

## Concept note on new aspects of the CHARM-EU mobility system

### 1. Context, background information

International student and employee mobility by the Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessors have been a key component of the European Higher Education Area throughout the last decades. Based on this heritage, the European Commission's European Universities Initiative aims to create inter-university campuses that put a special emphasis on mobility frameworks that provide accessible and seamless mobility options to all students and employees of the partner universities.<sup>1</sup>

Fully aligned with these aims, the CHARM-EU European University Alliance is preparing a unique system in which mobility is considered as a 'norm'.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the alliance is committed to providing its students and employees - including teachers, researchers, and non-academic staff - with a wide range of inclusive mobility opportunities, diversifying mobility schemes and continuously monitoring, evaluating and, if necessary, modifying mobility activities for quality improvement. As part of the CHARM-EU development process, there is a considerable emphasis on mobility within all the relevant work packages of the alliance.

### 2. Conceptual framework

As indicated in the project application, the first activity of the Mobility work package (WP5) is to explore the different mobility types and pathways and create a tailor-made mobility matrix scheme for CHARM-EU students and employees, embedded within all phases of curricula design, teaching and learning strategies, and services. The mobility matrix is a dynamic network of concepts and implementation tools towards achieving mobility as the norm in teaching and learning.

The starting point of the development process was to identify international mobility activities that have already been funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, including different forms of student and employee mobility. In parallel, a brief desk research of the relevant literature on international mobility and an extensive stocktaking exercise of the best mobility practices have been conducted.

The Mobility work package hereinafter identifies mobility as a key tool for quality enhancement on teaching and learning processes of the future students and employees of the CHARM-EU Alliance. The aims and implementation of the

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2019): EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES - A key pillar of the European Education Area. Factsheet. <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/european-universities-initiative-factsheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CHARM-EU European University Alliance application



mobility activities are inseparable from the overarching CHARM-EU educational principles<sup>3</sup>, teaching and learning aims and delivery of these activities. Therefore the Mobility work package recommends not to evaluate and award mobility as an independent notion, rather as a guiding framework of the three mission components of higher education, namely 1) teaching and learning, 2) research, development and innovation, and 3) 'third mission' (service to society or outreach).

Mobility principles and schemes, furthermore, shall be defined according to the shared sustainability principles and should reflect on the growing importance of ICT supported teaching and learning context. Last, mobility shall be organised alongside the inclusivity principles, defined in the Inclusivity work package, paying special attention to sensitive target groups.

### 3. Preliminary results

Bearing in mind the aforementioned conceptual considerations, our Mobility work package intends to broaden the horizons regarding the general categories of the current Erasmus+ Programme that are referred to as 'traditional mobility categories and activities'. As a part of it, our work package is mapping out and defining 'non-traditional mobility subcategories and activities' within the broader categories of mobility activities of the Erasmus+ Programme, based on activity and process goals.

Through introducing the term 'non-traditional mobility subcategories and activities', our work package aims to emphasize new aspects of mobilities, in terms of goals, modality, length, regularity of meetings, beneficiaries and other participants involved, etc. It is also important to highlight that most of the identified activities are not considered as 'new types', because these activities have already existed in different forms, but neither were officially and consciously defined in the Erasmus+ Programme nor were widespread outside of the programme.

The mobility matrix focuses on core business and analysis of tasks associated with different roles, including students (bachelor's, master's and PhD), teachers/researchers (academic staff), as well as higher education professionals and administrative support staff (non-academic staff).

A) The identified subcategories and activities concerning students and all three groups of employees are as follows:

1. Learning and development activities, including credit mobility/semester exchange, single course mobility, traineeship/internship/placement, community service, student startup, living lab, or participating in a

<sup>3</sup> CHARM-EU educational principles are as follows: challenge-driven; research-led, research-based; sustainability; technology-enhanced; student-centred; situated, authentic learning; disciplinary depth; transversal skills; transdisciplinarity; inclusivity; mobility.



workshop, seminar, staff week, skills training, employee training, international contest, summer/winter course/school, conference, field trip/excursion, fieldwork as a participant, job shadowing, mentoring, coaching, or creating, sustaining and participating in faculty learning communities;

2. Teaching activities, such as curricular teaching activity, participating in summer/winter course/school or field trip/fieldwork as a lecturer, participating in a staff week or a conference as a speaker, providing writing retreat, thesis supervision/tutoring, mentoring, as well as contributing to international contests and facilitating collaborative projects as a teacher;
3. Pedagogical design and development activities, including development of teaching materials, course development, curriculum design and counselling;
4. Research activities, such as participating in a collaborative research project, a field research or participating in writing retreat;
5. Professional, administrative and support activities will be defined in a later phase of the development process.

#### B) The innovative elements of our work in progress:

1. Considers mobility as an indispensable and integral conception within the teaching and learning processes and curricula design, not as an independent and external layer within the implementation of the three main mission components of higher education.
2. Explores and organises non-traditional mobility categories and activities into a structured system that could be promoted and supported as part of the current Erasmus+ Programme scheme and its successor. This systematisation of the mobility categories and activities creates a unique added value for the development of teaching and learning strategies, as well as the curricula design processes.
3. Highlights new dimensions of regularity and modality for contact-making. Besides activities that are implemented in consecutive days, there are activities that require only occasional face-to-face meetings, while others can be replaced and supplemented by virtual meetings, creating space for blended work processes.
4. Targets professional activities instead of mobility opportunities and tries to enhance given activities with mobility-elements which would allow cross-disciplinary and role boundaries (e.g. teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students working together on curriculum development). In this case the combination of different activity-types in one mobility-setting would be possible (see point 4/a).



5. Benefits of supporting and promoting mobility activities of non-traditional modality types in the European Education Area are as follows:
  - a. Blended or virtual international knowledge exchange fosters longer, product-oriented development projects that do not require consecutive physical presence for the whole duration of the activity but occasional face-to-face meetings.
  - b. Mobility activities carried out in non-traditional modalities are much more suitable to fluid situations such as potential additional short notice lockdowns due to COVID-19.
  - c. Through more intensive initiations of blended and virtual international knowledge exchange, the negative environmental consequences of international mobility are mitigated.
6. Promotes non-traditional mobility activities not only within the frames of development projects, but also their implementation in a broader spectrum of higher education in order to acquire wider-scale achievements.
7. Through non-traditional mobility, systematically supports underrepresented groups, promotes and protects equal rights and equity of access of students and staff regardless of age; disability; gender; sexual orientation; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; and socioeconomic background, aligned with the guiding principles of the European Education and Training 2020 Strategy and the Erasmus+ Programme.<sup>4</sup>

#### C) Funding suggestions for introducing non-traditional mobility activities:

1. The future Erasmus+ Programme shall finance professional development and learning goals, not predefined forms of mobility types. In terms of skill and competence development, activities are just means to reach a certain goal. If funding is focused on goals (and their implementation), modality or duration would have weighed less from an administrative perspective as activities could fall under one unifying category (ease of paperwork). Therefore, both of modality and length aspects should be subordinated to the purpose of the mobility to support reaching the aims of the learning and development processes. Of course, these learning goals have to be implemented through mobility activities, but the form of the activity shall be defined by the exact learning aims and goals, and not the form should define the possible learning activities.

<sup>4</sup> Article 23, REGULATION (EU) No 1288/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC



2. The successor of the current Erasmus+ Programme shall allocate a certain amount of its KA103 budget for the universities for flexible use in order to support the piloting of the aforementioned non-traditional mobility types that are defined by the learning goals, with special emphasis on the new aspects on length and modality of these activities. Also, learning activity-based reporting mechanisms shall be promoted regarding non-traditional mobility activities, focusing on the achievement of the learning goals.
  - a. E.g.: Clara wants to develop a course in an international collaborative project. The project group needs a kick-off-meeting to discuss the work and create a common ground. Project participants work from home focusing on the different parts of the project/course with occasional online check-in. After designing the course, another meeting is required to discuss results and fine-tune the plan. In the pilot phase, the group is testing the design in the reality (as a classical teaching mobility) but with others from the group acting as peers (e.g. as a lesson study) or as job shadowing, making notes on how the course works (e.g. the first two and second last occasion in the semester 2-2 weeks). After watching one of the teachers implementing the course, peers would provide feedback and fine-tune the course based on the experiences.
3. The future Erasmus+ Programme shall promote pair/group application and report more frequently in order to better achieve activity goals (e.g. mentoring, implementing a collaborative project, research group presenting at a conference, etc.), while collaborative reporting might be introduced for creating better professional alignments.

#### 4. How to read the mobility matrix outline below?

CHARM-EU university delegates from five universities drafted the first version of student and employee mobility matrix that collect and present the various traditional and non-traditional mobility activities. In the outlined version presented below, activities are classified under subcategories that aim to define the broad goals of these activities (see the vertical axis). On the horizontal axis, we provided a general description for the activities (also, the complete version refers to six basic variables in terms of possible participants involved, duration, regularity of meetings, modality, form of participation and funding options available. Options for CHARM-EU curriculum integration were also considered and included in the complete version in order to support the establishment of synergies with the developments of the curricula design and teaching and learning work packages.)

The mobility matrix is used internally as part of the CHARM-EU development process on 3 different levels:



1. Supports the conceptualisation of mobility as part of the curricula design (work package 3) and teaching and learning strategies (work package 4);
2. Provides an input in a form of a 'menu' for the relevant work packages to choose from when it comes down to the development phase;
3. Guides the implementation of mobility activities, supported by supplementary management and administrative services that will be discussed in detail in an interactive mobility handbook.

The mobility matrix aims to be used externally for the purposes as follows:

1. For the validation of the aforementioned non-traditional mobility activities in the piloting phase of CHARM-EU,
2. Based on the result of the testing phase, for the promotion of the defined non-traditional mobility activities outside of the CHARM-EU Alliance, and
3. To provide a coherent blueprint for other consortia considering making mobility an integrated part of their curricula as well as their teaching and learning strategies.

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