use the foreign language, you will not end up speaking Finnish by accident but you will really use the English language while observing the classes.*

*-I agree; I was alone in Denmark, and I really got the feeling of actually working hard, and got really good influences for my own work.*

In addition to developing the skills that have strictly to do with the teachers work, the participants brought up another important impact of the KA1 mobilities: the **INCREASED OPENNESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF OTHER CULTURES:**

***Learning about cultural issues instead of didactical skills, and developing one's own teacher identity and openness towards new things:***

*I had really high expectations that I would really learn or see something new and concrete that I could apply to my own teaching, but there wasn't really much of that. Instead we came across many things about school culture and teaching methods that really stuck, and we have been able to implement many of these things in our school's daily life and policies.*

*The mobility does not necessarily provide all teachers with much development or new knowledge in their own subject as such, but I am sure that everyone can get some new insights about their teacher identity and learn to appreciate their own working conditions as well.*

*You really do get a lot from the mobilities; to your own life as well, not only strictly the professional side. Just to be able to broaden your way of thinking and seeing the world is in itself a big plus!*

One of the main aims of ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities is to **DEVELOP THE SCHOOL IN ACCORDANCE TO THE SCHOOL'S STRATEGIC GOALS**. The participants of the focus groups did indicate that the mobilities were fairly well connected to the schools' strategy and development goals:

***KA1 mobilities continue a previous cooperation tradition with partner schools:***

*Our school has had Comenius-activities for years, and now we continue the cooperation with the ERASMUS+ project. We felt that the job shadowing activity acted as a sort of a bridge to*

*the new ERASMUS+ program, and that it was a natural continuation of the cooperation between schools that has been going on for years.*

**Concrete changes in school's strategic management after mobility:**

*As a result of the job shadowing visit in Iceland we have made a concrete change in our school's strategy, in that starting from next school year the teachers will return to work one week before the pupils, as opposed to just one day before, which has been the case until now. This will give the teachers more time to carefully plan their teaching and discuss things together before the teaching actually begins. This strategy change was taken straight from the Icelandic model. We have also modified the rhythm of the school day according to the model we observed in Iceland.*

For the sustainability of mobility outcomes, it is crucial that the **SCHOOL LEADER AND COLLEAGUES ARE SUPPORTIVE TOWARDS MOBILITY ACTIVITIES** as well as applying the new ideas and knowledge in practice after the mobility. The focus group participants were all quite unanimous that the atmosphere of their own school communities is very supportive towards mobilities and their outcomes:

**School leaders' support:**

*Our principal really encourages both the teachers and pupils to participate in the international projects. It really does have a positive effect on the whole school culture that the school leader is open for new things.*

*The school leaders' attitude toward the mobilities and international projects is very positive; the attitude of the municipal authorities is sometimes more of an issue, especially if extra funding is needed in addition*

**Collegial support:**

*The colleagues who stay home really support the teacher who goes for a mobility. It does not feel difficult to go when you know that the colleagues take care of your class when you are abroad.*

*If everyone is first given a chance to participate in the mobility and some colleagues choose not to take part, then the way I see it is that in that case there is no reason to complain afterwards when the participating colleagues get to go abroad.*

The goal of the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities is to support both the staff members' own professional development, as well as the whole school's strategic development. The participants of the focus group brought up examples of the outcomes of their own mobility in relation to **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGES IN SCHOOL:**

**New insights about leadership:**

*I got to observe school leader's work and I really got new insights about team leading, as well as utilizing the help of experts in different problematic situations that often arise in the school world.*

**New enthusiasm increases the motivation of pupils and staff:**



*Enthusiasm brings success! Job shadowing gives teachers a new kind of “inner light” about their work, and the newly lit inner light will spread to pupils as well. At their best, these mobilities give a new spark for new enthusiasm which has an effect on the whole school community.*

***Increased international activities in school:***

*The mobility has really increased the internationality in our school. Many teachers have kept in touch with the teachers they have met during the mobility, and we have had visitors from other countries in our school as well.*

The focus group also discussed the different forms of professional development abroad. Mostly the structural courses and job shadowing were under discussion, not so much teaching in a foreign country. The participants voiced their opinions on **THE USEFULNESS AND BENEFITS OF THE DIFFERENT MOBILITY FORMS:**

***Preference for active participation over listening to lectures:***

*Courses that consist of only lectures and active listening are not that beneficial. I think the courses should include mostly active participation and actually doing things instead of listening.*

*Personally I would not participate in a course that would include only lectures. Hands-on activities and active participation is the right way to go.*

***Different mobility forms suit different needs; importance of the host institution’s contribution to the mobility:***

*I have participated in all types of mobilities, and I think all of them are good in their own way. It really depends on the person who is going, and their needs. Also the receiving institutions’ willingness to host a visitor plays an important part in the success of the mobility.*

## **3.2 Focus groups with school leaders**

Two focus group interviews were organized for school leaders. The groups included a total of 10 participants. A few more had initially signed up for the interviews, but unfortunately they had to cancel their participation. The school leaders represented schools of different levels of education, and the schools were located in different parts of Finland. The schools were also managed differently; most of them were municipal schools, but there were also participants from schools that worked under an Educational Consortium or a university.

The main topics of the focus groups were (1) the schools leaders’ attitude towards teachers’ professional development mobilities abroad, (2) the relationship between the mobility projects and the school’s strategic management, (3) support from the local government (municipal level) and the National Agency, (4) advantages brought by mobility projects to teachers’ professional development, and (5) the impact, applicability and sustainability of the mobility outcomes.

### **3.2.1 School leaders attitude towards teachers’ mobility projects abroad**

The school leaders who participated in the focus groups all stated that there is **A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ABROAD** in their school communities. The mobilities

are seen as a positive addition to, or even as a normal and integral part of teachers' continuing professional development:

***International mobilities as part of the regular professional development of teachers:***

*KA1 is seen as the same kind of professional development activity as any others. The positive thing about it is that in this very difficult financial situation the funds for teachers' in-service training are scarce or pretty much nonexistent, so this is actually if not the only, at least one of the best ways for teachers to get any in-service training.*

***Support from school administration:***

*The goal is that the teachers do not have to participate in the mobilities during their own holidays, but instead we try to arrange the mobilities during normal schoolwork.*

*The attitude is very positive. Substitute teachers have been arranged so that colleagues are not burdened too much.*

*Our attitude towards these things is very positive, although financial issues are sometimes an obstacle.*

***Support from colleagues and other school community:***

*The attitude of the school community is positive; colleagues are interested in hearing and learning new things.*

*The atmosphere is very positive; people receive new information eagerly from those who have been out to learn new things, and information is spread very well.*

### **3.2.2 The relationship between the mobility projects and the school's strategic management**

The mobilities' connection to the school's strategic goals is a key feature of the ERASMUS+ KA1 activities. The school leaders indicated in the discussions that **THE GOALS OF THE MOBILITY PROJECTS ARE PLANNED TO SERVE THE SCHOOLS' STRATEGIC AIMS:**

***Mobility projects built in the school's yearly strategy:***

*The mobility project is based on the school's international strategy, which in turn is part of the general strategy of the school. The projects are chosen to correspond with the general direction in which we want to develop the school.*

***Mobility projects as a way to carry on a tradition of international activities:***

*Our school has long traditions in student exchanges. We have tried to make use of the existing expertise in these areas. That way we have been able to successfully combine the course optionality, student exchange connections and the mobilities together.*

***Mobilities designed to support whichever area of school needs developing:***

*We design the mobility to match what we are developing next. In the recent years the area of development has been CLIL-teaching, and we have applied for funds to focus on that. The teachers decide together, what the next, larger topic of development will be.*

***Combination of teachers professional development needs and the school's special areas of emphasis:***

*The mobility projects are linked to whatever needs for professional development the teachers may have, as well as the topics that are emphasized in the school strategy. Also the existing collaboration projects may affect the mobility planning.*

### **3.2.3 Support from local government (municipal level) and the National Agency**

The school leaders who participated in the focus groups stated that the **MUNICIPAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM OR UNIVERSITY ARE GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF SCHOOLS' MOBILITY PROJECTS ABROAD**, but do not have a very active role in the implementation of the projects. Some of the municipalities have an international coordinator who helps with the mobility projects, but many schools plan and execute their projects quite independently. The school leaders were happy with the situation, and did not wish that the municipal government or educational consortium would take a stronger role. The finances of the projects often go through the municipal administration, and this was seen as difficult by some respondents. The focus group participants were **VERY PLEASSED WITH THE SUPPORT FROM THE FINNISH NATIONAL AGENCY (CIMO)**:

***The role and support of the municipal government in the mobility project:***

*We work under the Education Department, which has an active internationality coordinator whose support has been excellent.*

*The Educational Consortium has a large internationality unit, and internationality is one of the central focus points, but in practice the school is responsible for carrying out their own projects.*

*The school works totally independently; the Educational Department does not provide instructions or support. We are happy with the situation as it is. The finances go through the municipal administration, which has been quite difficult and there has been some errors every time.*

*We operate very independently, which has been really great. The finances are handled through the university, and there have been some difficulties and errors with that. Even the university administrators have wondered why it is so difficult.*

***Support from the National Agency (CIMO):***

*The flexibility and support from CIMO has been excellent.*

*We have always got practical advice and instructions from CIMO when we have needed it. CIMO has provided us with all the support we have needed.*

*Our International Coordinator has been in contact with CIMO, and has always received excellent support. I have nothing but positive things to say about it.*

*Support from CIMO has been very good under the application process.*

*We are lucky that our National Agency is one of the best organizers in Europe; we are very privileged. It functions very well and keeps also well in touch with the field.*

### **3.2.4 Advantages brought by mobility projects to teachers' professional development**

The school leaders mentioned advantages that the mobility projects bring to the teachers' professional development. In Finland, teachers have much autonomy and responsibility of their work, and the school leaders generally trust the teachers to do their job well without much active supervision. This shows also in the school leaders' comments about the role of the teaching staff in planning and executing the mobilities. Most principals stated that the teaching staff had a very active role, and much freedom as well as responsibility in planning the mobility projects. In many cases, the **TEACHING STAFF INITIATED AND EXECUTED THE PLANNING AND APPLICATION PROCESS**, and the school leader merely served as a facilitator. According to the focus group participants, the mobilities function as an **IMPORTANT MEANS TO DEVELOP THE TEACHERS' OWN WORK AND GET REFRESHING AND REWARDING EXPERIENCES**:

***Active role of teachers in initiating and carrying out the project planning:***

*The teachers are very active and make suggestions of projects to the principal, who makes the decisions on the content and scale of the project.*

*The mobility projects stem from the interest of the staff. Some teacher will initiate the project and the teaching staff takes care of everything by themselves.*

*The teachers have given initiatives, and as a principal I have answered most of them with "Excellent, we'll go for it".*

*We have had an internationality team for many years; they initiate and inform others of what kinds of projects are available, and make sure that as many teachers as possible can participate. As a principal I rarely meddle with it; I have complete trust in their work.*

*The principal stayed in the background, and did not write the application or choose the participants. The willingness to participate was discussed among teachers, and everything was based on the teachers' own interest.*

***Rewarding experiences from mobilities:***

*The projects have been an important part of the teachers' additional training and an essential part of the yearly routine. It has been good to notice that the Finnish teachers have been able to contribute in the mobilities and share their expertise: Finnish music education is admired abroad, and it is a positive and rewarding experience for the teachers.*

*Mobility projects give the teachers a chance to develop their competencies in various ways, and this affects their morale and energy levels regarding work in a positive way, regardless the amount of work that the mobility entails. It gives inspiration and new energy for developing one's own teacher identity.*

The school leaders also discussed the impact of mobility projects on the teachers' professional development and career opportunities. The participants agreed that **PARTICIPATING IN A MOBILITY PROJECT ABROAD DOES HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**, but as to the career opportunities of teachers, many principals brought up the fact that in Finland, the teachers do not have a traditional "career" with changing titles and promotions, but instead most teachers have the same title from the beginning to the end of their career and the **MOTIVATION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STEMS FROM THE WILL TO IMPROVE ONE'S OWN WORK INSTEAD OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT**.

***Impact of mobility project on teachers' career and professional development:***

Teachers do not get separate compensation for coordinating a mobility project. It does affect the teachers' career in that it is easier to stay motivated and excited about the job.

There is no career in school. One could say that participating in mobilities makes it possible to work on interesting projects as a part of your job, but if we talk about career as something where you move somehow higher up, a school is quite a flat organization. It is more about developing yourself than your career.

Mobilities develop teachers' leadership qualities, as it is all about shared leadership. Other than that, there is no compensation for participation.

It is more about developing yourself professionally, not so much career advancement. It has an enriching effect.

### **3.2.5 The impact, applicability and sustainability of the mobility outcomes**

The focus group participants brought up several aspects of the applicability and sustainability of the outcomes of the mobility projects. One of the main aspects affecting the sustainability was the **DISSEMINATION MEASURES CARRIED OUT AFTER THE MOBILITY**. Most participants did say that dissemination is organized at their school, but there were also comments which suggested that there is still room to improve in that aspect. The biggest challenge for dissemination is, according to the focus group participants, the lack of time and ready structures for active dissemination of ideas within the school:

***Dissemination practices after mobility:***

*Information has been spread systematically. We have had internal training days where the actual methods or models are being introduced. That way the whole community gets the benefit without having to travel.*

*After each trip we have a teachers' meeting where the new information is presented and spread on.*

*"Pedagogical cafés" or other events are organized for the dissemination of new information.*

***Lack of time and resources as problem for dissemination:***

*It is sometimes surprisingly difficult to find time together to share new information and experiences.*

*New ideas are received gladly, but the problem has sometimes been that there hasn't been enough time or opportunities for sharing. We have used some of the meeting times for it, but many think that it could be done more.*

*As a principal I can honestly say that we could do more sharing and disseminating. Mostly the issue is to organize time for it, and systematically sharing experiences. In the upper secondary schools, a busy schedule and the matriculation exam always take time from pedagogical sharing; there is some of it, but I think it could still be increased.*

One of the most important impacts of mobility projects and the European dimension in Education mentioned by the focus group participants was the **INCREASED INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN THE SCHOOL**. The school leaders stated that the effects of the international networking and projects can be seen in the school culture, the teachers, as well as in the students:

***Effects of European dimension in Education in the schools:***

*Internationality is such an important part of schoolwork, that it is difficult to come up with some reason why it is not a part of a global young student's life, and that is why it must be part of the teachers' professional skills as well. It is wonderful to see that the school can be the first place where a student can get his or her first experience of internationality. Everyone who has a chance to share an experience like that with a young person is privileged; it is always a unique experience to be able to see outside one's own environment. That is one of the reasons why these projects are worth doing.*

## 4 Case study findings

Three case studies were conducted to reveal success factors and problems with mobility projects, and describe the mobility experience in more detail from a point of view of a single school and a consortium.

Two of the case studies investigated individual schools, both from the Helsinki metropolitan area. One of the schools was a large upper secondary school, and the other a large, joint comprehensive school and upper secondary school that also serves as a teacher training school.

The third case study dealt with a consortium of a municipality and two schools: a primary school and lower secondary school.

**Research topics** for the case studies were the following:

1. Organization of the mobility
2. Implementation and dissemination of the mobility experience
3. School leader's support and teacher leadership
4. Outcomes of teacher professional development abroad and their impact on school culture and pupils' learning

**Research methods** for the case studies consisted of:

1. Document analysis of the strategic documents of the school or consortium to evaluate the consistency between the strategic documents and the objectives stated in the project application
2. Focus group discussions with mobile staff and non-mobile staff
3. Interviews with school principals and legal representative of the consortium

### 4.1 Case 1: Developing teaching, learning, and evaluation using ICT – a case of an upper secondary school in the Helsinki Metropolitan area

#### 4.1.1 The consistency between the objectives set out in a project application form and strategic documents:

**Strategic goal of the school:** to develop teaching, learning and evaluation using ICT tools and electronic teaching materials. **School priorities:** Developing students' learning skills, using ICT in a pedagogically relevant way, maintaining international cooperation.

**The objectives set out in the application form** (*to update competences in using ICT tools for teaching, learning from best practices of international peers, developing ICT use in teaching to support learning skills of students*) **correspond with the priorities in the strategic plan.** The school's application includes the planned actions to sustain the new experience and knowledge gained from ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility, which are the following:

1. Internal training sessions will be organized to disseminate the outcomes of the project
2. Quality of teaching will be updated and improved
3. Learning environments will be diversified
4. Project outcomes will be disseminated to other schools as well

## 4.1.2 Findings from focus group discussions and interview with school leader

### Research sample

2 focus group discussions and an interview with the school leader:

1. focus group with mobile staff (5 respondents)
2. focus group with non-mobile staff (6 respondents)
3. interview with the school leader (principal)

### Project implementation peculiarities

1. School principal's active role in planning and implementing the mobility project
2. School principal's understanding of the connection of the mobility project to the school's strategic development
3. Mobile staff members value the new contacts and knowledge acquired from the mobility, but also the chance to take time to reflect on one's professional development
4. Non-mobile staff appreciates mobility projects but does not feel that they get enough information about their outcomes

### *School leader's perception*

#### **Connection between ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility project and school strategy**

*Actually, this project stems from the strategic development on the municipal level: all upper secondary schools have a common strategy with specific focus points, such as development of diverse assessment, electronic matriculation exams, usage of digital cloud services in teaching, etc, so the idea for the project really comes from that. In addition, all the schools in the municipality received tablets to use, so this project was good from that perspective.*

#### **School leader's active role in project's planning and application process**

*When I found out that this kind of funding could be applied for, I asked the staff, which subject groups would be interested in participating in this project. So everyone had a chance to express their interest, and the participants were then limited to English and music teachers, because they expressed the most interest. In this specific project I have taken the full responsibility of planning and applying for the project. This project had a very specific goal, to improve the ICT skills to use the newly acquired tablets, so I felt it was easier to just handle all the paperwork by myself. Maybe in the future, especially if we have a larger-scale project, we will form a team of teachers to take responsibility for the application process, but this time I felt it was best to do it this way.*

#### **Dissemination and implementation of mobility outcomes**

*Some of the teachers who have already been to their mobility visit have been showing other colleagues how they have learned to use ICT as an assessment tool. In our municipality we have established something called a "pedagogical afternoon", which is designed as a training and information sharing afternoon for teachers of the same subjects from different schools. Our school's teachers have presented their project outcomes to other teachers in these events and thus disseminated information from the mobilities outside of school. Another way that the information and ideas from mobilities are spread is in the everyday communication in the teachers' offices. Teachers have shared offices with the colleagues from their own subject group, so they disseminate the information to each other. The challenge for the future is to figure out how to spread the information more effectively also from one subject group to another.*



### **Support for teacher professional development activities**

*I think that the more the teachers want to develop their professional competences, the better. So if a teacher suggests that they would like to attend a training, at home or abroad, I try to find a way to make it happen. The development discussions between the teachers and the principal are also a good way to find out the teachers' wishes and needs for in-service training and to encourage them to participate. Finnish teachers are very good as it is, but it is very beneficial to sometimes go abroad and see how things are done elsewhere. It is good to see that things can be done differently somewhere else, but still work equally well.*

### **Impact of a mobility project on teachers' career**

*In Finland the teachers do not really have other career advancement possibilities than to become a retired teacher or a principal... but if one thinks about the employment chances of a teacher who looks for a new job, then I'm sure that these kinds of mobilities give a very good impression to the employer; they show that the teacher is interested in developing their competencies. Also, the teachers who actively participate in the schools' projects can get more responsibility within the school, for example as members of different teams or development groups.*

### **Sustainability of the mobility outcomes**

*I believe that the outcomes of the mobilities will be very sustainable, because the competences and ideas acquired from the mobilities were linked to an already pre-existing process of changing teaching methods, so there was an actual, existing need for those competences that the mobilities answered to. Another reason why I believe that these new ideas will stick, is that the mobilities started from the teachers' own initiative. When you have decided for yourself that this kind of training is useful and that there is a need for it, it is more likely that it will also be useful. I am fairly sure that the teachers who have started to apply the new teaching methods and have noticed them to be efficient and beneficial will not be going back to the more "old-fashioned" way of teaching anymore.*

### **Mobile staff perception**

#### **Benefits of mobility visit to the quality of teachers work**

*Cooperation with colleagues from other countries was really the best aspect of the course; everyone could share ideas and insights with each other. Participating in a week-long training instead of the usual training sessions that last only one afternoon, gives one a chance to really immerse into learning something new. You get a much clearer idea about how you can actually do things differently, when you get to try it yourself, because if you only study the theory of something it is certain that the moment you return to work, the theory is forgotten. But if it is possible to tie the new information onto something you already have tried, it is so much easier to bring it with you and start applying it right away. Being generally open-minded and just seeing something new, it certainly doesn't hurt!*

*Sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues from other countries can also help in realizing the positive aspects in one's own work. This may sound even a bit smug, but I think that Finnish teachers are actually pretty good, so discussing with teachers from other countries makes you realize all the possibilities, the freedom and autonomy that we as Finnish teachers have in our work.*

#### **Mobility as a valuable "time-out" to reflect on one's own work**

*When you have a chance to spend a week somewhere where you can really spend time to reflect on work-related things without the hectic schedule, it is clear that it does improve the quality of your work. It is also*

*really a matter of professional well-being to be able to be somewhere else for a while and reflect on things from a different perspective. Whenever one really takes time to reflect on one's work, it is a great moment for growth and it does affect the quality of the for sure. The teachers tend to be so fully burdened with work and a busy schedule that it doesn't matter where we were sent for a week, we would be happy to get a break to reflect on things.*

### **Support from the school community and school leaders**

*We have been able to share and implement the new ideas as much as we have wanted to and been able to. There hasn't been any sort of jealousy among the school community about the mobilities; the colleagues have been very interested and some of them have also been inspired by the mobilities and realized that "Maybe I could go too", and some of them have now applied for international projects as well. There is so much international activity in our school, that everyone who wants to participate, also has a chance to do it. School leader has been extremely supportive, and did all the paperwork and filled out the applications himself. The teachers did not have to do anything else than express their interest and sign up.*

### **Dissemination of ideas and new knowledge**

*The normal discussions in the teachers lounge or offices are maybe the most common ways to share ideas. We also had a common training afternoon a while back, where we discussed ideas and experiences and presented some of the best ideas to others. It would be great to have more time for discussion and sharing of ideas with the colleagues. We also have a networking system with the other upper secondary schools, which allows for the teachers from different schools can share their knowledge and best practices with each other. It seems that the municipality level has really been activated in that ideas should be shared more between schools as well.*

*When many colleagues have been to these courses and use the same ICT methods, it is easier to apply them in class since the methods are familiar to the students from their other classes as well.*

*The ICT skills gained from the courses make it possible for teachers to have new and different types of exercises in their classes, and activate students who otherwise would perhaps not participate so actively.*

### **Evaluation of teacher professional development forms**

*Courses are useful, as long as there is a clear focus and need; otherwise the benefits can stay quite thin. Language competence can also be a problem, especially if one is going to teach in a different country. If one does not understand the language used in the class, it is not so easy to gain as much from the observation as would be possible otherwise.*

### **Problematic aspects in the mobility implementation**

*The quality of the course is essential for the success of the mobility: even though the leaders of the course did a good job, there had been some lack of information, and many course participants had brought with them devices that were not compatible with the course providers' own devices. This wasted a lot of time from the courses when these compatibility problems had to be solved and dealt with all the time. There were also some problems with the internet connection and other technical problems. Differences in the language skill level of course participants caused some problems, as well as having participants from very different education levels, and thus with very different needs, in the same course.*

### **Non-mobile staff perception**

### **Mobilities and international projects common in the school**

*International activities are a very important, natural part of the everyday life of our school, it is almost considered to be self-evident that there is some projects going on every school year. Even if it is not in such a big role in my own subject, but it does affect the whole school.*

### **Information about the outcomes of on-going projects does not necessarily reach all teachers**

*I don't have very much knowledge about the current ERASMUS+ KA1 project in our school. I know very little about who has been where, and what they have done or learned. I would say that it is the big challenge in our school; how to share the new information more widely. It is often left to the active contribution by the mobile teachers. There has been talk about organizing possibilities for teachers who have participated in the mobilities to share their acquired knowledge in a more structured way, but then no one has taken the responsibility for organizing it and it has never been realized. For us who do not participate, the only information about the project is often the first e-mail or message informing the staff about an upcoming project, and if one does not want to be involved with the project, any further information depends on one's own interest and activeness. Specifically allocated time for sharing of project experiences does not really exist, even though it really would be beneficial. Basically the most likely way of finding out information on the on-going project are the discussions with the mobile colleagues in the common offices, but even that does not necessarily happen. I have asked a while ago if there could be a presentation by the mobile teachers to the rest of us, but it has never happened. I must admit that I don't even know who have participated in the mobilities! The real structures for information sharing are simply not there, and thus the mobile teachers perhaps do not have time to share their experiences or the thought of sharing does not even cross their minds.*

### **Benefits of the mobility for the teachers and school**

*It is good that one has to think about and justify one's own actions when one sees things done in a different way. When you have to explain to someone how you do something, you have to also think about why you do things the way you do. I am sure that the project has been successful in the individual level and beneficial for those who have participated in it, but in a community level it does not seem as successful since so many of us knows almost nothing about it. There could be a wider impact on the whole school if there were clearer structures for sharing and disseminating information after the mobility.*

### **Evaluation of professional development forms**

*Job shadowing sounds very interesting; to be able to really see how school life and education system works in a different country. To be really there to see everything in practice instead of just reasing or hearing about it. As teachers we rarely get a chance to just observe a class without having to participate. It could really be an eye-opening experience.*

*Maybe before the possible next project there could be a more open discussion about what kind of mobility training would be the most beneficial for us; whether or not it is a course, or more of a job shadowing-type project.*

## 4.2 Case 2: Evaluating and developing learning methods in upper secondary school and new learning environments – a case of a teacher training school in Helsinki

The second case study involves a teacher training school that had two ERASMUS+ KA1 projects: one from the call of 2014, and one from 2015. Participants from both projects are included in this case study.

### 4.2.1 The consistency between the objectives set out in a project application form and strategic documents:

**Strategic goals of the school:** to develop learning methods in upper secondary school, and to improve the use of ICT skills in developing new learning environments. **School priorities:** developing teachers' and pupils' ICT skills and new learning environments to meet the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the new Core Curriculum

**The objectives set out in the application forms** (*developing learning methods, improving ICT skills of teachers and of pupils of all ages, developing new learning environments*) **correspond with the priorities in the strategic plan.** In the school's application, these actions to sustain the new experience and knowledge gained from ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility are mentioned:

1. To integrate the relevant outcomes of the mobility into the implementation of the new Core Curriculum
2. To disseminate the new ideas to the teacher trainees
3. To utilize the network of teacher training schools to disseminate the ideas outside of school
4. To extend the benefits of the project to the local community

### 4.2.2 Findings from focus group discussions and interview with school leader

#### Research sample:

2 focus group discussions and an interview with the school leader:

1. focus group with mobile staff (4 respondents)
2. focus group with non-mobile staff (3 respondents)
3. interview with the school leader (principal)

**Project implementation peculiarities:** (1) International projects' strong connection to school strategy, (2) teachers' independence in planning and implementation of the project, (3) strong networking and dissemination structures outside of school, (4) positive attitude and understanding of the benefits of international mobilities on teachers' professional development and quality of teaching.

#### *School leader's perception*

##### **Internationality an important part of school strategy**

*Internationality plays an important role in our school. As a university teacher training school our strategy is linked to the university strategy, where internationality is also in a key role. We get a lot of visitors from all over the world: one to seven groups each week, from teachers and students to ministers; all kinds of visitors. We have partnerships, exchange programs and collaboration with several schools and universities from all over the world. The KA1 in-service training projects have traditionally been a bit separate from the school's strategic development and dealt more with individual people, but I would say that they are at least partly linked to the strategic development of the school as well. We are a large organization and we have multiple*

ongoing projects at any given time, so the school leaders do not necessarily even know all the details about all projects all the time; responsibility about them is shared more widely. It can also be seen as a challenge for our school, as sometimes the information about the projects does not spread as widely among teachers as it could.

### **Teachers' autonomy in planning and implementing projects**

Teachers have traditionally had a very strong role in planning and realizing the projects in our school. They have a lot of autonomy and power to influence what kinds of projects are done here. The principals act more as facilitators for the projects. The themes for the KA1 projects are suggested and planned by the teachers themselves according to what kind of in-service training they feel is needed at any time. The mobility projects abroad are very strongly supported in our school, and teachers are encouraged to be active and participate in different projects.

### **Lack of structures for dissemination among staff a challenge**

Disseminating the new ideas and knowledge learned in the mobility projects has been one of the biggest challenges in our school; there are no existing structures for regular dissemination or changing of ideas between the members of the whole staff, such as a "pedagogical cafés or afternoons". We did try to establish something like that, but it did not work mostly due to the school being such a large organization and staff having such different, busy schedules. It was very difficult to find a time that would suit enough people. However, we are in the process of strategically changing our organization, and we are planning a common meeting time in the schedule for all staff, so hopefully there will be more possibilities for wider dissemination in the future. At the moment, dissemination between staff is mostly done among smaller groups such as subject teacher groups or classroom teachers.

### **Stronger dissemination outside of school than among staff**

As a teacher training school we have good chances to disseminate new knowledge of our staff to the future teachers. All new ideas and teaching methods that our teachers learn and find useful are automatically shared to the teacher trainees. We also have a very active network of other teacher training schools, we organize in-service training and seminars, and many of our teachers are involved in making new textbooks and other teaching material, so dissemination of our teachers' knowledge and ideas outside our school and own staff is very widespread.

### **Mobility projects' strong impact on teachers' professional development and career**

I believe that the mobilities have a very strong impact in professional development of teachers, because whenever a person meets or experiences something new or different, they start to reflect, and whenever a person reflects on things, learning also occurs. I feel that it is very important to see outside of the box from time to time, that is how one experiences new things. It is not only about learning new things in your own teaching subjects, but also about more general things; how the society works, how teachers work, how students interact with each other and the teachers...these things inevitably have an effect on the teacher's own work. Anything that makes a person stop for a while, and think about things in a wider context is beneficial for personal and professional development. As to the career opportunities, it certainly is an asset for a teacher who is looking for a new job if they have experience of in-service training or other international projects abroad. It shows active interest in developing yourself, and also willingness and skill to work hard on a project.

### ***Mobile teachers' perception***

#### **Project theme decided by teachers is strongly connected to the school strategy**

*Participating teachers are selected according to interest; everyone are invited to express their interest, and afterwards the common theme for the project is decided on by those who participate. The common theme for the mobility project really does have a strong connection to the school's strategy; it is not just something we say. It is actually quite remarkable that even though we have teachers from three different educational levels participating, all mobilities in the projects are linked to the common strategy. The project themes are drawn from development needs that we have going on at the time; this time it was changing of the learning methods for upper secondary school.*

#### **Teachers' freedom (and responsibility) to plan and implement the project**

*The school leaders' attitude towards mobility projects is very positive, and we are encouraged to be involved in them. The leaders give us almost complete freedom to plan and implement the projects very independently, but that of course means that we also do most of the work ourselves.*

#### **Coordinating teacher mostly responsible for project planning**

*In our school, the coordinating teacher first comes up with the theme for the project, which then is developed together. Most of the other work in planning the project and writing the application also falls on the coordinating teacher. We do have a common document that everyone involved can modify and participate in editing, but I would say that about 80% of the work piles up on one person. I think that is the biggest problem at the moment. It is also the same with the final report; the tool for writing it is such that not just anyone can go and edit it, so there has to be one person who is in charge. In some other schools the principal takes care of it, or they have a special coordinator whose job it is to handle it. We don't have that, so the coordinating teacher has to do it on top of their own work, without extra compensation.*

#### **Strong networks for dissemination of ideas and knowledge outside of school**

*Within our school we disseminate information mostly in our subject teacher teams; structures or forums for systematic dissemination to the whole staff are not so strong. On the other hand, as a teacher training school we have very good networks and opportunities to spread our knowledge and ideas very widely outside of school: to teacher trainees, the teacher training school network, our numerous cooperation partners... many of us are also involved in making new textbooks, so that is another way of implementing the new ideas we have acquired in the mobilities.*

### ***Non-mobile teachers' perception***

#### **Internationality as part of the everyday life in the school**

*As a university teacher training school, we function as a sort of "display school" to international guests; if there is an international delegation coming to Helsinki to see how a Finnish school works, they are often directed to us. So we get a lot of guests from all over the world and that way we get a lot of international contact in our own school, even if we do not participate in the international mobilities ourselves. Telling foreign visitors about our school system and the learning methods we use is also a good chance to reflect on the way we do things and why we do them the way we do.*

### **Benefits of the mobile projects to teachers and schools**

*It is good to get new ideas and refresh one's thoughts. At best, the whole school will benefit from the new ideas, but at least the teacher certainly will. The benefit can also work both ways: the receiving school or foreign colleagues in the courses can also learn from us. I believe that Finnish teachers have a lot to offer. Acquiring authentic materials from other countries can help refresh and "spice up" the classes; it increases the motivation of the teacher, and also the students, at least for a short while. Learning cultural things can help to make classes more interesting for students and link the subject to the outside world. It is so much easier to reject or ignore things that you feel are separate from the world you live in.*

## **4.3 Case 3: Developing the teaching of art and music education and foreign language education – a case of a consortium of a municipality and two schools in southern Finland**

The third case study is about a consortium of a municipality and two schools in southern Finland. One of the schools is a primary school, and the other a lower secondary school.

### **4.3.1 The consistency between the objectives set out in a project application form and strategic documents:**

**Strategic goals of the schools are** to increase international cooperation to meet the needs of the new Core Curriculum taking effect in August 2016, to support the global education of the pupils by creating new networks for cooperation, increase the positive attitude towards international cooperation in the school community, to get new perspectives for teaching art and music. **The goals correspond with the priorities set out in the strategic plan** (to critically reflect on the existing teaching methods, to develop new, innovative models for teaching).

### **4.3.2 Findings from focus group discussion and interview with the legal representative of the consortium**

#### **Research sample:**

(1) focus group discussion with representatives from both schools (mobile teachers and a principal, 6 participants); (2) interview with the legal representative of the consortium (the Mayor of the municipality) and the director of the Board of Education (2 respondents).

#### **Project implementation peculiarities:**

International aspect of education is highly valued in the educational strategy of the region. The responsibility for planning and carrying out the projects lies almost completely with the schools themselves. The most important impact and focus point changed during the mobility.

#### ***Legal rep. perceptions***

##### **International connections in education are valued**

*Internationality is valued very much in the educational institutions of the region; We have hundreds of foreign students from 42 different countries. Our vocational school has an international programme where students can study in English, which is quite exceptional in Finland. Educational field seeks international connections actively, which is very positive. The projects funded by the European Union are valuable, because the economical situation in the public field is quite difficult at the moment, so any outside resources are very welcome.*

### **Impact of mobility project surprising: turned out to be other than originally planned**

*The mobilities happened so recently that it may be difficult to make any conclusions yet about the long-term impact of the mobilities, but I got the impression that the most significant impact of the mobility experience was the new perspective on interaction between teaching staff and the pupils. It was not the main topic that they went there to develop originally, but during the mobility they all agreed that this was much more important and significant topic to develop than the one that was originally planned.*

### **Schools mostly responsible for implementation of project, municipal authorities' role is very small**

*I must say that the role of the Mayor as the legal representative of the project is mostly to give permission to realize the project, and the responsibility for its implementation lies with the Educational Department and most importantly the schools themselves. The schools choose the themes of their projects themselves, write the applications and carry out the project very independently. Apart from giving formal permission for the project, the municipal authorities do not have any part in it. That is really the way it works here in Finland. It is important that the motivation and willingness to carry out a project comes from the schools. The Educational Department has clear guidelines for participating in these kinds of projects, and as long as these guidelines are followed, everything should work fine.*

### **Mobile staff perceptions**

#### **Teacher's motivation and school leader's support important for the success of mobility project**

*The teachers' own motivation and interest in developing the school and their professional development is essential for the project to be successful. Another important factor is the support from the school administration and school community; it is easier to get motivated in participating in the project when you know that you have the support of the school leaders behind you. And on the other hand, if the school leaders do not have a positive attitude for participating in international projects, it is much more difficult and burdensome for the teachers to realize the project all on their own.*

#### **Focus of the mobility project shifted mid-project**

*Initially the main focus point for our project was to develop the teaching of art and music, as well as foreign languages in our school. During the mobilities, however, the aspect that made the biggest impression to all of us was the warm atmosphere in the school and the communication and cooperation of the teaching staff and pupils. New understanding and perspective about the interaction and atmosphere between teachers and students was really the most valuable experience that we got from the project, not so much the new teaching and learning methods that we originally went there to learn about.*

#### **Value of participating in the mobility as a group, and with two schools from different educational levels**

*Since we had teachers from both the primary school and lower secondary school, we were able to see things also from the perspective of the other level, not just our own. I think it also makes it easier for our schools cooperate together in the future, since we have a better understanding of the points of view of both school levels. Participating in the mobility together as a group has also the benefit that the participants can share their experiences after each day, and also get the points of view of the other teachers. There is always something you have missed, but your colleague may have picked up on. Maybe the visits to the individual classes could have been realized in pairs or smaller groups, but in general the large group offers so much larger scope of knowledge, when we get to share all of our experiences together.*



## 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Conclusions on survey results

The respondents who had participated in ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities were generally very satisfied with the mobility visits, especially the intercultural experience provided by the mobility. The satisfaction was even greater in larger towns and cities.

More than 90 % of the mobility participants did at least some preparing for the mobility. The most common way of preparation was to study the culture of the mobility country. Other popular ways to prepare for the visit were to read about the educational system in the mobility country, to search for additional information about mobility topics and to prepare teaching material for the visit.

The teachers report the most significant personal changes in their general competences, both cultural and social. **Out of the different ways of preparing for the mobility, studying materials about the culture of the mobility country was the most beneficial in gaining the most advantages as a result of the mobility.**

Teachers who studied culture-related materials reported a deepened understanding about the cultures and educational systems of other countries more often than others. They also reported making foreign contacts, becoming more open for change, improving the practical use of foreign languages and developing their skills for working with people from different cultures more often. The results of the survey thus suggest that careful preparation before the mobility helps in developing different professional competencies during the visit.

According to the survey results, **the most mobility-related change was perceived in the school culture; that is, the internationality, openness and tolerance in the school.** In addition to changes in school culture, another impact that was recognized by respondents was the acquisition of **new learning methods.** **Curricular and organizational changes** were noticed much less often than the cultural changes.

Both the mobile and non-mobile respondents were reluctant to give an opinion on the impact of the mobility on the **pupils' learning process.** Reluctance to take a stance was especially strong about the impact of the mobility on **pupils' learning results.** As standardized exams and tests in general are used very little in Finland, and the assessment of the pupils is based on continuing assessment of each pupil's work at school instead of test results, it is difficult for the teachers to notice a change in all of the pupils' learning results at once. This may partly explain why the teachers' reluctance to comment on the pupils' learning results, and especially on the effect of the mobility on them.

According to the survey results, **the mobilities affect teachers' performance in areas that are considered important or highly valued by the pupils.** A majority of pupils also reported that the teachers gave more interesting classes, projects and homework after professional development mobility abroad. Thus the mobilities may have a positive effect on the pupils' learning motivation.

The parents' survey results indicate **that parents think that the schools' international projects are useful and that the parents are informed quite well about the projects.** The survey results also clearly suggest that the parents appreciate and think very highly of school internationality and teachers' professional development abroad.

The respondents of the survey were satisfied with the support they have received from CIMO, the Finnish National Agency. **A clear majority of the respondents perceived that the support from CIMO is helpful and timely, and the funding of projects is transparent.** They also agreed that there is **enough information** available about the programme. The only thing that the respondents were not so happy about was the clarity of the information about the programme, and especially the **complexity of the application form received critique.**

**Sharing information and experiences orally with colleagues** was by far the most popular form of dissemination reported by the mobile teachers and also noticed by the non-mobile teachers. Other dissemination methods were used considerably less. According to the survey results, dissemination of mobility-related knowledge and ideas **outside of school** is not very common.

The results of the survey indicate that most the mobile and non-mobile **respondents are content with the support of the school leader in realizing the mobility project.** The involvement of other, non-mobile colleagues is perhaps not perceived to be very necessary for the process, as about 40 % of the respondents chose to not take a stance when asked about the non-mobile colleagues involvement in the project.

When asked about the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility projects' significance in **teachers' assessment and further career**, about a fifth of the mobile teachers and a third of the non-mobile **teachers did not want to give an opinion about that statement but chose the option "neither agree nor disagree"**. This may reflect the fact that in Finland teachers are not personally inspected or assessed in an official way, but instead they have a great autonomy to choose their own pedagogical methods. Finnish school system does not have a hierarchical "career" for teachers; there are no "senior teachers" or other titles that the teachers are promoted to. Thus some of the respondents may have felt reluctant to comment on the assessment or career of teachers, since in Finland those things are mostly not applicable.

## 5.2 Conclusions on qualitative results

Importance of new personal contacts that are made during the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobilities was a theme that was brought up in many instances in the qualitative research results. The contacts with colleagues from other countries had resulted in increasing the internationality in schools, and further international projects had been started with help of those contacts. The personal contacts and friendships, as well as cultural experiences were valued even higher than the more concrete teaching skills that may have been the original reason to participate in a mobility project.

The participants in all the focus groups stated that there is a positive attitude in the school communities towards teachers' professional development abroad. The mobilities are a positive addition to, or even seen as a normal and integral part of teachers' continuing professional development. Especially in the current economic situation, when there are not as much funds for the in-service training, the possibilities for teachers' in-service training abroad are seen as an important resource.

According to the qualitative research results, the ERASMUS+ KA1 mobility projects in Finnish schools are often initiated, planned and executed by the teaching staff, with the school leaders and municipal administration serving only as a facilitator. The Finnish teachers have much autonomy and responsibility, and the school leaders generally trust the teachers to do their work well without much active supervision,

and thus the teachers are in a very active and independent role in realizing the mobility projects and activities.

Dissemination of the project results and new ideas is done at least in some level in all schools that were part of the qualitative research. The biggest challenge for dissemination in school is, however, the lack of time and ready structures for active dissemination of ideas within the school. The teachers' hectic schedules allow for little structured dissemination, and instead much of the dissemination is done more informally, in discussions with colleagues. According to the results from the focus groups and interviews, there is a need for more structures built in the operations of the school to disseminate project results in a more effective way, so that the spreading of information and project outcomes would not only depend on the activeness of the individual mobile teachers to share information.