D4.3 Report for policy effectuation

“Med-Mobil policy recommendations report”

WP4 Best practice and policies study network

Activity 4.3 Development of a policy plan
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1. Executive summary

As mentioned in the Annual Erasmus+ work programme, Education, Training and Youth (C(2015) 6151 final) face a changing landscape characterised by a deep economic crisis and high youth unemployment rates, lack of skills, important gaps between the skills and the labour market, low employability rates of graduates and a growing demand for high skilled profiles and a global competition for talent.

Taking into consideration this challenging environment, there is a need to establish closer links between programme and policy objectives, to create additional synergies, interaction and complementarity between formal, informal and non-formal learning, to enhance the internationalisation of education, to promote the establishment of more cross-sectoral partnerships and to tighten links between education and the labour market.

The above-mentioned needs are in line with one of the main priorities of the ENPI Programme: the promotion of better conditions and tools to ensure the mobility of persons, goods and capitals, supporting the flows of people among territories as a cultural, social and economic plus for countries on both shores. In addition, taking into account that one of the biggest challenges of the cooperation area is to create economic opportunities and jobs to reduce high rates of unemployment, the new call of the ENI Programme sets as a key priority “to support 'Business and SMEs development' through supporting start-up enterprises and enhancing the Euro-Mediterranean value chains and clusters, as well as to support “Innovation and technological development” in the territory as major driver for competitiveness and productivity of Mediterranean economies, through technological transfer, commercialization of research results and links between industry and research” http://www.enpicbcmed.eu/programme/about-the-programme/priorities-and-measures 1.

Co-funded by the ENPI CBC MED Programme, the Med-Mobil project intended to create a framework of cooperation and cultural awareness aiming to facilitate the exchange of students, professionals and young entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean area and to improve relations between project partners in the cultural dimension by supporting future regulations and improving existing programmes and initiatives. More specifically, the project aimed at enhancing cultural, social and economic cohesion by establishing joint cooperation actions and trainings and cultural, social and economic exchange among different countries of the Mediterranean Sea basin (namely Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Spain), going beyond the limits of the common bilateral cooperation, usually led by the EU.

1 http://www.enpicbcmed.eu/programme/about-the-programme/priorities-and-measures
The aim of this “Med-Mobil Policy Recommendations Report” is to inform and improve policymaking in the field of mobility and exchange of students, professionals and young entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean area through the development of a Policy Plan on mobility programmes. This Policy Report contains **recommendations to improve existing mobility programmes** in the Mediterranean area, and proposes **new mechanisms to promote the involvement of beneficiaries and institutions**. The recommendations are based on the previous needs’ analysis and transferable programmes and on the results of the best practices’ meetings organised within the project. The policy recommendations seek to contribute to improve the situation of the participating Mediterranean Countries in the fields of cultural, education, research and economic exchange. Moreover, this policy report suggests **specific actions** to be developed for a targeted mobility programme in the Mediterranean, among EU and non EU countries in a multi cross-border common framework (not only bilateral). Finally, it proposes also policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness and consistency of future strategies and initiatives and the sustainability of mobility patterns. With this report, the project intends to provide policy makers with food for thought for opening a debate on mobility in the region and offering conclusions and recommendations based on the lessons learned from the Med-Mobil project.

2. Introduction

2.1 What is Mobility

High quality mobility pursues educational, cultural and behavioral goals, such as enhancing the competences, knowledge and skills of those involved, as well as learning about new cultures, traditions and regulations and exchanging experiences and ideas. Mobility contributes to expanding and improving the flow of ideas, experiences, innovations and knowledge to further internationalise higher education organisations and institutions, to promote the employability and personal development of the mobility participants and to strengthen the cultural identity of Europe and the region.

2.2 Methodology - Scope

The report is divided into six chapters, including the executive summary and an introduction as chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the state of the art and needs identified under the project, regarding the key aspects of mobilities in the participating Mediterranean countries. Chapter 4 makes an overview of the Med-Mobil Mobility Programme designed, developed and pilot-tested under the project. Chapter 5 consolidates a set of recommendations to be taken into consideration in the future for better upcoming mobility initiatives and programmes. Finally, the last chapter (Chapter 6) presents the conclusions.
3. Current situation and needs in the Mediterranean countries participating in the project

This chapter presents a brief summary of the main conclusions gathered from the needs analysis carried out during the Med-Mobil project in all the participating countries, highlighting the current situation in terms of socioeconomical environment related to mobilities.

**EGYPT**

Egypt counts with a population of 83 million inhabitants (2015) and is facing an increasing population trend. The higher percentage of population is concentrated in the age group 15-64 (64.49%), part of which constitutes the work force of the country. The official language is Modern Standard Arabic and the State religion is Islam. Egypt faces an unemployment rate of 13.4%. The main economic sectors are services (employing 47% of the population), agriculture (29%) and industrial production (24%). Recent privatisation and new business legislation helped the country to move towards a more market-oriented economy and prompted increased foreign investment. Moreover, nowadays a modernization process is being enabled via a national reform agenda. The high levels of unemployment and immerse poverty seem to be the major issues that affect mobility in the country, while political uncertainty also exists resulting into protests, labour strikes, violence and criminal activities, attacks. Clear policy to define and set the mobility of undergraduate students is needed since mobility between institutions within Egypt is lacking in the education system.

**GREECE**

The resident population in Greece reached 10.8 million people in the 2011 census. Population is mainly concentrated in the 15-64 age group (68.1%) and the country is facing an extended immigration influx (around 1 million). In 2013 the total percentage of unemployment across all age groups was 27.3% (about thrice the number since 2005) and that is expected to have risen in most recent data. At age groups 15-19, 20-24 & 25-29 unemployment reached 72.9%, 57.5% and 42.5% respectively. The official language of the country is Greek and the most commonly practiced religion is Eastern Orthodoxy. The Public sector represents about 40% of GDP, while main identified industries are agriculture, tourism, shipping and construction. Total expenditures on education as percentage of GDP account for 5.44%. The recent economic recession affected the educational system as did the integration of immigrants into the society and into the educational system. The inbound student number for 2012 had a decrease 3.5% since last year. The number of Erasmus outbound student mobility has risen up to 3.591 in 2012 (4% annual increase) while student outbound mobility for work placements corresponded to 17%. In general high level of mobility patterns exist and a number of funded mobility programmes and initiatives are available (public, private and EU programmes). There is a need to lift
socio-political barriers and lessen bureaucratic procedures in order to facilitate the mobility exchange in and out of the country.

ITALY

The country is facing a demographic crisis evolution (natural negative evolution and positive migration dynamics). The inbound mobility rate for the country was 4% and the outbound mobility rate was 2.7% according to the most recent data. Italy is classified as low level in the knowledge of English as foreign language and therefore language constitutes one major mobility barrier. Less than 1% of Italian students are interested in studying abroad and only some hundreds of MENA students disseminated across Italian universities are interested in studying in Italy. This creates a strong contrast with the thousands of international students that Italy receives every year from other countries and regions. Weak university-enterprise cooperation that does not encourage placement mobility in the region is a fact. The lack of provision of sufficient and useful information about mobility programmes, bureaucratic procedures, limited financial support, national regulations, political instability and visa procedures are only some of the challenges Italy has to address and overcome in order to improve students’ mobility exchange rate.

JORDAN

The population in Jordan was estimated to be around 6.6 million people in 2014. The main religion of the country is Islam and the official language is Arabic. Employment is distributed mainly in sectors such as Services and sales workers (30.5%), Professionals (23.7%) and Crafts and related workers (14.3%). Despite plans to increase the private sector, the state remains the dominant force in Jordan’s economy. Around 20.5% of Jordan’s total government expenditures go to education. Jordan is facing an increasing number of refugees which puts pressure on educational services, medical services, economy and social life in general. Jordan is already home to several international universities such as German-Jordanian University, Columbia University, NYIT, DePaul University and the American University of Madaba. George Washington University is planning to establish a medical university in Jordan; all of these are steps that can enhance the mobility of the country. The universities in Jordan also allow easy transfer for students and professors and bilateral agreements with other countries to host students in Jordan exist. The educational system is flexible (can accept and absorb a large number of students). Finally, Universities sponsor graduate students abroad in the EU and US. This enhances the mobility and cross-cultural exchange process. There is a need to enable graduates to develop multi-cultural skills that efficiently and positively reflect on their productivity and societies.
LEBANON

Lebanon is facing an increasing population trend with an estimated population around 5 million people for 2015. The majority of the population is concentrated in the age group 15-64 (71.7%). Lebanon also faces an increasing internal migration. The main language is Arabic, while the most commonly practiced religions are Christianity and Islam. The level of unemployment of the country accounts for 16% while the main employment sectors are services (employing 39% of the population), trade (27%) and manufacturing (12%). Lebanon is facing structural problems at the root of the instability of the country, an increasing socio-economic disparity and government inaction, dwindling middle class and increasing poverty. A major challenge is to create jobs for the youth and graduates (main unemployed group) and boost inter-university cooperation in order to enhance the mobility. The implementation of mobility programmes faces some difficulties, mostly linked to the regional political and economic developments. Low investments for the education system are a fact and account for the 0.5% of the country’s GDP. After its civil war, Lebanon lost its attractiveness and credibility for students coming from other countries, nowadays the number is increasing again. According to the 2011 World Economic Forum Report, Lebanon is ranked 10th in overall quality of education which helps boost the attractiveness of the country again. External or private grants are provided to some universities. Foreign governments provide support through the provision of professors or teaching material, or the support of joint programmes and scholarships to students, all of which provide opportunities for the country to increase its mobility exchange rates. Lebanon is mainly in need of a stable political system. National policies to promote the foreign mobility of students during their higher education studies are also needed while making use of skills, expertise and talents in order to reach high and sustainable growth rates, improve productivity, reduce migration, reinforce co-existence and civil peace is also needed. Proper capacity building investment for international programmes such as Erasmus+ should be foreseen, to enhance the cooperation between universities. Infrastructure needs to be reconstructed after the military conflict and the state’s administration and government should be rebuilt.

PALESTINE

Labour force participation rate is 46.3% of the total labour force and unemployment in 2014 reached 26.2%. The poverty rate in Palestine is around 25.8%, the official language is Arabic and the main religion is Islam. High rates of outward labour migration are observed. Political impasse, security chaos and the worsening of socio-economic conditions have led to new waves of outward flows – particularly of young and well educated individuals; it is difficult for the Palestinian Authority to develop policies for managing the mobility, particularly as Palestinians are not allowed to access Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv; Jordan carefully controls the transit of Palestinians through its territory; Egypt closed until recently its borders with the Gaza
strip (Rafah) and mobility within the oPt (occupied Palestinian territories) is extremely difficult. Inability to build new schools and rebuilt/reconstruct education facilities since the construction sector has majorly declined is a fact (because of minimum imports of materials). Political obstacles, high unemployment, economic barriers in living in expensive cities/countries, workload and personal issues related to staff mobility and the lack of focus of mobility programmes on certain categories such as women are some of the issues mobility is facing in the country. The opportunities for Palestine are limited to funding offers from different international organizations, cross-border cooperation and the country can build on successful stories in previous mobility programmes and good experiences of national-level cooperation. There is a main need for an export-driven economy, establishment of greater trade, improvement of shipping capability and growth in strategic sectors (tourism, agriculture, pharmaceuticals).

**SPAIN**

The population in Spain according to the 2014 census reached about 46.5 million people and the growth rate is expected to increase as is the migration trend (3.7 million foreign population). The country faces high unemployment around 24.63%, especially to productive sectors such as services and construction. Spain is multilingual in some regions, being Spanish the official language. Government expenditure on education in 2010 accounted for 5% of GDP. Although the international experience is considered beneficial and sometimes even mandatory, the disruption in the Spanish labour market has contributed negatively to the social inclusion of young people. Barriers to mobility include, but are not limited to, difficulties in obtaining visas and the obtention of grants with a sufficient amount to cover the mobility period. Though, economic crisis is perceived as an opportunity since high unemployment rate makes young people willing to go abroad. The country needs concrete funding schemes for mobility programmes as well as an increased number of mobility programmes for the Mediterranean countries.

**4. Med-Mobil Programme**

Within the framework of the Med-Mobil project, based on the needs analysis, a **Capacity Building for Mobility Experts Programme** was designed and implemented to improve the capacities of students, researchers, entrepreneurs/professionals, volunteers and youth. The pilot actions aimed at testing mobility activities in order to improve the future mobility programmes in the Mediterranean Area in terms of cultural, education, research and economic exchange.

The following graph presents the Med-Mobil programme drafted and tested within the project. As the graph shows, different mobility strands target different type of participants.
More specifically, **Action 1** includes the mobility of HEI students and VET students for EDUCATION (studies or training assignments) and for INTERNSHIP purposes.

**EDUCATION**

- **Student mobility for studies and education (HEI):** Participation of HEI students to complete one semester or one academic year of studies (Grade and Postgraduates studies) in a HEI abroad.

- **Learners' mobility (VET) for training assignments:** Participation of VET students for a period from 2 weeks to 3 months in technical visits, job shadowing, VET schools’ exchanges.

**INTERNSHIPS**

- **Student mobility for traineeships (HEI):** Participation of HEI students to complete training placement in a hosting institution abroad (acquiring professional experience in the field of studies) for a period from 4 weeks to 3 months.

- **Learners' mobility (VET) for traineeship abroad:** Participation of VET students to complete training placement in a hosting institution abroad (acquiring professional experience in the field of studies) for a period from 4 weeks to 3 months.
BLENDED PROGRAMME

- Student and learners’ mobility for education and training purposes – from 1 to 4 weeks

- Participants’ profile: VET students and HEI students.

- Description: completion of a blended programme, including both education (attending classes, seminars or other activities for education purposes) and training (technical visits and job shadowing) activities

Action 2 includes the exchange of researchers and innovation staff to work or conduct research activities abroad either as INDIVIDUALS or under CONSORTIA.

INDIVIDUALS

- Conducting research activities as individual abroad: Exchange of research and innovation staff, and training of early-stage researchers in a hosting institution abroad (conducting research activities abroad) for a period up to 3 months.

CONSORTIA

- Partnerships for conducting joint research activities: Participation of research and innovation staff at all stages in technical visits (the carry out of a work programme established before the mobility period), job shadowing (accompanying an experienced staff member as he/she performs a targeted activity) for a period from 1 week to 1 month and in partnerships for joint researching activities for a period up to 12 months.

Action 3 includes the exchange of entrepreneurs and professionals to work abroad through participating in TECHNICAL VISITS and JOB SHADOWING.

TECHNICAL VISITS

- Technical Visits for jointly carrying out a work programme: Participation of entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs and people in the labour market in jointly carried out work programme for a period from 1 week to 3 months (a mix of workshops, debates, seminars, conferences, visits to companies and other relevant institutions) designed and prepared before the mobility period.
JOB SHADOWING

• **Exchange programme of entrepreneurs for running a business**: Exchange of entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs and people in the labour market providing new or aspiring entrepreneurs with the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other countries during a stay abroad for a period from 1 week to 3 months.

**Action 4** includes the mobility of young people to participate in JOINT WORK PROGRAMMES, VOLUNTEERING SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERING WORK.

YOUTH EXCHANGES

• **Exchange of young people to carry out a work programme**: Participation of youth people aged 18-30 to carry out for a period up to 1 month a work programme (a mix of workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, simulations, outdoor activities, etc.) designed and prepared by them before the Exchange. Example: A seminar for Mediterranean Youngsters to promote social dialogue and cross-cultural knowledge.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

• **Mobility of young people to offer voluntary service**: Participation of young people 18-30 in unpaid and full-time voluntary service for up to 6 months in another country.

MOBILITY OF YOUTH WORKERS

• **Mobility of young people to obtain experience through training placement and networking**: Participation of Workers and Volunteers in NGOs, Youth Organizations, Public and Educational Institutions in training placement (acquiring professional experience with the field of studies), technical visits (the carry out of a work programme established before the mobility period), job shadowing (accompanying an experienced staff member as he/she performs a targeted activity) for a period from 2 weeks up to 3 months.

The design and pilot testing of the Med-Mobil Programme included a set of trainings, cross-cultural events and other types of mobilities that reinforced the capacities of mobility stakeholders by means of methodology exchanges and know-how transfer. Moreover, cross-border actions were carried out for the benefit of public and private agents and stakeholders, aiming at achieving multiplier effects and cascaded providing long-term capacity building.
5. Policy Recommendations

This chapter contains recommendations to improve existing mobility programmes and proposes mechanisms to promote the involvement and capacity reinforcement of both beneficiaries and institutions in Euro-Mediterranean area.

Moreover, specific actions to enhance mobilities in Mediterranean countries and actions to develop a targeted mobility programme in the Mediterranean among EU and non EU Med countries in a multi cross-border action (not only bilateral) are also proposed.

Taking into account the importance of mobility of students, unemployed people, NEETs, researchers, professionals and entrepreneurs as a way to integrate the Euro-Mediterranean Area, to reach mutual understanding, to give new opportunities of personal, academic and professional growth to the participants, to enrich and to diversify their personal and academic skills, this chapter aims to propose a set of policy recommendations that would improve the future mobility programmes.

Following EU Regulations and the Erasmus+ programme priorities, the Med-Mobil project contributes to the development of mobility initiatives able to contribute to the achievement of the following general objectives:

- Provide more opportunities for VET and HEI students to increase their employability through education activities, internships and studies abroad by enhancing mobilities and exchange
- Improve the international dimension and quality of educational services of higher education and other training institutions through enhanced transnational cooperation between education and training providers and other stakeholders from different project countries
- Improve the key competences and skills of young people, students, entrepreneurs, and in particular the skills most required within the labour market and the competences related to society, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity. All these skills and competences can be acquired by the beneficiaries by providing them with more opportunities for learning mobility, thanks to a strengthened cooperation among education and training –job market- society.

5.1 Recommendations to improve existing mobility programmes and foster mobility amongst Euro-Mediterranean countries

a) Facilitate Visa Processes

The procedure for non EU individuals to get a Visa to travel to EU countries is more or less the same in all the participant countries and is the following:
i. Get an appointment at the embassy. The appointment for the interview might take more than one month.

ii. The embassy conducts an interview with the applicants and analyses paper work

iii. After the interview, the embassy issues the Visa (the process usually takes two weeks).

iv. The receiving country should send all the information necessary to complete the visas procedure at least one month before the event. Information about the travel such as the programme, the proposed hotels, duration and location of the activity, number of students, etc. is needed.

v. The sending partner should provide the receiving country with the necessary information at least a month before the departure and all at once. It is important to note that the hosting organisation takes a big responsibility when asking the General Security for visas to people from non EU countries, since they will be responsible of them during their stay, and in case they do not leave the country.

According to many studies, articles, state of the art and needs analysis reports, and feedback from the Final Conference of Med-Mobil project on “Mobility in the Mediterranean: Results, Recommendations and the Way Forward”, held in Rome on the 16th-17th May 2016, one of the main obstacles to mobility is the visa granting process. This is widely well known by Med-Mobil partners and by organizations and institutions running EC-funded projects where Universities and other organisations from MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region are involved.

More specifically, Visa procedures for entering the EU require a lot of time to be approved and sometimes visas are refused. Visa procedures and entrance procedures, mainly to EU, have been mentioned by stakeholders and beneficiaries as “the most serious problem to overcome to achieve an increase of number and quality of the mobilities in the Euro-Mediterranean region. This is linked to national regulations and political factors that might prevent mobility, especially from North Africa and Middle East countries to EU countries”. Therefore, there is an urgent need to facilitate the entrance of and issuance of visas to beneficiaries in order to facilitate, obviously without affecting security, the participation of beneficiaries and other stakeholders in mobility initiatives among European and MENA countries.

In this sense, embassies should be accurately informed about existing EC programmes and ongoing activities already undertaken by National Higher Education Institutions and others. It could be also useful to check with the EC if the European External Action Service (EEAS) could play a role in facilitating the process of issuing a visa, at least for
the beneficiaries of the EC-funded projects. Moreover, it is recommended the programme/mobility actions responsibles have a direct contact with embassies facilitating the acquisition of visas for the mobilities (in addition sometimes there is a problem to send unemployed people since the embassies consider that leaving the territory of the member states before the expiry of the Visa could not be ascertained). In addition, it is recommended that public authorities and embassies try to shorten the time needed for the application and approval of the visas while also a better coordination among the embassies for facilitating the procedures is recommended. Finally, when organising a mobility activity, it is important to take into consideration the required time to obtain a Visa; therefore it is recommended to fix the exact date for each mobility as early as possible in order to finalise administrative procedures well on time.

b) Building trust

Before taking part in a mobility programme, participants always wonder whether their participation and the knowledge/experience gained may somehow be certified. Within the Med-Mobil project, the need for the optimisation and consolidation of recognition procedures of diplomas was clearly exposed by project partners, since any doubts from participants regarding the quality of the mobility exchange (course or activity) offered will discourage/disuade them from participating.

Thus, offering a certification recognised by National and European institutions after having attended training activities, gives an additional incentive to the beneficiaries to participate in mobilities and other training activities, since they feel that they can trust the effectiveness of the programme. In order to achieve this, procedures for the certification of mobilities should be taken as a priority also by other foundations and/or institutions besides EC, allowing more flexibility to this rewarding experience.

c) De-bureaucratize and standardize Mobility procedures

Bureaucracy can sometimes represent a real and factual obstacle for both beneficiaries and sending/receiving institutions. Therefore, less bureaucracy is needed to foster real mobility amongst the EU and MED countries.

Initially, the creation of standard documentation and templates of documents may ease the recognition and visibility of the action, ameliorate the quality of mobilities and increase the impact, and therefore decrease bureaucracy. The experience arisen from Med-Mobil showed that these templates provided staff members (and also beneficiaries) with clear and concise guidelines about the information and documents required. In that sense, it has been promoted the use of documents based on the templates officially used in EU mobility projects such as the European standard CV Europass, or the Europass Certificate for internships (Med-Mobil Pass).
It is also recommended a simple user-friendly on-line application form to be created. This way, equal opportunities will be given to each student and in parallel, they will be motivated to participate in the activities. At the same time, the mobility action will be more effective and transparent.

Finally, it is recommended to make the selection of the individuals or stakeholders who are travelling or participating in the mobility activities following specific criteria and procedures. In this way, the individuals selected will be really benefitted from the activities.

d) **Customise the mobility duration according to the type of mobility action and its objectives**

Indicatively, longer stays may be needed to benefit from the mobility program (learn the anticipated skills and knowledge) and to understand the cultural norms of other nations which is the objective of any mobility program. On the other hand, a long duration of an activity may increase the costs and the administrative constraints. On the contrary, under Med-Mobil project it was approved that short mobilities can have also a great impact on the beneficiaries and on the region and in parallel would decrease the costs and facilitate to overcome some administrative constraints such as obtaining Visas. One or two weeks could be more than enough to establish the relations, get an idea of the culture to grow up personally and professionally and then go back home. Moreover, the costs of a mobility activity could be controlled through either decreasing the duration of a mobility action or applying for a Visa valid only during the mobility action i.e. Visa for less than 90 days that are easier to obtain and less expensive than applying for those with more than 90 days.

e) **Financial management of mobility actions and programmes**

The implementation of mobility actions, due to their demanding nature and to the longtime needed for its implementation, requests a significant amount of money to be spent. The economic crisis hinders (and sometimes even causes the cancelation) of mobility activities, which is time-consuming difficults the implementation of demanding mobility activities. Moreover, the amount of money allocated to the participant when travelling is sometimes not enough, in most cases, to cover accommodations in the host country and to visit historical and important places.

In order to minimise funds shortage for the beneficiaries, it is recommended the allocation of payments from the funding institutions to the organizations managing the mobilities to be done on time and if possible before the implementation of the activities, in order for the organisations managing the mobilities to go ahead with the planned activities and not face economic difficulties. Moreover, financial difficulties may require improving general costs-related rules to any activity in any partner country while in parallel financing institutions, such as the EU, Governments, networks or other
transnational institutions, should invest more funds and resources to support these mobility programmes given the fact that the impact is very high for beneficiaries and for the cohesion of the regions.

f) **Implement preparatory activities prior to mobility (pre-departure courses, information)**

Practical information and training courses should be provided to beneficiaries before their departure to mobility in order for them to be properly prepared for the mobility action. An accurate and precise description of the steps that they have to undertake, regulations and restrictions, respect of cultural differences, customs and traditions and the information they need in order to guarantee the success of their stay and make their experience both safe and productive, seem to be crucial according to the Med-Mobil experience.

Initially, one of the main barriers for mobility in the Mediterranean is the fear of individuals travelling to the countries affected by political and institutional transitions. Although some countries are highly affected by a regime change or by local turmoil, on the other hand, correct information on the geopolitical scenario is essential to better evaluate the individual’s choice to participate or not in a mobility programme in the MENA region. Sometimes misinformation, stereotypes and misunderstanding can highly affect the country chosen for a mobility experience, discouraging beneficiaries to travel to MENA countries. In this sense, we recommend a more in-depth knowledge of the political conditions of the countries from the sending institutions in order to promote major awareness, change perceptions and stereotypes, build trust, encourage confidence and break down cultural and political barriers.

Moreover, cultural barriers can negatively influence choices for mobility. Consequently, there is an urgent need for offering intercultural awareness courses in order to remove those barriers before travelling. Social and cultural habits concerning the destination area should be provided to beneficiaries before their departure in order to provide them with a first introduction to the social and cultural framework in which they will operate during their mobility. Therefore, introductory courses about the history of Mediterranean area and its value as well as courses to promote the Mediterranean culture are also recommended. Moreover, visitors or delegations from different countries may be unfamiliar with the laws and cultural norms of people in the hosting country. For example, they might not know that Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol. In addition, providing welcome services and facilities to the participants by hosting institutions is also a very useful practice usually suggested by the Med-Mobil partners.

Finally, providing language courses (at least English) prior to departure is also a best practice to take into account to let beneficiaries feel confident during their stay in the country they travel to. Many times, low level of English and/or French can discourage
candidates to apply for mobility actions to foreign countries. The Med-Mobil partnership underlines that it is absolutely important to improve the language skills of the beneficiaries prior to their mobility in order to make them feel safe and encourage them to travel abroad. In parallel, language is directly connected with culture and through language training beneficiaries will have the opportunity to be more engaged in the mobility action and feel that the hosting organizations are really engaged.

**g) Eliminate gender discrimination and promote the participation of women**

Already established programmes should dedicate particular attention to gender issues in order to ensure a higher participation of women. The participation of disadvantaged categories, as women are in several Mediterranean countries, has to be considered as a priority. According to Lamia Raei “A closer look at the distribution of the target population across gender and age indicates that mobility operators tend to target youth and women. In the meantime, gender gaps are clear, either in the data provided regarding the beneficiaries in recent years or in the total lack of addressing gender as a cross-cutting theme, especially for women in poor countries and in the South who can face mobility restrictions, particularly in cooperative contexts” (Lamia Raei pp. 80-81).

**h) Disseminate, promote and follow up mobility programmes**

An essential part of a mobility programme is when the individual/stakeholders have the opportunity to share the new knowledge and skills obtained through their participation in mobility activities. This is because mobility has a social and cultural impact on both beneficiaries’ local communities of the individuals, institutions and organizations. Thus, more effort should be given to this issue, collecting and disseminating the experience and impact of participants in order to improve future mobility activities and increase the number of participants.

Many MENA Universities participating in Med-Mobil, underlined the necessity to improve the dissemination of information on mobilities through information days. At the same time, spreading websites about mobility programmes is recommended in order to be more attractive, more comprehensible and accessible. These websites should also collect “successful experiences” in order to encourage the flow of non-academic and academic staff, and obviously of students, moving from Europe to MENA region and vice versa. Social networks (Facebook page, Twitter, LinkedIn) should also be used in order to ensure full and wider dissemination of information concerning mobility programmes. It is highlighted that these communication tools, will give stakeholders the opportunity to promote the mobility actions implemented, while the individuals involved will have the opportunity to promote their experience and work done and thus, stimulate more stakeholders to be involved in the future.
The actions exposed above should be responsibility of both the sending and hosting organisations that should actively participate in advertising mobility programmes among students and other beneficiaries, and in encouraging them to spend a year or semester abroad. In addition, students who have already participated in mobility activities should be supported to promote the benefits of the experience within the students’ body, while also national governments should actively promote and encourage their participation.

Finally, the use of ICT would facilitate the information research and share, as well as the raise of awareness about mobility programmes in the Mediterranean basin and it would also support eLearning by involving media, national agencies, embassies, universities, associations and networks. Moreover, ICT may facilitate the access to mobilities and thus, create an environment that gives students from different countries and universities the possibility to socialize and share experiences. Moreover, an alumni community could also be created sharing through ICT their experiences with the new stakeholders. Finally, new technologies are offering extraordinary opportunities to open up education systems and foster real learning opportunities for all, so the use of ICT through mobilities should be enhanced.

5.2 Proposals over new mechanisms to promote the involvement of beneficiaries and institutions

a) Improve soft-skills and the knowledge over entrepreneurship and innovation

Institutions are recommended to enhance the launching and implementation of initiatives and mobility activities that improve the skills (i.e. listening skills, team building and other soft-skills), competences, attitudes and capacities of unemployed, individuals, NEETs, staff, students over innovation and entrepreneurship. Skills, knowledge and competences improvement are the most important incentives for the beneficiaries to participate in mobilities while they are an important driver of human innovation.

These activities could be supported by business networks/incubators/accelerators offering coaching, training and mentoring programmes and services related to the attitudes, skills and profile an individual should have in order to be a successful entrepreneur and a key staff force. Self-efficacy, self-confidence, improve perceived behavioural control, motivation and other soft and transversal skills are needed. For example, mentor programmes, personal development courses, role play, exercises and activities based on real scenarios aimed at young post-students, are recommended.

b) Courses on mobility project management for institutions

Sometimes, the hosting organisation and involved stakeholders do not have the experience, skills and knowledge to design, launch and implement a mobility
programme. Thus, the Med-Mobil project proposes the implementation of targeted training courses on the project management, design of mobility programmes, implementing measures and instruments for administration staff exchange and capacity building on financial issues and contact negotiations to Universities, private sector and other public organisations.

The trained organisations will facilitate the involvement of other local stakeholders if they can play the role of hubs promoting International Mobility programmes in the area.

c) Improve the experience of the beneficiaries and focus the mobility activities on topics that are most interesting for them

Social sciences, marketing and tourism have been highlighted as the most interesting topics for the beneficiaries of mobility actions in the EU-MED area, while according to several University representatives during the 2016 UNIMED Week in Brussels, social sciences were indicated by the European Commission as an absolute necessity. It is important to increase the number of beneficiaries participating in mobility actions. This way, participants would be willing to promote the concept of mobility actions to other beneficiaries. So, while designing mobility programmes, it is important that both the interests, needs and priorities of the beneficiaries and EC should be taken into consideration and targeted by the responsible organisations.

d) Acknowledge the contribution of virtual mobility in the design of international mobility schemes for the benefit of both non-mobile and mobile learners

It is acknowledged that a number of restricting factors can limit the access to international mobility, such as socio-economic factors, learners with disabilities and those with special requirements.

“Evidence shows that the highest priorities of internationalization policies [...] are still the outgoing mobility for students, student exchanges, and attracting international students. However, mobility will always be limited to a relatively small percentage of the student and staff population: higher education policies must increasingly focus on the integration of a global dimension in the design and content of all curricula and teaching/learning processes (sometimes called “internationalization at home”), to ensure that the large majority of learners, the 80-90% who are not internationally mobile for either degree or credit mobility, are nonetheless able to acquire the international skills required in a globalized world.” (European higher education in the world, European Commission COM (2013) 499 final).

Virtual Mobility (VM) is different from physical mobility and should be conceived on the basis of its full educational potential. While physical mobility leads to the immersion in a different culture and to language learning, VM has other specific advantages. It is
cost-effective for the learners, flexible and can be applied just-in-time. Part-time and employed students, adult learners and learners with special needs can participate conveniently. It can ensure that all learners are able to benefit from a collaborative experience with students and educators from other countries, and gain an international awareness.

In its broader scope, VM is conceived as an educational opportunity that is no longer location-dependent and allows the collaboration with educators and learners on a global scale. VM initiatives are one of the most flexible, versatile and inclusive and equitable approaches in the provision of international experience opportunities.

This approach to mobility schemes ensures a more inclusive and equitable international mobility and brings new opportunities to reach potential learners, rather than simply focusing on the small percentage of mobile-students who can afford a period abroad or learners who can take a break from employment.

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, Virtual Mobility is defined as “a set of activities supported by Information and Communication Technologies, including e-learning, that realize or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching, training or learning. [...] It can be used to prepare, support and follow up physical mobility. It can also be organized to address people with special needs or with fewer opportunities to help them overcome the barriers to long-term physical mobility.” (European Commission, 2014).

VM touches upon everything. As is the case of physical mobility, VM can support credit mobility as well as degree mobility and far beyond, from the internationalization of academic curriculum, to international student/staff exchanges, virtual or blended internship, virtual seminars, interactions between local students and international students and faculty, innovative uses of digital technology to better exploit the ICT potential.

Most importantly, VM focuses on offering the benefits of international higher education to any learner, not just to those who are mobile, ensuring that universities contribute to the development of international competences in all students.

VM initiatives can be used to:

i) Support and complement physical exchanges

This can be defined as “blended mobility”, where aspects of physical and VM are combined in order to maximize the advantages of both approaches.

The report of the international seminar on the Bologna process (2004) and the challenges of distance education also indicates that: “virtual mobility must be used to enrich and support physical mobility by better preparing it, providing effective follow-
up means for it, and offering the possibility to stay in contact with the home institution while abroad. It can also offer (at least part of) the benefits of physical mobility for those who are otherwise unable to attend courses abroad.” (Report on the international seminar Bologna and the Challenges of e-learning and distance education, Ghent 4-5 June 2004).

In this scenario, VM can be used with two purposes:

- Taking virtual courses or full programmes in the student’s host university in preparation or follow-up of a physical exchange programme;
- Taking virtual courses in the student’s own university, while on physical mobility.

ii) Increase the number of courses offered by universities (virtual student exchanges)

Virtual student exchanges are the most common form of virtual student mobility. Like in traditional physical exchange programmes, students from one university can take a course in another university supported through ICT. This increases the number of courses offered by universities, adding contents or approaches probably not available at the home institution and allowing the collaboration with students and educators that are no longer location dependent. The exchange might range from a single course to a full academic year.

iii) Offer adds-on international experiences

Through VM, a university can also offer international experiences to students and staff through international discussion groups, international seminars and international learning communities related to a topic or a cluster of courses.

iv) Offer completely new courses or programme for continuing professional training.

This include intercultural and complementary themes within international contexts.

VM includes the use of ICTs such as collaboratory workspaces, live streaming, videoconferencing, social media, discussion groups, learning communities etc. A variety of technologies and tools can be used in one way or another to virtually support the exchange process. However, the success of an initiative does not really depend on the tool, but on the use of the tool and the pedagogical model(s) behind. The technology should be as transparent as possible and the way in which a tool is used for an activity is crucial.

e) Mobility Knowledge DB, sharing data of projects

Med-Mobil partners underlined the necessity to create a database (DB) with information such as:
- Identification of the institutions that joined the mobility programmes, number of students per institution, profile;

- Identification of the institutions more frequently chosen by the students;

- Data and statistics of the mobilities implemented;

- Testimonials and experience obtained.

The DB will help both students and institutions to facilitate their mobility process.

Moreover, a more precise knowledge of the mobilities implemented acquired thanks to the DB, will help to create stable and sustainable partnerships among institutions and more profitable mobility experiences for academic and non-academic staff and students.

Moreover, it is suggested to implement national and international data-base on mobility of post-graduates, in particular in sectors or fields of study, to define measures to ensure the follow up of projects that involve mobility schemes and to develop standardized methods to assess the mobility patterns.

**f) Expand the target groups of mobility activities**

Due to the importance of the mobility in the development of experiences and communication through Mediterranean, it is recommended to involve new beneficiaries in mobility activities, so that mobilities will not be limited anymore to students, but it will be available for all segments of society including researchers, professionals, staff, NEETs, unemployed, individuals. In addition, the European Commission prioritizes these groups as potential key actors for business.

- Researchers, Professors (individuals and consortia) could be involved through attending: conferences, technical visits, job shadowing.

- Entrepreneurs and professionals, experts in business field looking for cooperation domains and common projects could be involved through attending: workshops, debates seminars, visits to companies.

- Volunteers and youth could be involved through attending: workshops, exercises, debates, simulations, outdoor activities, training and networking, in order to unite the energies of youth and take advantage of volunteers in different places, and to show to youth the real life that others are living in different countries and to transfer the experiences from a place to another one.

- Local authorities (municipalities) should also be involved through cooperation between local authorities and to know the benefits of administrative decentralization.
g) **Connect the training curriculum with the labour market needs to decrease unemployment**

Unemployment has been identified as a key problem that all the countries of the Mediterranean region share. Business and labour market are the key drivers of education and training and thus, all the curriculums and training programmes should take into consideration the business and market perspective and the identified needs not only at regional and national level but also on at Mediterranean and European level, in order to develop and train the stakeholders over real life needs and situations.

Due to poverty, low income, and high unemployment level in the MED countries, more attention should be put to provide fresh university graduates with skills that make them job creators rather than being job searchers. This may be important in short-term educational but economically oriented mobility. Moreover, the role of businesses and success stories is important to share experiences with potential future entrepreneurs as well as future employers, so that businesses prepare the stakeholders about their needs for recruitment.

h) **Multilingual programmes available not only in the national language but also in English in order stakeholders from other countries be attracted to attend**

The majority of the activities are implemented in the national language and this restricts the activity to stakeholders coming from the same country or speaking the national language, and at the same time discourages foreign stakeholders of participating. It is recommended the upcoming educational and training mobility programmes to be provided in English in order to facilitate and encourage the participation of stakeholders coming from abroad and opening the scope of the activity. Moreover, this action would encourage trainers and teachers from abroad to participate in the activities and strengthen the benefits of the stakeholders having the opportunity to meet people from other countries with completely different experiences.

i) **Involving professionals and experts**

It is recommended the mobility programmes are designed and implemented by experts and professionals with experience in running mobility programmes and take into consideration the knowledge of participants’ needs, in order the activities be designed according to the stakeholder’s profile. Moreover, these professionals will more effectively disseminate the programme activities and thus will involve specific target groups that will be benefited from the activities. Moreover, proper marketing and advertisent is necessary in order to promote specific messages to the stakeholders and increase their interest and involvement.
5.3 Proposals improving the current situation in MENA countries in the fields of cultural, education, research and economic exchange

a) Increase mobility funding

The main obstacle for mobility is the limited financial support especially in MENA countries. Therefore, there is a need to increase mobility funding and to enable a wide-reaching portability of grants, loans and scholarships provided by the countries as well as to further improve the exchange of information regarding the portability of national grants and loans. It is important to know the existence of different financial sources and how to find financial support to develop and increase the number of mobilities. Furthermore, financing institutions, such as the EU, governments, networks or other transnational institutions, should invest more funds and resources to support these programmes since, as it is highlighted in the project results, the impact is very high for both participants, beneficiary organizations and the region. Erasmus+ provides good funding for mobilities outside Europe. However, for some countries funding is still very limited and hardly worth applying. Self-finance is also important. Moreover, it is mentioned that now more than ever is highly important to involve the private sector more and more, such as venture capitals and banks.

b) Promoting brain circulation

Against the “brain drain” widely used and criticised concept, it has been more recently proven that the mobility of skilled persons can turn into a very positive feedback in their country of origin. It is important both for sending countries and its society and for beneficiaries of the mobility to be fully aware of the benefits of going on mobility and coming back, physically or not, with a higher developed professional, personal, and inter-personal skills able to be promoted and integrated in their country.

c) Establishment of Mobility Offices in MED countries offering permanent mobility services

Within the framework of the Med-Mobil project, four new MED Mobility Offices were established and launched in MED countries to support and organise mobility programmes and cross-cultural exchanges in MPC territories. These offices were responsible to build campus communities that understand the common human experiences more deeply and prepare students for the challenges of an increasingly diverse and global society produced via the free accessibility of social networking, cross-cultural events, exchanges, and computer-mediated communications. The Offices were also responsible for the organization and implementation of local dissemination activities within the framework of the mobilities.

These offices were operated and pilot tested during the project, while the staff was trained according to the needs of the specific stakeholders at the local trainings implemented. Thus, it is recommended the maintenance of these offices after the project end with the support of the responsible project partners, offering permanent
mobility services and activities to the stakeholders. These offices reached the professionalism in providing mobility services to ensure better coordination between the existing and coming mobility programmes, to provide continuous information about the available domains in which the mobilities could be involved, and on the other hand, about the needs of the outgoing mobilities. With these mobility offices, it will be an accumulation of mobility experiences in MED.

Finally, eliminating bureaucratic barriers will assure a major and better assistance by the Offices, which should act as an interface between incoming students and local authorities.

d) Use successful initiatives as a source of knowledge

When drafting an effective policy, it is recommended to take into consideration projects and initiatives successful in inspiring human capital both within the region and outside the region. Adopting the success factors that are transferable will increase the chances of a successful policy and knowledge will be transferred, what is a key factor in Europe’s objective for integration. Med-Mobil project identified a set of Best practices.

Indicatively:

COMMO

COMMO is a UNIMED Italian consortium (European Commission, Erasmus+, KA1 – International Credit Mobility) of HEIs aiming at implementing throughout two years a mobility project from/to the countries of the southern Mediterranean and the Balkans. In the first year, it expects the mobility of staff (academic and administrative staff) to ensure a smooth process of training of the professionals that will be latter involved in the management of mobility and to provide them with a better preparation and training of students. In the second year the mobility of students (Bachelor, Master and PhD) for study purposes will be developed.

Fellowships for threatened scholars around the world

The IIE Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) has announced a new partnership with the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture’s Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) to provide safe places in Finland for threatened scholars from Iraq and Syria to continue their academic work. The initiative can be considered as an important tool to channel support to academia in the region suffering from the crisis and it could be retained as best practice for other HEIs in the Europe and MENA region. In the long term, the project aim is also to contribute to the capacity building of higher education in Syria and the region by creating long-lasting networks between IIE-SRF fellows and the higher education community in Finland.

Virtual Mobility Campus – UNED net campus
Virtual mobility is understood as a meaningful strategy for intercultural learning by studying an undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme at the local, national or international level, in relation to the student's own studies, using virtual or distance methodology; virtual mobility is also the possibility of studying specific topics or a determinate number of credits or courses. The programme begins with the preparation of a first international virtual mobility project, which is submitted for funding to the Spanish Ministry of Education (Campus of International Excellence Programme in 2010). The UNED CAMPUS NET programme aims to meet the teaching and learning needs of students within the institutions of the European Higher Education Area and the Ibero-American Knowledge Space (EIC) in terms of intercultural learning and international mobility, providing formulas that overcome the barriers of geography and time, and thereby expanding the possibilities to ensure the equality of opportunity for the students of all participating institutions. This experience can be considered as really useful and helpful for MENA region and Mediterranean Area. Transferability should be considered for this best practice. In this sense, virtual mobility and possibly could also be explored and extended to other types of courses, training and online collaborations, such as virtual mentoring for young entrepreneurs, virtual internships, etc.

**European Universities Association campaign on Refugees Welcome Map**

EUA has established an extensive collection of initiatives, showcasing the university sectors’ commitment to society at large and to the policy level in particular, and aiming to foster collaboration and inspiring others to follow suit. Scholars, researchers, students and university staff are among the thousands of people who have been forced to flee their countries. The Refugees Welcome Map demonstrates in an interactive way how higher education institutions all over Europe are responding by engaging them and assisting them in continuing their studies, research and academic careers. “Access to higher education can be key in integrating refugees,” says Michael Gaebel, EUA Higher Education Policy Unit Director. “Staff can continue to work and, by gaining qualifications, students and prospective students will find better jobs and build a better future for themselves. Furthermore, a qualified person enjoys more social mobility, and would also be in a much better position to return home one day.”

e) **Involve stakeholders, operators and target groups in creating the policy**

There is a lot to be gained by involving stakeholders and key operators such as the educational system, social services and business support agencies since they possess essential experience in the matter, but also because they are very important partners in implementing the policy. It might take more time involving more people in the process but it will give a more well-rounded result and save time in the long run since
it creates a sense of ownership among the operators, making the implementation more effective and enhances the chances of reaching the policy objectives.

— Through the involvement of entrepreneurs and professionals, the economic exchange between the hosting and sending countries is and will be enhanced. There will be an establishment for building economic relations, economic exchange and for economic activation between these countries through the expansion of markets and the prospects for commercial and industrial exchanges.

— The involvement of youth and volunteering beneficiaries will open the door for the establishment of volunteering communities in Mediterranean and it will help to find rapprochement on cultural and intellectual levels between them.

— Through the involvement of local authorities, the succeeded experiences on the developmental/administrative level, and to give the opportunities of cooperation and twinning between the different municipalities.

— Through the involvement of researchers in mobility activities it will be a possibility to establish cooperation in improving the scientific expertise, and open the way for scientific research and innovation and to create a scientific community in the region.

5.4 Specific actions towards a common cross-border targeted mobility programme in MED

a) Design locally but implementing transnationally

Although activities should be prioritised on National level, it is recommended that they have a transnational and Mediterranean scope, engaging not only National but also international stakeholders and creating synergies and cooperation at MED level.

b) Enhanced policy cooperation on Mediterranean level

It is recommended to complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of a knowledge and evidence-based policy, as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, notably through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices.

Finally, the Med-Mobil experience also allows to highlight the importance of boosting other types of mobilities that are not fully developed or promoted in other EU programmes, such as mobilities South-South, internships in South-Mediterranean countries, Sud-Sud and North-Sud entrepreneurs’ exchanges, etc. Indeed, exchanges contemplated in different EU programmes refer mainly to North-South mobility (from EU to South Med countries) and vice-versa, however, South-South cooperation is considered to be essential for the development of the region.
c) Increased public-private collaboration and partnerships

Limitations on budget may result on a limited number of individuals participating in activities, especially the cross-cultural contact events. To extend the participation of beneficiaries to these events, collaborative partnerships with public and private sectors at the level of each country may be sought as new possible funding ways.

d) Increase collaboration and partnerships among academia and industry

It is recommended implementing inter-university cooperation in order to improve mobility and development of joint programmes and enhancing international partnerships and collaboration among institutions, associations and networks.

In this sense, we recommend the creation of synergies between public and private strategies of both European and MENA countries implementing actions on intra-sectorial mobility opportunities such as staff exchanges, part-time positions, sabbaticals, honorary positions etc. Implementing training actions conducted in cooperation with representatives of industry sectors is also one of the simplest ways for academia to interact with industry and exchange research expertise and increase the impact and quality of the mobility activities.

e) Improving internal institutional communication

According to feedback collected among partners, the involvement of beneficiaries and institutions in mobility programmes could be strengthened by increasing the information flow at all levels, including administrative (and academic) staff in the project. This will help to improve awareness and implication of all the academic and non-academic staff procedures involved in the international mobility and will build up an involvement of beneficiaries and institutions at a practical level. A suggestion on this sense could be launching awareness campaign by mobility coordinators and sending targeted emails to all potential candidates when the call for application is published (i.e. to students of the degree programmes involved in the mobility flows). Issuing information sheets and brief handbooks/guides to explain step by step the procedures for a smooth implementation of the mobility flows is also recommended.

f) Improving the quality of Agreements

Along with the already mentioned necessity to improve numbers and figures concerning the mobility in Mediterranean area, the Med-Mobil Consortium, cannot avoid to underline the necessity to improve the quality of the mobility agreements. Mobility Agreements should be really and practically implemented by all the involved institutions resulting as a consequence of a matching process that can be for example promoted by Universities network such as UNIMED. As mentioned in the D.4.1 - Needs Analysis and State of Art on Mobility Programmes in Italy and in MENA countries
(Morocco – Algeria – Tunisia – Egypt – Lebanon – Jordan – Palestine), under the voice “Quality assurance and transparency tools for promoting high quality mobility inside and outside the EHEA”, the application of the qualifications framework for the EHEA, of the ECTS and of the Diploma Supplement are encouraged to strengthen the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

**g) Develop a programme for cultural exchange in MENA countries**

It is recommended to develop a programme of cultural exchange in which students are sent to the participating countries and received by families and live with them to identify their customs and traditions.
6. Participants’ feedback

Under the framework of the Med-Mobil project, participants of pilot activities/mobilities undertaken by the project partners, were requested to give their feedback about the barriers and obstacles that should be overcome and tackled by a Mobility programme. Below we present some of their answers:

"The language"

"Barriers of politics and religion. We live in a very diverse region and we have to understand our differences to make a change”

"Mainly political, cultural and religious barriers. Issues of stereotyping should be addressed too.”

"Visa barriers”

"Mobility conditions and procedures considering the singularity of each country”

"Longer mobility period”

"Gaza closure, blockage”

"Visa and financial barriers”

"Bureaucratic and social obstacles. Universities special offices could be empowered as they may play a strategic role in connecting Mediterranean students with sectorial stakeholders (local authorities, companies, NGOs, etc.)”

"Lack of knowledge and prejudices about the socio-political situation, culture and actual needs”

Under the framework of the Med-Mobil, project participants of pilot activities/mobilities undertaken by the project partners, were requested to provide feedback, suggesting recommendations in order to enhance the implementation of effective Mobility programmes among Mediterranean countries and thus engage additional beneficiaries. Below we present some of their answers:

“Being more active on social media and having presentations at the universities about the programme”

“Having a representative of a mobility programme in each country on a constant basis. He will be the link between the other countries and the interested youth.”
“More Mediterranean countries should be involved. It should be a continuous work. Develop effective follow up system to track the effect of the programme and to make corrective actions when necessary”

“Well preparation for mobilities in order to get the maximum advertisement of the mobilities”

“Collecting the available opportunities from each partner and share it with others, will enhance the quality of the mobility”

“Defining some specific objectives linked to a number of specific issues to be solved.”

“Proposing the learning of other Mediterranean languages, besides English.”

“Enhancing opportunities for Mediterranean students by increasing the number of grants (e.g. in the framework of Erasmus+ Programme) for students from the Southern Mediterranean, Middle East and Balkans”

“Reducing Visa barriers and quicken visa release procedures”

“Pro-active approaches making known and stimulating interest about the organization and programmes.”

In the framework of the Med-Mobil project, participants in pilot activities/mobilities undertaken by project partners, were requested to provide their feedback over the impact of an effective Mobility programme on improving youth employability and mutual understanding in the Mediterranean. Below we present some of their answers:

“Through meeting key players, possible collaborations are easier and more practical”

“Promoting youth employability by developing their knowledge, understanding, and additional skills such as communication skills and competencies.”

“Promoting mutual understanding and respect through contacting with people from different culture and exchange ways of thinking”

“Enhancing youth language (English) skills of young people will also increase good job opportunities”

“Widening youth mentality”

“Adding new experience and friends and providing opportunity of understanding different cultures, religions and communities”

“Improving self-confidence, making beneficiaries take challenges”
"Giving the possibility to learn new specific skills which can be used in future jobs."

"Facilitating Exchanges of expertise and experiences and new possible contacts and scientific collaborations, broadening the communication opportunities among students and young researchers and actors of the labour market (academic spin off, start up, enterprises and companies linked to the universities environment, etc.)

"Increasing the future professional skills of students participating in the mobilities"

"Strengthening the 'soft' skills such as linguistic competencies, team building, curiosity, flexibility, intercultural mindset, mutual understanding, critical thinking, and self-empowerment."
7. Discussion – Conclusions

The ENPI CBC MED Med-Mobil project was focused on mobility and cultural exchange among students, professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, professors and young people from different Mediterranean countries: Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Spain.

The aim of the current Policy Report is to provide a set of recommendations addressed to policy makers and stakeholders of mobilities that will inspire, improve and facilitate future mobility programmes and initiatives among European and South Mediterranean countries.

According to the feedback collected both from the project partners and from the stakeholders, many obstacles and challenges have to been tackled to reach the effective implementation of a flexible and smooth mobility programme among European and South-Mediterranean countries such as: administrative constraints related to Visa procedures, bureaucracy, financial barriers, perceptions and stereotypes, building trust amongst institutions and amongst hosting organisations and beneficiaries (i.e. through raising awareness, recognition of diplomas, synergies among institutions, etc.), duration of the activity, language barriers and cultural differences (i.e. way of life, habits, cultures, traditions etc.).

Med-Mobil highlighted that to facilitate mobility in Euro-Mediterranean area and to enhance the mobility of beneficiaries in MENA countries a stronger cooperation amongst key actors, stakeholders, institutions, Universities, private and public sectors and policy makers is needed. The involvement of more beneficiaries and actors should also be enhanced. More specifically, even if the regulatory, social and political framework and environment are different among European and non-EU countries in the Mediterranean, Med-Mobil project showed that cohesion and integration among the countries can be fostered and achieved through mobility activities. In order to boost mobility, this report suggests to develop more interesting initiatives for the beneficiaries (i.e. courses on entrepreneurship, innovation, tourism etc.), improving the skills and procedures of institutions managing mobility programmes (i.e. courses on project management), facilitate the use of ICT for both dissemination (social media), management (database) and educational uses (virtual mobility) and connecting mobility and education with market and business needs and facilitating the involvement of professionals and experts.

Moreover, specific actions have been proposed for improving the current situation in the Mediterranean countries in the fields of cultural, education, research and economic exchange through increasing the funding of mobility actions, promoting actions to
combat the “brain drain”, establishing MED Mobility Offices in MENA countries, sharing of good practices from EU and involving more policy actors in the mobility initiatives.

Finally, the current Policy Report suggests the establishment of a new common cross-border targeted mobility programme in MED countries and recommends that future initiatives should be designed locally but implemented internationally; collaboration, communication and trust among institutions from European and MENA countries should be enhanced through common agreements and initiatives with a common goal, improving cultural exchange and bringing closer MENA and European countries.