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Erasmus Goes Green
Policy recommendations

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I. Introduction

Where do we stand?

In 2021, Erasmus+ made a breakthrough in the environmental and climate goals, specifying the latter as a horizontal priority in the annual work programme and the programme guide by providing support across all sectors to raise awareness on environmental challenges. However, as addressed in the research for the CULT committee[1] (IPOL, 2020), the Erasmus+ programme, among others, lacks a baseline on environmental goals and monitoring outputs. Moreover, the political commitment of 20% of EU spending being used on climate objectives is not translated into the regulatory framework of Erasmus+, which does not allow for a comparable calculation of the carbon-related emissions of the programme.

The Erasmus Goes Green project was developed in a very strategic time, between the end of the old and the beginning of the new Erasmus+ programme, which allows project results to be considered for implementation during the 2021-2027 programming period and to feed into the midterm review implementation of the programme.

Objective

These policy recommendations are directed to the three levels of Erasmus+ Programme management - European, national and institutional - and attempt to describe a process of analysis and recommendations for each level, in order to achieve specific transport-related carbon reduction targets at multiple programmatic and geographic levels. The overarching objective of the recommendations is to provide each stakeholder with an action framework to help them transform the Erasmus+ mobility activities into more environmentally friendly ones. Ultimately, this document aims to encourage the three target groups to consider a collaborative approach and join forces to foster a transformation towards a greener Erasmus+.

Methodology

To achieve the best results possible, the European University Foundation (EUF) and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) worked together to develop the Erasmus Goes Green policy recommendations, with the support of all consortium partners. Firstly, the team conducted a review

[1] European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)

of existing policy recommendations and/or national/European strategies at institutional, national and European level. Secondly, a thorough analysis of previous project results[2] were conducted, in order to substantiate these results into policy recommendations. They will inform decision-makers on how to promote environmentally-friendly internationalisation by proposing changes to the Erasmus+ programme that help to lower its transport-related CO2 footprint. Finally, this document was a product of rich and fruitful discussions within the consortium and with relevant stakeholders.

II. Executive Summary

The Erasmus Goes Green policy recommendations put forward a range of measures we deem would have a **strong impact on bettering the environmental sustainability of the Erasmus+ programme**. These recommendations target policymakers in charge of the Erasmus programme management at the central level (European Commission), at the decentralised level (Erasmus+ National Agencies), and at the institutional level (higher education institutions).

The **key action** which we believe would really impact positively the carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme is to **offer to every student one ticket for a sustainable mode of transport** (e.g. train), that covers the outward and return journey. This would mark a historical shift of the Erasmus+ programme towards sustainability and would set a great example for the rest of the European communities.

The other key messages that these recommendations aim to convey are:

- The importance of **clear strategies** at all three levels to reduce the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme.
- The importance of providing support to higher education institutions (HEIs), students and staff to promote behavioural change.

Actions to raise awareness at all three levels can contribute to increase the ecological literacy of students and staff members and stimulate a sustainable behavioural change. Furthermore, there is a strong need to raise awareness and encourage positive action among Erasmus+ staff by creating a framework of environmental sustainability competences, which would help them to take action and promote sustainability better. Besides that, agents at the three levels could play the role of European, national and local ambassadors and involve public stakeholders, such as communities, operators of alternative means of transport, student organisations and higher education councils in the transition

[2] *Assessment of the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme*, and *Reducing the carbon footprint of Erasmus mobilities through incentives and carbon offsetting*

to sustainable mobility. If we aim to motivate students and staff to travel sustainably to their Erasmus+ mobility destinations, we cannot expect them to tackle the issues that are (most likely) going to appear along the way alone. Since the Erasmus+ programme is one of the biggest initiatives promoting travel between different EU countries, low-emission travel between EU countries should be not only feasible but also pleasant. Therefore, we encourage the alternative modes of transport operators to accelerate the process of improving their booking system and make it standardised, regularly updated and well-coordinated at European level. In the end, if we truly aim to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, as per the
European Green Deal proposal, we need to promote structural change and not leave it to individuals to make a change when realistic solutions to do so are not offered to them

A. Defining strategic goals at European, National and Institutional level to assess (and aim towards reducing) the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme

1. European Level

The European level strategy should establish different intervention points with a clear timeline. The list of recommendations below is not exhaustive; it gives an overview of the observations made by the consortium of the Erasmus Goes Green project. It is, however, necessary that European authorities put in place policies, measures and tools to make low-emissions Erasmus+ mobility the norm.

- **One student, one sustainable transport ticket**

If one is aiming to reduce the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme, the measure that will have the biggest impact would be to steer its participants to use more sustainable means of transport to travel to and return from mobility. The green top up that is currently being implemented is an example of a step in this direction, but the amount of the top up awarded is, in most cases, not enough to cover the difference between an inexpensive plane ticket and a more sustainable mode of transport. This places the burden on students to make the “right” choice and cover the extra costs, without any further support.
To truly make the Erasmus+ programme more environmentally sustainable, we advocate for every student to receive one ticket to travel sustainably that covers the outward and return journey. This would revolutionise the way the journey to the Erasmus+ mobility destination and back is perceived, making it an experience, and have a tremendous impact on the transport-related carbon footprint of

the programme. Ultimately, this measure would also have an impact at European level, shifting the way whole generations of students would see transport connections within Europe.

ESN and Erasmus by Train have already launched a joint call that advocates for the allocation of a free Erasmus+ ticket for every student. The "A ticket for Europe" initiative, which advocates for the creation of a ticket adapted to the needs of Erasmus students, would make it much easier and cheaper for them to reach their host city and return through low-emission means of transport.

- **Adapting the information collected in the reporting tools to collect data for transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme**

The objective of collecting data from each institution participating in the Erasmus+ programme is to allow European bodies to identify the travel-related carbon footprint levels and to monitor the actual CO2 emissions of the programme, as well as analyse the result of the implemented decarbonisation actions. This kind of analysis would allow for tailored and strategic targets and actions to be set and implemented, and researchers could use the data to develop studies on the environmental sustainability of the Erasmus+ programme, as previously done by the Erasmus Goes Green consortium.

Particularly regarding international mobility, the Beneficiary module has already been updated to request the actual distance in kilometres, as well as the main mode of transport used[3]. However, there are still several grey areas in which data collection could be improved, such as the ones related to Key Action 2 flows. Institutions, national agencies (NAs), as well as the European Commission will have to ensure that the data collection reporting is consistent with the rules of the general data protection regulation (GDPR). The feasibility of implementing such a regulation will largely depend on its technical design, which should be based on the digital infrastructure deployed under the European Student Card Initiative.

- **Setting targets for the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme & monitor its evolution**

As mentioned above, one of the horizontal pillars of action for the Erasmus+ programme is its environmental sustainability, and there are several measures implemented to promote it, one of them being the green top-up currently available for students and staff. This incentive directly influences the transport-related carbon footprint of the programme, but so far there aren't any mechanisms in place

[3] https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/NAITDOC/Add+mobility+activities+to+projects

to measure its implementation, impact and evolution, nor any goal in terms of CO2 footprint reduction that the programme has to achieve or even an identified KPI of how many students should benefit from this green top-up.

Setting clear targets is very important to ensure the policies are focused and can thus potentiate behavioural change. Ultimately, the programme should aim towards carbon neutrality in the long term, which is why it is necessary to set a legal ceiling for carbon emissions in the short and mid-term. This would make it possible to follow an overall decrease in carbon footprint of mobility.

We believe that the inclusion of such a target in the regulation related to the establishment of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 is very important. This document, published in May 2021, could be amended after the mid-term evaluation of the programme. By including indicators related to the CO2 footprint of Erasmus+ in terms of transport, it would emphasise and promote the need for change in practices to make the programme more sustainable.

Additionally, a monitoring system in place would promote transparency and increase awareness of the impact that the projects and initiatives of the Erasmus+ programme would have on the environment. The Beneficiary module already requests the main mode of transport and actual distance in kilometres, which should provide the necessary data to monitor the evolution, but a monitoring process is yet to be publicly created.

- **Implementing measures and tools to facilitate the transition to an Erasmus+ programme with a reduced transport-related CO2 footprint**

There are numerous short- and mid-term measures and actions that could be implemented to achieve a carbon-footprint reduction. It is important, however, to keep a long-term vision of carbon-neutrality of the higher education sector, which will be hardly achievable without planning carbon-offsetting strategies (e.g., investment in renewable energies, water cleaning, food waste reduction/management, ecological stoves, carbon capture, planting trees, etc.). Thus, creating a framework setting guidelines and concrete actions for HEIs on how to reduce their carbon footprint would be necessary to facilitate the implementation at institutional level.

Below are listed examples of three important measures, which we believe should be implemented in the short-term in order to accelerate the transition process:

- **Defining Erasmus+ conversion factors for HEIs reporting of greenhouse gas emissions**

Conversion factors mean the approximated average emissions per passenger per kilometre and are key when identifying the carbon footprint (CF). One of the main results of the Erasmus Goes Green project was the Assessment of the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme report. In the context of this report, the carbon emissions from the programme period 2021-2027 are estimated at 1,503,646 CO2eq. tonnes (high emissions scenario), 1,133,654 CO2eq. tonnes (average emissions scenario), 668,750 CO2eq. tonnes (low emissions scenario). In order to avoid potential biases, European authorities could provide conversion factors' spreadsheets with fixed values to be used for such conversions by HEIs, national offices and NAs, including a step-by-step guide on how to use them. This will facilitate the analysis of the carbon footprint at institutional and national level and will ensure coherence between the reports. Moreover, as recent studies have shown (Lee et al., 2020), non-CO_2 aviation emissions contribute significantly to global warming and it becomes extremely important to consider them for a proper evaluation of the Erasmus+ impact.

- **Updating existing tools to facilitate green travelling in the programme**

The tools used in the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme are slowly adapting to the overall goal of making it more environmentally sustainable (e.g. the Beneficiary module already requests data on the main means of transport and the distance in kilometres to the mobility destination). However, we believe that visualising the actual transport-related carbon footprint of an Erasmus+ mobility could have an impact on the choice of transport made by students and staff. We would therefore also recommend to integrate the EGG CO2 footprint calculator in the tools used for planning (e.g. Erasmus+ App) and reporting the Erasmus+ mobilities, as well as enable every grant agreement for mobility to include information about the CO2 footprint that travelling to the mobility destination via different means of transport would have. Ultimately, this could translate into specific goals being set by students and staff on their mobility agreement regarding the CO2 ceiling of their mobility, which would certainly impact their choices and decisions.

- **Creating an environmental sustainability competence framework for Erasmus+ staff**

There is still a long way to go to make sure that staff directly involved in the implementation of Erasmus+ understands and proactively works towards integrating environmental sustainability in their practices. For example, in the Green Erasmus research that focused on HEIs staff, 87,3% of staff agree or strongly agree that environmental sustainability is something they would like to learn more about,

and 76,3% strongly agree that environmental sustainability is something that HEIs should actively incorporate and promote.

A framework at European level could be created to describe the tasks and responsibilities required by Erasmus+ staff to support the global environmentally sustainable values and objectives of HEIs. Further to providing learning material on the subject, the framework would provide clear guidelines on the steps and processes they would need to go through to include environmental sustainability in their practices. The Framework of Erasmus+ Staff Competences created in the context of the Erasmus+ funded FESC project, as well as the GreenComp one - created by the Joint Research Centre - could be used as an inspiration.

2. National Level

National Agencies have a key role in showing the right direction and guiding HEIs towards sustainability. They also play a very important role when it comes to creating a space for discussion and sharing of good practices. Additionally, they are well placed to promote behavioural change and remind institutions and Erasmus+ participants (both international outgoing and incoming students) that everyone can contribute to greening the Erasmus+ programme by committing to certain sustainable actions. As suggested by AEF-Europe during the event Travelling differently for a sustainable internationalisation, a possible incentive for HEIs would be to create an eco-responsible charter for Erasmus+-funded projects. The timing is also something that is crucial in terms of setting and implementing strategies. Be it awareness raising, educating or requesting more tangible actions, such as signing a charter, it is important that it comes at the right time. For example, when universities are considering joining the Erasmus+ programme, they should be informed that they need to have a green approach towards international travelling. For those that already hold an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), it is important that they receive regular support and education on sustainable travelling.

3. Institutional Level

- **Create an institutional framework for Erasmus+ sustainable travels**

An institutional framework for sustainable travels made by each HEI that holds an ECHE, is an important step towards having a clear vision, strategy and action plan on reducing or replacing air travel when feasible. Furthermore, this would be a reference document for all Erasmus+ participants

in any given HEI to inform themselves about cultural changes in response to environmental and climate issues. Therefore, when preparing the plan, it is important to underline and include, but not limiting to the following:

- What is the HEI's (air) travel policy?
- What kind of support is provided to individuals to make sustainable travel decisions?
- What is the role of students in advocating and acting as sustainable travel actors?

- **Strengthen the position of students as active actors in promoting sustainability**

Given that students play a central role in the HEIs daily life, it is important to ensure that they are involved in its sustainability strategy if we want it to be successful. By engaging students, we have not only more people brainstorming to move things forward, but also agents of change who can influence their peers thus making a bigger impact within HEIs and on the society at large. An example of such an involvement would be organising workshops moderated by students about sustainable organisations for the Erasmus+ day's events. In order to strengthen the students' position in promoting sustainability, mutual collaboration with international relations officers (IROs) would be very beneficial.

- **Implement an air travel policy**

Despite the fact that many HEIs are aware of their impact on climate change and the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are produced by air travel, policies within this area seem to be lagging behind (Kreil & Stauffacher, 2021, Glover et al., 2018, Hoolohan et al., 2021). Thus, it is recommended that each HEI includes in its core mission to pursue an emissions reduction air travel policy compatible with the European Green Deal goals and to focus on reducing/replacing air travel with more sustainable means of transport. More details are shared in the section Limit the use of certain modes of transport under specific conditions.

- **Training and/or recruiting of staff for sustainability roles**

Providing the opportunity for feedback and advice by a competent staff member is an important asset for institutions to achieve their sustainability goals. Outbound students and staff members need such a point of contact, to be able to reach out in case of questions, and/or systematically be provided with travel guidance to cohorts travelling to certain destinations. This could involve providing decision-

making tools, such as maps or flowcharts, or it could involve more intensive measures, such as providing case-specific feedback and advice, per trip or per individual.

This recommendation can be a logical continuation of the suggestion to create an environmental sustainability competence framework for Erasmus+ staff mentioned above. It is thus advisable for institutions to evaluate their staff force and assess training needs, to provide either in-house training, use external trainers, or recruit new staff to meet the requirements of this framework.

- **Build social norms within the institution**

This recommendation suggests a change in the institutional culture in a way to sensitise the responsibility of students and staff members on making sustainable travel choices.

A starting point could be to raise awareness about the bias in the perception of travel time durations. For example, travellers don't always consider door-to-door travel time. This stresses the importance of practical and informative communication. The more people are convinced of the availability and feasibility of alternatives, the more likely air travel will be substituted.

- **Assess the actual carbon footprint of the HEI and compare with European targets**

Before institutions start to work on improving anything related to their carbon footprint, it is essential that they are aware of its situation, so that they can not only identify the most urgent areas to tackle, but also track the impact of the measures created to address them. Making it a standard to regularly assess the impact HEIs' activities have on the environment and compare it with targets set at European level will create a system that promotes continuous improvement and can therefore have greater impact on the long term.

There are several resources that were created to support HEIs in implementing this assessment, such as the EUSTEPS University Footprint Calculator, that will simplify this process.

B. Improve the support provided to HEIs, students and staff to promote behavioural change

There are a variety of theories that attempt to explain why, despite there being a change in hard factors such as duration or cost conditions, behaviour may remain static. Measures to influence and support travel behaviour will vary according to the strategy for carbon footprint reduction and the possible solution that the strategy is targeting - in other words, whether the participants attempt to **avoid, improve, or shift travel**. In this sense, the support provided by Erasmus+ European and National

bodies as well as HEIs could follow these behavioural measures, aiming for a gradual and widespread behavioural change. For example, it would be beneficial to integrate sustainable travel experiences as learning outcomes of the mobility experience of students, asking them to report on their experience and awarding them with badges that can appear in the diploma supplement.

1. European Level

- **Increase the green top-up**

The new Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 brought the novelty of a top-up amount to individual support for green travel, commonly known as the green top-up, being offered to both students and staff. This consists of a single contribution of 50 euros and up to four extra travel days for the return trip, representing an incentive to travel sustainably. Albeit it is a good initiative, it is clearly an insufficient one. The Green Erasmus research showcases that, despite high levels of concern about climate change, price remains the most important criterion that influences the consumer choices for mobile students when it comes to their choice of means of transportation.

To incentivise more people to travel sustainably and to make sustainable travel accessible and inclusive for students and staff from all socio-economic backgrounds, it is important to ensure that the higher costs deriving from low-emissions options are better reflected in the top-up amount. The Green Erasmus consortium is advocating for an increase to up to 250 euros for the top-up amount, according to the distance covered, and to up to seven days of individual support. If approved, the proposal would be a step forward in the policies related with making sustainable travel for and Erasmus+ mobility a reality, and one that the Erasmus Goes Green consortium strongly supports. This would be a measure that could be implemented right away, while the provision of sustainable travel tickets to each student is not yet implemented.

- **Additional organisation support for initiatives related with sustainable travelling**

HEIs should be encouraged to develop concrete initiatives promoting sustainable travel within their EU-funded projects, since they play a key role in reducing the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme. In order to boost and reward these new initiatives, we advocate for additional organisational support to be offered to HEIs in Erasmus+ KA131 projects that include such initiatives. This would ensure their capacity is increased and thus such actions can be further developed and implemented.

- **Streamline the implementation of the European incentives (such as the green top-up)**

The green top-up is a recent development of the Erasmus+ programme that represents an important incentive for students and staff to steer towards more sustainable means of transport. However, its implementation and requirements vary from country to country, together with the definition of what is considered as sustainable means of transport. Streamlining the process and guaranteeing it has a clear implementation methodology on a European level would benefit the administration and implementation of Erasmus+, ultimately ensuring that more students and staff would be able to use it.

This could be done through the standardisation of what is considered as low-emissions modes of travel, the simplification of supporting documents that must be presented, and ultimately the reduction of bureaucracy around it.

2. National Level

- **Develop informative resources at National level that support HEIs in reducing their transport-related carbon footprint**

Erasmus+ NAs have a very important role in the reduction of the CO2 footprint of the Erasmus+ programme, especially the transport-related one. They are the connection between the European policy sphere and HEIs, and their position at National level enables them to understand the state of play in the access to alternative modes of transport throughout the country. Additionally, they are also in the best position to identify and share good practices that are being developed.

For this reason, we advocate for NAs to create resources to support HEIs in this quest for a more environmentally sustainable Erasmus+ programme. These resources could include, but are not limited to:

- Specific information about the transport systems of the country
- Information on the best way to book tickets for low-emission modes of transport
- Decision trees that encourage a more sustainable way of travelling under certain circumstances
- Facts and figures on the environmental and CO2 impact of the Erasmus+ activities organised in their country

- **Create a working group at National level focusing on decreasing the carbon footprint of Erasmus+ mobility**

The diversity of access to means of transport, together with national policies that HEIs have to comply with, translate into very different scenarios across Europe. However, these differences tend to be reduced on a national level. It is on that level that we advocate for a working group to be developed, so that each institution can brainstorm possible initiatives, discuss which ones could have the biggest impact and share their experience on what worked or not at their institution. Having a national group would ensure that the reality is more approximate for all participants, which would allow for peer-to-peer learning.

Additionally, such a group could provide valuable inputs to the NA on what can be done to support HEIs in achieving the goal of reducing the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme.

3. Institutional Level

- **Ensure students and staff members understand the impact their mobility choices may have on the environment**

Carbon footprint calculators are a great way to increase the "ecological literacy" of students and staff members. However, their use is not effective on its own. Involving this step in the preparation of mobility and ensuring this is something everyone is aware of from the beginning may be extremely important to help reduce the carbon footprint of their mobility. For example, creating more campaigns aiming to **show relevant testimonials of students and staff members travelling sustainably**. Furthermore, communication to students and staff may include **pledges and calls for action** towards the desired behavioural change. Another important factor in increasing the effectiveness of understanding and persuading environmental efforts by means of communication is their strong connection to the messages delivered in the form of the so-called preparatory act. The latter means introducing people who use the CO2 calculator to the subject matter in the form of **short explanations or group discussions.**

The different realities across Europe translate into difficulties in sharing expertise amongst EU partners - sometimes what is easily accessible in one country is not even a possibility in another. However, at national level these differences are reduced and there is thus an opportunity to use each other's trials and errors to improve processes and practices.

- **Implement a partial or full monetary compensation of complementary products and services that improve and stimulate sustainable travel.**

The financial incentives tackle one of the most important barriers to sustainable travel: travel costs. Indeed, travel costs influence travel behaviour, especially for students. Another benefit of financial incentives is that they not only reduce cost barriers, but also prove the commitment of the implementing body to the cause. Thus, it is important and even inevitable to include financial incentives to increase the effectiveness of the desired behavioural change, since the Erasmus+ green top-up is currently not sufficient to cover the alternative modes of transport costs. For instance, HEIs could focus on the travels that contribute the most to the carbon footprint of the programme first, as well as their frequency. Sending HEIs could offer **bonuses (e.g., discounts on public transportation, cultural passes, etc.) for students who had only 2 long-distance travels for the entire mobility period** during the main academic breaks, to encourage them to spend the entire mobility period at their host country. Additional bonuses would be given to those that chose to travel sustainably to and from the Erasmus destination. For example, HEIs could think of creating partnerships for discounts for Interrail passes or public transport cards, and thus offer staff and students the option to book tickets with a lower price.

- **Facilitate group travel by linking up travellers going to the same destination around the same time.**

Travelling sustainably to an Erasmus+ mobility destination can be an experience. Students can seize this opportunity to create memories and live the best that Europe has to offer. It can be even more enjoyable if there is also a chance to get to know other Erasmus+ students who are travelling to the same destination. We advocate for HEIs to encourage and promote the possibility to travel in groups and to create arrangements that enable this, such as organising discussions in the Erasmus+ preparatory sessions that are divided by destinations, or even connecting with platforms such as Go2Rail (among others).

- **Limit the use of certain modes of transport by staff and students, under specific conditions**

Implementing measures that reduce the number of journeys done through very pollutant means of transport can have a tremendous effect on the actual carbon footprint of HEIs and of the Erasmus+

programme in general. After assessing the available connections of low-emission modes of transport, HEIs should develop internal policies that limit resorting to flying depending on a certain number of conditions such as travel duration, travel distance, duration of stay, purpose of visit, number of past exchanges, etc. This would not only provide a clear indication of the efforts the whole academic community should make towards environmental sustainability, but also promote behavioural change and push the habit of travelling more sustainably.

- **Promote the use of sustainable means of transport while on mobility**

The life-changing role an international mobility can have on the life of a higher education student might make it the ideal moment to promote a long-lasting shift in habits. Host institutions can leverage this to have a role in the change towards more sustainable means of transport to commute and travel in the host country. The Erasmus Goes Green consortium thus advocates for host institutions to provide their incoming students with relevant information regarding the access and availability of public transport, the availability of bicycle rentals, etc., so they can change their transport practices and hopefully take more sustainable habits home with them, after the end of their student mobility.

- **Encourage mobility students to volunteer on organisations focusing on environmental sustainability**

Combining the period abroad that is used for international student mobility with volunteering work on environmental sustainability can be a way to promote not only an awareness on the impact human actions have on the environment, but also a means to reach more people and influence them to change their behaviour. Host institutions can connect with NGOs working on the subject in the host city and facilitate contact with interested students.

- **Promote the journey to and from an Erasmus+ student mobility as an experience in itself**

To truly promote a change towards environmental sustainability, and a reduction of the transport-related carbon footprint that the Erasmus+ programme activities account for, one needs to shift the paradigm of how travel to and from mobility is regarded. Making that journey an experience, where students will have the chance to get to know other countries and cultures and thus experience the best that Europe has to offer, is something that could really impact the choice of transport made by

students. Ultimately, this would result in not only the reduction of the actual CO2 footprint of that Erasmus+ mobility, but also in a richer Erasmus+ mobility experience that positively impacts the perception of the EU and its citizens by each student that undertakes it.

C. Boost the external communication and visibility of travelling sustainably within the Erasmus+ programme

In order to scale up the process of decreasing the carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme, external parties should also be involved. This translates into more lobbying and networking with public stakeholders and advocating for better transportation conditions for Erasmus+ participants.

1. European Level

Communication from a European perspective should aim at the clarification and analysis of the transport-related carbon footprint issues of the Erasmus+ programme. **Lobbying and networking with public transport authorities** should bring solutions towards seamless European train and bus ticketing for student and administrative and academic staff members, since they represent an important share of the European travellers. Thus, it is important to advocate for urgent improvements in the booking systems and geographical coverage if we want to accelerate the transition towards a more sustainable higher education sector.

2. National and Institutional Level

NAs and HEIs are well-suited to influence local public authorities by promoting actions towards more sustainable mobility among communities, public transportation authorities, student organisations and higher education councils. These external stakeholders can not only “spread the word” on sustainable Erasmus+ mobility, but also contribute with financial incentives (except student organisations) and organisational support and thus ensure the economies of scale of the sustainable Erasmus+ mobility initiative.

III. Conclusions

Despite the existence of substantial institutional and socio-psychological barriers to sustainable travel behaviour of the Erasmus+ programme participants, Erasmus+ management bodies already implement measures to steer the Erasmus+ participants towards more sustainable practices. However, before putting in place any actions we should ask ourselves first: “What strategies and support do we need to implement for sustainable travelling?”

The answer to this question should rely on a holistic approach and we must do more to ensure the desired levels of impact. For example, green top-ups are essential, yet alone they are not enough to ensure substantial results. Therefore, one of the recommendations we would like to highlight is the awarding of a sustainable transport ticket to each student that undertakes an Erasmus+ mobility. Implementing this measure would ensure a concrete change is promoted and encouraged, and students would be able to choose more sustainable means of transport without concerns about its cost, thus being able to make choices in accordance with their environmental concerns.

One of the most pressing challenges associated with sustainable travelling of Erasmus+ participants is the competitive advantage of air transport. Transitions will thus require transformations in elements such as policy and infrastructure, which should be applied simultaneously and in a coherent and structural way by European and national public transportation authorities. Their involvement and awareness about the Erasmus+ transport-related goals are crucial for the Erasmus+ mobility transformation.

Finally, the current policy recommendations advocate not only for specific strategies that may help to improve the transport-related carbon footprint of the programme, but also aim at making real changes that will support a bigger mindset shift, which will help stakeholders and participants in the programme to think of the Erasmus+ mobility as a journey rather than getting from point A to point B in the fastest and most cost-efficient way. After all, Erasmus+ is about exploring and learning, seizing new opportunities and gaining novel perspectives through international experiences, which sustainable journeys can only make more significant.

We believe that the Erasmus Goes Green policy recommendations and overall results may be useful to contribute to increasing the sustainability of travel within the Erasmus+ programme and urge institutional leaders and policymakers to support their wide dissemination and adoption.

IV. Bibliography

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