

Mobility Abroad in Apprenticeship Training, Framework conditions, funding instruments and stakeholder perspectives

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1 Executive summary

Apprenticeship training is an integral part of the vocational education system in Austria. Aside from the primary objective of achieving vocational competence and agency, under the Austrian Vocational Training Act (Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG) apprentices have the option to undertake a practical traineeship abroad. Although the number of apprentices taking up international mobility opportunities is rising, it still represents only a fraction of the overall apprentice cohort (around 3 per cent per year group). This is significantly lower than the proportion in full-time school-based vocational education and training (at VET schools or colleges – Berufsbildende Mittlere und Höhere Schule, BMHS). The ibw study presented here looks into the reasons behind this.

To understand this, it is important to bear in mind that mobility abroad is **voluntary** for all stakeholders (particularly apprentices and training companies, and vocational schools too where applicable¹) and based on their consent. Placements abroad also take place **during the apprenticeship** (including retention period) and **for a limited duration** (a maximum of six months per academic year).

In Austria, there is a range of **support initiatives** with informative, advisory, supportive, and specific (co-)organisational remits. The IFA (International Young Workers Exchange) association is the only nationwide initiative. All of the others have a regional focus. There are also **financial support schemes** available: The training company receives the gross compensation for apprentices for periods in which the apprentice is undertaking a language course and/or a work-related traineeship abroad and is therefore not actively working at the company. The actual costs of language courses are funded (with no limit), while fixed allowances and daily rates are granted to help cover travel and accommodation costs. Apprentices receive a bonus in the form of a EUR 15 daily allowance for the duration of their stay abroad. This means that **the main – though not all – expenses and investments involved in apprentices spending time abroad can be covered**. As far as the training companies are concerned, the fact that apprentices do not make a productive contribution to the production process while they are away is an investment component they still have to shoulder. Meanwhile, apprentices have to make their own investment by paying any additional amount required for their actual travel and accommodation expenses, as the total sum of the apprenticeship bonus and the funding they receive for travel and accommodation costs is rarely enough to cover these.

The **expectations on both sides (apprentices and training companies/trainers) regarding the benefits of spending time abroad** are therefore not the only crucial factor in deciding whether training opportunities abroad are something worth considering and ultimately pursuing. The **information available about these funding opportunities** (and any **benefits available through the support initiatives**) has a bearing on this too. These aspects therefore form the main focus of the study's empirical research, which is based on an online survey of trainers. In addition, the study sheds light on the perspective and situation of vocational schools (based on qualitative interviews with administrators of these institutions).

The study highlights the fact that there are, on the one hand, **certain structural constraints on the participation** of apprentices in **practical traineeships abroad**. This is due to...

¹ If the period an apprentice spends abroad falls during (or overlaps with) vocational school time.

- ... the specific way in which apprenticeship training in Austria is organised (especially with regard to the young age of the apprentices and the effects relating to this, which often hinder participation², and the intense schedule of the training programme³).
- ... the stakeholders involved, whose interests and level of willingness must align as a “necessary” requirement for participation, at least as far as training companies and apprentices are concerned.⁴
- ... a support/counselling landscape and a financial support scheme which, although the former exists and is available in principle and the latter is essentially adequate, both involve a certain degree of complexity and lack of transparency⁵.

Nevertheless, there is potential for increasing participation levels, because...

- ... there is a **widespread lack of information**, both amongst trainers/training companies and amongst apprentices themselves. In many cases they do not realise, or are only vaguely aware, that it is possible to do a traineeship abroad as part of an apprenticeship. Many stakeholders (also) have no (in-depth) knowledge of the support, advice, and funding options available.
- ... the **“main benefits” of mobility abroad (namely the apprentice’s personal development, independence, and motivation)** are underestimated by both training companies/trainers and apprentices themselves (and presumably their parents or guardians too).

These two factors form the basis for possible **courses of action** which the study authors believe could be used to boost apprentice uptake of traineeships abroad in the medium term (e.g. pushing the participation level towards the EU benchmark of 6 per cent). This would require the development of an **overall national strategy**, which would involve all relevant stakeholders⁶ both in terms of formulating objectives and fundamental strategic approaches, and in terms of implementing measures/activities in their respective spheres of action or responsibility. A **concerted public image** and a joint campaign⁷ would need to be devised on the back of this. The aims of this would be as follows:

- To disseminate **essential information about the support and funding options available**,

² For example, apprehensions and reservations (including on the part of many parents or guardians) about the apprentices staying abroad “on their own”, probably for the first time for many of them. Young people also often have other interests within their peer group.

³ All training content needs to be taught on an occupation-specific basis within the apprenticeship period. The time available for training at work is also reduced by holidays, sick leave, time off to attend vocational school, and – in the final year – preparations for the final apprenticeship exam (Lehrabschlussprüfung – LAP).

⁴ The temporary loss of an apprentice from the production workforce while they are abroad is a potential inhibiting factor for many training companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

⁵ It is not immediately clear to training companies and apprentices who they can contact for advice, support, or funding. This is particularly challenging for training companies and apprentices looking into opportunities for mobility abroad for the first time. There are numerous support initiatives available (although IFA is the only one with nationwide scope), but it is often unclear who is responsible for what and the support offered by these initiatives varies. The funding instruments (and where they stand in relation to the national funding budget and Erasmus+ funding components) and the eligibility criteria for support are also difficult to grasp at first glance.

⁶ Meaning the government departments and their “downstream” institutions (the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Agency for Education and Internationalisation), social partners and interest groups and their institutions (particularly the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, including apprenticeship offices, the Federation of Austrian Industries, the Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Federation), and the relevant support initiatives (IFA, xchange, Let’s Walz, etc.).

⁷ The following aspects are crucial to an overall national strategy:

- ... The involvement of all relevant stakeholders, in terms of both content and responsibilities (who does what and who is charge of/responsible for what).
- ... The creation of a joint “centralised” public image, e.g. in the form of an officially presented **central communication platform/website/“point of contact”**.
- ... Coordination of the activities launched, organised, and implemented by the various stakeholders, in terms of both content and scheduling.

- To **raise awareness of the advantages and benefits of practical traineeships abroad on a target group-specific basis** (training companies/trainers⁸, apprentices, parents/guardians, vocational schools). The “**main**” **benefits** of traineeships abroad **should be highlighted in particular, i.e. the apprentice’s personal development** (independence/self-reliance, self-confidence, motivation), along with the positive effects on in-company training and for vocational schools. Emphasis should also be placed on improving foreign language skills (especially in relation to communication) and on the opportunity to gain insights into different professional settings in practice (production processes/organisational structures, etc.).
- To actively **address/encourage discussion on any apprehensions/reservations**, again on a target group-specific basis (e.g. a traineeship abroad being the first time an apprentice goes abroad “on their own”, uncertainty on the part of training companies on whether their business will be able to reap benefits from this too).

It is essential to use attractive media formats for all these implementation activities and to include testimonials. Equally importantly, the measures must follow an **outreach-based approach** (i.e. proactively approaching the relevant target groups) rather than a reactive one (i.e. waiting to see what happens first, responding to demand). The study outlines a series of specific possible activities as examples.

Our investigation also sets out **some further measures**, such as (sectoral, regional, or cross-border) mobility alliances, opportunities to raise awareness of engagement in mobility abroad and the quality of the programmes on offer (award for training companies, national prizes, documenting traineeships abroad in apprenticeship certificates), promoting mobility placements during the retention period and amongst training staff themselves (in-company trainers and/or vocational school teachers), to name but a few.

Finally, there are two more aspects that should not go unmentioned: the unsatisfactory data situation when it comes to the **monitoring** of mobility placements abroad, and the **empirical research** on mobility abroad in apprenticeships. This study is the first of its kind in Austria. Further research should follow.

⁸ Since companies organise their training differently depending on their size, this should be taken into account when deciding how to approach them. Most training companies in Austria are SMEs, so any general information/PR strategy needs to take the specific challenges they face into consideration.

2 Initial situation and study design

Apprenticeship training is an integral part of the vocational education system in Austria. Aside from the primary objective of achieving vocational competence and agency, Section 1a of the Austrian Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz – BAG) suggests that paying attention to the interchangeability between different educational pathways and the international dimension of vocational training is crucial to making vocational training more attractive. While the term “international dimension” is not defined in detail – apart from a reference to international trends in the way teaching is organised (e.g. establishing new apprenticeships in IT/computing, including transversal teaching content such as building capacity for action on an international level and/or e-skills, or designing training systems in line with skills-oriented learning outcomes) – there is certainly scope here for international mobility for apprentices.

Despite the legal provisions in place for mobility placements abroad⁹, as well as the advisory and support institutions (most notably the IFA¹⁰ and OeAD, which cover the whole of Austria – along with various regional initiatives, cf. Chapter 3.1.3) and funding instruments available (for both training companies and apprentices, cf. Chapter 3.1.2), there are still **numerous inhibiting factors** at play – both from an apprentice perspective (e.g. age, language barriers) and amongst training companies (e.g. temporary unavailability of apprentices as productive members of the workforce). This means that, realistically, only a relatively small proportion of apprentices have the option to engage in international mobility opportunities. And only very few of these end up spending several months¹¹ abroad. Most traineeships abroad last four to six weeks, with the focus not so much on acquiring specific professional skills as on boosting the apprentices’ self-confidence and personal development (the key word here being independence), improving foreign language skills, and providing the opportunity to gain insights into different work settings.

From a systemic perspective, there is a complex interaction between apprentices, training companies, and vocational schools that underlies mobility abroad in apprenticeship training. The specific interests, level of knowledge, and expectations – not to mention apprehensions – of each of these stakeholders play a crucial role, especially against the backdrop of the legislation in place, the institutions providing information, advice and support, and the funding instruments available. It is these stakeholders, along with their perspectives and the institutional and systemic framework, that the study focuses on in its comprehensive analysis¹² of possible inhibiting factors relating to mobility abroad. The findings from this provide a basis for identifying any areas in need of reform and for coming up with recommendations for action that could help to promote mobility abroad in apprenticeship training.

The **objective** of the study is to answer the following questions from the various stakeholder perspectives:

- To what extent is information about practical traineeships abroad (conditions of participation/ funding options) available?

⁹ The BAG sets out the fundamental cornerstones of mobility abroad for apprentices: Placements must take place during the apprenticeship, the apprenticeship remuneration must continue to be paid during the placement, and the apprentice must receive social security entitlements for the duration of their stay abroad. Up to four months of training abroad per academic year can be counted towards the time spent learning the relevant occupation as part of the apprenticeship. The BAG also governs the decision-making powers in the event that any leave of absence from vocational school is required.

¹⁰ International Young Workers Exchange; <https://ifa.or.at/>; Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation; <https://oead.at/en/>

¹¹ Fitting placements abroad into the alternating schedule of an apprenticeship (which is split between work-based learning and time spent at vocational school) can prove challenging, especially in the case of longer placements.

¹² Apprentices may be the main target group for mobility abroad in apprenticeship training, but the study also examines mobility abroad amongst in-company trainers and vocational school teachers.

- How much basic interest is there in taking part in practical traineeships abroad, and to what degree is this accepted?
- What motivating factors/expectations (improving professional skills, soft skills, foreign language skills, etc.) encourage or discourage participation in practical traineeships abroad?
- Who are the instigators or stakeholders who initiate participation in traineeships abroad or make this possible?
- What options/measures could be put in place to overcome existing barriers to mobility?

When submitting the bid for the study, it was impossible to predict how long the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would last. With this in mind, the main focus was on fundamental and structural aspects and on the opinions of the various stakeholders in light of their experiences to date. It was important to ensure, as far as possible, that the findings would not be influenced by the current situation. Care was taken to make sure this was clear to the respondents involved in the analyses (particularly the surveys). Although COVID-19 may have been mentioned, potential short- and medium-term impacts (e.g. postponing planned traineeships abroad, waiting until new traineeships can be run again, or even suspending traineeships altogether) were not discussed.

ibw also drew on the expertise of the International Young Workers Exchange (IFA) – the association for the promotion of international exchanges for apprentices, young professionals and trainers in industry – by engaging its assistance with the project. In addition, the key stages of the project (scheduling, interim results, and feedback on draft questionnaires) were arranged in consultation with an advisory committee (representatives of the project commissioner). This approach proved extremely productive in terms of providing a **practice-oriented perspective and implementing** the study results.

Broadly speaking, the project is structured across four phases or modules:

Phase 1: Assessing the current situation

The first phase of the project focused on shedding light on the legal **framework** for implementing and facilitating (and recognising) mobility abroad in Austrian apprenticeship training based on a systems analysis approach. The different focal areas of the current national and regional **funding programmes/initiatives** were also outlined and examined as part of this phase. **Secondary data** relating to participants (OeAD database) was referred to where available.

In addition, the project looked in depth at the situation regarding mobility abroad in **Germany and Switzerland**. These findings are based on desk research and a **literature review**. The aim here was partly to build an understanding of **similarities and differences** to the situation in Austria, and partly to identify any examples of best practice from abroad. Aspects examined include the degree of integration in the legal framework and the level of regulation, an analysis of any funding instruments (including national/regional support structures), and empirical findings on both inhibiting and promoting factors affecting international mobility in apprenticeship training (with a focus on the mobility of apprentices in the country in question).

Phase 2: Trainer survey

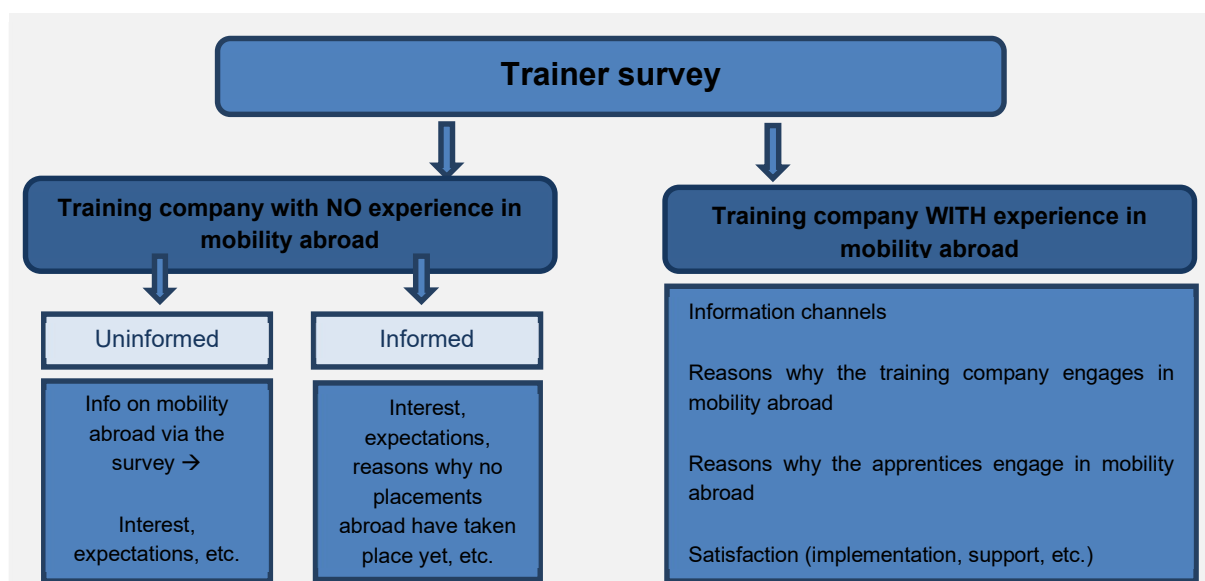
For mobility abroad to happen, there needs to be a mutual agreement between two – or often three – stakeholders: the apprentice (and their parents or guardians if they are minors), the training company, and the vocational school. Companies are therefore up there with apprentices themselves and vocational schools as key players in enabling apprentices to undertake training abroad.

To collect the broadest possible information on the perspective of this highly relevant target group, along with their level of knowledge, motivations, and any factors inhibiting their apprentices' take-up of mobility opportunities abroad, an **online survey of in-company trainers in Austria**¹³ was carried out.

Carrying out a survey of in-company trainers made sense for several reasons: These are people who not only have direct **experience in dealing with apprentices**, but can also provide opinions from **the company's perspective**. They therefore act as a kind of **"mouthpiece"** and can convey the views, expectations, and interests of both sides¹⁴.

The trainers' assessment of their apprentices' **willingness to engage in mobility abroad** is a crucial part of the survey. This means that **potential influencing factors** from their family life and social sphere can also be included in the analysis¹⁵.

Illustration 2-1: ibw trainer survey



This empirical survey was aimed not just at companies that already had experience in sending their apprentices on training placements abroad, but also – and more importantly – at training companies that had not yet engaged in mobility abroad, or only to a very insignificant extent. The intention was to use the findings gleaned from this particular target group to ascertain what information is available about

¹³ This was based on a random sample compiled as part of an ibw study in 2019. The 4,804 e-mail contacts collected in total were from trainers based in companies throughout Austria. However, use of this contact information must be contractually agreed with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (data processing in accordance with Article 28 GDPR). According to Section 72 (4) of the Austrian Economic Chamber Act (Wirtschaftskammergesetz – WKG), e-mails sent for the purpose of fulfilling tasks assigned to commercial organisations do not require consent from the recipient as stipulated in Section 107 of the Austrian Telecommunications Act (Telekommunikationsgesetz – TKG).

¹⁴ Certain misinterpretations are of course possible, as the views and opinions of the trainers are not necessarily the same as those of their company management or the apprentices under their tutelage. While this is a potential downside of the survey design, there are advantages to it too: For example, these trainers often have a significant influence on whether the training companies consider the idea of placements abroad in the first place, as well as actively encouraging mobility abroad where applicable and selecting the apprentices to be considered for these placements. This survey design also makes it possible to generate empirical findings on significant potential influencing and (if applicable) inhibiting factors on both sides – the company the trainer works for and the apprentices they are responsible for. Separate surveys for training companies/trainers and apprentices would need to be compared and consolidated, which would require considerable effort in terms of organisation (not to mention the challenges relating to data protection).

¹⁵ Such as parents playing an encouraging/supporting or inhibiting role in an apprentice's decision to do a traineeship abroad, income (particularly for apprentices supporting their own households), peer pressure, etc.

mobility opportunities for apprentices and how much basic interest there is in taking part in these opportunities. Another aim was to identify the motivations and expectations (and apprehensions) that matter most to the companies, along with **incentives for making placements abroad more attractive** to apprentices.

In the case of companies that had already been involved in apprentice mobility opportunities, the focus was on questions about motivations and expectations, levels of satisfaction (with the implementation process, supervision, support, financial incentives, etc.), the challenges involved, and the **impact of taking part**.

Different questions and topics were raised depending on the respondents' level of knowledge and whether they had any previous experience in mobility abroad for apprentices. The diagram above outlines the main target groups and topic areas covered by the survey.

Phase 3: Qualitative vocational school survey

Aside from training companies, trainers, and apprentices themselves, **vocational schools** also play a key role in initiating and implementing opportunities for mobility abroad. What is the underlying situation for them in terms of interest, motivation, and inhibiting factors? What challenges do they face that need to be resolved to pave the way for traineeships abroad? What experiences/views do they have regarding the various aspects of "their" pupils' willingness to engage in mobility abroad?

In terms of methodology, this phase is based on qualitative interviews with six vocational schools, conducted by telephone using a set of interview guidelines. A **contrasting sample design** was used here: Of the six vocational schools interviewed, four had explicit experience in mobility abroad involving their pupils and two did not. Mobility abroad for vocational school teachers was also covered in the interviews.

Phase 4: Report and deriving possible courses of action for increasing participation in mobility abroad

The report contains a description of the methodology used and all the evaluations and analyses carried out through the various phases of the project, along with a summary of the results and findings from these. Based on this, conclusions are drawn and possible courses of action are suggested for promoting international mobility opportunities for apprentices.

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Project advisory committee

The project commissioner has also set up an advisory committee for the project. Key stages of the project (scheduling, interim results, and feedback on draft questionnaires) were arranged in consultation with this advisory committee. This opportunity to obtain an external assessment of each project phase and module enhanced the quality and usefulness of the study results in terms of providing a practice-oriented perspective and facilitating implementation. ibw also drew on the expertise of the International Young Workers Exchange (IFA) – the association for the promotion of international exchanges for apprentices, young professionals and trainers in industry – by engaging its assistance with the project.

The project advisory committee was made up of experts from OeAD, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF). The study authors would like to take this opportunity to thank the project advisory committee for its valuable suggestions and critical input.

Chapter overview

Chapter 3 sets out the starting point for implementing mobility abroad in apprenticeship training, including the legal framework, the funding instruments, and the support initiatives and their agendas. The focus is on Austria, but references are also made to Germany and Switzerland for comparative purposes.

Chapter 4 is based on qualitative interviews with vocational schools and sets out their interests, views, experiences, and opinions regarding mobility abroad in apprenticeships.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the quantitative trainer survey. This survey produced various empirical findings on the information available to trainers (“training companies”) regarding mobility abroad, their expectations concerning the benefits for the training company, and their assessment of the level of interest and any apprehensions on the part of their apprentices. It also investigated the level of knowledge regarding support schemes and funding instruments and the extent to which these are used. The main focus was on training companies that had not yet engaged in any opportunities for mobility abroad (within the last three years). However, the survey also covered trainers whose companies had had experience with practical traineeships abroad. This approach led to some interesting contrasting findings (especially with regard to the level of information and expectations concerning benefits).

Chapter 6 draws a final conclusion from the analyses carried out and outlines the study authors’ suggestions for possible courses of action based on their findings, particularly with regard to opportunities for increasing participation in mobility abroad in the context of apprenticeships.

3 Framework conditions, support and funding schemes, and recent findings on mobility abroad in Austria (including in light of the situation in Germany and Switzerland)

This chapter presents the key findings on the current situation regarding mobility abroad in apprenticeship training, setting out the legal framework, the funding instruments available, and the support initiatives and their agendas. References are also made to the information available on participant figures. Section 3.1 describes the current situation in Austria, while section 3.2 takes a comparative look at Germany and Switzerland. Section 3.3 briefly outlines the available research findings from these three countries.

3.1 Situation in Austria

3.1.1 Legal framework

On a legal level, international mobility for trainees is covered by the Austrian Vocational Training Act (BAG). The basis for this is in Section 13 (2) BAG¹⁶, which states that “apprenticeship periods or comparable work-related training periods spent abroad” can be considered equivalent to an apprenticeship period spent in Austria. Such apprenticeship periods abroad (or comparable work-related training) are credited – after obtaining a statement from the relevant regional advisory board on apprenticeship – by the responsible apprenticeship office and can cover up to four or six months per academic year: Up to six months in work placements per academic year can be counted towards an apprenticeship undertaken in Austria, while the limit is four months for other training-related educational activities abroad. Training abroad can only be credited if the knowledge that the apprentice acquires abroad is comparable to what is taught in the Austrian apprenticeship (Section 27c [1] and [2] BAG).

Section 27b (1) BAG also stipulates that “periods of work-related training abroad [...] [are] considered equivalent to all or part of the period allotted for the corresponding apprenticeship if this has been contractually agreed”. Training abroad that is not covered by this provision can still be credited towards an apprenticeship based on a corresponding directive from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy. This requires a review to be carried out to prove that the learning content of this training – “particularly in terms of the practical vocational skills and knowledge taught” – corresponds as far as possible to what is taught as part of the apprenticeship training in Austria. These provisions fall under the “Equivalence of training periods abroad” category.

Section 17 BAG includes a provision regarding continued payment of an apprentice’s usual allowance while they are on a placement abroad; the organisation responsible for the apprentice’s training is obliged to pay the apprenticeship remuneration for the period in which they are undertaking this placement. This only applies if the apprentice is seconded by the company. Participants in traineeships abroad are also considered apprentices within the meaning of Austria’s General Social Insurance Act, Family Allowance Act, Wages Guarantee in case of Insolvency Act, and Income Tax Act (Section 27c [4] BAG) and receive social security entitlements for the duration of their stay abroad.

With regard to compulsory vocational school training, the law stipulates that permission for leave of absence must be obtained from the school administration if part of the traineeship abroad falls during a period when vocational school attendance is compulsory. The school administration or the responsible board of education (the local school authority) decide whether to grant a leave of absence.

¹⁶ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10006276> (in German)

A cross-border language course and/or a work-related placement at a company abroad can be organised either independently through the training company or through a dedicated institution such as the IFA association (International Young Workers Exchange; cf. also section 3.1.3). For options eligible for funding, both from national funds and through Erasmus+, see section 3.1.2.

In the case of apprentices under the age of 18, the provisions of the Austrian Child and Youth Employment Act (Kinder- und Jugendlichen-Beschäftigungsgesetz – KJBG) and the Ordinance on Bans and Restrictions on Employment for Young People (Verordnung über Beschäftigungsverbote und -beschränkungen für Jugendliche – KJBG-VO) in particular must also be complied with. As part of its educational purpose, the placement abroad should also include training that relates to the occupation in question or even goes beyond this – if this is required to reconcile with the relevant legal requirements. The placement company abroad must confirm that the apprentice is attending training at the company, as well as confirming the location and duration (working days) of the placement, and providing a brief description of the actual content of the training.¹⁷

Vocational schools also have the option to organise placements abroad for apprentices assigned to them, but only a few such institutions choose to take up this option. In this case, the vocational school takes care of the relevant formal and organisational tasks.¹⁸

3.1.2 Funding instruments

Mobility abroad for apprentices is funded by various sources of financing: Some of this funding comes from EU funds (specifically Erasmus+), while some comes from national budgets and, in particular, the sources of financing under Section 19c BAG, which are designed to supplement the funding from Erasmus+.

National funding to support training companies in accordance with Section 19c (1) 8 BAG:¹⁹

The legal basis for training company funding is in Section 19c (1) 8 BAG, which states that organisations that provide apprenticeship training are entitled to financial support if they take measures which serve “...to increase the chances of a successful vocational training outcome...”. Local authorities, political parties, and inter-company training facilities are exempt from funding. The specific arrangements of the funding schemes (and the supplementary support structures) are laid down in guidelines issued by the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.²⁰ The funds required for this come from the “Insolvenz-Entgelt-Fonds” (IEF), Austria’s insolvency remuneration fund.²¹

¹⁷ Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (2021), p. 9

¹⁸ Klimmer (2009)

¹⁹ Until 2017, funding was also provided for training placements abroad for high-achieving apprentices and apprenticeship graduates under the “Begabtenförderung Mobilität” mobility scholarship scheme. These scholarships were funded by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs. The placements funded in this way were organised by the IFA.

²⁰ The funding is therefore currently provided by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) and the Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA). Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs: Guidelines in accordance with Section 19c (1) 8 of the Austrian Vocational Training Act, status as of 1 July 2021. (Online: <https://www.wko.at/service/bildung-lehre/richtlinie-9c-abs-1-z8-bag.pdf>)

²¹ These funds are capped, as the law states that “once these funds have been used up, no further contractual commitments can be entered into or promises of funding made”. In actual fact, however, the funds have so far been sufficient to grant support to all applicants eligible for it.

According to the guidelines, a total of EUR 200,000.00 in funding is earmarked for institutions that provide support for mobility abroad (e.g. through the IFA). In the past, this has been more or less enough to meet the demand for

This financing based on national funds is designed as support for training companies (hence its legal basis being incorporated into the BAG). The funding recipients in this case are training companies, apprentices, and support institutions. This funding covers four specific components:

- **Compensation for apprenticeship remuneration:** The training company receives full compensation for the allowance usually paid to the apprentice throughout their placement abroad. This also covers extra time spent abroad to improve language skills²². Evidence demonstrating completion of the placement abroad and payment of the apprenticeship remuneration for the duration of the placement or language course must be provided.
- **Language courses** in connection with a placement abroad: Since July 2017, funding is also provided to cover additional time apprentices spend abroad to improve their language skills for their placement. The funded language courses should take place immediately before the placement abroad or around the same time.²³ These language courses can last up to two weeks (with at least 20 lessons per week)²⁴. Compensation is provided to cover the actual costs incurred and borne by the training company. This includes the overall **course costs** along with a **capped amount towards accommodation costs** and a **capped one-off payment towards travel expenses** (calculated based on the Erasmus+ fixed allowances²⁵). However, these language course expenses are only funded through national schemes if funding could not be obtained from Erasmus+ and the language course is taken around the same time as the training placement.
- **Apprenticeship bonus** for apprentices: This amounts to EUR 15.00 per day spent on placement abroad. This funding is also provided through the training company, but the apprentice is the recipient in this case. This bonus is paid out either after the placement abroad by the organisation responsible for the apprenticeship training (if this organisation arranged the placement itself), or before the placement abroad by the institution that is organising it. Applications for funding by training companies automatically include an application for an apprenticeship bonus for the apprentice.
- The fourth funding component relates to **services** (for both apprentices and training companies) connected with training placements abroad. This concerns initiatives and support institutions (e.g. the IFA). The funding amount is capped at the aforementioned level of EUR 200,000.00 per year, as set out in the guidelines (cf. footnote 21).

The first three funding components are managed via the apprenticeship offices of the Austrian Economic Chambers or the in-house unit within the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. Aside from tasks such as finding partners abroad, providing on-site support for apprentices, and organising stays abroad (cf. also section 3.1.3), support initiatives (including the IFA in particular) also often provide services to assist with these financing arrangements. Furthermore, the funding agencies effectively finance placements abroad (plus language courses) in advance, excluding compensation for the apprentice's allowance.

financial support based on the level of interest. Rising interest in mobility abroad (e.g. due to measures/initiatives and strategies yet to be put into practice) would presumably mean that this amount would no longer be sufficient. Unless this funding amount is increased, some interested candidates may therefore not receive adequate support, which could reduce the likelihood of them actually participating in mobility opportunities abroad.

²² If a training placement is combined with a private holiday, compensation is of course only provided to cover the period relating to work.

²³ Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (2017)

²⁴ Further funding criteria are set out in the guidelines (p. 10).

²⁵ For the current fixed allowances under Erasmus+, see footnotes 30 and 31

EU funding from Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme for education, training, youth, and sport and it currently spans the period from 2021 to 2027 (the previous period, which was the period relevant to this study, was 2014–2020). One of the explicit aims of this programme is to increase mobility in its four key areas of school education, vocational education and training, higher education, and adult education as a means of developing cooperation between the partner countries. Austria is expected to receive EUR 220 million in funding under Erasmus+.

The programme encompasses three key action areas: mobility (Key Action 1), cooperation for promoting innovation and best practices (Key Action 2), and support for political reform (Key Action 3). Mobility of learners, educators, and staff is supported at institutional level under Key Action 1. This covers the following target groups: students, graduates, school pupils in initial vocational education and training, and apprentices. Educators and staff from all kinds of educational institutions can also obtain funding from Erasmus+ to take part in continuing education and teaching programmes abroad. Apparently over 90 per cent of Erasmus+ funding currently goes towards internships for pupils in full-time training or education, while only 5 per cent is used directly for dual training schemes.²⁶ In Austria, the Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD) is responsible for coordinating and managing Erasmus+ funding. The table below shows the trend in Erasmus+ funding for mobility within Austria's vocational education and training system.

Table 3-1: Development of funding under Erasmus+ Key Action 1 within vocational education and training in Austria over time, in EUR million

Year	Erasmus+ Key Action 1 funding
2014	4,670,894
2015	5,007,137
2016	5,222,950
2017	6,413,312
2018	7,418,321
2019	9,400,582

Source: OeAD April 2020

In 2019, around 5,100 vocational education and training mobility placements in total were recorded in connection with Erasmus+ funding for Austria (cf. also [Table 3-2](#)); the most popular destinations included the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany. In addition to placements in EU Member States, there are also mobility opportunities available in Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and North Macedonia.

Mobility projects consist of three stages:

- The preparation stage, which involves making practical arrangements, selecting participants, working out agreements between partners and participants, and preparing the participants in terms of language skills, intercultural knowledge, and the learning content and tasks they will be dealing with;
- The implementation stage, in which the mobility activities are carried out;

²⁶ <https://www.ale.or.at/about-i> (in German)

- The follow-up stage, which involves assessing the activities and revising them where necessary, formally recognising the learning outcomes achieved, and disseminating and making use of the project results.²⁷

Funding for mobility under Erasmus+ is generally based on fixed allowances to cover travel and accommodation costs for participants and organisational costs for the institution involved. Fixed allowances are provided under certain conditions for participants' linguistic preparation and to cover costs arising from taking part in courses (but only for languages not covered by the Online Language Support [OLS] platform²⁸). Approval for reimbursing actual costs incurred by participants with fewer opportunities (support for inclusion) or extraordinary costs may also be granted if there is a need for this.²⁹

The **funding** covers the following **expenditure components**:

- **Grant for travel costs** (the grant amount depends on the distance travelled)³⁰
- The funding amounts for **accommodation costs** range across a scale and vary depending on the destination, the length of stay, and the type of participant receiving the funding: The destination countries are split into three groups with different daily rates. There are two categories relating to length of stay: Higher daily rates apply for the first 14 days of a mobility placement, with lower rates for any remaining time thereafter. The people granted funding are distinguished between learners (including apprentices) and (teaching) staff (including accompanying persons), with the daily rates for staff being significantly higher.³¹
- Organisational costs: Costs incurred in direct connection with organising and implementing mobility placements are eligible for funding. This is provided in the form of a fixed allowance (payable to the institution), calculated based on the number of participants, the type of activity involved, and the duration of the mobility placement.
- Also eligible for funding are expenses relating to support for inclusion, preparatory visits, course costs, linguistic preparation, and extraordinary costs (for details, see the website mentioned in footnote 29).

Summary: Funding from the perspective of stakeholders/funding recipients

Taking all funding components into account (i.e. the funding through Erasmus+ and the national funding in line with Section 19c [1] 8 BAG), this gives rise to the following financing structure from the perspective of the funding recipients and with regard to the various expenditure components:

²⁷ European Commission (2020)

²⁸ In actual fact, the OLS covers almost all EU languages, so Erasmus+ ends up funding hardly any international language courses. For more information about the OLS, see: <https://eu.daad.de/infos-fuer-hochschulen/projektdurchfuehrung/mobilitaet-mit-programmlaendern-ka103/ols/de/47501-online-sprachunterstuetzung-online-linguistic-support/> (in German)

²⁹ Information from <https://erasmusplus.at/de/berufsbildung/mobilitaet-akkreditierung/gefoiderte-kosten/> (in German)

³⁰ Current Erasmus+ fixed allowances for travel: https://erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/bildung.erasmusplus.at/Berufsbildung/Mobilitaet/Gefoiderte_Kosten/2021_Reisekostenpauschalen_ank.pdf (in German)

³¹ Current Erasmus+ daily rates for time spent abroad: https://erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/bildung.erasmusplus.at/Berufsbildung/Mobilitaet/Gefoiderte_Kosten/2021_Tagessaetze_KA121_2021-03-30_ank.pdf (in German)

- The **training company receives the gross compensation for apprentices** for periods in which the apprentice is undertaking a **language course and/or a work-related traineeship abroad** and is therefore not actively working at the company.
- The actual **costs of language courses** are funded (with no limit).
- Fixed allowances and daily rates are granted to help cover **travel and accommodation costs**.
- **Apprentices** receive a bonus in the form of a EUR 15 daily allowance for the duration of their stay abroad.

The main – though not all – expenses and investments involved in apprentices spending time abroad are therefore covered. As far as the training companies are concerned, the fact that apprentices do not make a productive contribution to the production process while they are away is an investment component they still have to shoulder. Meanwhile, apprentices have to make their own investment by paying any additional amount required for their actual travel and accommodation expenses, as the total sum of the apprenticeship bonus and the funding they receive for travel and accommodation costs is rarely enough to cover these.

The expectations on both sides regarding the benefits of spending time abroad are therefore not the only crucial factor in deciding whether training opportunities abroad are something worth considering and ultimately pursuing. The information available about these funding opportunities (and any benefits available through the support initiatives outlined in the next section) has a bearing on this too. This study focuses mainly on these key influencing factors in Chapter 5, which presents the empirical trainer survey.

3.1.3 Support initiatives

In Austria, there is a range of support initiatives with informative, advisory, supportive, and specific (co-)organisational remits. The IFA (International Young Workers Exchange) association is, in principle, the only nationwide initiative. All of the others have a regional focus (cf. Illustration 3-1: Support initiatives on the next page). This section outlines the agendas of the respective support initiatives³².

International Young Workers Exchange – IFA

Probably the most important institution when it comes to mobility abroad for apprentices in Austria is the International Young Workers Exchange (IFA).³³ The IFA has been organising placements abroad for individuals undergoing initial vocational training, young workers, and trainers for 25 years now. By its own definition, this institution serves as a “one-stop shop” that provides access to support and funding for both individuals and business enterprises, with its main target groups being apprentices and companies. The IFA operates on all organisational levels: It applies for funding, arranges placements abroad, and takes care of all the formalities regarding payments and reporting.

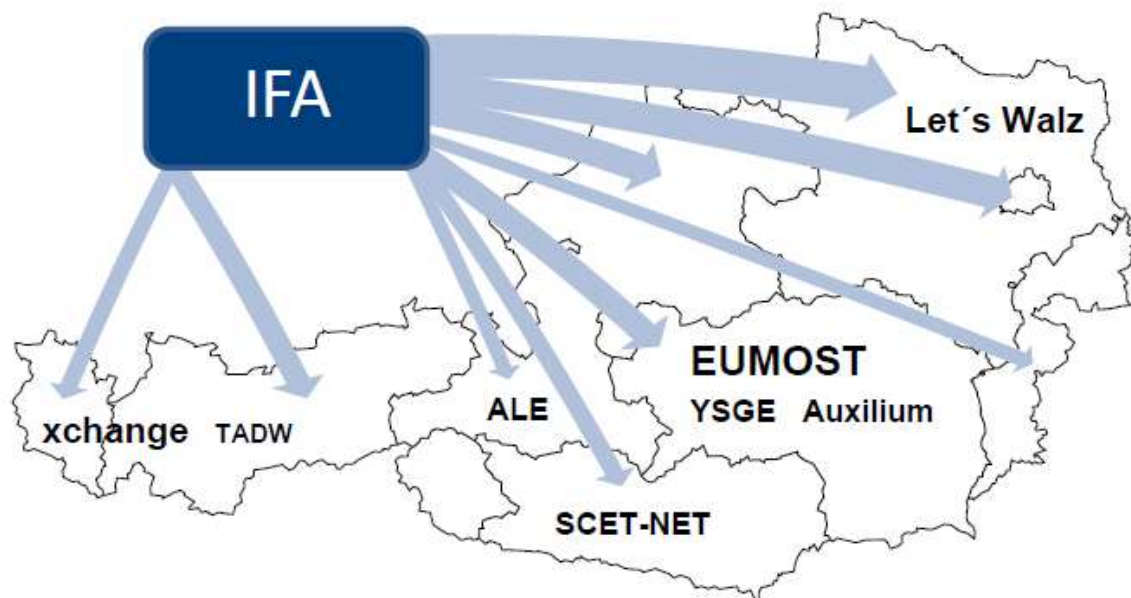
Each year, some 2,000 young people and 150 companies, schools, and other educational institutions make use of the services offered by the IFA. The association focuses mainly on non-academics: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it gave around 800 apprentices, vocational school pupils, workers, and trainers per year from all over Austria the chance to undertake a placement abroad, making it one of the biggest providers of practical training opportunities abroad for Austrian apprentices. Conversely, it also offers

³² Note: SCET-NET (the Senza Confini Education and Training Network) offered apprentices from Carinthia the opportunity to spend up to four weeks learning about everyday working life at an Italian company in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia or Veneto regions. Participants received an allowance for travel and accommodation. Since this project was due to end in September 2020, it is not presented in detail in the brief descriptions given here.

³³ <https://ifa.or.at/>

support for adults and young people from other EU countries who are undertaking placements in Austria. The IFA's members include all the Austrian Economic Chambers, the Federation of Austrian Industries, and Junior Chamber Austria.

Illustration 3-1: Support initiatives



Quelle: ibw-Recherche (siehe Initiativenprofile, Seite 6-19)

Erläuterung: Die Schriftgröße der regionalen Initiativen orientiert sich an der Schätzung des Umfangs der jährlich durchgeführten bzw. geplanten Lehrlingsmobilitäten im Zeitraum 2018-2020 (Tabelle 1). Die Breite der Pfeile des IFA-Vereins orientiert sich am Umfang der durchgeführten Lehrlingsmobilitäten aus dem Jahr 2019 (Tabelle 2).

Source: ibw research (see initiative profiles on pages 6–19)

Note: The font sizes used for the regional initiatives reflect the estimated volume of their apprentice mobility placements planned and/or implemented per year, in the period from 2018 to 2020 (Table 1). The widths of the IFA association's arrows are based on the volume of apprentice mobility placements implemented in 2019 (Table 2).

Source: taken from Petanovitsch and Fibi (2021)

xchange

The xchange initiative was launched in 2001 and is supported by the Internationale Bodensee-Konferenz (IBK), the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer (Working Community of Alpine Regions, or Arge Alp), and the European Union via the Interreg IV programme.³⁴ The initiative operates in the western provinces of Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol, and Vorarlberg, and its apprentice exchange scheme involves more than 30 partner organisations, economic chambers, vocational education and training authorities, and regional youth information and funding organisations. Apprentices looking to do training abroad can choose from a range of destinations in Germany (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg), Switzerland (Aargau, Appenzell, Grisons, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Ticino, Thurgau, Zurich), Italy

³⁴ https://www.standort-tirol.at/data.cfm?vpath=ma-old_import/downloads/flyer_xchange_2011 (in German)

(Bolzano in South Tyrol, Trento, Lombardy), the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the Upper Rhine region (Alsace, Basel area).

The aim of the initiative and its supporting organisations IBK and Arge Alp was to establish a tailored programme for apprentices in the local region who are interested in undertaking training in neighbouring countries.

The regional aspect of the initiative is important, as the neighbouring and partner countries involved also place a strong emphasis on dual training schemes, so there are suitable programmes and opportunities available for training abroad. The initiative's ultimate objective is to encourage closer networking and greater exchange within the Lake Constance region in general. The target group is apprentices in at least the second year of their apprenticeship. However, graduate apprentices are also still eligible to take part in the exchange programme up to 12 months after taking their final apprenticeship exam. The scheme is open to all apprentices across all sectors within the region. Roughly 2,300 young people have taken advantage of the opportunity to spend time abroad through the xchange initiative since it was put into action around 20 years ago, with between 140 and 170 taking up funded training placements abroad each year.

The apprentice exchange scheme involves more than 30 partner organisations, economic chambers, vocational education and training authorities, and regional youth information and funding organisations. Each province or destination has a dedicated coordinator, who usually also works with apprentices as part of their own job. The xchange project managers act as a link between the funding and support providers and the coordinators in the various provinces and regions. They are also responsible for dealing with financial matters and payments and for handling the bureaucratic and administrative aspects of the exchange programme (e.g. forms).

The funding is largely provided by the Erasmus+ programme. Placements in Switzerland, however, are funded via Movieta, the Swiss national agency for the promotion of exchanges and mobility in the education system. If the Erasmus+ funding criteria (minimum of 13 nights spent abroad) are not met, funds can also be obtained from the Arge Alp and IBK funding budget for the exchange programme.

In addition to their standard training allowance, apprentices receive an extra allowance of around EUR 35 for each day of their exchange while they are abroad. Accommodation costs are reimbursed up to a maximum of EUR 25 per night and participants can also claim back their travel expenses if they provide receipts. If they travel by car, they will receive the relevant official kilometre allowance. Placements abroad under the xchange scheme take place during the apprenticeship period and usually run for four weeks, although they can carry on for up to six months.

Trainees can register with an xchange facility, then xchange will find a partner company abroad and arrange training objectives, content, and placement dates. When they register (for a placement in Switzerland, for example), participants can specify three preferred destinations. Their application is then sent to the relevant local coordinators and a destination is chosen depending on which region is most likely to have a suitable training position available.

Plans were made to mark xchange's 20th anniversary in 2020 by revamping the initiative and making it more youth-oriented (e.g. by setting up a new website, through Instagram and Facebook activities, etc.) with the aim of engaging more effectively with its young target audience. However, these plans could only be implemented to a limited extent due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Let's Walz

Let's Walz is a local initiative based in Lower Austria that was launched by the Lower Austria Economic Chamber (WKNÖ) in 2017 and is currently supported by the WKNÖ and the Lower Austria Chamber of

Labour.³⁵ This scheme gives trainees in at least the second year of their apprenticeship the chance to complete a placement at a selected partner company and do a language course. The placements are organised through the International Young Workers Exchange (IFA) and run for four weeks, with support on hand from an advisor assigned by the IFA during the first week. Any apprentices at businesses within the region can take part in the programme provided that they are in the second year of their apprenticeship or upwards and are at least 16 years old. However, they can only apply once.

The costs are borne by the WKNÖ and the Lower Austria Chamber of Labour, with support from sponsors and funding from the Erasmus+ programme, meaning that participation is free. The WKNÖ and the Lower Austria Chamber of Labour pay the costs for placements abroad that are not covered by Erasmus+ funding. This includes flight and accommodation expenses. There are additional placements available for participants looking to complete apprenticeships leading to a secondary-school leaving certificate. The destination options include the United Kingdom, Italy, the Czech Republic, Spain, Ireland, Germany, and Denmark. In 2019, a total of 102 scholarships for training abroad were granted to apprentices from Lower Austria.³⁶ Around 330 apprentices have completed placements abroad via Let's Walz since the programme began.

Applications are submitted jointly by the apprentices and the trainers or company managers and each training company can put forward up to two participants. Let's Walz works with the IFA to find suitable placement companies in the host countries for all professional pathways and to organise the placements abroad. Its placement package includes a four-week practical placement for apprentices from any occupational sector, along with support from an IFA advisor during the first week, local transport, and an excursion. Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ireland are popular destinations for placements abroad. Full funding and the low-threshold accessibility of the programme are key factors in the success of this initiative.

Tyrolean take to the road (TADW)

The EU project "Tyroleans take to the road" ("TirolerInnen auf der Walz") offers scholarships for practical placements abroad within the EU and is aimed at apprentices, young workers (who have left school within the last year), and pupils from VET schools or colleges in Tyrol.³⁷ The arrangements for these experiences abroad (training placements, accommodation, insurance, etc.) are made with the help of Standortagentur Tirol and the Tyrol Chamber of Labour. The programme receives financial support from the Provincial Government of Tyrol. The organisations hosting the placements include companies and institutions in the public or private sector, with opportunities available across all EU Member States, in the EEA countries Liechtenstein, Norway, and Iceland, and in Turkey and Croatia. Participants spend between two and twelve weeks abroad.

The aim of this initiative is to enable participants to gain international professional experience and additional qualifications in their chosen field and to improve their foreign language and communication skills. The young trainees have the opportunity to explore new countries, cultures, and mindsets and to establish new contacts and networks, as well as developing on a personal and social level. All in all, the scheme is designed to significantly boost participants' prospects in both the Austrian and the European labour markets.

The programme offers two forms of financial support: a mobility grant and a scholarship. In addition to any remuneration that may come with them, placements are funded by means of a scholarship depending on the destination and duration. This scholarship consists of a living allowance and a travel

³⁵ <https://www.wko.at/service/noe/bildung-lehre/folder-lets-walz.pdf> (in German)

³⁶ <https://www.lehre-respekt.at/artikel/auslandspraktikum> (in German)

³⁷ https://www.standort-tirol.at/eu-internships/erasmus/vocational-students&switchLocale=en_US

allowance. For placements lasting four to 26 weeks, participants – depending on their location – receive between EUR 520 and 600 per month, along with a travel allowance from Erasmus+ of up to EUR 360. Participants who complete a language course before or during their placement abroad are also eligible for a grant of up to EUR 200. Those who carry out a placement in a country where English, French, Italian, Spanish, or Dutch is spoken can take advantage of free online language courses offered by the European Union.

European Mobilities for Styrian Apprentices (EUMOST)

As part of this project, placements abroad for apprentices are organised by representatives from Styrian vocational schools, led by the LBS Eibiswald vocational school, and supported by EU funding. EUMOST is aimed at apprentices in Styria – from any industry – who attend one of the participating vocational schools. The project was developed in 2010 with support from the Provincial Government of Styria and the Styrian Provincial Education Authority, before being launched in 2012 with a total of 16 vocational schools involved. There are currently 12 vocational schools in the EUMOST network. Thanks to EUMOST, around 250 Styrian apprentices per year are able to do a placement abroad.

EUMOST sees itself as a community of interests, linking the participating vocational schools and providing an opportunity for them to share and discuss organisational, pedagogical, and structural issues or challenges at one-day conferences held two or three times a year. The project's structural setup within Styria has also encouraged further vocational schools that had previously abstained from such schemes to take part in exchange programmes via EUMOST.

The mobility placements are organised and implemented by the relevant vocational schools. Each school has a coordinator who is responsible for managing this on a voluntary (unpaid) basis. The turnover of pupils at vocational schools – i.e. the fact that, unlike VET schools or colleges, these institutions bring in new pupils four times per academic year – poses an organisational challenge.

Through EUMOST, participants can now obtain full funding for fixed administrative costs (travel, accommodation, etc.). However, there are no funding options available to cover the costs for the teachers involved – unlike ordinary school trips, for example, for which the funding is clearly regulated by law. Funding is provided via Erasmus+ and the Styria Economic Chamber has also been making a small financial contribution for some years now. In addition, the Provincial Government offers each participant EUR 100 in support.

The placements abroad are implemented exclusively by and through the vocational schools and take place during school time. Vocational schools that already have extensive experience in organising residential trips abroad often send up to 20 pupils abroad, along with staff, for two to three weeks. These kinds of placements are incorporated directly into the planning for the school year. However, the participants should be selected from a range of different classes to make sure that the remaining staff at the vocational school do not lose too much teaching time.

The inclusion of staff in trips abroad is a feature unique to EUMOST mobility schemes and one that is also required for legal reasons, as the school is responsible for its pupils during teaching time and the trips abroad take place during this time. However, including teachers pushes up the costs compared to “conventional” placements abroad.

There is no particular focus on specific destinations; these mainly depend on the vocational schools in question and their partnerships abroad. Nevertheless, southern European countries such as Italy or Spain are popular, along with the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and Finland, for example, further north.

The previous scheme, Leonardo, involved four to eight weeks of basic language and cultural preparation in the run up to going abroad. Under the new funding programme, however, this is no longer offered for vocational training and the vocational schools currently have to arrange language tuition themselves.

As a basic principle, participants ideally have to have reached the age of maturity or demonstrate the “necessary level of mental maturity” to take part. Apprentices who meet this second criterion may be accepted even if they are still minors. The teachers have the ultimate say on putting together what they consider to be the best possible team for the placement abroad. Attendance at one of the vocational schools involved in EUMOST is naturally one of the requirements for being admitted to the programme.

Auxilium

Auxilium is a non-profit association that has been specialising in EU project management since 2004 and offering mobility opportunities for apprentices under the Erasmus+ scheme since 2014.³⁸ For mobility projects, Auxilium receives funding for a fixed quota of participants that covers around 75% of the total cost of the placement; the participants only need to stump up a small amount themselves – EUR 150 to 250 on average. The Styrian Economic Chamber also provides EUR 300 in support for each participant. The placements abroad supported by Auxilium run for three to four weeks and take place during working time. They are open to apprentices throughout Austria who are involved in manufacturing technology, retail and wholesale, public administration, and tourism. Language courses are not currently offered.

Auxilium’s target group is Styrian apprentices in at least the second year of their apprenticeship (and over the age of 16), preferably from the manufacturing technology, retail and wholesale, public administration, and tourism sectors. In rare cases, their offers are also made available to pupils. The main destinations are English-speaking countries (the United Kingdom, Ireland, Malta). Germany is also offered as a destination for participants who do not feel sufficiently confident about their English language skills (e.g. young people from the “Jugend am Werk” access to work scheme).

The association also provides information in preparation for placements abroad by holding information events at training companies, for example, or through one-to-one consultations. It also has a partnership with the cross-company apprenticeship training organisation “Jugend am Werk”. In addition, Auxilium works with partner institutions abroad to organise the placements themselves and put the necessary framework in place for them (such as arranging accommodation, flights, and local transport), including setting out the participants’ tasks and activities in a learning agreement beforehand. Apprentices have a designated contact person in Austria, as well as an English-speaking contact in their placement destination, for the duration of their placement. If need be, they can also access support from an advisor who will be on hand to provide assistance during the journey to their destination and for the first few days when they get there. Once they have completed their placement, participants are asked to provide a final report by answering some questions online. This is a requirement for issuing their mobility certificate.

Young Styrians GO Europe! (YSGE)

Since 2016, this project has been offering Styrian apprentices from all professional pathways the opportunity to do practical placements abroad.³⁹ It is an Erasmus+ programme coordinated by the local non-profit educational association Steirische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft (STVG). The other partners involved in the project include the Styrian Board of Education, the Provincial Government of

³⁸ http://www.auxilium.co.at/fileadmin/user_upload/INFOBLATT_Auslandspraktikum_fuer_Lehrlinge_mit_Verein_Auxilium.pdf (in German)

³⁹ <https://www.youngstyrians.com/> (in German)

Styria, various companies in Styria, and the LOGO Jugendmanagement association, which provides services for young people.

The scheme provides support for pupils and teachers from Styrian VET schools or colleges, along with apprentices (from the second year of their apprenticeship upwards) and trainers from companies based in Styria. STVG helps with preparing for, implementing, and following up the placements.

Demand for placements abroad is currently highest amongst apprentices training in technical professions. However, YSGE and its partners abroad offer opportunities for all professions. The partners in Scandinavia, for example, are specialists in technical fields, but virtually all professions can be accommodated thanks to the diverse range of partners in the other host countries. Group placements involving several apprentices are common, although the apprentices do not necessarily need to be from the same company; groups can also be made up of participants from different businesses across different industries. If a young person wants to do a placement abroad on their own, this can also be arranged. The following destination options are currently available: Italy, France, Ireland, Spain, Norway, Sweden, and Malta.

At the moment, this project gets all of its funding from the EU. The financial contributions that the participants themselves have to make vary depending on the destination, and they can vary significantly: They would have to pay around EUR 350 towards the costs of a four-week placement in Sweden, for example, but EUR 800 to 900 for a similar placement in Ireland. If a new partner institution abroad is needed, the project managers start by gaining an impression of the conditions at the destination being considered and then decide whether a partnership would make sense and could work in practice. This is regarded as a very important step in ensuring the quality of placements abroad.

The initiative currently focuses on mobility opportunities during working time. The placements abroad last between two and five weeks, with four-week placements proving optimal for achieving the learning objective. Two-week placements can only be completed by supplementing them with seminars (online language courses, etc.) organised by the partner organisations beforehand. Placements are not run during vocational school time as that is not considered constructive. There were plans to introduce six-week summer placements in 2020, but this could not be done due to the coronavirus pandemic.

ALE – Arbeiten und Lernen in Europa

The non-profit association ALE⁴⁰, founded in 2019, offers support and assistance in planning training placements abroad to help apprentices, vocational schools, and companies gain easier access to Erasmus+ funding. The reason for this is that over 90 per cent of Erasmus+ funding currently goes towards internships for pupils in full-time training or education, while only 5 per cent is used directly for dual training schemes. ALE aims to bridge gaps and provide support in this area to help boost this figure.

On its website, ALE also states that it helps with organising placements abroad, obtaining the necessary information, and preparing the required forms. To keep the administrative burden to a minimum, the initiative strives to establish stable, long-term partnerships abroad as far as possible. The association is supported by the Provincial Government of Salzburg and also organises practical traineeships for the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer (Working Community of Alpine Regions, or Arge Alp), which covers the Austrian provinces of Salzburg, Tyrol, and Vorarlberg, as well as Bavaria in Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and South Tyrol in Italy.

The placements arranged through ALE can be undertaken during school time or during holidays or outside school hours. Applications are generally submitted by the apprentices themselves, although

⁴⁰ <https://www.ale.or.at/> (in German)

they can be made via vocational schools. The participants are usually in the second year of their apprenticeship. The apprentices have to write and submit a letter of application demonstrating why they want to take part in this mobility scheme and are seeking support.

Contact with the vocational schools is established via the quality managers (formerly school inspectors) at the Board of Education. The optional language/preparation courses are no longer offered as face-to-face sessions, but are provided online by the European Union instead. The placement destinations are mainly in northern Germany, partly for language reasons but also because of the partnerships established with companies in this region. Other popular destinations include the Scandinavian countries, English-speaking countries, and South Tyrol.

Eurodesk

Eurodesk is a European network that provides information for young people in a total of 36 countries via national coordinating offices, as well as over 1,000 regional service centres across Europe.⁴¹ This includes information about mobility and relevant funding available.

3.1.4 Petanovitsch Alexander; Fibi Benjamin (2021): Initiatives by companies and vocational schools

In the case of many enterprises (e.g. Rail Cargo), mobility opportunities abroad are organised and implemented by the companies themselves (with funding often managed via the IFA). Unfortunately, there is no clear overview available of the placements organised either by or under the leadership of training companies. Fibi and Petanovitsch (2021) cites a number of training companies that run apprentice mobility schemes organised (largely) by themselves.

In some companies – such as Spar, kika, Leiner, and REWE – placements abroad are offered as an incentive for high-achieving apprentices who show exceptional dedication. Most of these placements are organised and implemented through the IFA.

Each year, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) recognises training companies that have demonstrated outstanding commitment and quality in their mobility offerings for apprentices.⁴² The award criteria for this quality label, which was developed by the EuroApprenticeship network⁴³ as part of the EQAMOB project, include, for example, aspects relating to organising and preparing for placements abroad, the support provided for apprentices during their stay abroad, and the subsequent evaluation and recognition of placements as part of apprenticeship training.

Landberufsschule Arnfels, a vocational school in Styria, has been offering the “Irish Adventure” project to its automotive engineering pupils for some years now, with the option of doing a placement in Ireland.⁴⁴ There is no overview available of the status and development of mobility opportunities organised by vocational schools for their pupils either. Again, Fibi and Petanovitsch (2021) mentions a number of vocational schools that engage in mobility for apprentices.

⁴¹ <https://www.jugendinfo.at/internationale-projekte/eurodesk/> (in German)

⁴² <https://ifa.or.at/en/eqamob-en/>

⁴³ The IFA (as a partner of the EuroApprenticeship network) initiated the label and played a leading role in its development.

⁴⁴ <https://www.verwaltung.steiermark.at/cms/beitrag/12033990/74837489/> (in German)

3.1.5 Secondary statistics on participants

This section looks at the secondary statistical data provided by Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation, the OeAD. The OeAD has been Austria's central service hub for European and other international mobility and cooperation schemes in education, science, and research for 50 years. Its core activities include coordinating education programmes such as Erasmus+, CEEPUS, Citizen Science, and Sparkling Science.

Table 3-2 below shows the development of funded mobility placements under Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (Mobility of individuals) over time⁴⁵ and is taken from the OeAD's current monitoring records for the EU Erasmus+ programme. These mobility figures include teachers, students, and staff. More specifically, they relate to pupils from VET schools and colleges, apprentices, teachers, educators, and trainers.

Table 3-2: Mobility placements under Erasmus+ Key Action 1 within vocational education and training by region, over time, and in absolute numbers

Province	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Burgenland	32	17	28	20	8	129
Carinthia	516	371	473	515	494	852
Lower Austria	281	372	386	458	530	580
Upper Austria	324	264	440	558	472	511
Salzburg	148	156	184	187	233	339
Styria	225	338	547	374	679	995
Tyrol	292	459	320	503	404	468
Vorarlberg	267	334	288	417	317	399
Vienna	865	894	823	872	808	857
Austria	2,950	3,205	3,489	3,904	3,945	5,130

Source: OeAD April 2020⁴⁶

A special analysis by the OeAD offers a somewhat deeper insight into mobility for apprentices. This indicates that the number or proportion of approved mobility placements abroad as part of apprenticeship training in the last six years is fairly low (see

Table 3-4): Apprentices account for around 15 per cent of these placements, while the rest are mainly undertaken by VET school or college pupils. This imbalance between dual training and full-time vocational education and training becomes clearer still if we take a particular year group as a reference value. Since apprentices usually go abroad no more than once during their apprenticeship training, it can be assumed that **3 per cent of apprentices engage in funded mobility opportunities abroad as part of their training**. By comparison, the figure for a similar cohort of VET school or college pupils is around 15 per cent.

Interestingly, the absolute number of approved mobility placements for apprentices in the period under review rose by more than 70 per cent, climbing from around 600 to just over 1,000 – despite a decline in the number of apprentices overall. In many cases, however, it may be that the actual participation figures differ from the number of approved placements because a lot of support institutions apply for

⁴⁵ "This is all about providing opportunities for individuals to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness. Under Key Action 1 organisations can apply for funding to run mobility projects to offer structured study, work experience, job shadowing, training and teaching opportunities to staff and learners. Key Action 1 covers the five fields of higher education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education and youth." (<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/what-are-the-key-actions>)

⁴⁶ https://bildung.erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/bildung.erasmusplus.at/Publikationen/Programmcontrolling_Erasmus_042020_finale_Version.pdf (in German)

funding but end up running fewer apprentice mobility placements than planned and use the funds granted to support mobility schemes for VET school or college pupils instead.

Table 3-3: Most common destinations under Erasmus+ Key Action 1 within vocational education and training, over time

Destination	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (ranking)
United Kingdom	600	753	851	951	912	1,108
Ireland	309	425	458	684	653	895
Germany	503	459	566	509	581	701
Italy	436	422	341	371	327	451
Spain	194	196	285	359	218	421
France	277	263	184	217	217	338
Malta	124	135	136	140	177	222
Sweden	87	80	97	96	118	139
Netherlands	30	46	53	80	83	122
Norway	62	75	56	76	113	120
Finland	56	86	77	84	101	109

Source: OeAD April 2020

The most popular destinations for Erasmus+ mobility placements abroad are currently the United Kingdom⁴⁷, Ireland, and Germany, which between them accounted for not quite 60 per cent of all placements abroad in 2019 (see

A special analysis by the OeAD offers a somewhat deeper insight into mobility for apprentices. This indicates that the number or proportion of approved mobility placements abroad as part of apprenticeship training in the last six years is fairly low (see

Table 3-4): Apprentices account for around 15 per cent of these placements, while the rest are mainly undertaken by VET school or college pupils. This imbalance between dual training and full-time vocational education and training becomes clearer still if we take a particular year group as a reference value. Since apprentices usually go abroad no more than once during their apprenticeship training, it can be assumed that **3 per cent of apprentices engage in funded mobility opportunities abroad as part of their training**. By comparison, the figure for a similar cohort of VET school or college pupils is around 15 per cent.

Interestingly, the absolute number of approved mobility placements for apprentices in the period under review rose by more than 70 per cent, climbing from around 600 to just over 1,000 – despite a decline in the number of apprentices overall. In many cases, however, it may be that the actual participation figures differ from the number of approved placements because a lot of support institutions apply for funding but end up running fewer apprentice mobility placements than planned and use the funds granted to support mobility schemes for VET school or college pupils instead.

⁴⁷ The future of cooperation between the United Kingdom and the European Union with regard to placements abroad has been uncertain in light of the Brexit negotiations. The first phase of negotiations resulted in an agreement that all projects with British involvement would be fully funded up to the 2020 round of applications and that the United Kingdom could continue to fully take part in Erasmus+ up to the 2020 application round. However, this decision needed to be ratified first. With regard to the successor programme to Erasmus+ (due to run from 2021 to 2027), the British government stated that it would be desirable for the UK to remain involved in this EU education programme even after leaving the EU. (<https://bildung.erasmusplus.at/de/aktuelles/artikel/2018/06/update-zum-austritt-grossbritanniens-aus-der-eu/>, in German)

Table 3-3).

Table 3-4: Approved placements abroad under Erasmus+ Key Action 1 for apprentices and trainers in vocational training and education, over time

Year	Apprentices	Trainers/ skilled workers	Combined	Total apprentices	Proportion of apprentice mobility placements
2014	603	144	747	115,068	0.52
2015	702	148	850	109,963	0.64
2016	727	175	902	106,950	0.68
2017	615	183	798	106,613	0.58
2018	881	203	1,084	107,915	0.82
2019	770	217	987	109,111	0.71
2020	1,038	419	1,457	-	-
2014–2020	5,336	1,489	6,825	-	-

Source: OeAD July 2020

3.2 International comparison

What is the situation regarding mobility placements abroad in the two countries that, like Austria, also have a long tradition and a sizeable initial vocational training segment in the form of an apprenticeship? This chapter takes a look at Germany and Switzerland for comparison purposes, presenting the legal situation, the funding instruments available, and (selected) support initiatives.

3.2.1 Germany

Legal framework

In Germany, the option of completing part of one's apprenticeship abroad is enshrined in the German Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz – BBiG). According to Section 2 (3), “parts of initial training [...] may be completed abroad if this serves the training objective” provided that the total training period abroad does not exceed a quarter of the training period stipulated in the training regulations.⁴⁸ Stays abroad are monitored and funded by the competent bodies (chambers).

Section 36 (1) sentence 3 BBiG requires the company providing training to notify the competent chamber about the traineeship abroad, for which the chambers provide a dedicated form (“Zusatzvereinbarung über einen Auslandsaufenthalt während der Ausbildung”, or “Supplementary agreement regarding a stay abroad during a period of training”). A plan must be agreed with the chamber if the stay abroad is to last longer than four weeks, in which case the Erasmus+ Learning Agreement can also be submitted.

Although such a traineeship is permitted under the training contract, it is still advisable for a separate contract or an Erasmus+ Learning Agreement to be concluded between the trainee, the company training them in their home country, and the company hosting them abroad.⁴⁹ The obligation to pay the training allowance continues to apply during the stay abroad. Apprentices are required to cover their travel expenses and the cost of their stay themselves, although they may be able to obtain funding and/or grants via Erasmus+, for example. Those spending time elsewhere in the European Union will remain covered by German health and accident insurance, while contributions for nursing care, pension, and unemployment insurance will also continue to be made. Outside the EU, insurance cover will only be maintained if the country in question has signed a corresponding treaty with Germany.

If the traineeship will not take place exclusively within the school holidays, the apprentice will be required to request leave of absence from their vocational school and to make up the lessons missed in their own time. They will not need to attend an equivalent vocational school while abroad.

Secondary statistics on participants

In Germany, the National Agency Education for Europe at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB) is responsible for the European Commission's action programmes and initiatives for vocational education and training and adult education.⁵⁰ In 2019, 4,000 more trainee scholarships were granted via the NA at BIBB than in 2018, an increase of 18 per cent.⁵¹ Based on this rapid growth, the agency estimates that the mobility rate of apprentices was around 7 per cent in 2019. This figure is still some way off the target for 2020 that was set by the German Bundestag in 2013 to enable at least 10 per cent of apprentices to spend time abroad during their training.⁵² However,

⁴⁸ https://www.bmbf.de/upload_filestore/pub/Das_neue_Berufsbildungsgesetz_BBIG.pdf (in German)

⁴⁹ Berufsbildung ohne Grenzen (2016)

⁵⁰ <https://www.na-bibb.de/en>

⁵¹ NA at BIBB (2020)

⁵² Deutscher Bundestag (2012)

breaking the figures down into individual sub-groups of occupations reveals that the 10 per cent target for mobile trainees has already been met on some pathways: Amongst apprentice electronics technicians for building and infrastructure systems, for example, one in two of the 2017 graduate cohort had completed a mobility traineeship abroad.

Table 3-5: Mobility rate* of the top 20 apprenticeship pathways (under the BBiG and the German Trade and Crafts Code [Handwerksordnung – HWO]), 2017, as a percentage

Apprenticeship pathway	Mobility rate
Industrial manager	13.9
Commercial manager in wholesale/exports	5.3
Mechatronics engineer	5.2
Commercial manager for office management	4.6
IT specialist	4.1
Administration specialist	3.8
Hotel industry specialist	3.7
Electronics technician for industrial engineering	2.8
Carpenter	2.4
Bank clerk	1.7
Industrial mechanic	1.5
Vehicle mechatronics engineer	1.4
Warehousing logistics specialist	1.1
Commercial manager in retail	0.9
Medical specialist	0.8
Plant engineer for sanitary, heating, and air-conditioning technology	0.7
Electronics technician	0.6
Tax specialist	0.5
Dental specialist	0.3
Sales agent	0.1

* Calculated based on 2017 graduates

Source: NA at BIBB (2019)

According to a 2011 study, the percentage of apprentices who spend time abroad during their apprenticeship was roughly the same in Germany around ten years ago as it is currently in Austria. Roughly 3 per cent of all trainees (some 16,000 young people) completed a traineeship abroad of this kind on average between 2007 and 2009. Assuming that training lasts about three years on average, this means that approximately 1 per cent of trainees take advantage of measures like these every year.⁵³

A more recent study has shown that mobility rates amongst apprentices have increased significantly, with an equivalent figure of 5.3 per cent projected for 2017. In other words, just over 5 per cent of trainees who were in the final year of their training in the first half of 2017 – nearly 31,000 people – will have spent time abroad at least once during their initial vocational training.⁵⁴

⁵³ Friedrich/Körbel (2011)

⁵⁴ NA at BIBB (2018)

Accounting for some 40 per cent of all mobility placements abroad, the United Kingdom is by far the most popular destination (cf. Table 3-6).

Table 3-6: Most popular destinations amongst trainees in vocational education and training for stays abroad as part of Erasmus+ in Germany, 2016, as a percentage

Destination	2016
United Kingdom	40.6
Spain	10.7
Ireland	7.1
Austria	5.5
Malta	5.1
Italy	3.8
Finland	3.5
France	3.4
Poland	2.6
Netherlands	2.6
Sweden	2.4
Norway	2.0

Source: NA at BIBB (2019)

Funding and organisational matters

Erasmus+ applications are open to all public- and private-sector institutions based in Germany as well as organisations that offer vocational training (apprenticeship training) in accordance with the BBiG and HWO. These include companies, vocational schools, other educational institutions, and chambers.

Pool projects

Besides the funding available via Erasmus+ itself, there are numerous national and regional grants that can be applied for in Germany. Companies and vocational schools generally only organise traineeships abroad for their own apprentices and trainees. However, individuals can also do a traineeship abroad with Erasmus+ via what are known as pool projects.⁵⁵ Each pool of grant recipients is organised via educational institutions that offer stays abroad for a sizeable group of people. All the various projects decide for themselves who is eligible to take part and in what countries they can do a traineeship. Thus, for example, stays abroad can be arranged for set dates and at set companies in the host country, while other arrangements provide financial and organisational support but leave it up to participants to find a suitable company abroad.

Pool projects are offered at both national and regional level and have now become firmly established in Germany as part of the “Erasmus+ Berufsbildung” (“Erasmus+ vocational training”) initiative.⁵⁶ Since 2016, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has also provided funding at national level to cover staffing requirements at institutions and organisations that enable apprentices to spend time abroad as part of nationwide pool projects. This benefits small and medium-sized businesses

⁵⁵ https://www.machmehrausdeinerausbildung.de/dein-weg-ins-ausland/praktikumsplatzsuche/?tx_xmpoolprojektsuche_poolprojektfilter%5Baction%5D=form&tx_xmpoolprojektsuche_poolprojektfilter%5Bcontroller%5D=PoolprojektQuery&cHash=73a27a2e26178d6b7c33ed664656097d (in German)

⁵⁶ An overview is available at <https://www.berufsbildung-ohne-grenzen.de/auszubildende/links-material/> (in German).

in particular and aids their efforts to give their trainees options for mobility placements.⁵⁷ One of these projects that are available nationwide is outlined below by way of an example.

The Bundesarbeitskreis Arbeit und Leben, a continuing education institution supported by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and the German association of adult education centres (Deutscher Volkshochschulverband – DVV), offers two options for mobility abroad as part of a pool project.⁵⁸ With the first, the Bundesarbeitskreis helps participants find a traineeship abroad, plan their journey, and source accommodation at their destination. Besides finding somewhere to live, this also includes organising the actual traineeship, a language course (if desired), and a ticket for local public transport as well as making sure that the participant has named contacts who they can get in touch with at their destination. Participants arrange their own flights and their journey from the airport, for which they receive a fixed allowance. They are also required to contribute a certain amount of their own money, which will depend on where they are going, how long they are going for, and what work has been agreed for them to do there.

Under the second option, which is aimed at “free movers”, participants are paid the full grant amount and organise all aspects of their stay abroad (traineeship, travel, accommodation, and, potentially, language course) themselves. Both options are available to people who are currently in training or who completed their training within the last year.

Besides Erasmus+ and the pool projects mentioned above, stays abroad can also be funded and organised via partner programmes (such as bilateral youth schemes), which tend to focus on intercultural exchange. There are also a few initiatives that fund stays in countries outside the scope of the Erasmus+ programme. These include “AusbildungWeltweit” (“TrainingWorldwide”), a project launched by the BMBF in 2017 to promote stays in countries all over the world as part of vocational training.⁵⁹ The destinations under this scheme are countries that are not part of Erasmus+, such as the USA, China, Switzerland, and Russia. The programme makes a contribution to travel expenses, flight costs, accommodation, organisational matters, preparation, and follow-up. Applications can be submitted by training companies, chambers, vocational schools, and other vocational education and training institutions.

Mobility advice

The *mobility advice services* offered regionally in Germany are of interest from an organisational perspective. A total of 50 advisors based in over 40 advice centres (most of which are based at chambers of trade and industry or chambers of crafts and skilled trades) help participants to plan, prepare for, and undertake a stay abroad. Their services include providing information on funding opportunities and support with applying for this funding, assistance with finding partner companies abroad, help with coordinating matters between the key parties involved (companies, apprentices, vocational schools), and finding and/or organising preparatory courses (such as language courses and intercultural training).⁶⁰

The mobility advisors are also responsible for raising awareness of the service amongst the media and general public and have a network of contacts at companies, schools, training centres, and various partner organisations both within Germany and further afield. However, the network of mobility advisors is also tasked with helping to create educational and training partnerships and networks between companies. This nationwide network is itself supported by a national coordination office that is based at

⁵⁷ <https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-berufsbildung/mobilitaet/pool-projekte/nationale-kofinanzierung/> (in German)

⁵⁸ <https://www.arbeitundleben.de/internationale-bildung/mobilitaetsprojekte> (in German)

⁵⁹ <https://www.ausbildung-weltweit.de/> (in German)

⁶⁰ “Berufsbildung ohne Grenzen” coordination office (2017)

the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Berlin and at the Zentralstelle für die Weiterbildung im Handwerk (the central office for continuing professional development in crafts and skilled trades) in Düsseldorf and that, for example, ensures the continuing professional development of the mobility advisors.

The regional mobility advice services have also been linked up since 2009 via the federal programme entitled “Berufsbildung ohne Grenzen” (“Vocational Education and Training without Borders”),⁶¹ whose stated aims include “fostering a mobility culture at German companies”. The scale of its activities in this area is impressive: Since 2009, the network has delivered over 139,000 consultations, found nearly 10,000 apprentices a placement abroad, and secured the services of more than 4,000 companies to act as multipliers. Although the United Kingdom has retained its above-average degree of popularity as a destination, non-European countries are also increasingly making it on to the list of desired destinations, especially the USA, Canada, China, and South Africa. The network’s products worth mentioning here include a subject-specific handbook on traineeships abroad.

Other sources of information

Another relevant player in the area of mobility abroad for vocational education and training is the “*Informations- und Beratungsstelle für Auslandsaufenthalte in der beruflichen Bildung*” (“Information and Advice Centre for Stays Abroad in Vocational Education and Training”, or ibs), which for over 25 years has been providing free, unbiased information on opportunities for gaining professional experience abroad and which helps young people find the right option for them.⁶² ibs works as an independent advice centre on behalf of and with financial support from the BMBF and is based in the NA at BIBB.

The *Eurodesk* platform (cf. the corresponding section in the Austria chapter) also provides its services in Germany, specifically at some 50 regional service centres. These pool information on stays abroad and opportunities for young people to make contacts in different countries, for example. Its website contains details of various programmes as well as information on funding options and selecting suitable organisations.⁶³

xchange

xchange offers trainees from Germany (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg), France (Alsace), Italy (South Tyrol, Trento, Lombardy), Liechtenstein, Austria (Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Upper Austria, Salzburg), and Switzerland (Aargau, Schaffhausen, Zurich, Thurgau, St. Gallen, Appenzell, Grisons, Ticino) the opportunity to do a traineeship abroad in the Alps. The programme is funded by the Internationale Bodenseekonferenz (International Lake Constance Conference, or IBK) and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer (Working Community of Alpine Regions, or Arge Alp). xchange lets trainees spend four weeks of their in-company training at a business in another country while an apprentice from that business comes to their own company.

FEDA Madrid

FEDA Madrid is a German school abroad that is accredited by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and follows German curricula.⁶⁴ It is funded by the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office and with the involvement of the German federal states (Länder). FEDA Madrid

⁶¹ <https://www.berufsbildung-ohne-grenzen.de> (in German)

⁶² <https://www.go-ibs.de/ab-ins-ausland/deine-moeglichkeiten/> (in German)

⁶³ <https://www.rausvonzuhause.de/wai1/showcontent.asp> (in German)

⁶⁴ <https://www.feda-madrid.de/> (in German)

regularly offers traineeships that are open to both students and trainees on a commercial pathway as part of an Erasmus+ placement. It delivers almost all its training for industrial, freight forwarding, and logistics managers in German. As well as receiving their monthly training allowance from their Spanish company, Germany-based applicants can also continue to receive child benefit and may also be able to apply for a vocational training allowance in Germany depending on their individual circumstances.

3.2.2 Switzerland

Legal framework

With the country lacking a uniform, clearly defined range of schemes for mobility abroad up to that point, the Swiss federal government and cantons approved a common strategy on exchanges and mobility in 2017.⁶⁵ The Movetia national agency is chiefly responsible for implementation at operational level (cf. the “Funding and organisational matters” section below). Amongst other things, the strategy obliges the parties involved to amend the underlying legislation and/or develop it further as required in order to promote exchange and mobility successfully. This covers federal acts, canton-level laws, and intercantonal agreements.

The strategy lists the following laws as constituting the underlying federal legislation governing exchange and mobility programmes:

- Swiss Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA; Classified Compilation of Federal Legislation [SR] 412.10)
- Swiss Federal Act on International Cooperation in Education, Professional Education and Training, Youth Affairs, and Mobility (SR 414.51)
- Swiss Ordinance on International Cooperation in Education, Professional Education and Training, Youth Affairs, and Mobility (ICEMO; SR 414.513)
- Swiss Federal Act of 5 October 2007 on the National Languages and Understanding between the Linguistic Communities (LangA; SR 441.1)
- Swiss Ordinance of 4 June 2010 on the National Languages and Understanding between the Linguistic Communities (LangO; SR 441.11)
- Swiss Federal Act of 30 September 2011 on the Promotion of Extra-Curricular Activities for Children and Adolescents (ECAA)

Secondary statistics on participants

There is scant data available on the extent to which apprentices in Switzerland engage in mobility abroad. Based on a survey of 148 upper-secondary vocational schools, some 3,000 students in all took part in a foreign exchange at some point between 2014 and mid-2016.⁶⁶ The author of the study believes that the percentage of students who spend time abroad during their basic education had been well below 5 per cent up to that point. According to the statistical report compiled by the national agency Movetia, not quite 1,000 apprentices participated in mobility projects in total in 2019.⁶⁷

However, it must also be borne in mind in this regard that Switzerland did not become a full member of the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) until 2011 and did not have a mobility culture in its vocational education and training sector before then.⁶⁸ Switzerland has held “third country” status since 2014, and the opportunities afforded under the Erasmus+ programme are available to schools and other

⁶⁵ https://www.regionalkonferenzen.ch/sites/default/files/2019-02/AM_Strategie_20171102_d.pdf (in German)

⁶⁶ Helfenstein (2016)

⁶⁷ Movetia (2020)

⁶⁸ Faedi (2014)

educational and vocational education and training institutions in the country.⁶⁹ The Federal Council will consider Switzerland's potential involvement in Erasmus+'s successor programme from 2021 onwards once the basic details of the scheme have been announced.⁷⁰ The lack of a mobility culture in the country has also been discussed in other publications in the sector:

"No distinct culture has yet developed in the Swiss vocational education and training sector, either in terms of mobility activities or with foreign-language learning at schools. The implementation of mobility activities, participation in mobility programmes, and the teaching of foreign languages is only done piecemeal [...] This is what we mean when we talk in general terms below about a mobility culture that is lacking and that needs to be fostered." (Bichsel et. al. 2012, p. 3)

Switzerland's common strategy on exchanges and mobility mentioned above also states that the number of mobility placements abroad undertaken in the vocational training sector is extremely low:

"The figures are also low amongst teachers and in vocational education and training. This suggests that relevant opportunities are lacking, not designed in a suitable way, or not sufficiently known about." (Swiss Confederation 2017, p. 2).

Funding and organisational matters

With regard to mobility abroad, responsibility for establishing suitable foundations, underlying conditions, and services lies at federal level with the Swiss Federal Office of Culture FOC (school exchanges within Switzerland, culture, and leisure), the Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO (non-school-related matters), and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI (education in general, vocational education and training, continuing education, international educational cooperation). The cantons promote exchange and mobility arrangements within their remits and with their own services. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) and its executive bodies play an important role as intermediaries and brokers in this regard.

The Swiss Foundation for the Promotion of Exchanges and Mobility (SFAM) was set up in early 2016 by the SERI, the FOC, the FSIO, and the EDK. It brokers contacts and supplies information relating to exchanges and mobility and is responsible for handling exchange and mobility schemes both within Switzerland and involving other countries.

The foundation conducts its day-to-day operations under the name Movetia. As the national agency for exchange and mobility, Movetia funds and supports exchange- and mobility-related projects in training and education at national and international level, both at and outside schools.⁷¹ The agency also works to connect organisations and institutions involved in exchange and mobility and brings providers of projects and activities together with people interested in making use of them.

As Switzerland stopped being an Erasmus+ programme country in 2014 and has only been a partner country since then, the Federal Council launched a federally funded solution to enable Swiss institutions to continue cooperating with Erasmus programme countries. This scheme funds the participation of individuals and institutions from Switzerland as well as the incoming mobility of people from Erasmus+ countries coming to Switzerland. Vocational schools, professional associations, vocational education and training authorities, training companies, and other public- or private-sector institutions involved in education can apply for mobility projects as part of Movetia, whereas individuals cannot.

⁶⁹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-and-internationalisation-91_de

⁷⁰ <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/mobility/eu-education--training-and-youth-programmes.html#-681501592>

⁷¹ <https://www.movetia.ch/en/>

The mobility projects supported include placements for students and people who have completed an apprenticeship, which may include a preparatory language course and which are designed for individuals or groups. They last between twelve days and a year. People who have completed an apprenticeship and who are looking to undertake a placement of this kind must begin it within twelve months of graduating. In addition, staff involved in vocational education and training can obtain funding for job shadowing, networking, giving guest presentations, and engaging in dialogue on education and training matters. The projects on the agenda also include international cooperation partnerships between institutions involved in vocational education and training. Since 2021, it has been possible to invite experts from other European countries to Switzerland to aid internationalisation. Vocational education and training staff undertaking an activity eligible for funding can spend between two and sixty days in the country under this initiative. There are various mobility schemes at cantonal level, an overview of which can be found here: <https://www.movetia.ch/programme/weitere-angebote/kantonale-programme>.

Individuals or institutions involved in vocational education and training that are planning a mobility project or a cooperation partnership can visit their future partner organisations before submitting their project and can apply for fixed allowances to cover their travel expenses and the cost of their stay. Vocational education and training institutions that are interested are also able to apply for additional financial support in various areas (e.g. communication, organising events, and networking).

AFS Intercultural Programs

The Swiss institution entitled “AFS Austauschprogramme für interkulturelles Lernen” (“AFS Exchange Programmes for Intercultural Learning”) defines itself as an international, non-partisan, public-benefit volunteer organisation that, amongst other things, offers training and exchanges to apprentices aged 15–18.⁷² The AFS is a non-profit organisation and a member of Intermundo, Switzerland’s umbrella organisation for youth exchanges.⁷³ Stays abroad organised via the AFS last between nine and ten months, during which time the participants attend a state high school in their host country as normal students. There are over 50 partner countries all over the world to choose from as destinations, including the USA, the UK, Brazil, Mexico, China, Russia, and India.

The apprenticeship contract and attendance at vocational school are suspended during the year abroad, and the AFS supports the training companies and the young people with their administrative preparations. During their year abroad, the young people live with a volunteer host family and are looked after and supported by staff in Switzerland and in their destination country before, during, and after the programme. The costs incurred are generally around CHF 11,000, usually split between the training company and the apprentices themselves.

visite

visite is an independent association affiliated with Rotary Switzerland/Liechtenstein and has been organising exchange programmes for apprentices within Switzerland and to Liechtenstein, Germany, and Austria for around 20 years now.⁷⁴ It is headquartered in Zurich and runs additional contact points in French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland so that it can cover all the country’s linguistic regions. Every year sees some 70 young people spend time abroad via visite.

⁷² <https://www.afs.ch/auslandsjahr-high-school-jahr-lehre/> (in German)

⁷³ The Swiss association Intermundo was established in 1987 and campaigns in the political, economic, and social spheres for youth exchange to be recognised and supported on a broad basis as a form of education, for financial and institutional obstacles to be removed, and for as many young people as possible to be able to benefit from such an exchange (<https://www.intermundo.ch/>; in German).

⁷⁴ <https://www.visite.ch/#visite---Home1>

The association handles the search for suitable partner companies and host families, with most stays abroad lasting at least three to four weeks. If the young people are unable to be hosted by a family in a particular case, visits will find them suitable alternative accommodation. During their exchange, participants work in their exchange company and are supported and looked after by a local apprentice with whom they also attend the local vocational school. This is why visits also call its programme “Lehrlinge besuchen Lehrlinge” (“Apprentices Visit Apprentices”). Once back at home, the young people who took part can themselves become a host apprentice and support the apprentice whom they worked with initially on that apprentice’s return visit.

During their exchange, the apprentices continue to be paid by the training company, while the organisations that fund visits contribute some of the travel expenses for the exchange apprentice and cover the cost of arranging, organising, and implementing the exchange.

AgriAliForm

Mobility programmes in the agricultural training sector are offered via the Swiss farmers’ association AgriAliForm (or via its service provider arm Agrimpuls), which are funded through Erasmus+ or Movetia as the national agency.⁷⁵ This scheme allows apprentices to complete a traineeship of one to five months at a company in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, or – in some cases – an English-speaking country during their basic education; apprentices being trained in winemaking and wine technology can also spend time abroad in Austria. The only lessons that they attend are at their vocational school in Switzerland. The initiative is open to third-year apprentices being trained in farming or a specialist agricultural profession. The young people must be at least 18 and need a letter of recommendation from their upper-secondary vocational school and the consent of the company training them (in exceptional cases, placements can be done by apprentices in their second year, i.e. aged 17). They are also advised to have achieved a certain minimum average mark from the most recent semester.

AgriAliForm puts applicants in touch with suitable companies for their placement. Participants also receive some financial support, the amount of which depends on what country they are going to and for how long. The young people are given a fixed allowance of CHF 400 to put towards their travel expenses and are provided with accommodation and meals during their stay abroad. In addition, they are paid a wage – which varies from one host country to another – in lieu of their apprentice allowance. The partner organisations charge a placement fee, which the participants themselves must cover. Participants are required to write two reports on their placement and submit a final report and receipts for their travel expenses for the purposes of Erasmus+.

The Euregio Certificate

Introduced in 1996, the Euregio Certificate scheme allows apprentices in any industry to do a placement during their training that lasts at least four weeks in a company in a different country in the tri-national Upper Rhine region.⁷⁶ The project is funded by the German-French-Swiss Upper Rhine Conference (ORK) and the Tri-National Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine (TMO) and managed by the ORK’s “Netzwerk Expertenausschuss Berufsbildung” (“Vocational Training Expert Committee Network”), which includes representatives from all the offices responsible for vocational education and training in the region.

Once EU funding expires, the “Euregio Certificate” will be continued using national and regional resources furnished by the various partners, with each region applying different rules for its funding. The

⁷⁵ <https://www.agri-job.ch/de/grundbildung/praktikum-im-ausland.html> (in German)

⁷⁶ <https://mobileuregio.org/de/schweiz-suisse/home.html> (in German)

offices responsible for vocational education and training help participants find a suitable partner company and organise their stays abroad. As well as the consent of the company training them, they will also need a basic knowledge of the language spoken at their chosen destination.

Euregio mobility placements are usually undertaken during the school holidays. For apprentices with a good level of attainment, however, the company training them can also ask their vocational school to give them a leave of absence for the duration of their placement. Participants will continue to receive their training allowance or wage while they are abroad, while additional funding may be available in certain cases. The apprentices taking part in the scheme are required to write a report on their placement after they return home, which they submit to the company training them, to the company where they did their placement, and to the competent office.

xchange

Besides apprentices from some parts of Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Austria, the “xchange” programme outlined above also offers young people from Switzerland (specifically, from Aargau, Schaffhausen, Zurich, Thurgau, St. Gallen, Appenzell, Grisons, and Ticino) the opportunity to do a placement abroad in the Alps. The programme is funded by the Internationale Bodenseekonferenz (International Lake Constance Conference, or IBK) and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer (Working Community of Alpine Regions, or Arge Alp). Participants spend a total of four weeks of their in-company training at a business in another country, while an apprentice from that partner business comes to their own company.

3.2.3 Examples of best practice

Internationalisation strategy in North Rhine-Westphalia

In North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) – Germany’s most populous federal state – a mobility scheme was launched in 2017 with support from the state’s various EU offices. The target for 2020 that was set by the programme was for at least 10 per cent of trainees to gain some experience of living abroad during their training.⁷⁷ The aim was also to raise awareness of the topic of internationalisation in vocational education and training in general amongst a wider audience and tell them about the potential that it offers. To this end, for example, a decision was taken at federal state level to focus specifically on promoting international cooperation in European vocational education and training. A certification service for vocational colleges⁷⁸ in NRW with an international outlook was also set up in a partnership between the regional Ministry for Schools and Continuing Education and the governments of the state’s five districts.

This certification scheme takes a two-pronged approach: Firstly, pupils have the opportunity to obtain an additional qualification in “international professional mobility”, which incorporates international activities directly into how the courses are organised from a schooling/didactic perspective and thus makes the topic area of stays abroad an integral part of lessons. Specifically, this qualification comprises

⁷⁷ <https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-bis-2020/erasmus-berufsbildung-bis-2020/mobilitaet/good-practice/internationalisierungsstrategie-in-nrw> (in German)

⁷⁸ “Vocational colleges in North Rhine-Westphalia deliver vocational education and training in a nuanced teaching system that includes courses leading to both single and dual qualifications. They allow students to obtain general upper-secondary-level qualifications and catch up on any lower-secondary-level qualifications that they may have missed.” (<https://www.berufsbildung.nrw.de/cms/das-berufskolleg-in-nordrhein-westfalen/abschluss-und-anschluss/index.html>; in German). These vocational colleges also include the vocational schools, which offer two- to three-and-a-half-year specialist courses under the dual system of vocational training, similar to the vocational schools in Austria.

at least 40 hours of lessons and requires an in-company traineeship or vocational project to be completed abroad.

“The curriculum combines specialist theoretical and practical components that provide young people on the courses with advanced technical and personal skills to boost their international employability. This includes learning additional content from subjects *that are relevant to any profession*, such as politics, social studies, and foreign languages. The content of the subjects on the *profession-specific* curriculum relate to a company and production strategy with an international focus and to intercultural skills. Students are also expected to do a traineeship or placement abroad as part of an ongoing grant programme.”⁷⁹

The in-company placement abroad must last at least ten working days. Alternatively, pupils can undertake an international professional project of the same length, with at least five working days spent abroad and the remaining five spent at their vocational college together with a group of international pupils.

Secondly, this certification procedure also challenges and supports vocational schools themselves as an institution as well as the pupils who attend them. Schools are only issued with a corresponding certificate if they are able to present comprehensive written evidence of their internationalisation strategy. However, there is another criterion for successful certification: At least 10 per cent of pupils in a year group must obtain the additional qualification in “international professional mobility” mentioned above – a certificate that is awarded in addition to their school-leaving certificate.

The application procedure for certifying vocational colleges is run every year at a specific cut-off date. Vocational colleges that are applying for the certificate can submit their documents to the EU office in their respective state district. Stays abroad and the content taught in relation to them must be documented in accordance with a set list of criteria. Certificates are valid for three years, after which recertification can be applied for. The EU offices in the state districts can provide schools with information and advice on certification, while the process itself is the responsibility of NRW’s Ministry for Schools and Education.

To accompany the certification procedure, this ministry has published a quality framework and set of guidelines for vocational colleges on organising study visits and traineeships abroad.⁸⁰ These guidelines are geared towards optimising how study visits are organised and their content designed and towards ensuring that communication between the various parties involved runs as smoothly as possible. The publication gives both teachers and in-company trainers something to work with as they seek to plan, implement, and follow up work-based stays abroad in a systematic manner.

In conclusion, one benefit of this additional international qualification in NRW is the fact that, although it forms a formal part of the curriculum and is thus clearly defined within the framework of the training provided, the qualification is nevertheless voluntary. In addition, the prospect of achieving certification if the 10 per cent threshold is reached also gives schools an incentive to promote international mobility more heavily, as they will undoubtedly be able to use this certificate as a marketing tool and a way of standing out from the crowd.

⁷⁹ Circular issued by the Ministry for Schools and Education of North Rhine-Westphalia on 3 April 2017 (https://www.berufsbildung.nrw.de/cms/upload/idb/erlass_zertifizierung_mobilitaet.pdf; in German)

⁸⁰ <https://www.berufsbildung.nrw.de/cms/upload/idb/qualitaetsrahmen-und-leitfaden.pdf> (in German)

The “go international” initiative in Arnsberg

The internationalisation strategy in NRW set out above is geared towards encouraging mobility amongst students in vocational education and training. Something that was lacking for a long time, however, was an equivalent support structure for teachers at vocational schools. To this end, the “go international” continuing education course was set up at the EU office in NRW’s Arnsberg district in 2018.⁸¹ These specific continuing education modules are designed to better overcome the challenges and obstacles that teachers at vocational schools face when they want to run European projects. The practical problems cited by the initiators include, in particular, a lack of coordinated strategies at the schools, issues with project management, and a shortage of tools for managing projects.

The content of the course, which lasts two years altogether, thus primarily includes planning and running mobility projects in vocational education and training.⁸² The focus in the first year is on promoting internationalisation by developing school-specific strategies, with establishing and leading an EU team and project management methods covered in year two. Specific topics addressed in the continuing education modules include tasks and functions of the EU representatives, the role played by the National Agency at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (which is responsible for the EU’s Erasmus+ education programme), project management and teambuilding tools, and public relations work.

After completing their continuing education programmes, the participants provide feedback to the senior leadership team at their school on what they have learnt and worked on, identify aspects of internationalisation at their own schools, and draw up action and annual work plans as well as stakeholder analyses. The end product of these activities is a school-specific internationalisation strategy devised by the participants – again in consultation with their school’s senior leadership team.

The “go international” programme also incorporated the development of a quality framework and a set of guidelines for running study visits and traineeships abroad. These efforts are intended to make a further contribution to quality assurance and the systematic, structured, and well-planned delivery of mobility placements:

“The quality framework was developed as part of the implementation in a vocational context of the cooperation agreements between the Ministry for Schools and Education of North Rhine-Westphalia as the competent body and the académies of Lille and Aix-Marseille under the partnership between vocational colleges in North Rhine-Westphalia and French lycées professionnels. The tools presented in the quality framework and guidelines can also be transferred to other bi- and multinational mobility arrangements. The framework and guidelines are geared towards optimising how study visits are organised and their content designed and towards ensuring that communication between the partners during vocational placements runs as smoothly as possible.”⁸³

These documents give both the teachers at the vocational schools and the trainers at the companies something to work with as they seek to plan, implement, and follow up work-based stays abroad in a systematic manner.

⁸¹ https://www.na-bibb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/na-bibb.de/Dokumente/06_Metanavigation/02_Service/Publikationen_Warenkorb/WEB_NAJ31_200108.pdf (in German)

⁸² <https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-bis-2020/erasmus-berufsbildung-bis-2020/mobilitaet/good-practice/internationalisierungsstrategie-in-nrw> (in German)

⁸³ <https://www.berufsbildung.nrw.de/cms/bildungsganguebergreifende-themen/idb/qualitaetsrahmen-und-leitfaden.html> (in German)

The trainee exchange programme at Lindauer DORNIER GmbH

Headquartered in southern Bavaria, the world-renowned Dornier factories manufacture looms and specialist machinery and employ some 1,000 people. For the past nine years, the company has offered both apprentices and their trainers the opportunity to spend time in Norway.⁸⁴ The programme has been recognised as an example of good practice in mobility abroad by the National Agency at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB).

The exchange programme for apprentices is bilateral, with German apprentices being sent to Norway and Norwegian ones coming to Germany. Young people who are interested in doing an exchange must first write a letter of application. The placements last three weeks and begin on site with an introduction to the country, its culture, and its education system as well as a language course. To make sure that the young people actually learn skills relevant to their profession, they work on specific tasks and cultivate contacts amongst customers. Besides these work-related activities, the exchange also incorporates a cultural programme in the respective host country.

Trainers can also take part in the exchange scheme via job shadowing thanks to Erasmus+ funding. A close working relationship with staff at the Norwegian vocational schools is also a key part of the mobility programme. The positive effects are clear: As well as gaining more specialist expertise and making their company more attractive, the young people also benefit from spending time abroad, e.g. by becoming more willing to travel abroad for work in the future.

The “Vocational Training in Insurance across European Borders” pilot project

Launched in 2011, this international mobility project was instigated by the Berufsbildungswerk der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft (Vocational Training Centre for the German Insurance Industry, or BWV) – a major training and continuing education institution for the insurance sector in Germany – together with German and Danish partners from the industry.⁸⁵ Besides general promotion of vocational mobility placements abroad in the insurance industry, the results of the project were also intended to show how placements abroad help to make the profession more attractive.

In addition to the underlying general administrative conditions such as the timing and duration of each secondment, the number of trainees, travel and accommodation arrangements, etc., a comparison between the various training systems also formed an integral part of the project’s concept, which was devised jointly by all the project partners involved. Building on this, the training content that was to be taught during the trainees’ stay abroad in Denmark was determined and set down in writing. A declaration of intent was signed between the BWV and the Danish insurance academy to safeguard the project. The project was funded via the NA at BIBB.

The bilateral exchange programme gave a total of ten apprentices from each of Germany and Denmark the opportunity to spend three weeks abroad, one of which was devoted to learning theory and the other two to in-company placements. The full schedule for the project is shown below.

⁸⁴ <https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-bis-2020/erasmus-berufsbildung-bis-2020/mobilitaet/good-practice/together-for-a-better-europe-dornier-foerdert-grenzueberschreitenden-austausch> (in German)

⁸⁵ Berufsbildungswerk der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft (2014)

Illustration 3-2: Schedule for the “Vocational Training in Insurance across European Borders” project

Month	Project phase
October 2011	Work package I 1. Preparatory phase: agreeing the objective, target group, and duration 2. Attracting and nominating project participants 3. Coordination/declaration of intent signed with the partner institution 4. Proposal submitted to NA at BIBB
May 2012	Funding approved
November 2012	Work package II 5. Fleshing-out phase: processes and documents designed to ensure quality (e.g. risk plan and learning agreements to be concluded with the trainees, certificate) 6. Preparatory meeting
May 2013	Work package III Preparation phase for the measures: intercultural training, subsequent programme, booking accommodation, plane tickets
June–July 2013	Work package IV 7. Trainees seconded and received at their destination
December 2013	Work package V 8. Project results evaluated 9. Certificates awarded 10. General public informed about project results

Source: Berufsbildungswerk der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft (2014)

The results of the subsequent project evaluation highlight the positive impact of the stays abroad on the participating individuals and companies alike. The young people said that they were able to learn new techniques and practices to apply in their specific area of work and acquire new professional skills. They also referenced an improvement in social skills, a better cultural understanding, and a general boost to their motivation to get involved on a professional level. Participants also honed their skills in English as a foreign language.

In addition, the companies involved were clearly very satisfied with how the project went and reported that participants' social skills had been enhanced:

“The trainees have become more mature and more independent. They also say that they are more open to tackling new areas of work and techniques and that they have been incorporating new ideas. There has also been a noticeable improvement in their intercultural competences. Worthy of particular note, they say, is the motivational boost that is having a positive impact on their attainment levels during their training. In other words, a stay abroad is undoubtedly a good way from an HR development perspective to encourage high-performing trainees and thus to start developing the skilled workers and managers of the future from an early stage. The companies involved have also benefited from the fact that the stays abroad have made the dual-curriculum model more attractive.” (Berufsbildungswerk der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft [2014], p. 20)

Everyone involved in the project concluded that the benefits of the project vastly outweighed the time and effort involved. The opportunity to improve several skills at the same time within a short, intensive period of learning and working was identified as a particular plus in favour of stays abroad – compared

to in-company training and continuing education courses, for instance. It must also be borne in mind that the outlay involved in arranging international mobility placements on a regular basis will only be a fraction of that required to do it for the first time. In particular, for example, there will be little or no need to hunt for partners each time, a highly laborious and time-consuming process. In addition, the practice gained in arranging mobility placements as a matter of routine will make it easier to apply for funding and agree on the content to be learnt.

Berufsschulzentrum Westerberg

This vocational school in Osnabrück in the federal state of Lower Saxony is especially keen to promote the internationalisation of training programmes.⁸⁶ Besides opportunities for pupils to spend time in another country, this also includes stays abroad for teachers, who are able to gain experience and insights from both the foreign companies and the educational institutions in that country. The young people and the teachers then record their newly acquired skills as learning outcomes in a documentation process designed on the basis of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET).

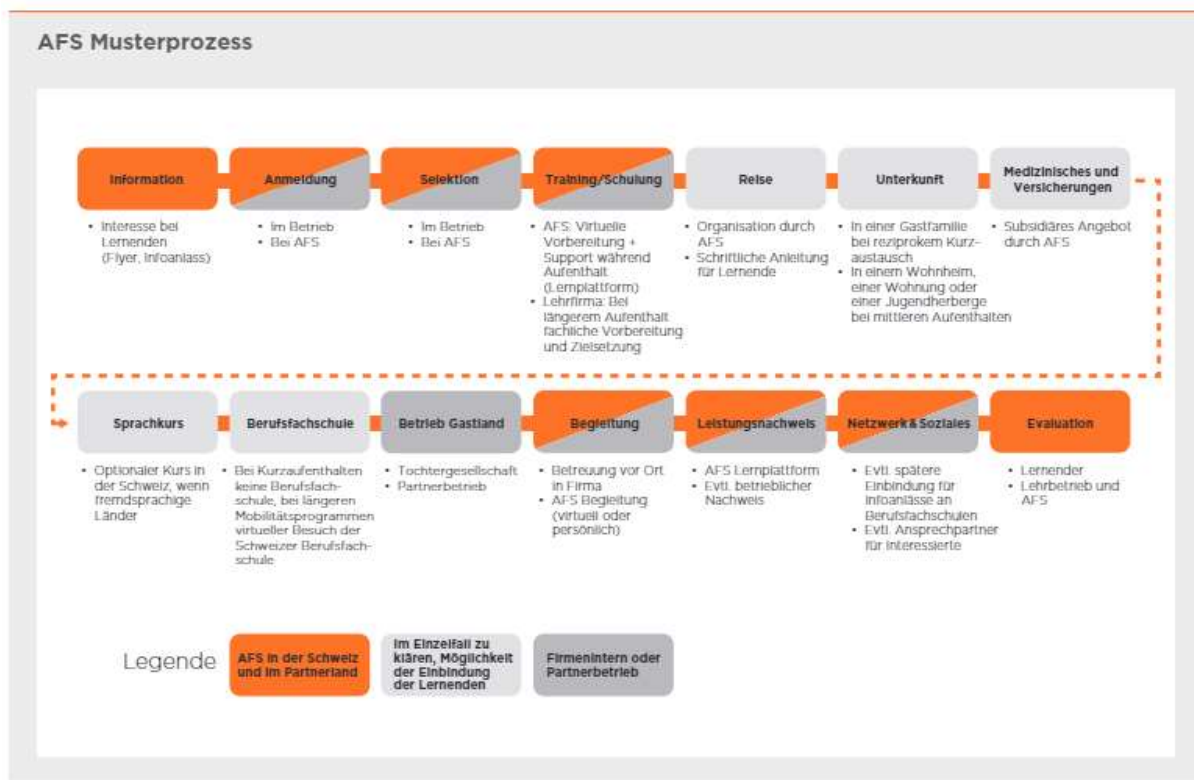
In recognition of the high-quality mobility projects that it runs, the school was awarded the Erasmus+ Mobility Charta for 2019–2020 by the NA at BIBB.

Switzerland: a model process for organisation

The Swiss association “AFS Interkulturelle Programme Schweiz” (“AFS Intercultural Programs Switzerland”) is the country’s largest and oldest non-profit organisation for intercultural pupil exchanges. Besides criteria for a successful mobility programme, the AFS also sets out a model process for successfully organising and delivering mobility placements abroad to serve as an example in its report entitled *Die Berufslehre wird mobil* (“Making vocational training mobile”). This process is explained in more detail below.

⁸⁶ <https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-bis-2020/erasmus-berufsbildung-bis-2020/mobilitaet/good-practice/eine-berufsschule-aus-niedersachsen-zeigt-qualitaet> (in German)

Illustration 3-3: The AFS model process



Source: AFS (2013, p. 25)

The AFS model process						
Information	Registration	Selection	Training	Travel	Accommodation	Medical matters and insurance
Interest amongst learners (flyers, fact-finding event)	Within company At AFS	Within company At AFS	AFS: virtual preparation and support during stay (learning platform) Training company: job-specific preparation and target-setting for longer stays	Organised by AFS Written instructions for learners	At host family if short reciprocal exchange In halls of residence, a flat, or a youth hostel for medium-length stays	Subsidiary cover provided by AFS
Language course	Upper-secondary vocational school	Company in host country	Support	Confirmation of achievements	Network and social matters	Evaluation
Optional course in Switzerland if non-German-speaking countries	No upper-secondary vocational school if short stay; virtual attendance at Swiss upper-secondary vocational school during longer mobility programmes	Subsidiary Partner company	Support provided on site in company Support from AFS (virtually or in person)	AFS learning platform Possible company certificate	Possible subsequent involvement in fact-finding events at vocational schools Possible contact for interested people	Learner Training company and AFS
Key	AFS in Switzerland and partner country	To be clarified in each individual case; possibility of getting learners involved	Within company or at partner company			

3.3 Research

In contrast to the high importance attached at a programme level to mobility abroad in teaching by national stakeholders and EU institutions, the topic itself has only attracted a rudimentary amount of empirical research to date. However, the literature does contain a few recent studies on the topic that allow focus to be placed on each of the three parties involved (company, vocational school, apprentices) and the reasons why mobility comes about – or does not come about – to be explored in more depth.

3.3.1 Companies providing training

Table 3-7 uses data from a 2010 German study to illustrate the reasons why companies do not send their apprentices abroad to do a placement or traineeship. This representative study questioned a total of 785 companies in Germany training some 37,000 apprentices. By far the most commonly cited obstacle was the fact that the companies had not received any suitable offers – and evidently had not gone out and looked for such offers on their own initiative. Amongst the main barriers to participating in mobility abroad that were present within the company itself was the money aspect: A placement abroad was simply too expensive for around two thirds of the training companies. However, the in-company training time lost as a result of a stay abroad was an important factor for over half the survey respondents when deciding not to introduce placements abroad.

The benefit that stays abroad bring to the apprentices involved was not fundamentally questioned, however, with only 16 per cent of the training companies indicating that stays abroad of this kind would not have a positive impact on the people undertaking them.

Table 3-7: Reasons why companies do not send their trainees abroad, as a percentage (multiple answers possible; n = 785)

Obstacles	Com-pletely agree	2	3	4	Do not agree	Categories 1 + 2 (ranking)
No offers received	80	2	4	2	12	82
Is too expensive for the company	45	15	25	6	9	60
Vocational school not involved in organising mobility placements	48	9	17	10	16	57
Too much time for in-company training would be lost	43	9	18	9	21	52
We would not benefit much from stays abroad	43	7	16	12	22	50
There would be a shortage of trainees at the vocational school	43	7	23	4	23	50
Chamber/guild not involved in organising mobility placements	41	8	25	8	18	49
No interest in having trainees spend time abroad	39	6	19	8	28	45
Trainees would not benefit from going abroad	13	3	22	15	47	16

Source: Friedrich/Körbel (2011); own illustration

The study presented here also involved a separate survey of 189 companies running active mobility operations on their motives for doing so (cf. Table 3-8). “Increasing trainees’ independence” was by far the most common reason cited. Interestingly, improving language skills was not amongst the main motivations for sending young people abroad. Nevertheless, placements abroad formed an integral part of the curriculum for a tenth of the companies running active mobility operations.

Table 3-8: Reasons given by companies for offering placements abroad, as a percentage (n = 189)

Reasons for placements abroad	Percentage
Increasing trainees’ independence	94
Strengthening trainees’ engagement	74
Rewarding particularly motivated trainees	73
Improving foreign language skills	45
Learning how foreign customers think	20
Part of the curriculum	10
Familiarisation with export markets	5

Source: Friedrich/Körbel (2011)

3.3.2 Apprentices

The reasons why apprentices themselves avoid spending time abroad can be studied in more detail thanks to a 2017 survey conducted by the National Agency Education for Europe at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB). As Table 3-9 shows, the statement “I’m already very well qualified without having to go abroad” garnered the most agreement in this regard. These young people thus see no reason to undertake a placement abroad “on top” of their standard vocational education and training. Many apprentices would also clearly find it hard to juggle a stay abroad with the obligations of their day-to-day lives.

The second most-cited obstacle was the financial aspect of stays abroad. This can either be interpreted as an indication of support structures that could be improved or attributed to the fact that many young people do not know enough about the financial support options that are available. Another frequently mentioned reason for not going abroad was a lack of support or interest shown by training companies and/or vocational schools.

The fear of going abroad triggering too great and too sudden changes in a person’s life came in towards the bottom of the list of obstacles. Similarly, the young people surveyed generally perceived the fundamental benefits and the cost/benefit ratio of a placement abroad to be less important amongst the various reasons for not doing so.

Table 3-9: Main reasons for apprentices not spending time abroad; results of a survey of apprentices

Obstacles	Mean*
I’m already very well qualified without having to go abroad.	2.5
A stay abroad would be too expensive (for me).	2.6
It’d be hard to fit a stay abroad into my day-to-day life.	2.7
My company/vocational school isn’t interested in sending me abroad.	2.7

I don't have any support.	2.9
Spending time abroad would disrupt the planning for my training too much.	2.9
It would take up too much time (for me).	3.0
I can get all the benefits of going abroad without having to leave the country.	3.0
I didn't think my foreign language skills would be good enough to spend time abroad.	3.0
I didn't want to live apart from my family and friends.	3.0
There aren't any high-quality certificates or diplomas that highlight the additional skills you might acquire by spending time abroad.	3.1
I was too lazy to look into going abroad.	3.2
I didn't know that spending time abroad was an option.	3.3
It's uncomfortable (for me) when so many things around me change at the same time.	3.3
It's not worth the time, money, and effort I'd put into it.	3.4

* Question: "We'd also be interested in the reasons that would prevent/have prevented you from spending time abroad. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements." Lower scores (1 and 2) indicate (a high degree of) agreement.

Source: NA at BIBB (2018b)

So what are the benefits of mobility abroad? The NA at BIBB has obtained some empirical findings to help answer this question too (cf. Table 3-10). From the perspective of the apprentices themselves who have undertaken a placement abroad, their experience most definitely developed their own personality in the sense of increased self-confidence and self-assurance (not least thanks to their interaction and communication with other people and tackling new challenges). It also helped them to form political values and strengthened their social engagement, albeit evidently to a lesser degree.

Table 3-10: Skills acquired during stays abroad from the perspective of the participants; mean values (scale from 1 "Completely agree" to 5 "Do not agree")

Skills acquired: "Thanks to my stay abroad..."	Mean
I've become more open and more curious about new challenges.	1.7
I'm more self-assured and more confident in my abilities.	1.7
I can work better with people from other cultures and different backgrounds.	1.8
I've improved my technical/professional skills/competences.	2.0
I'm better at making decisions.	2.2
I'm more interested in what's going on in the world day to day.	2.3
I want to get more involved in the social and political life of my community.	2.4
social and political ideals like democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights mean more to me.	2.5
I feel more European.	2.5
Skills acquired: "After spending time abroad, I'm now better able to..."	
appreciate other cultures.	1.5
work in a team.	1.7
think logically and draw conclusions (analytical skills).	2.4
communicate and express myself in my mother tongue.	2.9

Source: NA at BIBB (2019)

3.3.3 Vocational school

The results of a Swiss study in which a total of 115 upper-secondary vocational schools⁸⁷ took part shows that schools are prevented from getting actively involved in mobility programmes by a lack of financial resources (cf.

Table 3-11). The administrative aspect of coordinating matters between the school, the company, and the courses straddling several companies⁸⁸ was evidently another barrier for the upper-secondary vocational schools with regard to mobility activities. In third place came an external obstacle, namely a lack of interest on the part of the training companies.

Table 3-11: Obstacles to student mobility as perceived by upper-secondary vocational schools in Switzerland,* as a percentage (n = 115)

Obstacles	Percentage
Lack of financial resources	16
Coordination between vocational school/company/cross-company courses	13
Companies not interested	11
Students not interested	9
Not enough information or knowledge about opportunities	9
Too much organisation required	8
Students would miss important lessons	8
No suitable offers	7
Parents do not want students to go	7
Too laborious and time-consuming for vocational schools	6
Not enough advice and support available	3
Don't know	3

* Question: "What do you see as the biggest obstacles and challenges for student exchanges?"

Source: Helfenstein (2016); own illustration

The overview given below of obstacles to and factors supporting mobility abroad in apprenticeships represents an initial conclusion that can be drawn from existing research. It makes a distinction between the various stakeholders (company providing training, vocational school, apprentice) and phases of a project.

⁸⁷ Swiss upper-secondary vocational schools are similar to vocational schools in Austria and teach theory as part of a dual-curriculum basic vocational education (known as "Berufslehre", or "vocational education and training").

⁸⁸ Strictly speaking, the dual vocational education and training system in Switzerland is actually a "triple" curriculum delivered in a company, at an upper-secondary vocational school, and in courses that straddle several companies. The last of these teach basic practical skills and are often based in industry-specific centres.

Overview 4-1: Obstacles to and factors supporting mobility abroad by stakeholder and project phase

	Obstacles	Supporting factors			
		Planning	Delivery	Follow-up	General aspects
Companies providing training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial resources – Human resources – Length of stay – Not enough information; no offers – Time missed by apprentices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge and use of external sources of information and support – Examples of best practice – Agreements on objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Precise requirements made of stays abroad (e.g. content taught) – Reliable partner company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Certificates/diplomas that highlight additional skills acquired by spending time abroad – Follow-up after the stay abroad (application in day-to-day work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Convincing companies of the added value for them (short- and long-term) – Incorporating stays abroad into training systems
Vocational school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial resources – Coordination between vocational school and company; time/effort required for organisation – Not enough information; no offers – Young people miss important lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge and use of external sources of information and support – Flexibility (e.g. not putting key learning content just before summer holidays) – Coordination office/point of contact within school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Precise requirements made of stays abroad (e.g. content taught) – Availability of as much learning material as possible on learning platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incorporating participants' experience into school operations (e.g. presentations for fellow pupils) – Certificates/diplomas that highlight additional skills acquired by spending time abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Young people with experience of mobility abroad are more independent – Incorporating stays abroad into curricula – Contact with partner institutions abroad
Apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stay abroad as a risk (“venturing into the unknown”); responsibility for looking after oneself – Length of stay (falling behind with learning) – Financial resources – Resistance from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge and use of external sources of information and support – Incorporation into planning – Preparation (language, intercultural training) – Agreements on objectives; rights and obligations – Timing of stay abroad (during school holidays) – Knowledge of other people's experiences abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supervision and support structure at the other end (mentoring) – Named contacts who are trained teachers – Being accompanied by trainers at the start and/or later on for an interim appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow-up after the stay abroad (application in day-to-day work) – Certificates/diplomas that highlight additional skills acquired by spending time abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Desire for independence – Experience abroad (professional and personal) – “Mobility culture” at the company – Parents; family environment – Length of stay – Placements abroad as an incentive to perform well at school and/or at one's company

Source: Own compilation

4 Survey of vocational schools

The study asked experts (teachers, headmasters/headmistresses) from a total of six vocational schools in different disciplines (construction, retail/wholesale, hairdressing, etc.) about their experience organising and running mobility placements abroad; four of them already had some practical empirical knowledge to share in this regard. Two of the vocational schools were based in Vienna, with a further two in Salzburg, and one each in Carinthia and Lower Austria. This chapter is based on the findings from these interviews,⁸⁹ which were supported by a set of interview guidelines and held between mid-April and mid-May 2021, and reflects the experiences and opinions shared by the respondents.

Fundamental problems and challenges

As the interviews showed, the **main problem** that the vocational schools identified in running stays abroad was the **administrative outlay and red tape required to prepare them**. As a basic principle, this outlay was considered to be extremely large; even when external support was provided (e.g. by specialist associations for registration processes or funding applications), a significant amount of the organisation and responsibility remained to be shouldered by the teachers and/or their vocational schools.

In particular, the people involved spoke of **considerable uncertainty** and/or **opaque structures** when it came to planning and running mobility placements abroad; it was rarely clear what was the right office or person to contact with queries. Many departments at the vocational schools lacked experience in this area and knowledge of the possibilities available to them. The interviewees thus voiced the idea of a **central contact point** for interested stakeholders, which could be based at the OeAD, for instance. An information point of this kind would be able to provide information not only about Erasmus+ or other funding schemes and partner institutions but also about how vocational education and training systems are organised in other European countries and how a partnership might logically be designed.

A main port of call like this would also be important because teachers and their vocational schools clearly have limited time and money at their disposal. Teachers often take on additional administrative duties or other obligations on top of their standard teaching workload. For instance, one interviewee had assumed responsibility for organising her school's mobility placements abroad in addition to her full teaching timetable and her duties as a guidance counsellor. In addition, work done organising mobility abroad is generally paid poorly, if at all. The **key role played by committed teachers and senior leadership teams** in running stays abroad was mentioned in this context in all interviews: *"It's what the whole thing hinges on."* Without an external support and contact point, however, even the greatest possible level of personal dedication is ultimately unlikely to be sufficient, especially since this extensive commitment cannot simply be taken for granted.

This is reflected in several areas, including **planning certainty**: Placements abroad and/or the associated activities (outward journey, flights, accommodation, etc.) often have to be planned a whole year before participants actually set off. A great deal of uncertainties may arise during this time. The situation may change, some young people or companies may drop out, and the school will need to cover the costs incurred regardless, etc. In one specific case, for example, a vocational school structured on a course basis reported on its planning for a stay in Brussels. If flights are not booked until just before the stay starts, they are fairly expensive. If, by contrast, they are booked as early as September for the

⁸⁹ The set of guidelines for these interviews is included in the Appendix0, which also lists the names of the vocational schools and individuals who graciously gave up their time to be interviewed.

following June, the flights may be much cheaper but nobody knows which of the pupils/companies will ultimately be taking part in the placement abroad when it comes around.

Even establishing **contacts abroad** (partner schools and placement companies) is no easy task – without support, at least – and represents a major barrier to organising mobility programmes. If staff at the vocational schools do not have any existing relationships/contacts, it is hard to identify suitable institutions to contact “from scratch” and then actually get a functioning partnership off the ground. The experts thus believe that one potentially promising avenue would be to enable teachers to do a placement abroad first before sending young people to another country. This would allow them to establish these kinds of contact, experience and scope out the situation on the ground for themselves, and so on. Being able to assess the situation in this way would also be a sensible step in view of the differences between the various vocational education systems in Europe.

Sharing out the placement periods evenly between **the vocational school, the companies, and the apprentices themselves** could represent an additional organisational challenge as far as the respondents were concerned. One interviewee revealed that, for one previous three-week stay abroad, the participants had been given a one-week leave of absence from their vocational school, one week had been “donated” by the young people themselves, and for the third week they had been given a leave of absence by the company training them. If one adds linguistic and/or cultural preparatory measures into the mix, it becomes clear just how laborious and time-consuming even relatively short placements can be to organise and “negotiate”.

The different ways in which national education systems are structured is one aspect that is sometimes sidelined in the debate over running mobility placements abroad. Whereas the dual training programmes offered in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland are very similar, working together with partners from English-speaking countries or Scandinavia, for instance, presents bigger challenges – especially for vocational schools that are getting involved for the first time – as a result of these differences.

Another potential organisational and administrative issue is the different ways in which the job-specific training is organised at a vocational school. Some training pathways have lessons all through the year, whilst others are organised as defined courses or taught in blocks. Although “a lot of the organisation can be done” within the school itself, things begin to get difficult if, for example, the board of education needs to give its approval.

As might be expected, all the abovementioned uncertainties and problem areas affecting the organisation of stays abroad are a much bigger factor for the **vocational schools and colleges** with **no experience whatsoever** to fall back on. These obstacles and this lack of information often seem insurmountable and frustrating to these stakeholders, who may not be able to overcome them with the time and money available to them despite a strong commitment to the cause. One suggestion for tackling these problems is to offer pre-packed “**all-in-one solutions**” for these schools containing all the details relevant to implementation (registration, funding opportunities, outward journey, accommodation, etc.). This could include strategies for short-term stays as well as medium- to long-term stints abroad and would reduce the amount of human and administrative resources that a vocational school would need to expend. All-in-one solutions of this kind could be put together for both pupils and vocational school teachers about to go abroad. One positive example highlighted was of a competition for stays abroad in which vocational schools from three federal provinces took part. Here, all organisational and administrative matters had already been prepared by the guild involved, while funding had also been sorted out. All the vocational school and its teachers had to do in this case was to encourage the young people to take part, an arrangement that worked very well.

Interest and commitment on the part of the vocational schools

Despite all the difficulties mentioned above, **the vocational schools and their teachers were extremely interested** in running mobility placements abroad for both pupils and teaching staff. The benefits of a stay abroad for the young people as well as for the companies and the vocational schools themselves (specifically, job shadowing) were clearly recognised and were underlined time and again in the interviews. Mobility abroad programmes at schools were also mainly instigated by (particularly committed) teachers. In the interviewees' opinion, however, the topic of placements abroad had not yet become embedded in or part of the overarching administrative framework of the vocational schools sector to the extent that it had in other school contexts (such as academic secondary schools or VET schools or colleges): *“At an academic secondary school [upper-secondary level], it's more or less the done thing to spend a week abroad.”* This lack of a mobility culture can also cause organisational problems, which is why interviewees suggested that higher-level bodies such as the board of education responsible for the vocational schools sector should show greater dedication and/or get more involved.

Mobility placements abroad are an integral part of the curriculum for English teachers at vocational schools and are seen as extremely positive. As well as being key to the teachers' professional development, these stays also motivate them to get their pupils interested in doing the same thing. Gaining experience in organisational matters is also important for staff in terms of running mobility placements for their apprentices.

Something that repeatedly causes problems with potential stays abroad by teachers is various **aspects of civil service law**; the many uncertainties in this regard present obstacles to implementation for both the teachers themselves and school administrations. At one of the vocational schools that responded to the survey, for example, the level of interest amongst the teaching staff in mobility placements abroad was currently fairly low due to the problems mentioned above. Out of a total of around 60 colleagues, it was always the same five or six people who would be finding out about what suitable opportunities were available. For instance, teachers are afraid that taking part would in some way infringe the terms of their teaching contract or affect their pay while they were abroad. Establishing **transparent and clear terms and conditions** under civil service law would undoubtedly make teachers more willing to get involved.

How teaching is organised at vocational schools can also make it harder for teachers to participate in mobility programmes. If pupils are taught on ten-week courses, for instance, school will “start” and “end” four times a year. With so much going on from an organisational perspective, it is virtually impossible for staff to incorporate stays abroad into their day-to-day work in a meaningful way (who is going to cover for them, etc.).

Partnerships between vocational schools are also often required in order to engineer stays abroad for teachers, because an individual school is unlikely to be able to manage without multiple teachers at the same time: *“Doing that just for my school would be virtually impossible, because I'd have to close the school.”* Europe-wide networking meetings for interested vocational schools would be useful in this context as a way of creating opportunities for cooperation with foreign partner institutions. According to one interviewee, these kinds of get-together have been organised before (*“A sort of fair where you meet people”*). The discussions held at such events have often given rise to exchange projects. It was not known whether these meetings were still being offered.

The situation at the companies providing training

The respondents felt that there was much greater **awareness of the benefits** of mobility placements abroad at vocational schools than at the **training companies**. Some interviewees referenced a lack of a support culture on the part of the companies (as might be expected, only larger companies are more interested in exchange programmes and instigate them proactively). However, it is only fair to say in this context that, as far as a company is concerned, an apprentice is an employee as well someone to be trained. This is especially true from the second or third year of their apprenticeship onwards – i.e. just when they would usually be spending time abroad. Inevitably, therefore, **the size of a company plays a role** here. Since the young people are already spending time at vocational school and are entitled to annual leave, it is hard for small businesses in particular to give their apprentices an additional leave of absence. Reciprocal exchange programmes would be one potential option, whereby a company sends some of their own apprentices abroad and welcomes some foreign apprentices in return.⁹⁰

Yet support from and acceptance by the training companies is key. Even if an apprentice knows that they are legally entitled to do a placement abroad, they will not be able to do so if there is resistance to the idea from within their company. **Commitment on the part of the training companies** is vital if stays abroad are to be implemented successfully. Without it, respondents say, programmes of this kind cannot really work. It must therefore be impressed more strongly on the companies that sending apprentices abroad will also generate added value for them as a company. This is another reason why the “all-in-one solution” for mobility placements abroad that was mentioned above is regarded as being highly practicable. For example, companies could start with a small package of one to two weeks, gain experience, and thus recognise the benefit that it brings to their company.

A further success factor mentioned in the context of running placements abroad was **communication** between the **senior leadership team/school administration** and the **training companies**. As far as the respondents were concerned, this is also important because many companies still have little to no idea of what opportunities young people have to do a placement abroad. Unlike apprenticeships leading to the secondary-school leaving certificate (“Matura”), which is now well established at many companies, placements abroad are still something of a blind spot (“*you can’t take up an opportunity you don’t know about.*”)

Communication between the school administration and the company is also important with regard to the **planning timeline**: Placements of this kind have to be explored as early as during the first year of a person’s apprenticeship so that the stays abroad can then be organised in the third year. In addition, many training companies still need to be convinced of the serious nature of the placements (“*not just a load of nonsense*”). **Information** that was tailored specifically to the needs of the industry or the training companies and that highlighted how companies could benefit would be useful in this regard. Last but not least, mobility placements abroad should not present any financial barriers to training companies or land them with any extra costs.

Level of knowledge and interest amongst the young people

The **young people are definitely interested** in spending time abroad, once they have the relevant information (although this interest is not as quite as strong as at, say, VET schools or colleges). The work being done to raise awareness can undoubtedly be improved. The respondents felt that neither parents/guardians nor companies passed on this kind of information enough (“*the opportunities are out*”)

⁹⁰ According to experts from the IFA, this has been attempted on a number of occasions but has rarely been a success. The devil is in the detail, whether it is due to the vocational schools in the two countries being organised in different ways or because Austrian companies have very little interest in receiving trainees from countries that do not operate a dual system (i.e. most of them in the world). Another common reason for failure is the different time windows available for reciprocal exchanges.

there, but they're not shared with the pupils”). Highly committed teachers and the school administration thus have an important role to play. However, support and advice given at the schools by external providers would be desirable too.

There are also certain signs of industry-specific effects that influence or hinder efforts to send young people abroad. For example, the employment regulations governing apprentices on building sites (e.g. masons) in different countries are frequently formulated differently, the key question being *“What is someone under 18 allowed to do in what country if they have a training contract?”*.

The main priority for the pupils themselves is the **accessibility** of the **registration process** as well as the **costs that they will incur**. If they need to submit documentation via an association or with the help of their teachers, for instance, young people will generally have no problem taking part – assuming they have the approval of the company training them. In a class of fifteen, one can assume that about three or four pupils will take up such an opportunity. As mentioned earlier, however, the support of the company is crucial, because otherwise no amount of information they are given will actually be of any use: *“It’s like dangling a carrot in front of the young people’s noses and then yanking it away.”*

In an ideal scenario, the relevant teachers would be able to accompany the young people on their stays abroad and support them there. Many of the pupils will not have travelled or been abroad before, so the support of adults whom they already know is seen as another factor influencing the successful delivery of projects of this kind.

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber could also tell both the training companies and the young people about the possibility of spending time abroad and the benefits of doing so when the apprenticeship contract is first concluded. Providing more information on the option of a mobility placement abroad would make apprenticeships more attractive across the board. The topic of stays abroad could also be incorporated to a greater extent into the advice given at careers fairs, which might make apprenticeships more interesting for those who are studying for their secondary-school leaving certificate or who have broken off their studies. One final idea mentioned was that of multipliers or testimonials, where apprentices who have already been abroad go into companies and report on their experiences. This is a concept that has already been applied at European level in the “Euroapprentices” scheme. In terms of ways to get trainees more interested, some interviewees also suggested the possibility of having placements abroad included in or counting towards the participants’ final apprenticeship exam. How this would actually be structured from a formal and/or legal perspective, however, is unclear.

Concluding assessments

Overall, successfully sending apprentices on mobility placements abroad is regarded as a **win-win situation**. Everyone involved – the young people, the companies, and the vocational schools – benefit from a project done well. In this context, one interviewee thus lamented the loss of the “journeyman period” in the crafts and skilled trades, which used to be taken for granted. In addition to the **extra specialist knowledge** that the participants acquire (specifically, being able to compare their own job profile to what it is like in another country), the main factors mentioned were the **language aspect**, the broadening of their personal and cultural horizons, the flexibility, the willingness to embrace change, and the **greater independence** that the young people develop after completing a placement or traineeship abroad. In particular, independence and – associated with it – increased self-confidence were also considered major benefits by the companies and schools involved. Further relevant success factors mentioned as important for achieving this when running mobility programmes were the preparation and follow-up of the stays abroad as well as the supervision and support provided to the young people at the other end.

One key element that can be distilled from the surveys of vocational schools is the issue of **accessibility**. Despite the commitment of the stakeholders at the vocational schools, a fact stressed repeatedly in the interviews, the limited time, human resources, and money available mean that the organisation and implementation of mobility placements abroad have to incur as little additional outlay as possible. Virtually all interviewees thus expressed a desire to see help and support given at schools by external providers, which they consider to be essential if mobility programmes are to be run successfully and expanded.

5 Trainer survey

For the first time ever in Austria, some basic empirical findings on the topic of mobility abroad in apprenticeships were gathered with the help of a broad-based quantitative survey of trainers.

The main results are presented and analysed in this chapter. Section 5.1 outlines to what extent the survey results are able and permitted to be regarded or interpreted as representative. Section 5.2 reveals some findings on how much the trainers surveyed know about the opportunities, support options, and funding sources associated with mobility abroad. Section 5.3 supplies findings on the situation at training companies where apprentices have completed a placement abroad over the past three years, focusing particularly on the link between how much is known about sources of support/funding and the use made of these and on the main factors encouraging mobility abroad. Section 5.4 contains some important insights into the motivation and reasons for a training company not gathering any experience of mobility abroad (i.e. for them not having a single apprentice do a placement abroad over the past three years). The two subsequent chapters analyse what interests and incentives/(additional) support services are or could be key to the uptake of mobility placements abroad – section 5.4 does this from the perspective of the training companies and section 5.5 from that of the apprentices. Finally, there follows a brief exploration of the trainers' own experiences with and level of interest in mobility placements abroad.

5.1 Representative nature of the survey

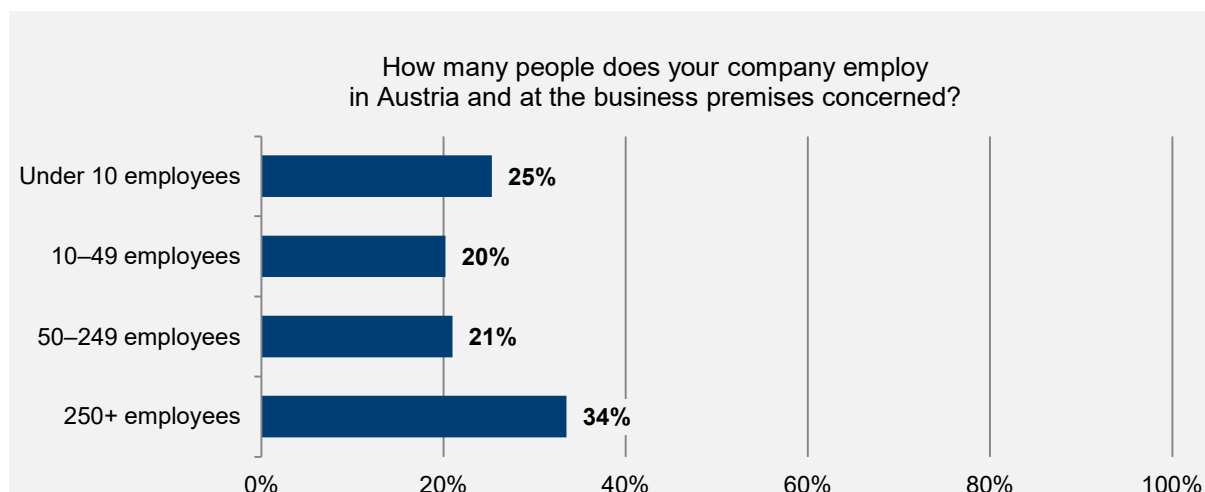
The online survey was conducted throughout Austria between January and March 2021 and was aimed at trainers and business owners in all industries and sectors. Invitations to complete the online questionnaire were sent to 4,965 contacts, with 646 not being able to be delivered successfully. Out of the remaining 4,319 contacts, 626 began filling out the questionnaire and 372 completed it in full. A total of 396 questionnaires were able to be evaluated. This produced a response rate of 9.2 per cent of all the training companies contacted (that actually received their invitation).

Around a third of respondents said that they worked at a company employing 250 or more people, with the rest spread more or less equally amongst micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (cf. [Chart 5-1](#)).⁹¹ This roughly matches the composition of training companies in Austria⁹², although small businesses were overrepresented in our study at 25 per cent (as against 15 per cent nationwide).

The sample corresponds roughly to the Austrian average in terms of its distribution by federal province and industry, although two categories were overrepresented: industrial companies (14.6 per cent of the sample as against 4.2 per cent according to the apprentice statistics for Austria for 2020) and training companies based in Upper Austria (23.2 per cent of the sample as against 19 per cent according to the apprentice statistics for Austria for 2020) – see also Annex 7.1 for more details.

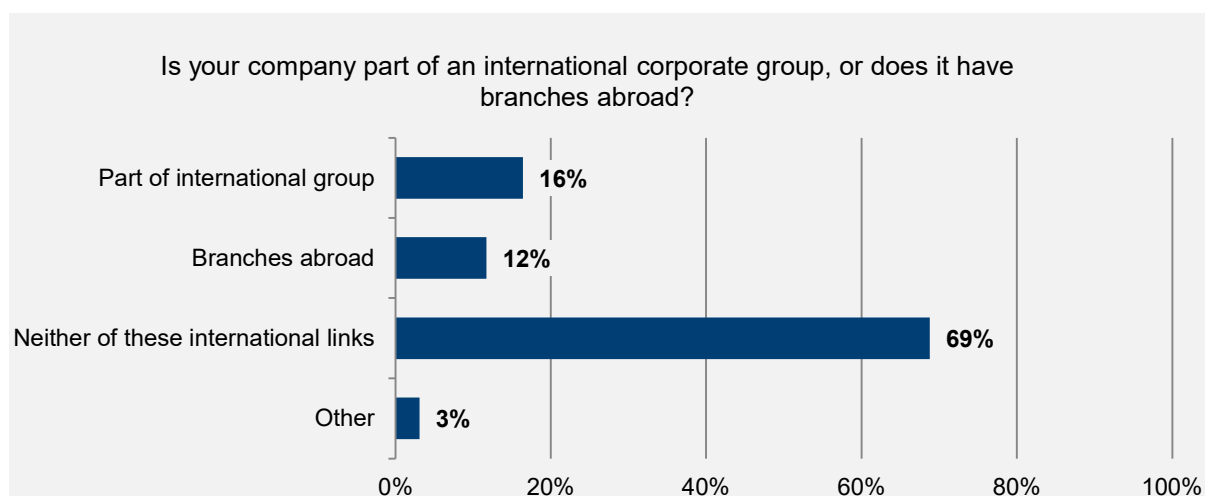
⁹¹ Unfortunately, around a third of those surveyed (139 people) did not provide any usable information on the size of their company. Nevertheless, it was possible to assign most companies to one of the four categories (micro-, small, medium-sized, and large enterprises) using other information from the survey (e.g. number of apprentices, industry).

⁹² Cf. Dornmayr and Nowak (2020).

Chart 5-1: Company size by number of employees

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 396)

A total of 28 per cent of the companies that took part⁹³ had branches abroad or were part of an international corporate group. As many as 69 per cent did not have any international relationships of this kind, meaning that they were based exclusively in Austria in terms of their head office and business premises.⁹⁴ The remaining companies (3 per cent) did not provide information or fell into the “Other” category (cf. Chart 5-2).

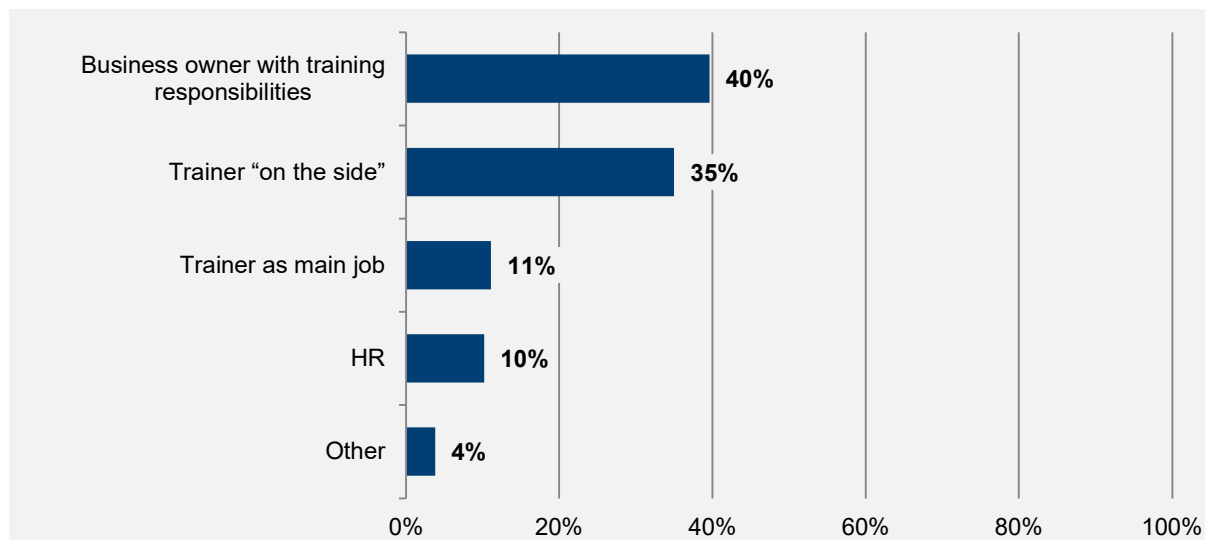
Chart 5-2: Overview of companies’ international relationships

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 385)

Breaking the respondents down by the role that they perform at their company reveals that being a trainer was not the main job for more than three quarters of respondents (cf. Chart 5-3). A quarter of those surveyed had only been involved in training for a very short time (up to three years), while a third had been doing the job for a very long time (over twenty years).

⁹³ Although this was strictly speaking a survey of trainers, one may assume that a trainer was “representing” their training company because, even at most of the larger training companies (i.e. those with several trainers), only one trainer is likely to have taken part in the survey. “Trainer” and “company” are thus used interchangeably in this text.

⁹⁴ Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that a company’s value chain can certainly also have a strong international orientation (e.g. in terms of its supplier and/or customer structures).

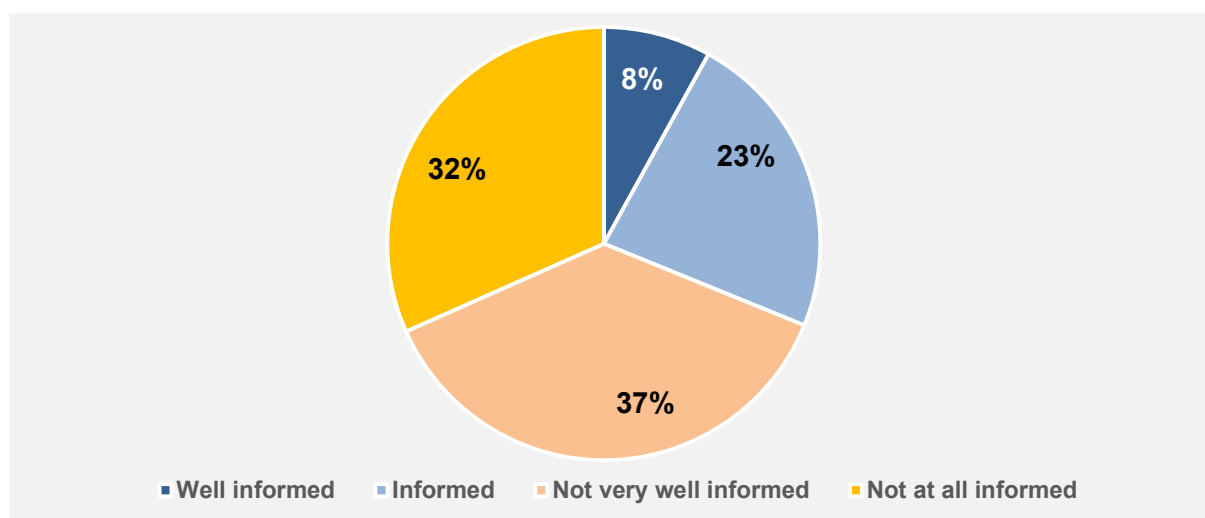
Chart 5-3: Respondents broken down by their role at their company

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 394)

In **conclusion**, therefore, it can be said that the **ibw's trainer survey largely** reflects the composition of the body of trainers in terms of what regions they come from, the size of their training companies, the industries they work in, and the nature of their role as trainers and can thus certainly be regarded as **representative**.

5.2 Companies' level of knowledge

The answers given to the questions about how much the participating companies knew about various funding opportunities (cf. [Chart 5-4](#)) allow an overall assessment to be made of how broad/detailed a knowledge of apprentices' mobility abroad the companies possess. The chart makes it clear that **a great many – two thirds (69 per cent), in fact – of the trainers surveyed knew little or nothing at all** about this subject.

Chart 5-4: Level of knowledge about apprentices' mobility abroad⁹⁵

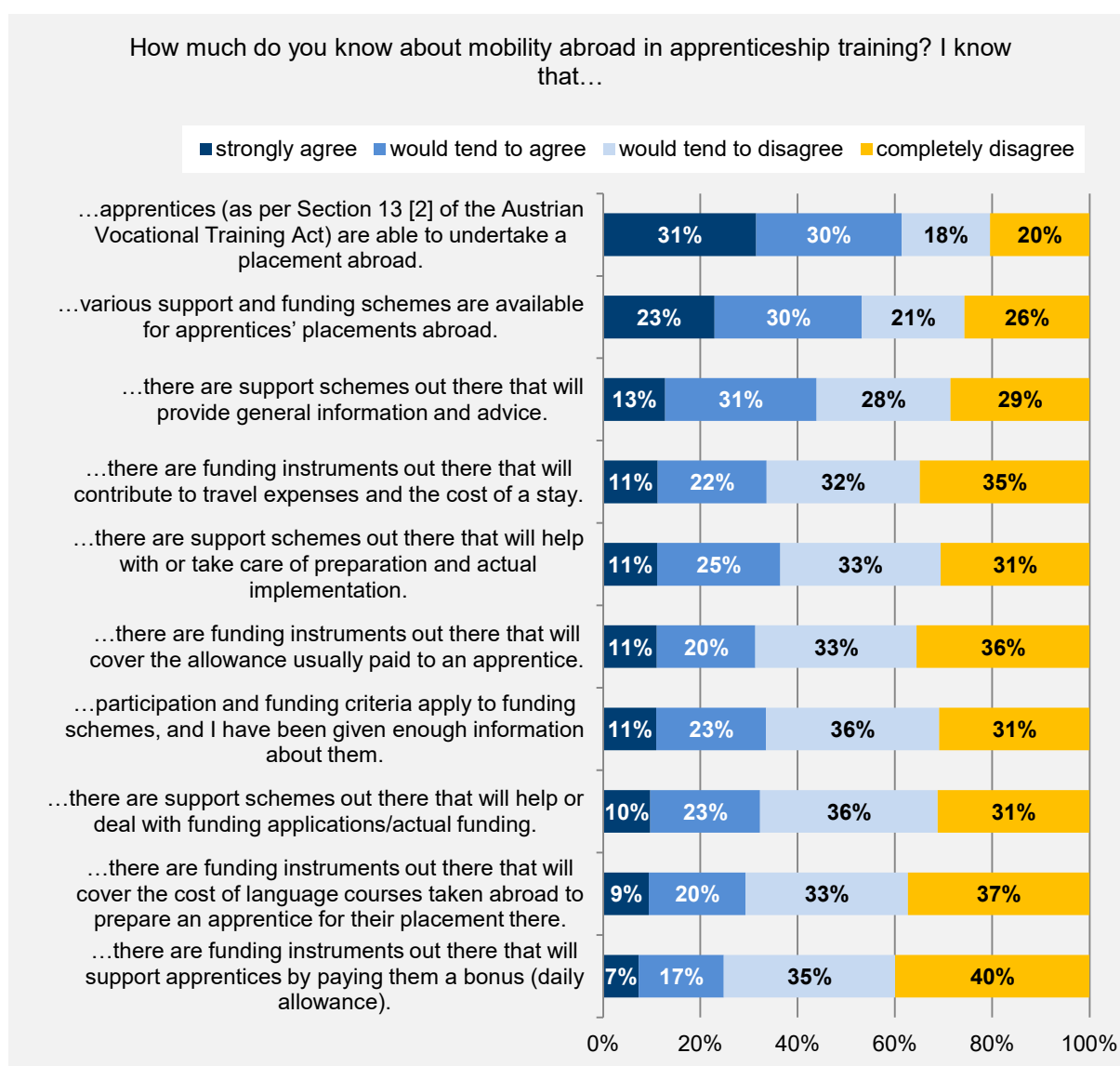
Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 383–391)

⁹⁵ To create this chart, an average value was first determined for each trainer based on Question 9 from the questionnaire, then the distribution of these values amongst all the respondents was plotted on the chart.

Only around a third of companies surveyed said that they definitely knew that apprentices could undertake a placement abroad. Another third evidently knew something, albeit not a great deal, about this (“would tend to agree”). This means that around 61 per cent of the companies surveyed have some information at their fingertips regarding the possibility of their apprentices spending time abroad. By contrast, 40 per cent of trainers evidently have no (or, at best, a rudimentary) knowledge of this; cf. [Chart 5-5](#).

Around half of respondents had a general idea that support and funding was also available for placements abroad. On being questioned in more detail about the various support/funding options available, however, it became clear that more than two thirds of respondents had little, if any, idea that funding was available to cover some or all of the apprentices’ travel expenses, language course costs, and the allowance that they usually received or, as the case may be, to support them with a separate daily allowance. Only around a third of companies were aware that funding schemes helped with the preparation and implementation of placements abroad and took care of handling funding applications.

Chart 5-5: General level of knowledge possessed by trainers (“companies”) regarding mobility abroad



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 383–391)

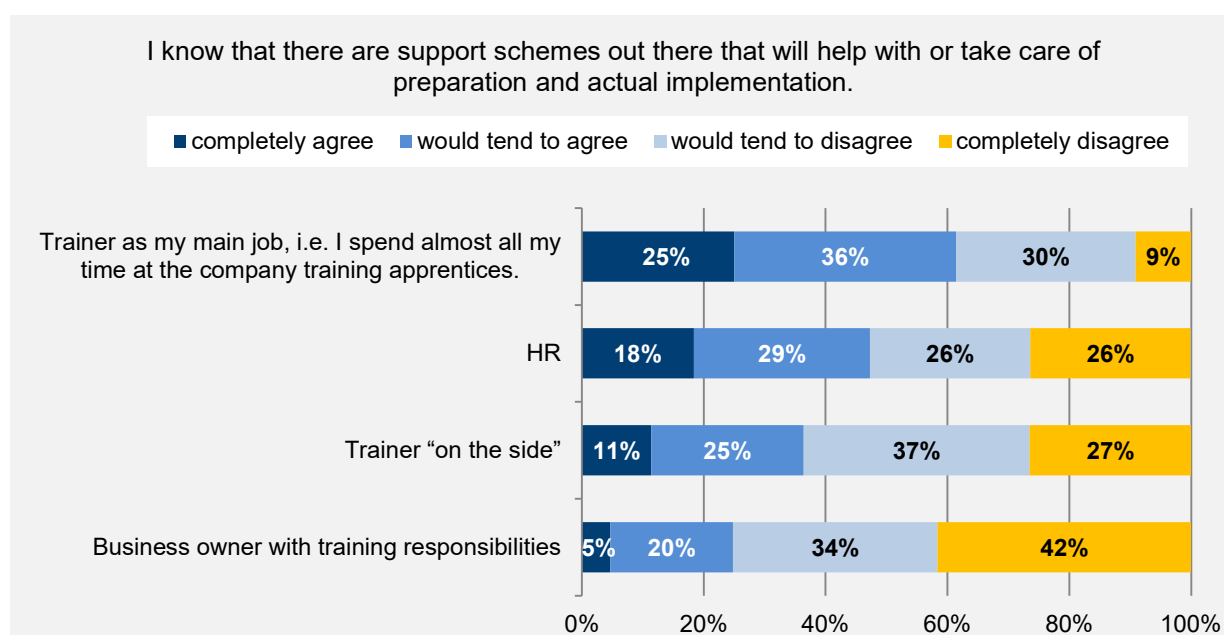
The more detailed questions that were asked about various support and funding opportunities, the smaller the percentage of trainers who regarded themselves as (very) well informed on the issue became (cf. [Chart 5-5](#)). For instance, a mere 11 per cent were evidently really well informed (and a further 20 per cent “fairly well” informed) that their company could be reimbursed for the money that it would pay its apprentice during their stay abroad. What is more, an even smaller percentage of respondents evidently had a good knowledge of the options available for funding language courses and for the apprentice themselves (bonus/daily allowance).

Even amongst respondents who believed themselves to be very well informed in general, however, it was clear that some information gaps definitely remain (these cover a very wide variety of topics and affect all aspects of support/funding); cf. [Chart 7-1](#) in the Appendix for a detailed assessment.

The survey questioned **trainers both with and without experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad**, so it is worthwhile taking a look at these two groups separately (cf. [Chart 5-7](#)). Trainers with experience of mobility should be expected to be better informed than those without – a comparison between these two groups confirms this in no uncertain terms, as the illustration clearly shows. Nevertheless, even trainers whose apprentices have spent time abroad in the past three years undeniably exhibit gaps in their knowledge. In many areas, only a third of these people consider themselves to be very well informed. Amongst those without any experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad, meanwhile, the percentage of very well-informed respondents was much lower – down in single figures.

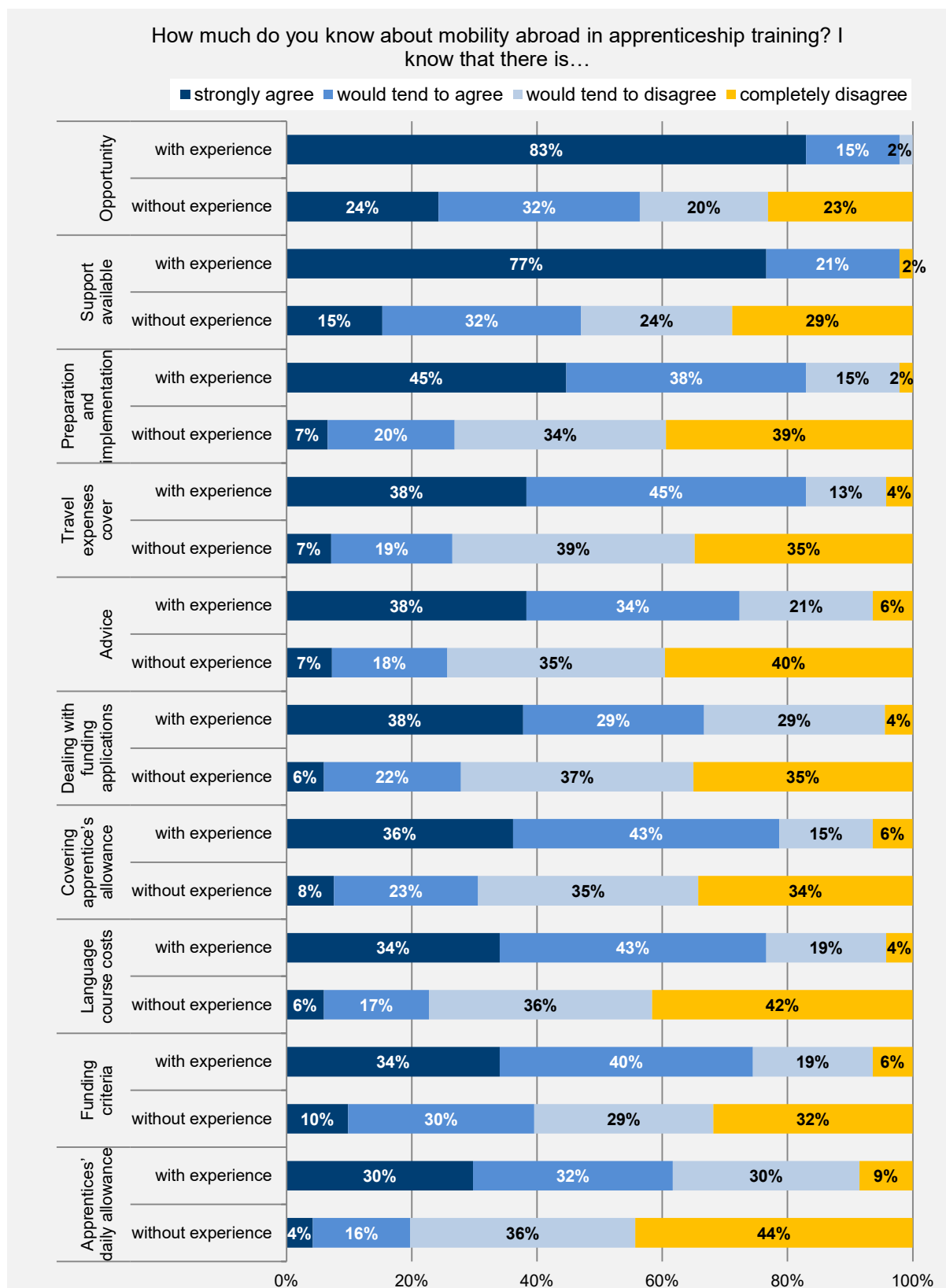
The best-informed people regarding funding schemes were those whose main job at their company involves training apprentices, followed by HR staff. Business owners with training responsibilities regarded themselves as the least well informed (cf. [Chart 5-6](#)). This finding is likely to be linked closely to the role played by the size of a training company, both with regard to having a professional HR setup (i.e. a dedicated HR team) and because larger companies are more likely to (be in a position to) facilitate mobility abroad, either because they will have/find apprentices who are suitable and interested or because they will be able to make up for the work that the apprentices will not be able to do while abroad.

Chart 5-6: Level of knowledge by people’s area of responsibility within their company



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 383–391)

Chart 5-7: General level of knowledge possessed by trainers regarding mobility abroad: comparing trainers (“companies”) with and without experience



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 383–391)

The difference between the size of the various categories is stark, with 45–47 people in the “Companies with experience” category compared with 330–342 in the “Companies without experience” category.

The findings revealed so far about the level of knowledge amongst trainers suggest the following:

- Trainers without any experience of mobility abroad are often unaware that their apprentice(s) is/are fundamentally able to do a placement abroad, with only one in four considering themselves to be definitely well informed about the issue. Even fewer people are aware of the various funding and support options available.
- As might be expected, trainers with experience of mobility abroad are much better informed (about the fundamental possibility of spending time abroad, needless to say). Even amongst this group, however, definite knowledge gaps remain – especially regarding funding options.
- There are also a great many trainers who consider themselves to be very well informed in general but who evidently have gaps in their knowledge of support opportunities and funding options and need more information about them.
- In particular, business owners with training responsibilities and trainers who train apprentices “on the side” also revealed a need for further information. This finding correlates closely with the size of the training company where the person works.⁹⁶

This heterogenous situation with regard to people’s level of knowledge would suggest that a nuanced approach to outreach is required:

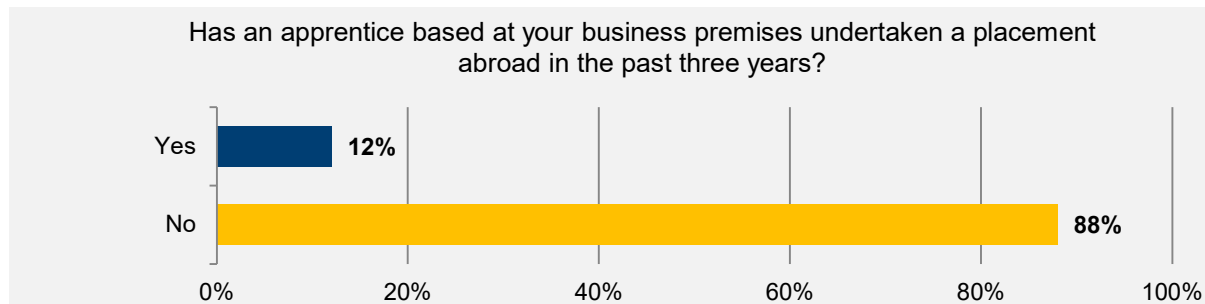
- In large companies, many apprentices can be reached via HR managers and trainers for whom training is their sole responsibility, who will often already be aware of the possibility of doing a placement abroad. Nevertheless, many of them still need to be given more detailed information.
- There is likely to be significant untapped potential at the smaller companies (around 60 per cent of them in Austria) because the staff responsible for training have no or only rudimentary knowledge about the possibility of doing a placement abroad. In these cases, people’s interest would first need to be aroused before following up with more details (about the support/funding options available).

5.3 Companies with experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad

Twelve per cent of the companies surveyed had an apprentice undertake a placement abroad in the past three years (cf. [Chart 5-8](#)). This rises to 30 per cent if one only considers those companies that are part of an international corporate group. At companies with branches abroad, meanwhile, the equivalent figure is 20 per cent. Amongst those companies that are not part of an international group and do not have any branches abroad, 6.8 per cent said that one of their apprentices had undertaken a placement abroad in the past three years. There is an evident correlation between international links, especially in the form of branches/sites abroad, and the size of a company on the one hand and the likelihood of that company having experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad on the other.

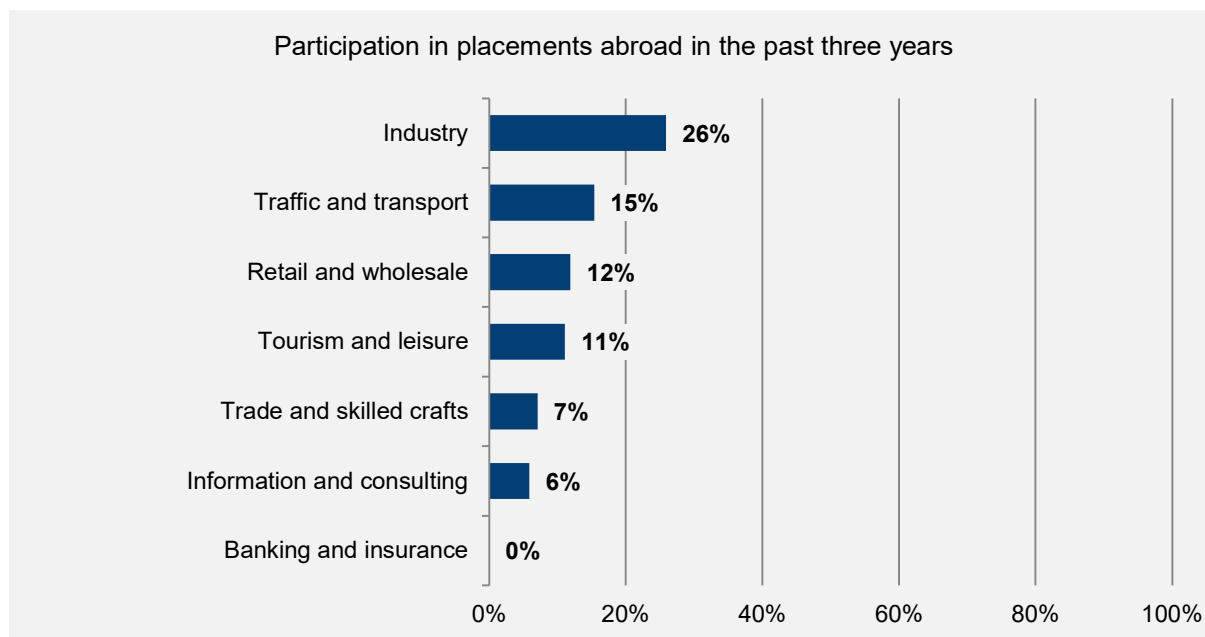
N.B.: The figure of 12 per cent of companies having experience of mobility abroad comes from the ibw survey. However, it is not an empirically representative value. In particular, it can be assumed that training companies that either have a fundamental interest in their apprentices’ mobility abroad or have already run actual stays abroad were more likely to take part in the survey, resulting in an overestimate of the true value.

⁹⁶ For instance, three quarters of business owners with training responsibilities worked at training companies employing up to 49 people. By contrast, three quarters of trainers for whom this was their main job were at a company with over 250 employees.

Chart 5-8: Participation in a placement abroad

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 393)

A breakdown by sector (cf. [Chart 5-9](#)) shows that the likelihood of an apprentice undertaking a mobility placement is highest at industrial companies (around a quarter of the trainers surveyed from industrial companies said that they had experience of sending their apprentices abroad). As already mentioned several times, this is probably linked to the size of the company and to being part of an international corporate group. Due to the relatively small size of the survey (especially in the retail and wholesale, information and consulting, and banking and insurance sectors), however, the percentages shown in the chart are only to be interpreted as general indicators for industry-/sector-specific uptake rates.

Chart 5-9: Participation in a placement abroad by sector

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 389)

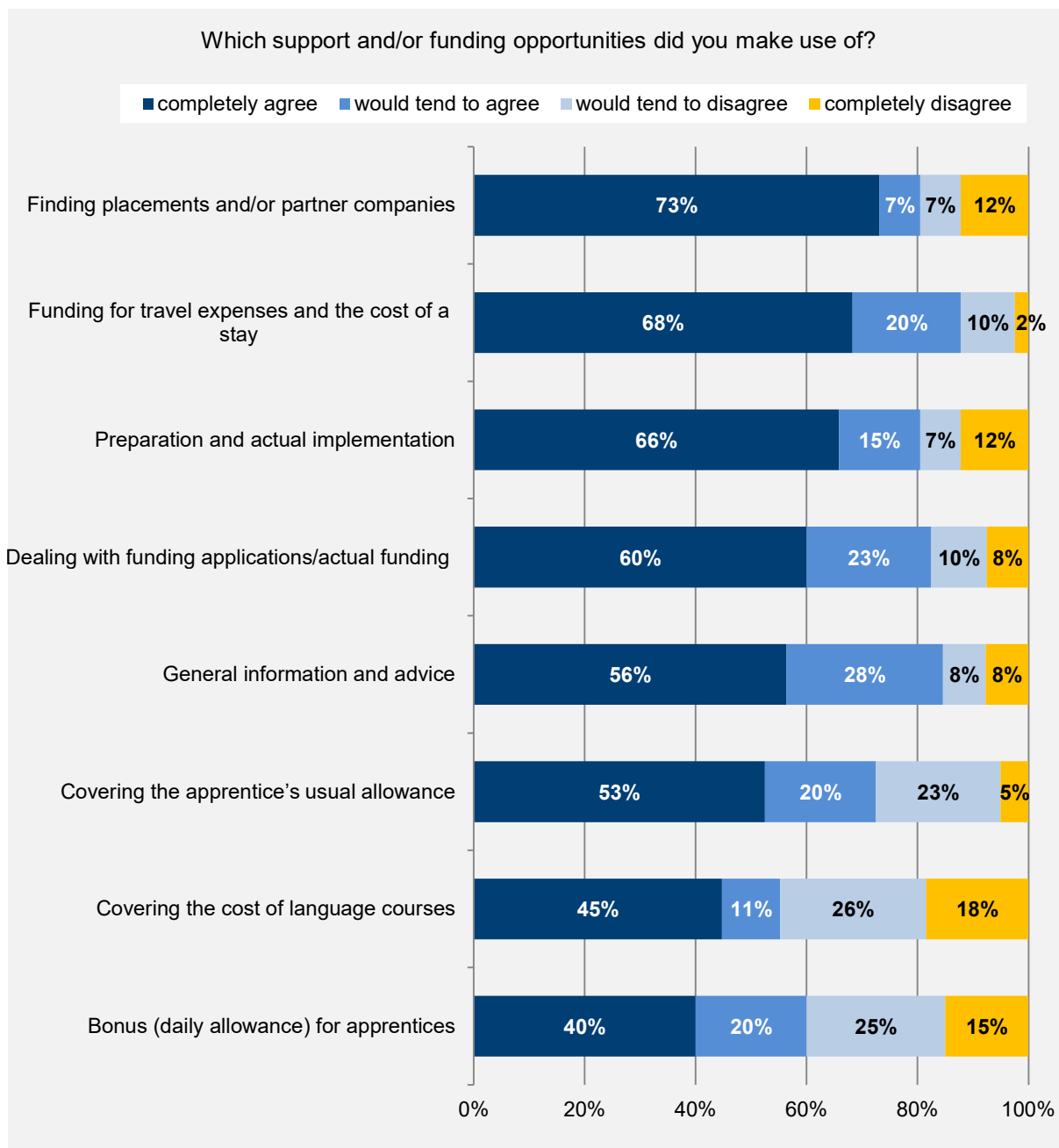
This section's specific evaluations on the trainers in companies with experience of mobility abroad are based on a small sample of 47 respondents. The findings are therefore to be interpreted as general indicators/indications rather than empirically sound (percentage) values.

In response to the overarching question about whether trainers/companies with experience of mobility abroad **made use of the available funding**, **90 per cent of companies** said that they had done so. In

other words, nearly all these companies take advantage of existing support and funding opportunities – at least one in some form or other, but mostly more than one.⁹⁷

Breaking down the data into specific support and funding opportunities (cf. [Chart 5-10](#)) reveals that arranging placements was the most frequently used service. Three quarters of trainers in companies with experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad made use of this support, with a further 7 per cent evidently doing so at least to some extent. Funding for travel expenses and the cost of a stay was also claimed very often.

Chart 5-10: Use of available funding



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 38–41)

⁹⁷ With 90 per cent of companies making use of support services, the number that had not was very low (n = 5), so it would make little statistical sense to assess the potential reasons for this.

It can also be observed that there are still a great many trainers/training companies that have run mobility placements abroad for their apprentices but who are not really aware that support/funding is available for this or in what forms. For example, only around half of training companies actually took up the option of securing funding for their apprentices' daily allowances.

Another noticeable aspect is that (aside from claiming funding for travel expenses and the cost of a stay), more/more frequent use was made of non-monetary support (arranging placements, organising preparation/implementation, dealing with funding applications, providing general information/advice) than of actual funding (compensation for apprentices' earnings, course costs, bonus/daily allowance for apprentices).

As a basic principle, there is a **close link between how much is known about a support/funding opportunity and whether it is actually made use of**. The bivariate correlations are mostly highly significant (the sole exception being dealing with funding applications), as [Table 5-1](#) makes clear. The better informed trainers/training companies are about a support/funding opportunity, therefore, the more likely they are to take it up. The failure to make use of support/funding opportunities is thus due at least in part to not knowing enough about them.

Table 5-1: Bivariate correlation between the level of knowledge about a support/funding opportunity and whether it is actually made use of, ranking

Support/funding opportunity	Bivariate correlation	Significance
Dealing with funding applications/actual funding	0.197	NS
Funding for travel expenses and the cost of a stay	0.442	**
Preparation and actual implementation	0.491	**
Bonus (daily allowance) for apprentices	0.533	**
Covering the cost of language courses	0.552	**
Covering the apprentice's usual allowance	0.585	**

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (sub-sample of trainers with experience of their apprentices' mobility abroad, n = 47)

A total of 77 per cent of companies said that they had been supported by funding schemes such as IFA, Let's Walz, and xchange, while 44 per cent made use of support offered by the vocational school.

Many mobility placements undertaken by apprentices are likely to come about in an ad hoc way, i.e. depend largely on the apprentice being proactive. This can be inferred from the answers to the question of **who provided the motivation for undertaking** a mobility placement abroad, with over 80 per cent of respondents saying that the interest came mainly from the **apprentice** themselves (cf. [Chart 5-11](#))⁹⁸.

At the same time, however, the **underlying training culture at a company** is clearly relevant as well. For instance, 60 per cent of trainers agreed (22 per cent strongly and 39 per cent fairly strongly) with the statement that apprentices at their company regularly undertake internships abroad. In addition, around a third of training companies (with experience of mobility abroad) have a dedicated contact point

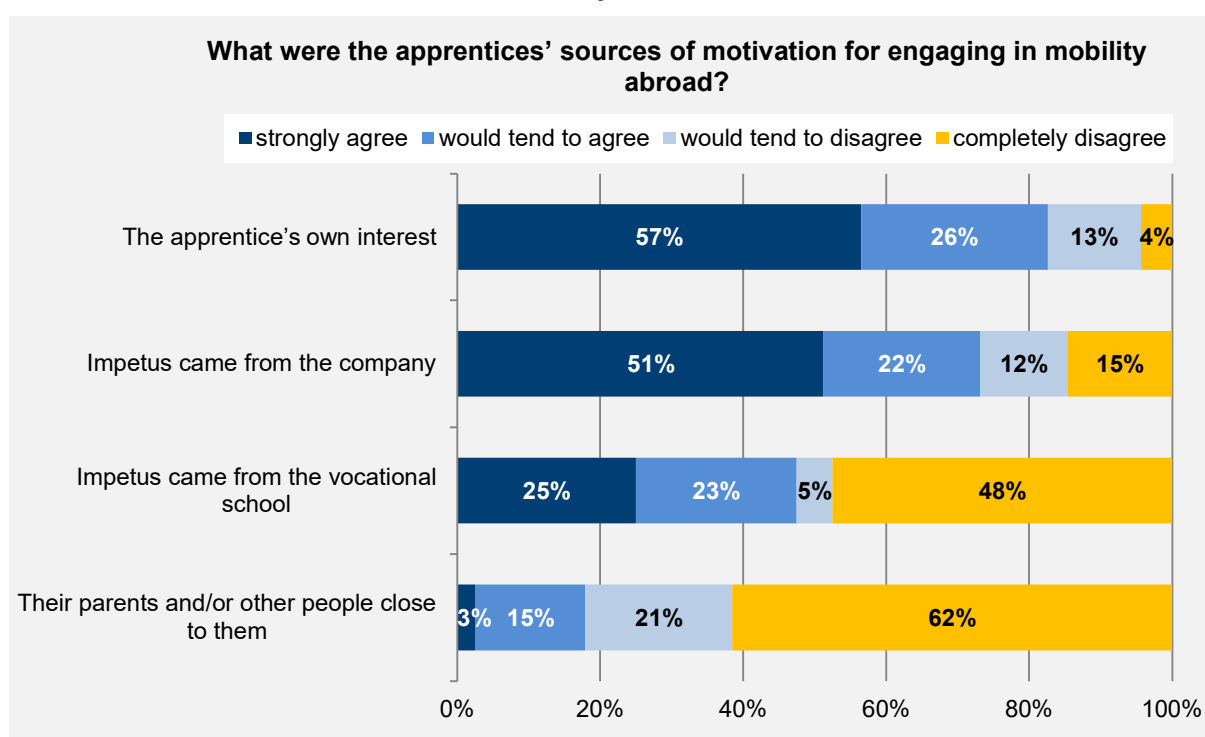
⁹⁸ If more research were to be done on this topic in the future, it would undoubtedly be interesting to start by asking where the apprentices found out about the possibility of doing a placement abroad (from their vocational school, from their company routinely encouraging mobility placements abroad, from their parents, from the young people's representative at their company, from friends, from the Internet/media, or from other sources of motivation?). It was not possible to address this question in our study because, perhaps obviously, it is based on the statements and assessments made by the trainers (who would not know how apprentices had found out about the possibility of doing a placement abroad).

for apprentices' placements abroad (cf. [Chart 5-12](#)),⁹⁹ while 60 per cent of companies that had sent an apprentice abroad in the past three years said that they offered this option to all their apprentices. Forty per cent of them choose which of their apprentices to send abroad based primarily on their performance in the company and at their vocational school.

However, vocational schools (can) also play a not insignificant role, evidently being more or less the main source of motivation in roughly half of cases. Parents and other people close to the apprentices such as their peers play a negligible role.¹⁰⁰

The results for this question highlight once again the complex web of stakeholders that determines whether or not apprentices undertake mobility placements abroad. Both the apprentice themselves and the company training them – plus often their vocational school as well – are key actors, addressed here under the “sources of motivation” aspect.

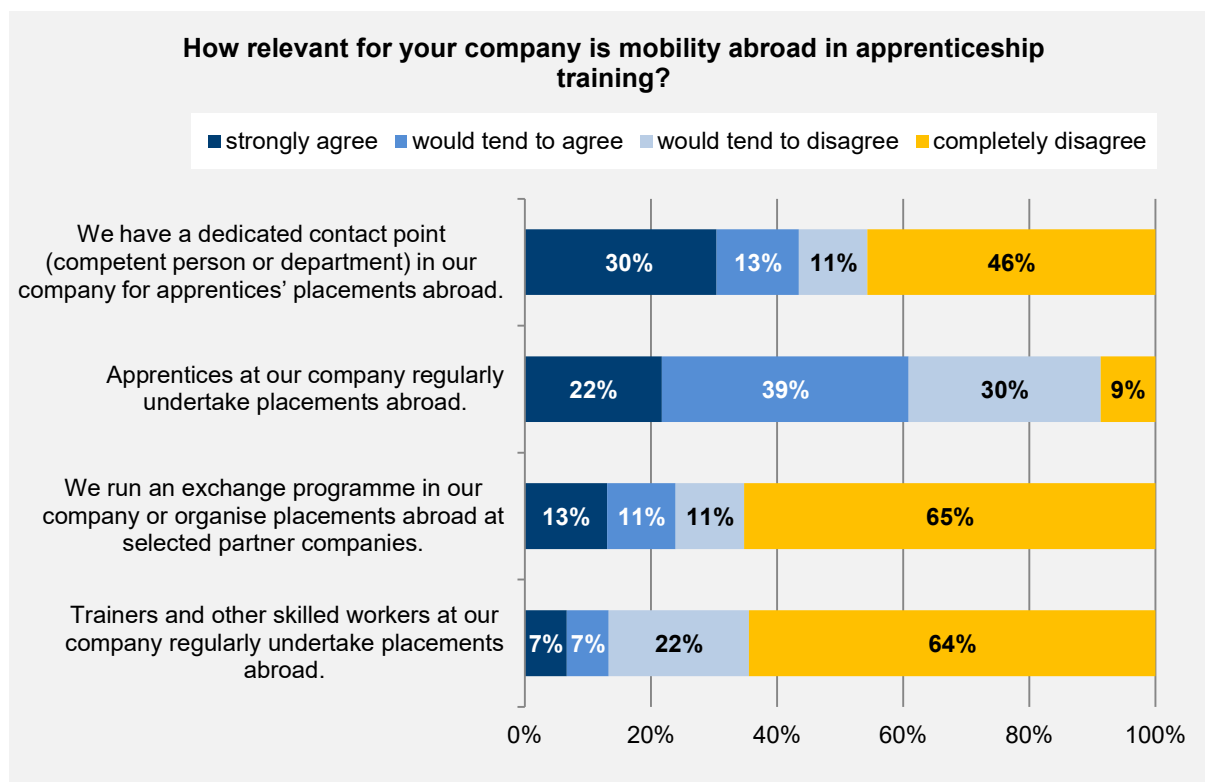
Chart 5-11: Sources of motivation for mobility abroad



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 39–46)

⁹⁹ By contrast, only a minority of training companies run exchange programmes involving partner companies and/or mobility placements abroad for trainers or other skilled workers. However, they still make up a not insubstantial 10–20 per cent.

¹⁰⁰ This does not mean that they will or might not be able to play a role in the future. Perhaps more so than anyone else, peers (e.g. as providers of testimonials) could be key sources of motivation (cf. the comments in the final chapter on possible courses of action).

Chart 5-12: How apprentices' mobility is organised within a company

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 38–41)

We only received six answers to the question of how relevant stays abroad by trainers and skilled workers were to the companies, preventing it from being evaluated statistically.

An open-ended question about wishes and suggestions for improvement that could make it easier for companies to organise and run a placement abroad was included in order to make use of the trainers'/companies' experiences to date. The following aspects were mentioned:

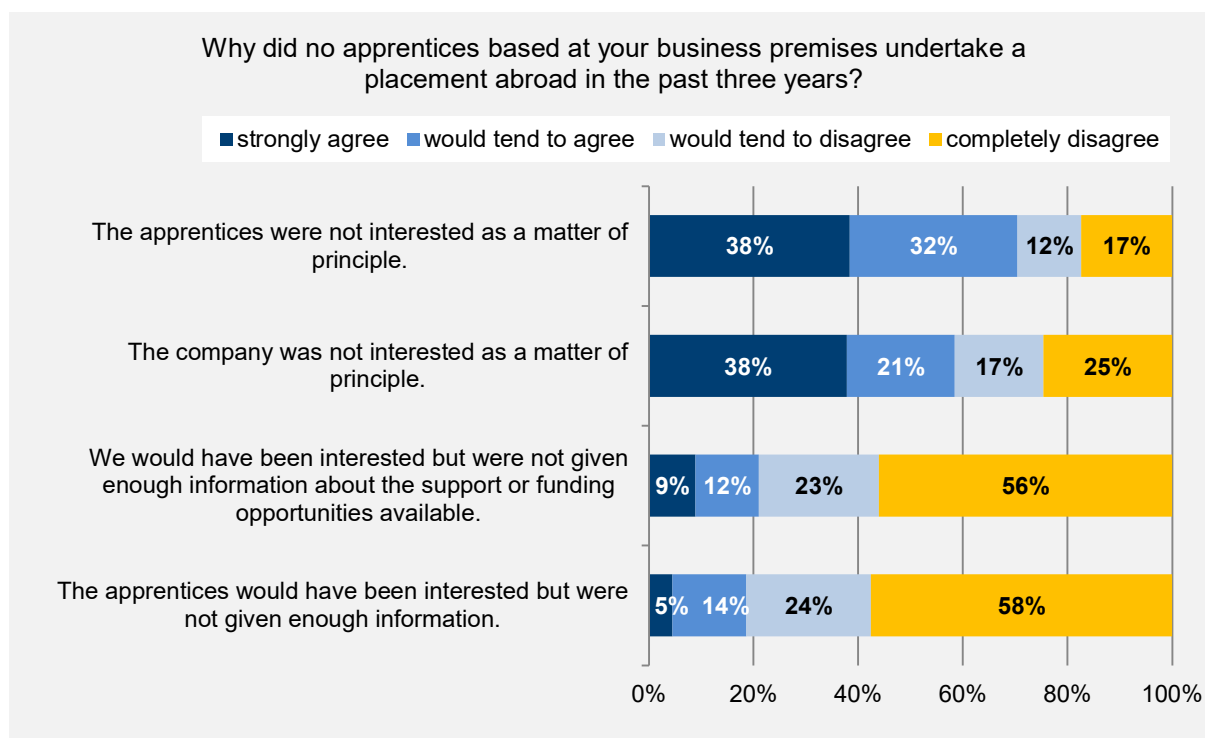
- **Language:** One trainer surveyed said that the language spoken in the destination country was not taught at school, presenting an obstacle. Someone else would like to see more placements offered in English-speaking countries.
- **Timing:** One trainer pointed out that the target group – apprentices – were relatively young and proposed moving mobility placements abroad to the third year of their apprenticeship, after they have finished vocational school. However, this timing would be problematic in that the apprentices would already be preparing for their final apprenticeship exam and taking their driving test. One potential time slot for a placement abroad could therefore be between this exam and military/civilian service, which could also be seen as a “reward” for passing the exam.
- **Information:** The issue of “information” was mentioned multiple times. Specifically, respondents would like to know the names of their contacts and details of funding opportunities.
- **Organisation:** One trainer said that getting information promptly was the most important factor, while another would like to have several windows for the placements that companies and apprentices could then choose from. Criticism was voiced by one respondent from western Austria, who did not understand why everyone had to travel to Vienna for meetings or why the flights also left from Vienna. The same person said that their funding had been cut because the budget was too small. This last point in particular was echoed by vocational schools with regard to planning uncertainty and would appear to represent an obstacle to promoting mobility for both companies and vocational schools.

5.4 Companies without experience of apprentices' mobility abroad

A total of 88 per cent of the companies surveyed did not have an apprentice undertake a placement or traineeship abroad in the past three years.¹⁰¹

The main reasons cited by respondents were a lack of interest on the part of the apprentices and a similar lack of interest from the companies (cf. Chart5-13). Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that some 20 per cent of apprentices and companies would have been interested in arranging a mobility placement abroad but were thwarted by a lack of information. Getting these groups to participate in a placement abroad would probably be fairly easy. Another not insignificant target group are the 29 per cent of apprentices and 42 per cent of companies with a moderate to high level of interest.

Chart5-13: Reasons for not participating in placements abroad in the past three years



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 311–328)

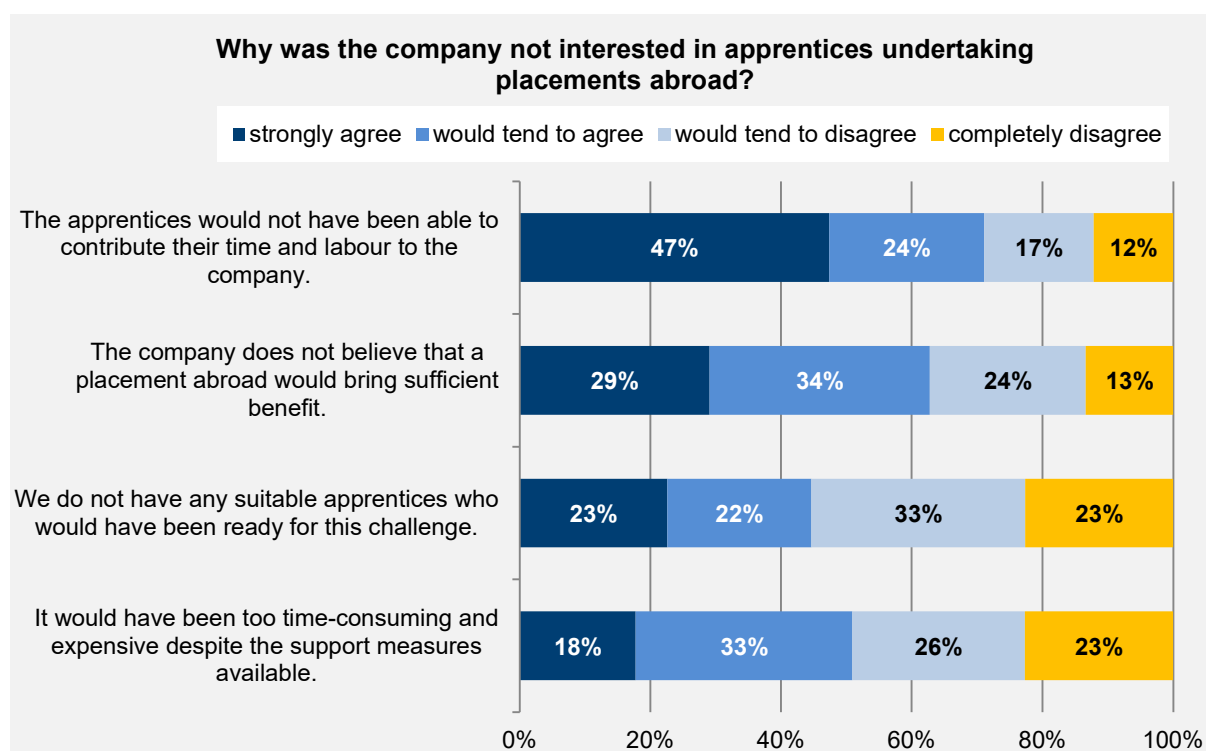
Those trainers who said that their company had no interest in enabling apprentices to spend time abroad were asked why that was. The results clearly show that the main problem was the labour shortage that this would leave the company with (cf. Chart 5-14). A certain trend can be observed, namely that the loss of the apprentice's productivity is a more important factor at smaller training companies than at medium-to-large ones. Even at larger businesses, however, the fact that training companies have no or only little interest in their apprentices' mobility abroad is often a major sticking point.

What is more, over 60 per cent of companies believe that a placement abroad brings only little added value. This is linked to the fact that nearly half of respondents felt that the time and cost involved in a placement abroad were too high. Eighteen per cent of respondents found it too time-consuming and expensive despite the support measures available. This highlights the fact that many companies may well see a placement abroad as an investment but that the mismatch between cost and expected benefit

¹⁰¹ N.B.: This percentage of companies without any experience of mobility abroad comes from the ibw survey. Like the figure for training companies with experience of mobility abroad, it is not an empirically representative value either (cf. the comments on page 58).

is too great for some and/or the company has used up its investment budget and thus cannot fund any placements abroad.

Chart 5-14: From the point of view of the trainers, why are training companies not interested in placements abroad?



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 163–173)

However, many trainers are simply not confident that their apprentices are ready for the challenges that a stay abroad brings. A quarter of trainers firmly agreed with this view, while a further quarter “would tend to agree”. This assessment corresponds closely to the finding that many trainers believe that apprentices lack the confidence to work abroad (cf. [Chart 5-15](#)).¹⁰² There is a correlation between the two views (highly significant bivariate correlation coefficient of 0.372). In the trainers’ opinion, however, a more important aspect eroding apprentices’ interest in mobility abroad is the fact that a very large number of them would not be keen to be away from their family and friends for the duration of their placement. The fact that apprentices underestimate the benefit of a placement abroad would appear to be equally important. If they did not do so, they might potentially be more willing to spend a brief period of time away from their friends and family.¹⁰³

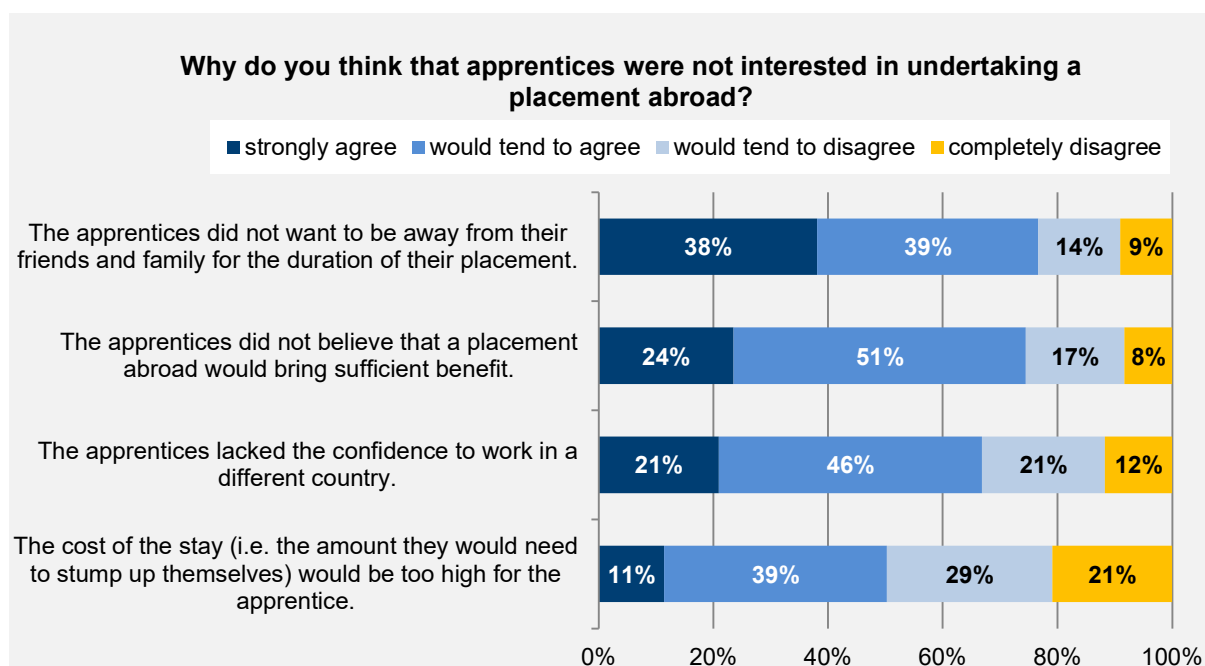
Only 11 per cent of respondents thought that the apprentices were uninterested because a stay abroad was felt to be too expensive. However, 39 per cent suspected that there was a certain link between the costs and a lack of interest.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² A follow-up study could probe this further: What lies behind this lack of confidence in the apprentices’ ability to handle a placement abroad? Is it their insufficient language skills, their young age, or something else?

¹⁰³ It would be interesting to consider in this regard whether young people who are required to leave home to attend blocks of lessons at vocational school would be more confident about working abroad than those who regularly attend vocational school while living at home.

¹⁰⁴ A comparison between the trainers’ assessments of the cost/benefit ratio – for the training companies and for the apprentices – reveals a high level of agreement, with around half the trainers seeing an unfavourable

Chart 5-15: From the point of view of the trainers, why are apprentices not interested in placements abroad?



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 201–210)

After the trainers had given their assessment on the reasons mentioned, they were offered the chance to list more obstacles in freeform answers.

Some respondents thought *that apprenticeships were already very short and that there **was no time to fit in another placement** alongside vocational school, annual leave, and being off sick.*

Some companies failed to see any added value because they **did not have any branches abroad**: “As a workshop for commercial vehicles, there’s no point in us sending our apprentices away for a traineeship. They need their apprenticeship time at the company to learn the ropes of the business,” or, alternatively: “We need apprentices in Vienna and don’t have any sites abroad.”

Some companies also cited the **different standards and laws applicable in other countries** as an argument militating against a placement abroad.

As well as actually sourcing a placement, the planning that companies need to do poses additional challenges for them:

- **Age of apprentices** (15–18, since they begin their apprenticeship at the end of their compulsory schooling)
- **Consent of parents/guardians** (duty of care, insurance, what to do in the event of illness)
- **Language barriers**
- **Lack of information about allocation** (in our case, requesting a placement in the UK [London] but being allocated the Czech Republic [Prague])
- **Not enough opportunities** for our sector (professional photographers)
- **Coordination with the times apprentices are expected at vocational school**
- Many respondents wrote that neither they nor the apprentices knew about the **possibility of doing a placement abroad**.

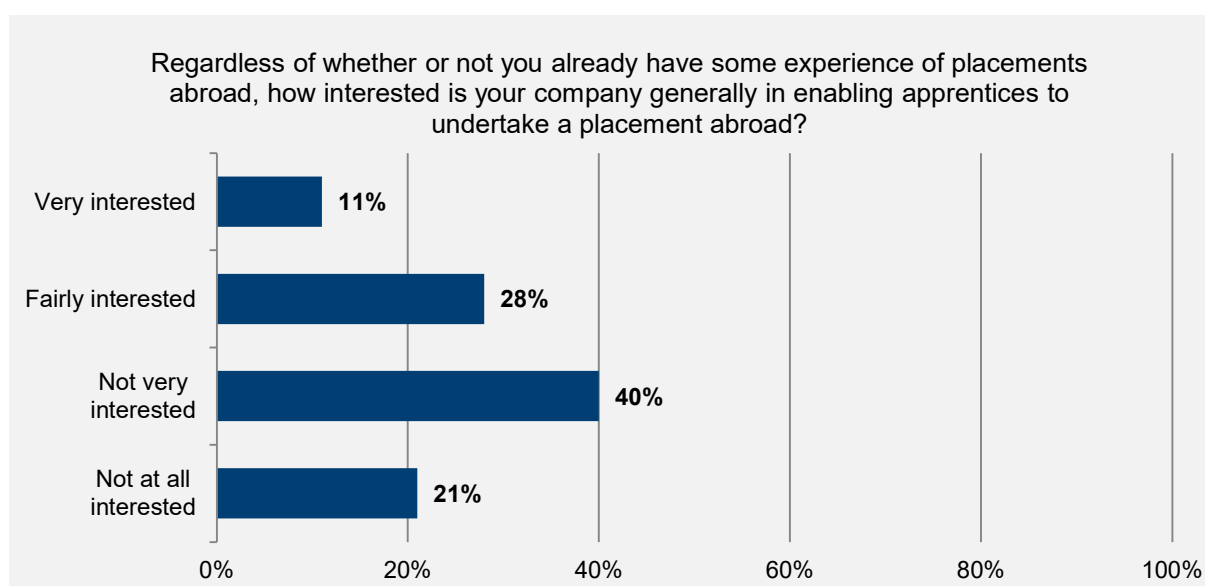
cost/benefit ratio as a major factor eroding interest in mobility abroad amongst both training companies and apprentices. The correlation coefficient for both aspects is a highly significant 0.456. Thus, trainers who sense an unfavourable cost/benefit ratio on the part of the training companies also tend to feel that the same is true for the apprentices.

Many companies had planned an initial trial but were unable to see it through due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.5 Interest amongst training companies in and relevance of (additional) support services/incentives for companies

The following section sets out the study results regarding the general level of interest shown by trainers/companies, their motives, and the support that they needed. No distinction will initially be made here between companies that had previously indicated experience with mobility abroad and those that had not.

Chart 5-16: General interest in enabling apprentices to do a placement abroad

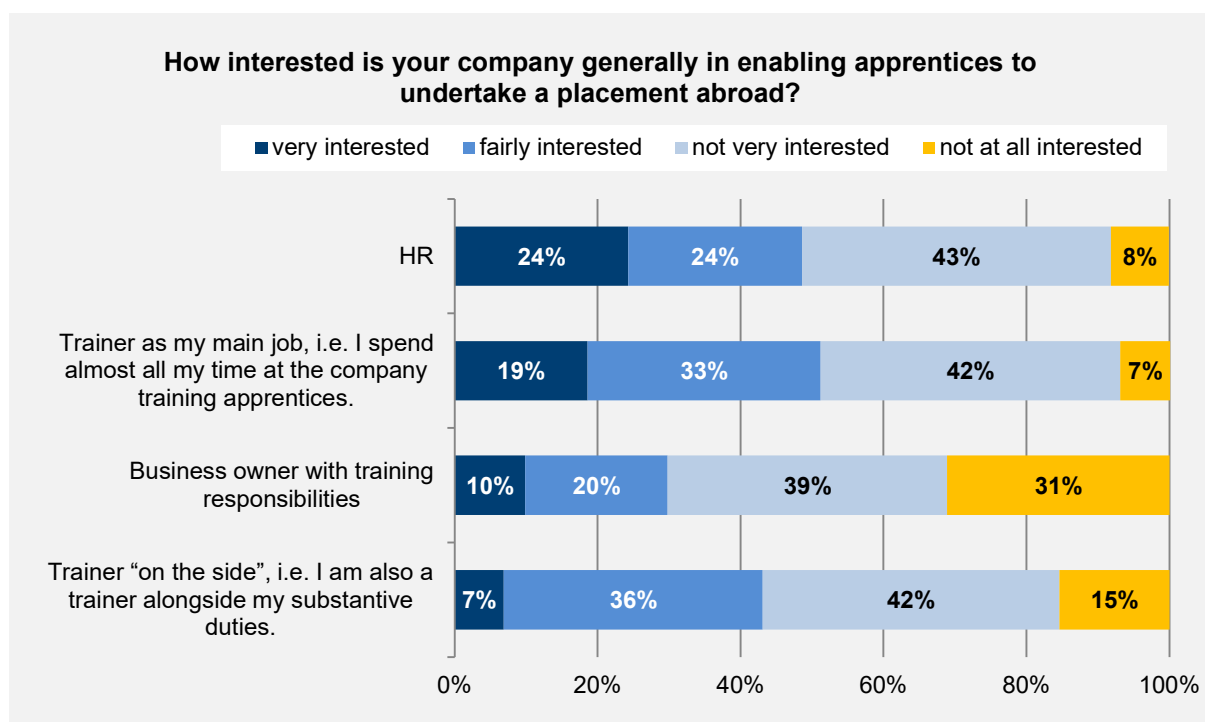


Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 377)

Chart 5-16 shows that, as a basic principle, 39 per cent of respondents would be fairly to very **interested** in having their apprentices undertake a placement abroad, with a mere 21 per cent having no interest whatsoever. There is no major difference in the level of interest expressed by respondents at companies of different sizes. Only amongst companies employing 10–49 staff was the level of interest somewhat lower.

Business owners with training responsibilities were the most uninterested at 31 per cent (cf. Chart 5-17). It must be stressed, however, that almost as many people in this group expressed a fairly high to very high level of interest. Interest was strongest amongst those who worked in HR or for whom training was their main job.

Chart 5-17: General interest amongst trainers in enabling apprentices to do a placement abroad

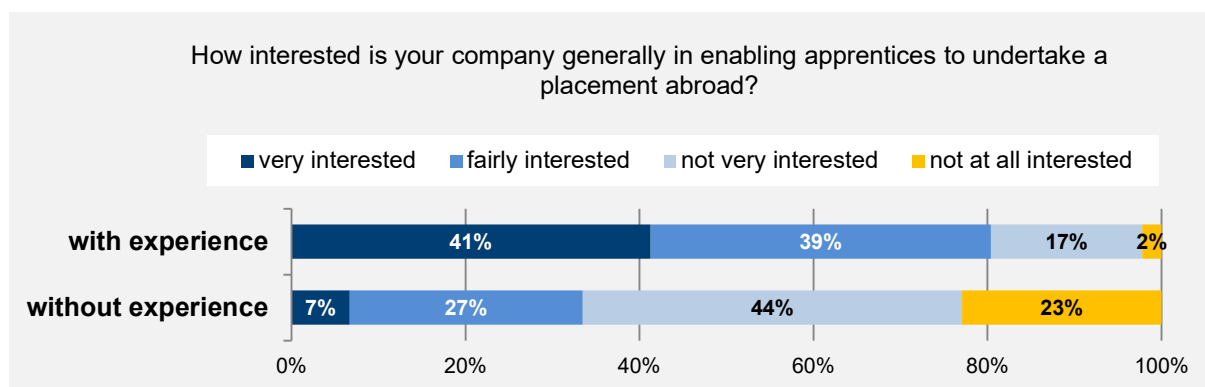


Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET

The difference between the size of the various categories is stark, with 43 people in the “Trainer as main job” category and 37 in the “Work in HR” category compared with 151 in the “Business owner with training responsibilities” category and 130 in the “Trainer ‘on the side’” category.

Companies that have already enabled their apprentices to do a placement abroad appear to have been highly satisfied with the outcome. As many as 80 per cent of respondents would be fairly to very interested in continuing to offer their apprentices this opportunity. In contrast, only 34 per cent of respondents without any experience said that they would be interested in their apprentices doing a placement abroad (cf. Chart 5-18). **Positive experiences of mobility abroad are thus evidently a very strong incentive for companies** to retain an interest in it.

Chart 5-18: Interest amongst companies in a placement abroad: comparison between companies with experience and those without

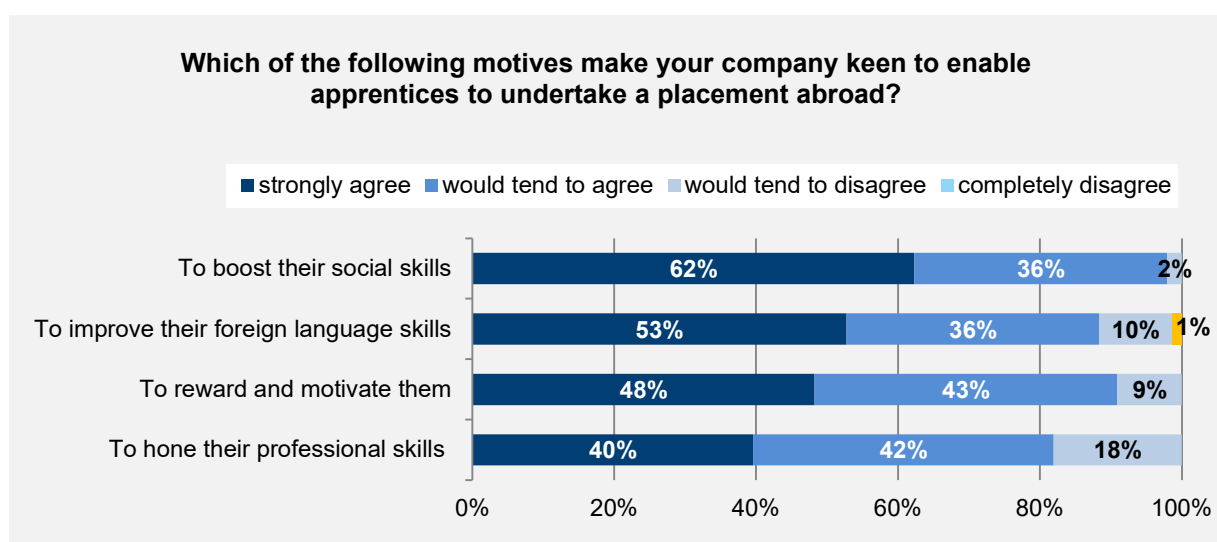


Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET

The difference between the size of the various categories is stark, with 46 respondents having experience of apprentices’ mobility abroad compared to 328 who did not have any up to that point.

Improving social skills was the most common answer to the question of what **motives** led companies to enable their apprentices to do a placement abroad. A very high degree of expectation was also placed on enhancing foreign language skills. Many trainers evidently see placements abroad as a way of increasing motivation and ultimately as a reward. Although improving professional skills was not a priority for the respondents, it was likewise seen as very important, with 82 per cent agreeing with the corresponding statement. In summary, it can be said that the expectations made of mobility placements abroad are extremely high (cf. [Chart 5-19](#)).

Chart 5-19: Companies' motives

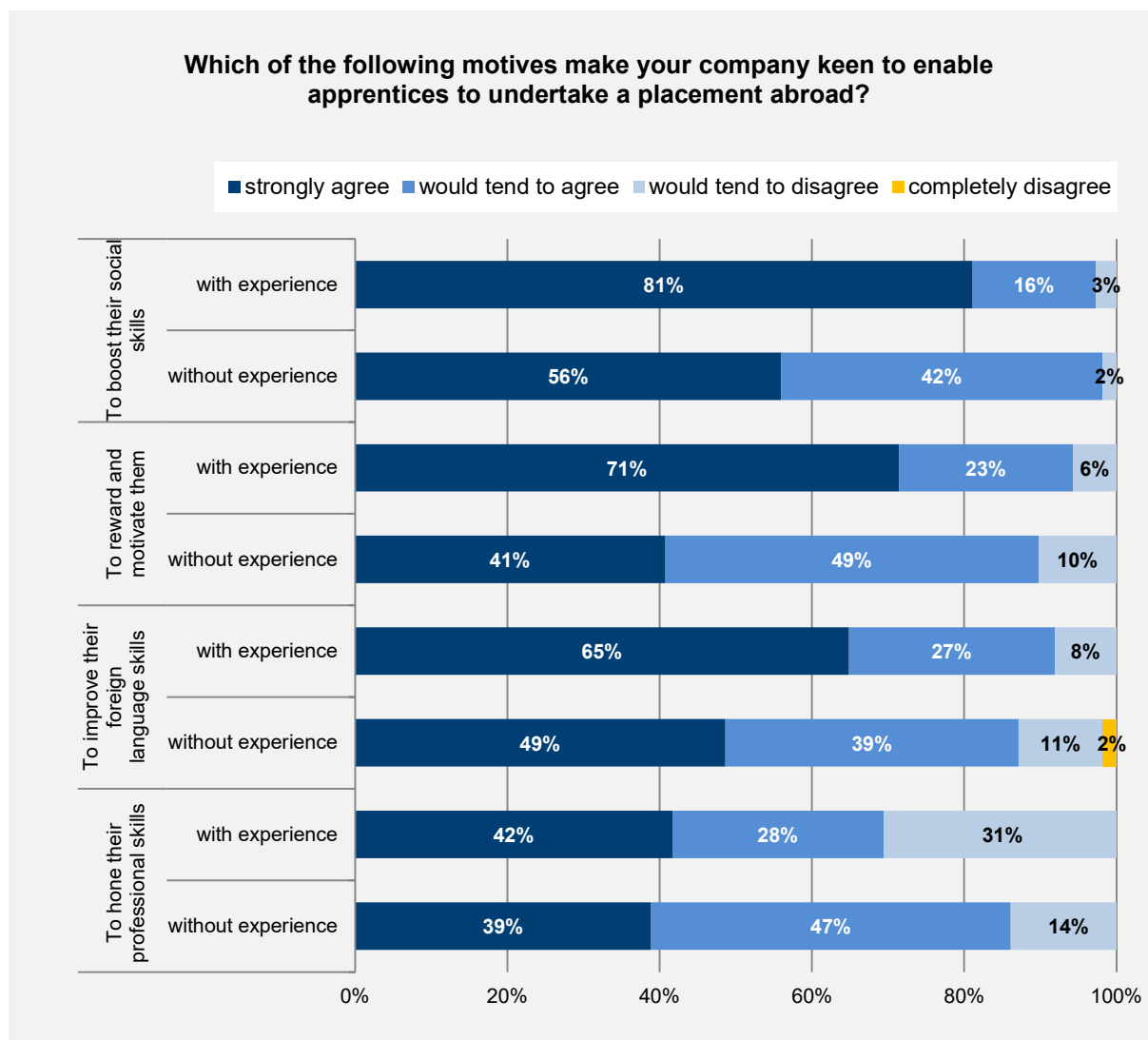


Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 143–146)

Respondents could give freeform answers listing additional motives. As well as boosting independence and self-confidence, gaining international experience was another very common reason. Also cited as motives were encouraging a willingness to engage in mobility and networking with colleagues and apprentices from another country. Respondents also expected to gain new input for their own company by having people learn about different corporate structures and ideas.

It is also interesting to break down the answers to the “motive” question into those companies that already had some experience of mobility abroad and those that did not. Comparing the two groups makes it clear (cf. [Chart 5-20](#)) that companies without any experience were somewhat more cautious in voicing their motives and expressed “strong” agreement less often. Overall, however, it can be said that **there is only minimal difference in the expectations held by companies with experience and those without**. Improving professional skills was the only area that appeared to be a somewhat stronger motive amongst companies without any experience; it is also a factor that they might have overestimated.

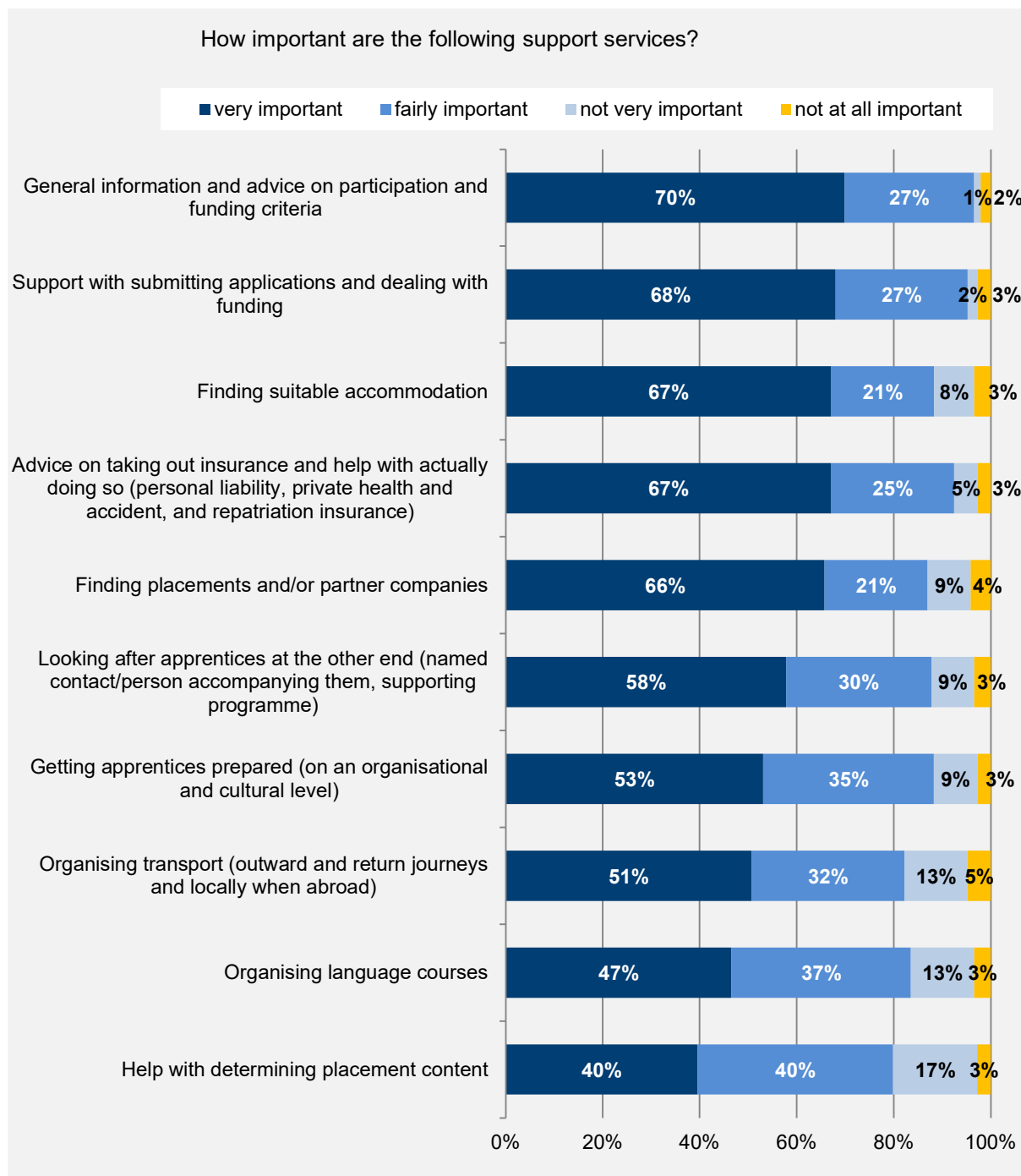
Chart 5-20: Companies' motives: comparison between companies with experience and those without



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET

The difference between the size of the various categories is stark, with 35–37 respondents having experience of apprentices' mobility abroad compared to 108–109 who did not have any up to that point.

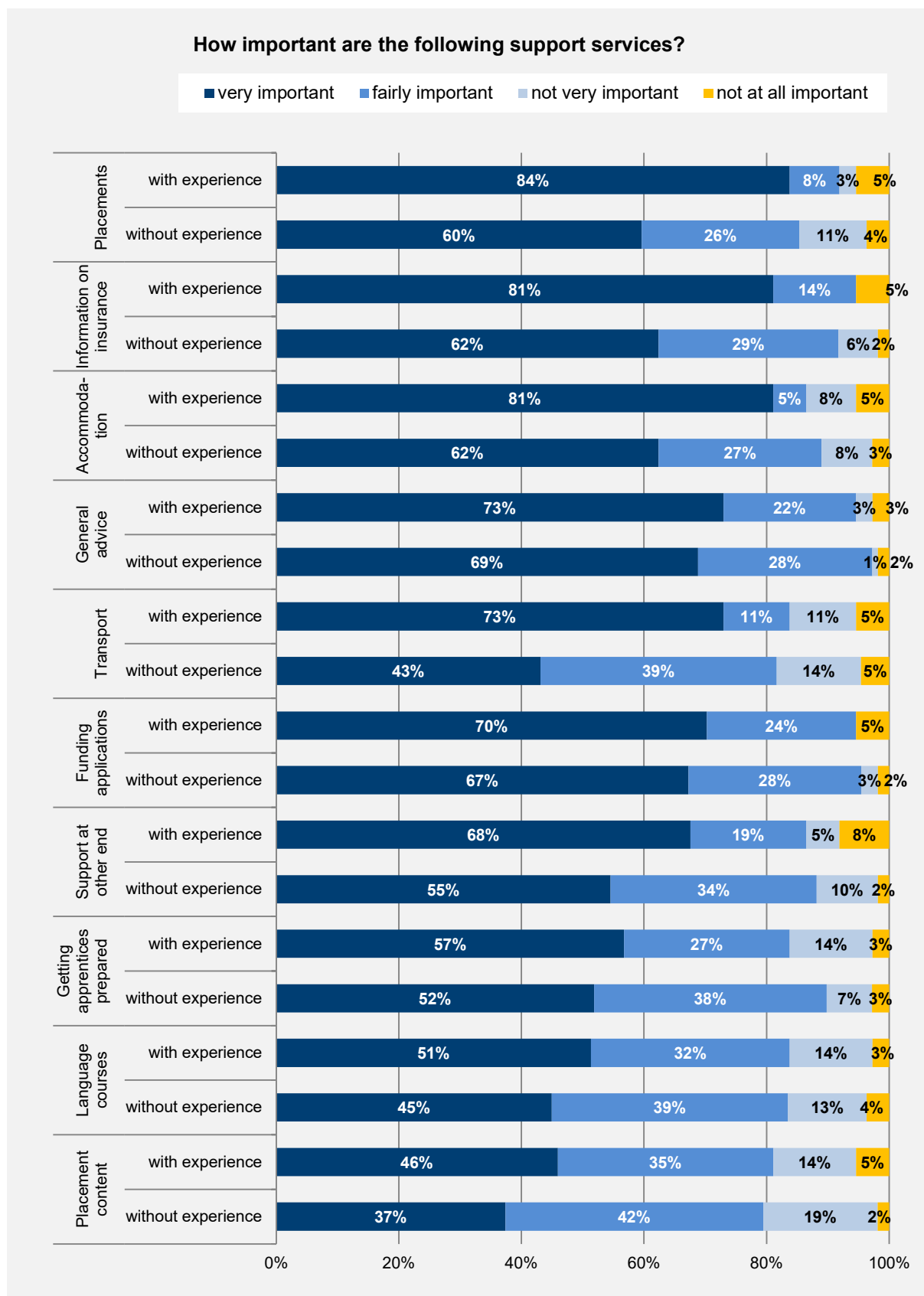
Chart 5-21 shows how important the various **support services are to the training companies** and reveals that they have a particular need for this when laying the groundwork for their placements abroad. Virtually every company said that support with participation and funding criteria, including submitting applications, was important. Organising transport and language courses appears to be somewhat easier for the companies sending apprentices abroad. At least 80 per cent of respondents found all the abovementioned support services to be important.

Chart 5-21: In which areas do companies need support?

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 146–147)

Taking the trainers' assessments of the importance of the various forms of support offered and comparing the answers given by two groups with each other – those with and without any experience of their apprentices' mobility (cf. [Chart 5-22](#)) – reveals an interesting observation. Whereas both groups see the **support services as relevant across the board**, **trainers with no experience of mobility abroad** evidently **underestimate** the importance of these services and the contribution that they can make. Specifically, they consistently accord these services less importance than do trainers with experience of mobility abroad.

Chart 5-22: In which areas do companies need support? A comparison between companies with experience and those without



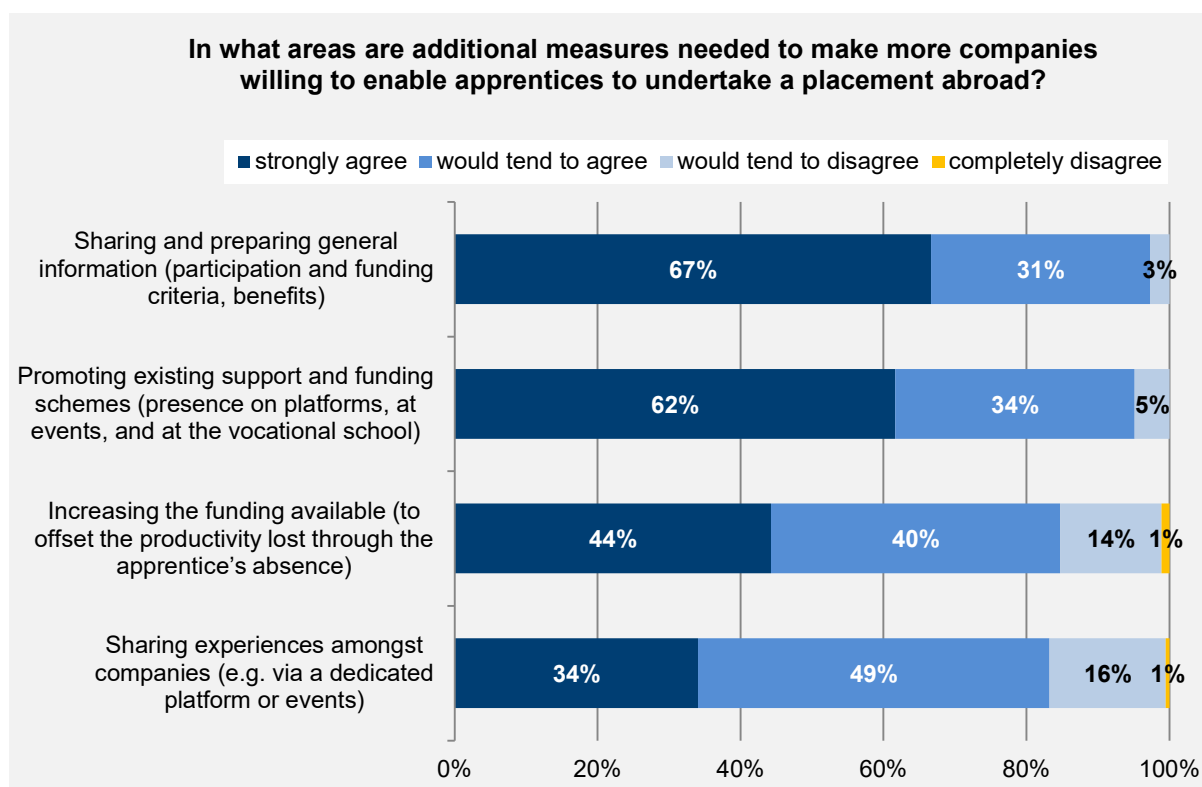
Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 37; companies without experience: n = 107–110)

Are the support measures currently in place sufficient? It would appear not, according to the trainers surveyed (cf. Chart 5-23). Specifically, over half of respondents felt that more measures were needed in order to get companies more interested in placements abroad for their apprentices. Although respondents saw potential everywhere, the most glaring need is for **information about placements abroad and the funding opportunities available for them to be shared across the board**. Likewise, **the promotion of existing support and funding opportunities should be pushed**.

A total of 44 per cent of the trainers surveyed said that the loss of labour caused by an apprentice going abroad could be offset by increasing the funding provided. This suggests that doing so might motivate those 47 per cent of the companies surveyed that stated that their apprentices had been unable to undertake a placement in the past three years due to the labour shortage that this would create (cf. Chart 5-14). Unfortunately, however, it is not quite as simple as that. This is because, although both aspects exhibit a high level of significance, the correlation between them is fairly weak ($R = 0.275$). More funding would thus have a degree of potential to increase the uptake of mobility placements abroad. However, this would not be enough to overcome the barrier represented by the apprentice's lost productivity during their stay abroad as far as most companies (that cited this as a relevant obstacle) were concerned. These companies would quite simply miss out on the apprentice's contribution to the production process, which they would not be able to manage without or offset by redeploying other staff. It would also be very difficult to ring-fence the funding accordingly. Put another way, simply increasing the financial resources provided would generate considerable deadweight effects, and an attempt to allocate them more precisely would be likely to cause an administrative overload (that would, in turn, potentially be counterproductive for the company's willingness to participate).

Many of the trainers surveyed also cited **sharing experiences** (e.g. via dedicated platforms and/or events) as an important factor that would encourage more people to get involved.

Chart 5-23: Additional support measures for companies



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 183–185)

As has already been done several times in the study, a comparison was also carried out for this set of questions in respect of the assessments made by the two groups of trainers – those with experience of

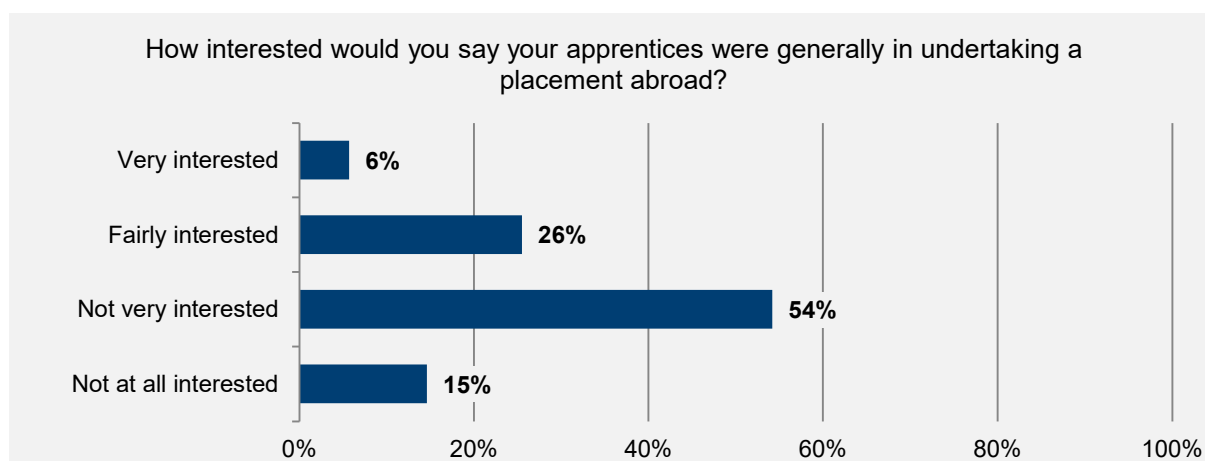
apprentices' mobility abroad and those without. This did not reveal any noticeable differences (cf. [Chart 7-2](#) in the Appendix).

Respondents' answers to the **open-ended question about other measures** for increasing interest amongst companies included outreach by the guild and the vocational school, while greater synchronisation with the lessons taught at the vocational school (in terms of timing and content) was also suggested. As well as the companies, there is also a need to tell the young people about the possibility of doing a placement abroad and the benefit that it would bring.

5.6 Level of interest amongst apprentices and potential ways of getting them more interested in taking part

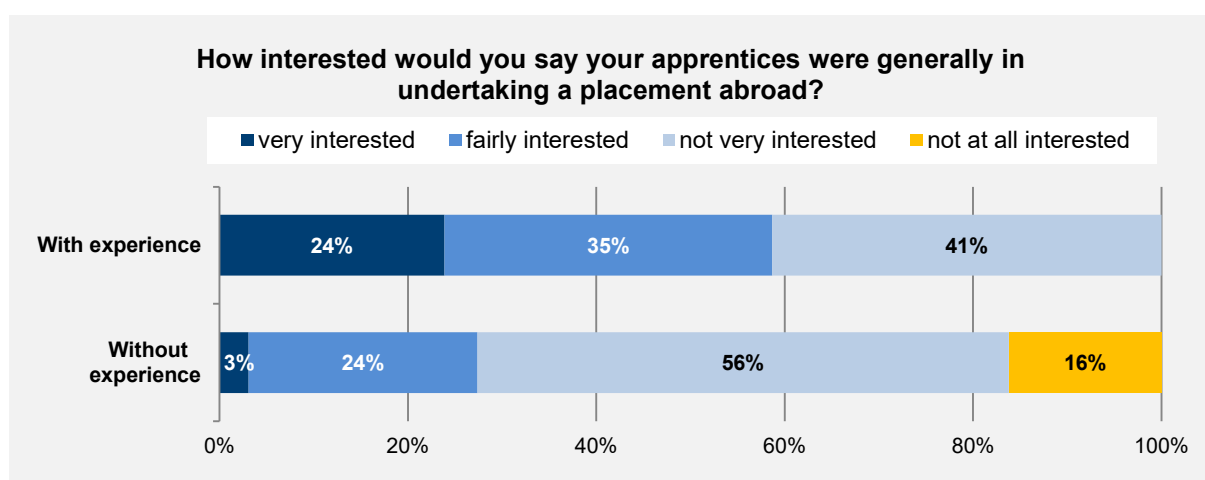
As far as the trainers were concerned, the **level of interest amongst their apprentices** in a mobility placement abroad painted a sobering picture, with 69 per cent believing that they had little or no interest:

Chart 5-24: Apprentices' level of interest as perceived by their trainers



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 369)

Chart 5-25: Apprentices' level of interest as perceived by their trainers: comparison between companies with experience and those without



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 46; companies without experience: n = 321)

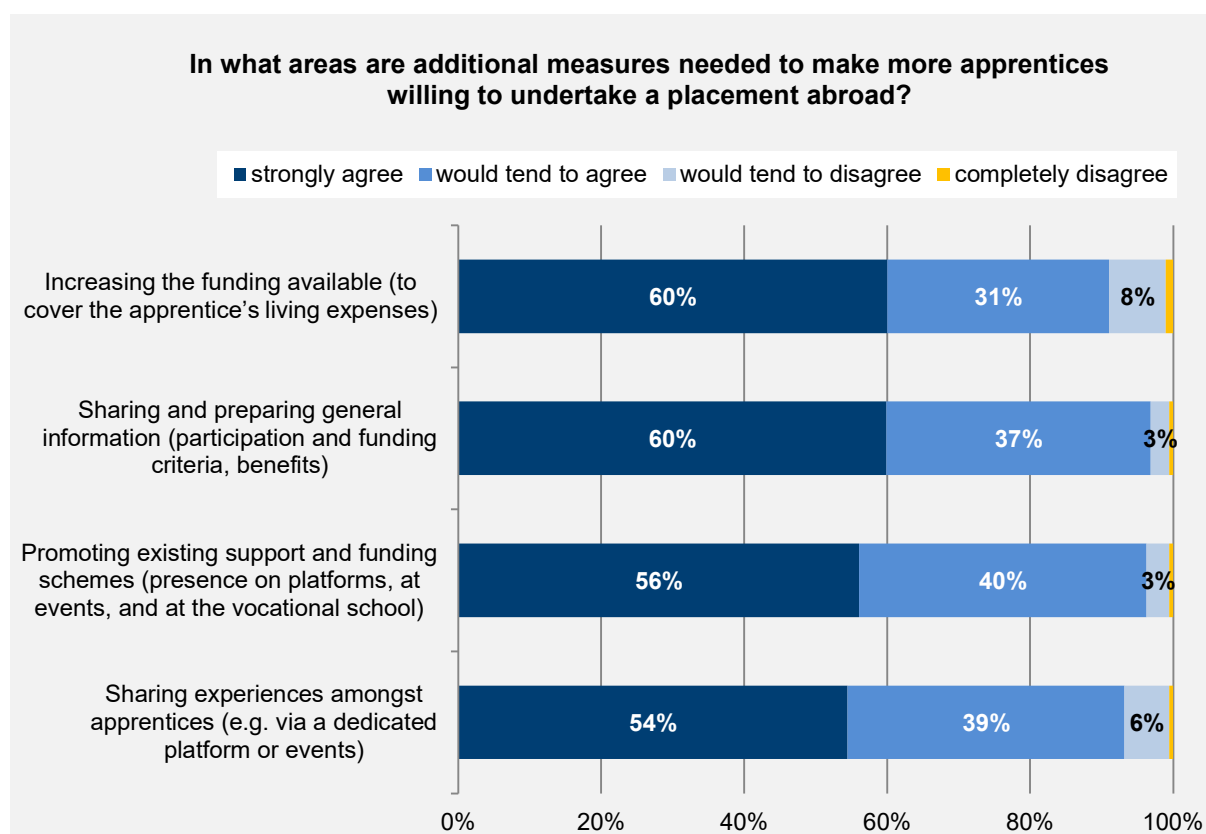
Although trainers whose company had already run placements abroad perceived their apprentices' interest to be much higher, there was still a considerable percentage – 41 per cent – of respondents from companies with experience who felt that their apprentices had a fairly low level of interest. As many

as 72 per cent of respondents from companies that admitted to not having any experience of mobility abroad thought that their apprentices had little or no interest in a placement abroad (cf. [Chart 5-25](#)).

At the same time, however, **over 90 per cent of the people surveyed felt that the measures should/had to be strengthened** in order to get apprentices interested. This makes it clear that trainers believe there is much that needs to be done. It also suggests that the trainers feel that it would certainly be possible to broach the subject of a mobility placement abroad with their apprentices and motivate them to undertake one provided that suitable measures/activities were in place – or at least to get more apprentices interested than had been the case to date.

[Chart 5-26](#) below shows how loud the calls are for stronger measures. Over 90 per cent of trainers felt that increasing the funding for apprentices – to cover more of their living expenses – was a key attraction factor. The other options listed also met with a similar level of agreement. Thus, both general information (including about the benefit of taking part) and details of existing support and funding opportunities should/need to be advertised more – something that a discussion between apprentices would provide a very good opportunity for.

Chart 5-26: Measures to get apprentices more interested



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 189–192)

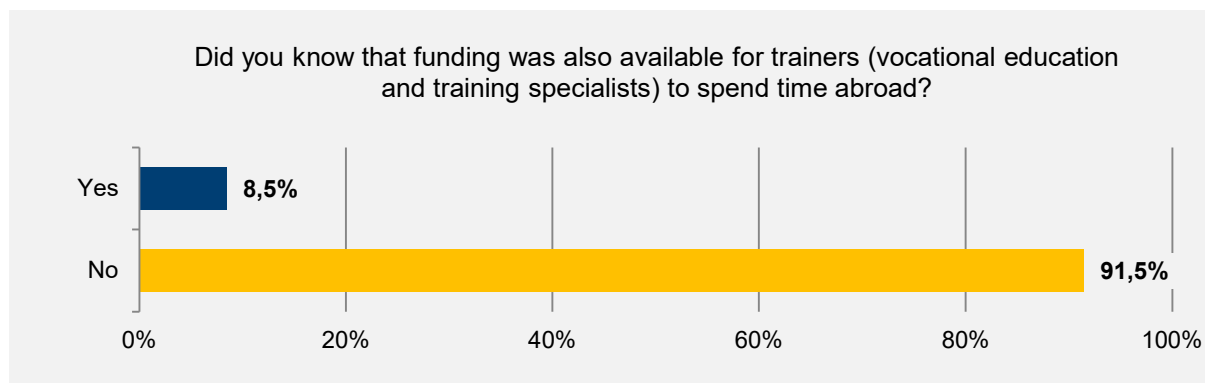
There are only minor differences between trainers with experience of mobility abroad and those without in terms of their views of these activities/measures deemed necessary/helpful. Trainers from companies that have already run placements abroad argued somewhat more strongly for expanding/promoting measures of this kind than their peers without any mobility experience (cf. [Chart 7-3](#) in the Appendix) and placed a bit more weight on expanding opportunities for the apprentices themselves to get together for a discussion.

5.7 Trainers: interest in and benefits of mobility abroad

One issue that has registered little in stakeholders' consciousness to date and that is still entirely "unresearched" is the time that trainers themselves have spent abroad for mobility purposes. A few questions on this topic were thus included at the end of the online survey.

Besides funding for apprentices to spend time abroad, **funding is also available for trainers' own mobility abroad**. However, over **90 per cent of the trainers surveyed were unaware** of this (cf. [Chart 5-27](#)).

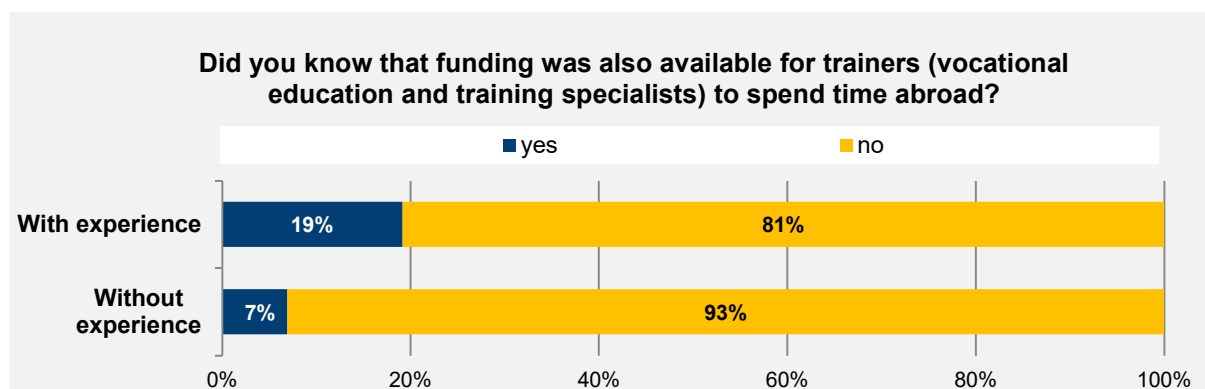
Chart 5-27: Knowledge of available funding for trainers



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 366)

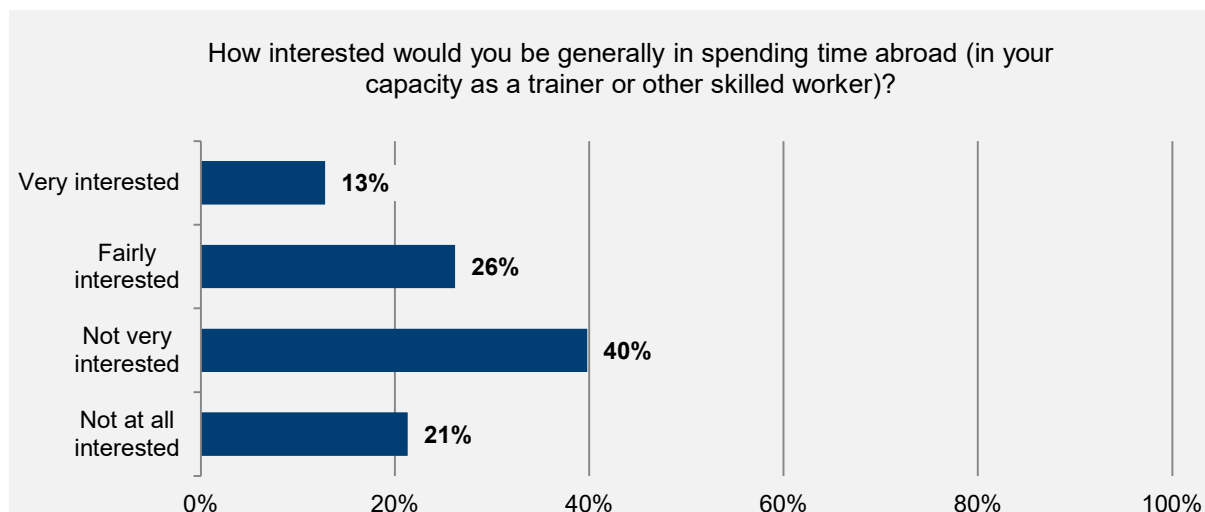
Companies that already have experience of placements abroad involving apprentices tended to know a bit more about the funding available for trainers. Here too, however, the actual figure was under 20 per cent (cf. [Chart 5-28](#)).

Chart 5-28: Knowledge of available funding for trainers: comparison between companies with experience of apprentices' mobility abroad and those without

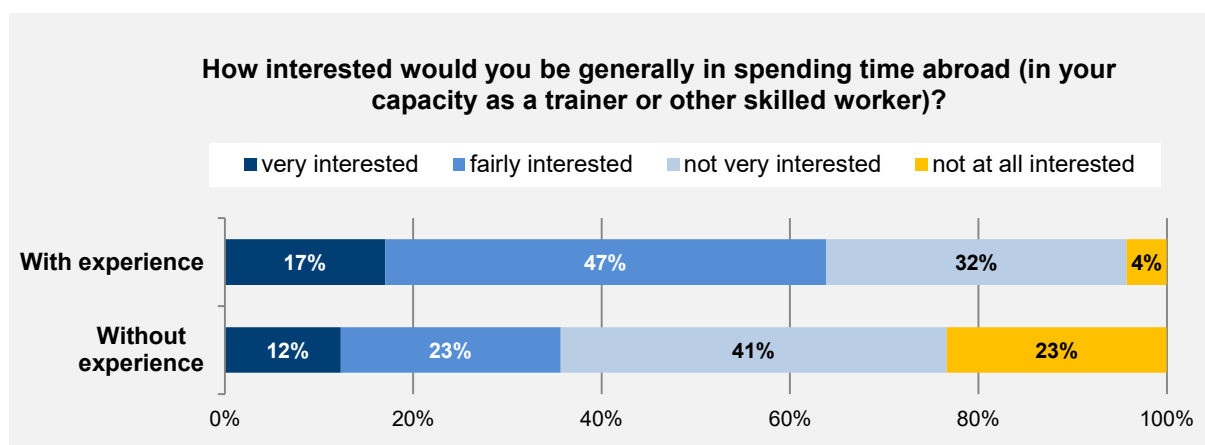


Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 47; companies without experience: n = 318)

Ten per cent of trainers had already spent time abroad themselves (as a trainer or other skilled worker), and 39 per cent of respondents were interested in doing so. Where respondents indicated that an apprentice from their company had completed a placement or traineeship abroad in the past three years, the percentage of those with a general interest increased to 64 per cent (see [Chart 5-30](#)).

Chart 5-29: Trainers' level of interest in a placement abroad

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 367)

Chart 5-30: Level of interest in mobility abroad for trainers: comparison between companies with experience of apprentices' mobility abroad and those without

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 47; companies without experience: n = 318)

Trainers with little or no interest in spending time abroad themselves were asked why that was the case.¹⁰⁵ One particularly common answer was a lack of time due to family commitments, while many respondents also cited their role at their company and the responsibility that it involved as factors militating against taking part. Other reasons given were differences in the legal and professional situation in other countries and the respondents' own good education and training in their home country. Those who had already gained some professional experience abroad did not see any added value in doing so again. The language barrier was also an issue for some.

The final set of questions in the survey asked the trainers to evaluate the **benefit of mobility placements abroad as part of apprenticeship training from a holistic perspective** (cf. [Chart 5-31](#)).

The greatest benefit in the trainers' eyes lay in the personal development that their apprentices experience. As many as 91 per cent of respondents thought that a mobility placement abroad improved their apprentices' linguistic and intercultural skills and made them more independent. Many respondents

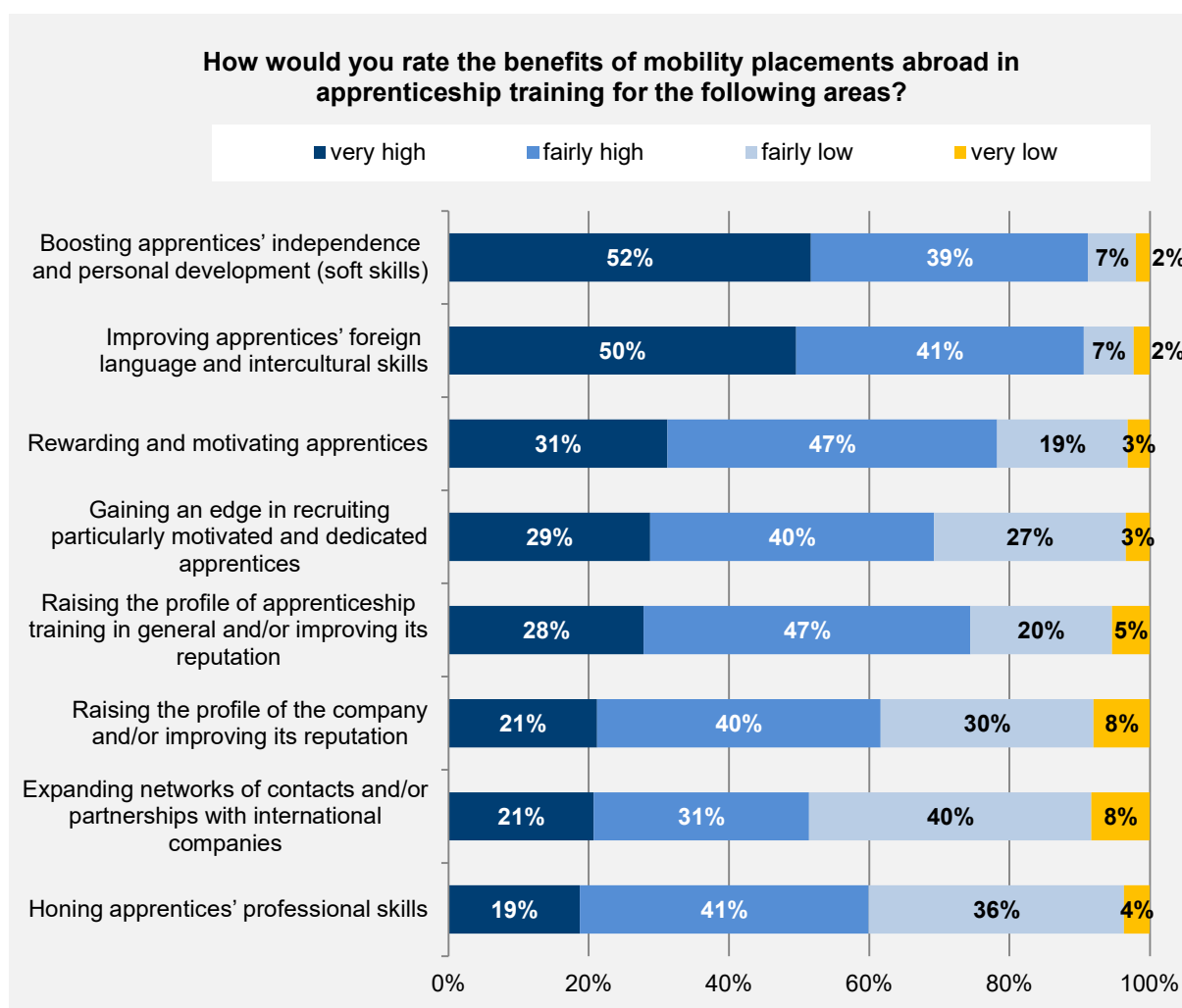
¹⁰⁵ The question was posed in an open-ended format.

also saw mobility abroad as a suitable way of increasing apprentices' motivation and/or rewarding an appropriate level of dedication and performance.

Positive effects were also identified in terms of the image and reputation of both the trainers' own company and of apprenticeship training in general. Another potential benefit lies in forging links with companies in other countries.

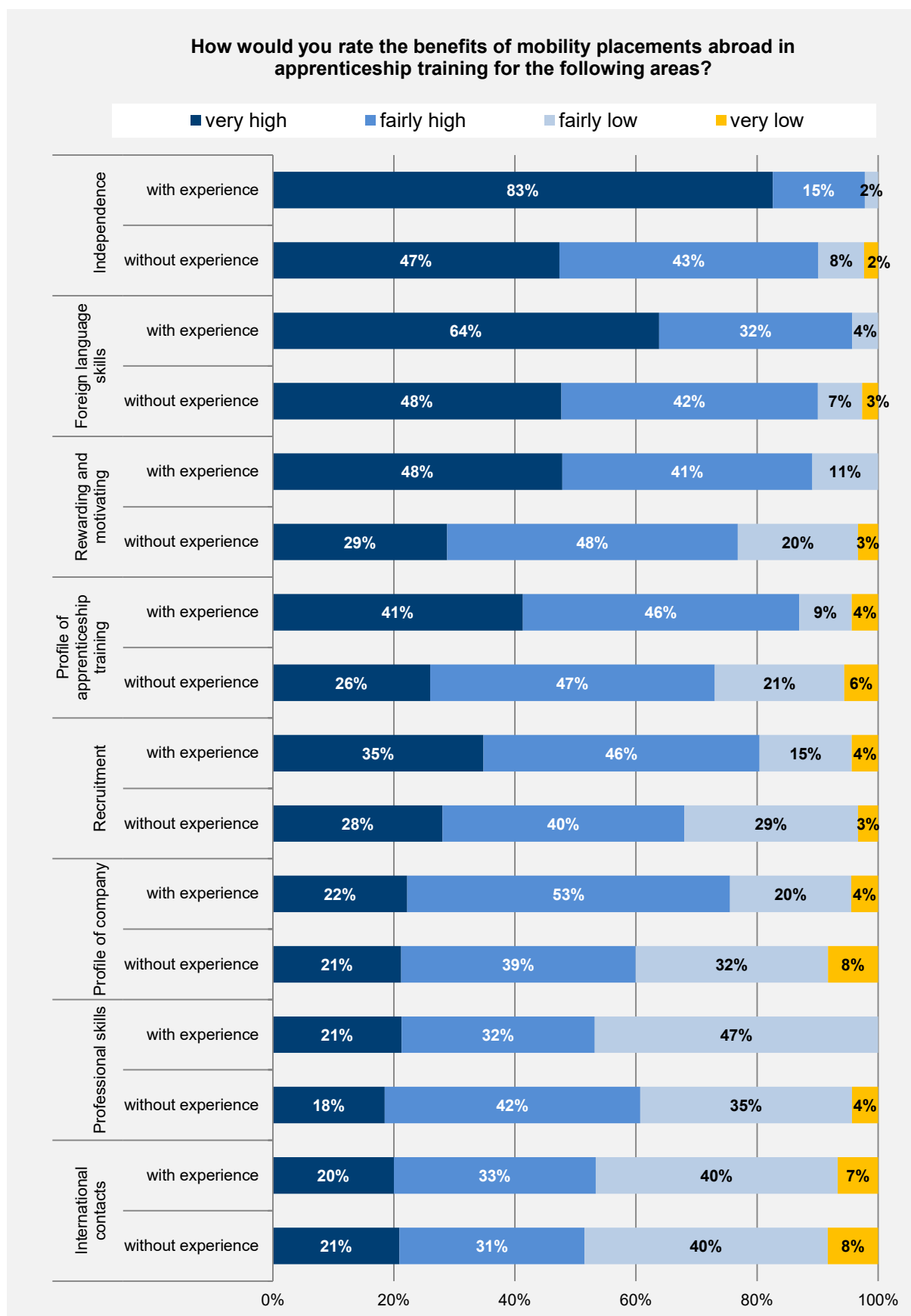
One striking aspect of this ranking of the benefits of mobility abroad in apprenticeship training is the fact that improving apprentices' professional skills came in last place. Nevertheless, trainers' expectations are largely positive in this regard too.

Chart 5-31: Benefits of a mobility placement abroad as perceived by trainers



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 349–352)

Chart 5-32: Benefits of a mobility placement abroad as perceived by trainers: comparison between trainers with experience and those without



Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 45–47; companies without experience: n = 301–304)

The final chart, [Chart 5-32](#), reaffirms in a concise way the fact that the views and assessments expressed by the trainers often varied considerably, due in particular to their experience (or lack thereof) of mobility placements abroad. This is especially noticeable with regard to their assessment of the increase in the apprentices' independence brought about by a stay abroad, which trainers with experience felt was much larger than those without did. There were similar (albeit not quite as marked) differences in the assessment of benefits in terms of an improvement in foreign language skills. Trainers are also likely to have underestimated the positive impact on apprentices' levels of motivation and on the image of apprenticeship training in general. The views expressed regarding the remaining aspects/individual benefits were very similar across the board. Trainers without any experience of mobility placements abroad might have somewhat underestimated the potentially positive effect in respect of improving apprentices' professional skills.

6 Highlights, summary, conclusions, and potential courses of action

This concluding chapter of the study presents a concise summary of the findings from and results of the various analyses. This summary then serves as a basis for identifying and outlining possible courses of action that should/could have the potential to increase the uptake of mobility abroad (at least in the medium term).

6.1 Highlights and summary of the study

Apprentices are **legally** entitled to undertake a placement or traineeship abroad in accordance with the **Austrian Vocational Training Act**. Fundamentally, mobility abroad is **voluntary** for all stakeholders (particularly apprentices and training companies, and vocational schools too where applicable¹⁰⁶) and based on their consent. Traineeships abroad also take place **during the apprenticeship** (including retention period) and are **time-limited** (a maximum of six months per academic year). This means that the various elements underlying the apprenticeship system (apprentice's earnings, provisions under social security, employment, and occupational health and safety law, etc.) can and do continue to apply and that the training time covered by the placement abroad is recognised and deemed equivalent.

In Austria, there is a range of **support initiatives** with informative, advisory, supportive, and specific (co-)organisational remits. The IFA (International Young Workers Exchange) association is the only initiative that operates nationwide as a basic principle. All of the others have a regional focus.

Funding opportunities/instruments are governed by regulations and ordinances (particularly in the case of funding awarded at national level) or by the provisions/criteria for Erasmus+. Under these, the training company receives the gross compensation for apprentices for periods in which the apprentice is undertaking a language course and/or a work-related traineeship abroad and is therefore not actively working at the company. The actual costs of language courses are funded (with no limit), while fixed allowances and daily rates are granted to help cover travel and accommodation costs. Apprentices receive a bonus in the form of a EUR 15 daily allowance for the duration of their stay abroad. This means that **the main – though not all – expenses and investments involved in apprentices spending time abroad can be covered**.¹⁰⁷ As far as the training companies are concerned, the fact that apprentices do not make a productive contribution to the production process while they are away is an investment component they still have to shoulder. Meanwhile, apprentices have to make their own investment by paying any additional amount required for their actual travel and accommodation expenses, as the total sum of the apprenticeship bonus and the funding they receive for travel and accommodation costs is rarely enough to cover these.

The **expectations on both sides (apprentices and training companies/trainers) regarding the benefits of spending time abroad** are therefore not the only crucial factor in deciding whether training opportunities abroad are something worth considering and ultimately pursuing. The **information available about these funding opportunities** (and any **benefits available through the support initiatives**) has a bearing on this too. These aspects therefore form the main focus of the study's empirical research, which is based on an online survey of trainers. In addition, the study sheds light on the perspective and situation of vocational schools (based on qualitative interviews with administrators of these institutions).

¹⁰⁶ If the period an apprentice spends abroad falls during (or overlaps with) vocational school time.

¹⁰⁷ Of course, "can be covered" here means only to the extent that a training company/apprentice is not forced to draw on financial support.

Before presenting the results of the study regarding these aspects/influencing factors in more detail, a number of fundamental **structural conditions** that influence the uptake of mobility abroad amongst apprentices must be pointed out:

➤ **The fact that apprentices are still young people**

Most apprentices are between 15 and 18 when they do their apprenticeship, an age that gives both them and their parents reason to be apprehensive and have second thoughts. For many young people, this would be the first time that they would be going abroad on their own. The fear of not getting on very well in a different country and, on top of that, having to leave their peer group behind for a time, can sometimes put young people off doing a placement abroad. Apprentices under 18 may find conditions/restrictions imposed on their journey and their stay. These are all reasons why most stays abroad happen in the second and third year of an apprenticeship.

➤ **A complex combination of stakeholders**

Getting a mobility placement off the ground requires the agreement of the apprentice themselves (and their parents, if they still have parental responsibility), the company training them, and their vocational school (if the placement is scheduled for term time). If one of these parties does not give their consent, the placement abroad cannot happen.

➤ **Limitations in terms of time**

Apprentices must be taught all their training content on an occupation-specific basis within an apprenticeship period of two to four years (depending on the apprenticeship pathway). Trainers have pointed out that an apprentice does not actually spend very much time at their company if one factors in annual leave, sickness absence, and their time at vocational school. They must also start preparing for the final apprenticeship exam as early as during their third academic year.

➤ **Lost productivity for the company providing training**

Seven out of ten trainers surveyed said that an apprentice doing a placement abroad creates a labour shortage for their company. As most such placements are arranged for the second or third year of an apprenticeship, the contribution that the apprentice makes to the company's overall productivity and performance should not be underestimated¹⁰⁸ and is most definitely a relevant factor in the training company's decision-making. The later a stay abroad is scheduled for, the bigger an obstacle the potential loss of productivity will be to the apprentice actually being able to go through with it.¹⁰⁹ As the ibw study also showed, this tends to hit small and medium-sized companies harder than larger ones.

➤ **Inconsistency in the provision of support and advice**

It is not immediately clear to training companies and apprentices who they can contact if they are seeking funding for an apprenticeship abroad. Besides nationwide institutions (such as the IFA and OeAD), some federal provinces also run their own funding schemes that provide varying degrees of support. The various support services offered range from simply providing advice to handling all aspects of the application process, including accompanying the apprentices abroad. Particularly for training companies and apprentices without any prior experience of placements abroad, therefore, the situation can come across as rather opaque and unclear (in terms of who is responsible for what), not least because there is no official structure in place.

➤ **Complexity of the funding schemes/instruments**

It is hard to get a handle on the various funding opportunities available, especially for those who are interested in going abroad for the first time. For one thing, there are two different funding pots (national and Erasmus+). For another, it is often very difficult to find out what (apprentice's earnings, language

¹⁰⁸ According to Schlögl and Mayerl (2016, p. 58), the average performance level of an apprentice (relative to a skilled worker) is 43 per cent in their second year and as much as 63 per cent in their third (rising as high as 73 per cent in year four).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the comments on page 73 for the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the amount of funding available to training companies to compensate financially for this lost productivity.

courses, travel expenses, cost of stay, living expenses) and who (training company, the apprentice directly, or the apprentice via their training company) can be funded and how generously (in full [e.g. in the case of the apprentice's earnings] or merely in part [e.g. fixed allowances for travel expenses and cost of stay]).

➤ **Lack of transparency regarding support and funding options due to there being no “central communication platform”**

The inconsistency in the provision of support and advice combined with the complex nature of the funding schemes/instruments themselves often makes the situation rather opaque and unclear in respect of the amount of support available and which institution is responsible for what, particularly for training companies and apprentices without any prior experience of placements abroad. This is certainly not helped by the lack of an officially designated central communication platform, website, or “contact point”.

➤ **Limited options for destinations**

Until recently, there were only limited options for countries (under the Erasmus+ funding scheme) where apprentices could do a placement abroad. This should no longer be a consideration in the new generation of the programme because the field of eligible partner countries has been widened and is now very extensive.

➤ **Uncertainties over how to count long stays abroad**

In the case of longer placements abroad (e.g. over two months), the vocational school is required to “check” the progress an apprentice has made with their learning. However, there is no transparent way – let alone a formal process – of determining competencies. The planning uncertainty that this creates (for both training companies and their apprentices) is a further obstacle to mobility. However, this only affects the handful of longer stays that take place.

These **underlying structural conditions** form the **context** in which the current uptake rates for mobility placements abroad by apprentices as well as any objectives in education policy to **increase participation** in the medium to long term (e.g. towards the EU's benchmark¹¹⁰ of 6 per cent) **need to be discussed in realistic terms**.

Besides these structural conditions, the main barriers to participation abroad according to the results of the study would appear to be **fundamental information gaps** and **many people underestimating the benefits** of mobility abroad. Thus, a **high percentage of the trainers surveyed knew little or nothing at all about the funding available for apprentices' placements abroad**.

- Trainers without any experience of mobility abroad often have no idea that their apprentice(s) is/are/would be fundamentally able to do a placement abroad, with only one in four considering themselves to be definitely well informed on the issue. Even fewer people are aware of the various funding and support options available.
- As might be expected, trainers with experience of mobility abroad are much better informed (about the fundamental possibility of spending time abroad, needless to say). Even amongst this group, however, definite knowledge gaps remain – especially regarding funding options.
- There are also a great many trainers who consider themselves to be very well informed in general but who evidently have gaps in their knowledge of support opportunities and funding options and need more information about them.

¹¹⁰ According to *Education and Training 2020* (ET 2020), “at least 6 per cent of 18- to 34-year-olds who have completed their initial vocational training are expected to have completed a training period abroad (including placements) related to their vocational training of at least two weeks' duration or, where this is recorded in their 'Europass', of a shorter length.”

- In particular, business owners with training responsibilities and trainers who train apprentices “on the side” also revealed a need for further information.¹¹¹ This finding correlates closely with the size of the training company where the person works.

As well as not being aware of the possibility of running mobility placements abroad (or the support and funding that might be available to them), **many trainers also underestimate the benefits that they bring to the apprentices and their company**. Whilst 80 per cent of the companies that had had an apprentice undertake a placement abroad in the last three years said that they had a high to very high level of interest in enabling their apprentices to do so, the equivalent figure was just 34 per cent amongst companies without corresponding experience. Something that these companies particularly underestimate is the positive impact on apprentices’ independence, motivation, and foreign language skills and on the general image of an apprenticeship as a career choice.

Information gaps and a tendency to underestimate the benefits of a stay abroad for their own personal and professional development would also appear to be widespread **amongst the apprentices** themselves based on the assessments that their trainers made of them.¹¹² However, many trainers also simply did not feel that their apprentices are ready to spend time abroad (they thought “that apprentices lack the confidence to work in a different country” and that “...many would not be keen to be away from their family and friends for the duration of their placement”). Only one in ten trainers believed that apprentices saw the cost factor as the main barrier, although 40 per cent suspected a certain negative influence (exerted by the fact that apprentices are effectively required to stump up some of the costs themselves).

Taken together, these assessments of the potential barriers to participation produced the **meta-finding** that around three quarters of trainers believe that the reason for apprentices not having undertaken any placements abroad is a “lack of interest amongst the apprentices themselves”.¹¹³ At the same time, however, 59 per cent of trainers also said that they (i.e. the training company) were not interested either.¹¹⁴ Where both are true (i.e. neither the apprentices nor the training companies are interested), it is likely to be extremely difficult and challenging to change people’s opinions.

By contrast, there are two (**target**) **groups** that are likely to be easy to reach out to. According to the survey of trainers, some 20 per cent of apprentices and companies would have been interested in arranging a mobility placement abroad but were thwarted by a lack of information (provided to the respective party). Getting these groups to participate in a placement abroad would probably be fairly easy. Another not insignificant target group are the 29 per cent of apprentices and 42 per cent of companies that, according to trainers, signalled a fundamentally moderate to high level of interest. However, vocational schools (can) also play a not insignificant role, evidently being a source of motivation (sometimes the main one) in roughly half of cases. By contrast, parents and other people close to the apprentices such as their peers play a negligible role.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Amongst business owners with training responsibilities, 42 per cent were unaware that funding was available to help them submit their applications and run their placements. Some 70 per cent of respondents had little or no idea that there existed funding instruments to cover travel expenses and the cost of a language course, for instance. There is significant potential in the 20 per cent of companies that said they had a strong to very strong interest in arranging a placement but that they had lacked relevant information up to that point.

¹¹² Apprentices could only be “observed” through the lens of their trainers in this study. Conducting further studies based on direct surveys of apprentices would undoubtedly be beneficial.

¹¹³ 38 per cent of trainers “strongly agreed” with this statement, with a further 32 per cent “tending to agree”.

¹¹⁴ 38 per cent of trainers “strongly agreed” with this statement, with a further 21 per cent “tending to agree”.

¹¹⁵ This does not mean that they will not or might not be able to play a role in the future. Perhaps more so than anyone else, peers (e.g. as providers of testimonials) could be key sources of motivation (cf. the comments in the final chapter on possible courses of action).

Moreover, the survey makes it clear that the **training culture at a company** undoubtedly also has an impact on whether people are interested in mobility abroad and whether this interest is actively encouraged. This is based on the assessments by those trainers whose training companies already have experience of sending their apprentices on placements or traineeships abroad. A sizeable number of training companies open up participation in particular to those apprentices who stand out through their performance in the company and at their vocational school.

All of the above produces the following **brief summary**: **On the one hand**, there are **certain structural constraints on the participation** of apprentices **in placements abroad** due to...

- ... the specific way in which apprenticeship training in Austria is organised (especially with regard to the young age of the apprentices and the effects relating to this, which often hinder participation).
- ... the stakeholders involved, whose interests and level of willingness must align as a “necessary” requirement for participation, at least as far as training companies and apprentices are concerned.
- ... a support/counselling landscape and a financial support scheme which, although the former exists and is available in principle and the latter is essentially adequate, both involve a certain degree of complexity and lack of transparency.

On the other hand, there is potential for increasing participation levels. This is suggested by the fact that...

- ... there is a widespread lack of information, both amongst trainers/training companies and amongst apprentices themselves. In many cases they do not realise, or are only vaguely aware, that it is possible to do a traineeship abroad as part of an apprenticeship. Many stakeholders (also) have no (in-depth) knowledge of the support, advice, and funding options available.
- ... the “main benefits” of mobility abroad (namely the apprentice’s personal development, independence, and motivation) are underestimated by both training companies/trainers and apprentices themselves (and presumably their parents or guardians too).

These two factors thus form the basis for possible courses of action which the study authors believe could be used to boost apprentice uptake of placements abroad by a certain degree in the medium term.

6.2 Conclusions and potential courses of action to improve apprentice uptake of mobility abroad

The results of the survey clearly suggest that putting more effort into sharing information would be an important and sensible move. In substantive terms, the challenges in this lie not only in the fact that training companies and trainers (as well as apprentices) have a fundamental need for information and advice on the participation and funding criteria, because this is merely the first step, so to speak, in a **chain of cause and effect** that runs right up until a placement abroad is actually completed. Fairly early on in their **decision-making process**, they also need to be given detailed information on the various other forms of support available. This relates to help with submitting their applications, dealing with funding, finding accommodation and placements/partner companies, support with arranging transport (outward and return journeys and locally when abroad), looking after apprentices at the other end (named contact/person accompanying them, supporting programme), and organising language courses. In addition, they often require advice on taking out insurance and help with actually doing so (personal liability, private health and accident, and repatriation insurance). Furthermore, training companies and trainers should be told how they can prepare their apprentices for their stay abroad on an organisational and cultural level and what content/objectives should be agreed for the placement.

Based on the trainer survey, much more input is expected and needed in this area. Specifically, over half of the trainers surveyed felt that more measures were needed in order to get companies more interested in placements abroad for their apprentices. Although respondents saw potential everywhere, the most glaring need is for **information about placements abroad and the funding opportunities available for them to be shared across the board**. Likewise, **the promotion of existing support and funding opportunities should be pushed**.

In addition, and going above and beyond the existing support available, **measures** with two main areas of focus were regarded as extremely important. Firstly, there should be (more) opportunities for **sharing experiences** (for both the training companies and the apprentices) via suitable formats such as dedicated platforms, events, and testimonials. Secondly, many respondents also suggested **increasing the amount of funding provided**. As far as the training companies were concerned, this would mean compensating them for the productivity lost by the apprentice's absence; for the apprentices, it would mean increasing the bonus that they receive (and thus reducing the amount that they are effectively required to stump up themselves or even covering their living expenses in full during their stay).

However, the authors of the study believe that a funding scheme designed to “pay for” the apprentice's lost productivity during their stay abroad would be fairly unlikely to increase the uptake of placements abroad to any significant degree. This is because, rather than having actual costs to compensate for, the training companies “affected” face the problem of their apprentice missing from the production process and not being able to manage without their contribution or offset it by redeploying other staff.¹¹⁶ A financial contribution would therefore not have the desired effect, because it simply is not the appropriate instrument for solving the company's problem. By contrast, increasing the daily allowance/bonus paid to apprentices could be an appropriate funding instrument as a basic principle, especially where the amount that the apprentice has to (or is effectively expected to) stump up themselves makes them less likely to put their name forward. Some thought would likewise need to be paid to how such a scheme might be designed so that funding could be ring-fenced without imposing an excessive administrative burden. Based on the information available, it is only possible to assess the logic of and various arguments involved in the two new/additional funding options suggested by the respondents. More in-depth empirical research would be required in this area to be able to arrive at a better estimate and evaluation based on the evidence.

Taken together, the significant need for information, the abovementioned inconsistency in the provision of support and advice, the extremely complicated funding options available, and the widespread tendency to underestimate the benefits of placements abroad suggest the following potential course of action I:

Potential course of action I: an overall national strategy

Drawing up an overall national strategy. A strategy of this kind should have three inherently consistent and related objectives/agendas:

Agenda I: getting all relevant stakeholders on the same page – both in government departments and their “downstream” institutions (the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Agency for Education and Internationalisation), social partners and interest groups and their institutions (particularly the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, including apprenticeship offices, the Federation of Austrian Industries, the Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Federation), and the relevant support initiatives (IFA, xchange, Let's Walz, etc.) – to create a **coordinated portfolio of tasks, activities, and responsibilities**.

¹¹⁶ See page 73 for more on this and on potential deadweight effects and aspects of ring-fencing.

- ⇒ Likely effects: increased transparency concerning the support, advice, and funding options available

Agenda II: creating a concerted public image and developing a joint campaign and corresponding activities with the following objectives:

- To disseminate **essential information about the support and funding options available**, specifically...
 - ... on the possibility of apprentices spending time abroad and the corresponding underlying conditions and criteria
 - ... on the possibility of obtaining support and advice when organising stays abroad
 - ... on the funding available when organising stays abroad
 - ⇒ Likely effects: increased transparency and amount of information provided concerning the support, advice, and funding options available
- To **raise awareness of the advantages and benefits of practical traineeships abroad on a target-group-specific basis** (training companies/trainers,¹¹⁷ apprentices, parents/guardians, vocational schools). **The “main” benefits should be highlighted in particular, i.e. the apprentice’s personal development** (independence/self-reliance, self-confidence, motivation), along with the positive effects on motivation and independence, including for in-company training and for vocational schools. The improvement in foreign language skills (especially in relation to communication) and the opportunity to gain insights into different professional settings in practice (production processes/organisational structures, etc.) should also be made clear.¹¹⁸
 - ⇒ Likely effects: demonstrating/highlighting the benefits of mobility abroad for all stakeholders (training company, apprentice, vocational school)
- To actively **address/encourage discussion on any apprehensions/reservations**, again on a target group-specific basis (e.g. a placement abroad being the first time an apprentice goes abroad “on their own”, uncertainty on the part of training companies on whether their business will be able to reap benefits from this too).
 - ⇒ Likely effect: helping to dispel uncertainties, fears, reservations

Agenda III: supporting measures:

If credibility is to be improved, these activities (under agenda II) will need to be based on two pillars: a **high level of involvement by stakeholders providing testimonials**¹¹⁹ (apprentices, training companies, vocational schools, and parents who have had correspondingly positive experiences of

¹¹⁷ Since companies organise their training differently depending on their size, this should be taken into account when deciding how to approach them. Most training companies in Austria are SMEs, so any general information/PR strategy needs to take the specific challenges they face into consideration.

¹¹⁸ Highlighting that, although apprentices may also improve their professional skills somewhat, this increase will be fairly small and will depend significantly on the length of their placement abroad.

¹¹⁹ The testimonials approach could be used in various settings. In order to reach out to **apprentices**, for instance, information could be provided via their vocational school directly. The testimonials in this case could come from apprentices of a similar age who have already completed a placement abroad. This would enable their reservations and fears in particular to be addressed in that the people giving the testimonials will have faced similar issues prior to their own placement abroad, allowing them to talk about their experiences with authenticity. However, **trainers/company representatives** can also provide testimonials, both at vocational schools and – as a priority – at training companies with no previous experience of mobility abroad. They could give an authentic account of realistic expectations to hold about the benefits of such a venture, about challenges in selecting apprentices and getting them motivated, and so on. SMEs in particular would find it interesting and useful to be able to draw on their counterparts’ experiences.

mobility abroad) and a concept for the information-sharing activities in particular that triggers a “call to action”. In other words, the measures must follow a **decidedly proactive approach (i.e. outreach-based**, in the sense of reaching out to the relevant target groups) rather than a reactive one (i.e. waiting to see what happens first, responding to demand). This could make use of existing contacts, relationships, and information-sharing channels leading to target groups (e.g. from apprenticeship offices to trainers/training companies or from the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research to vocational schools). These PR/information-sharing activities must also be designed in media formats (e.g. videos, trailers, YouTube) that the respective target group like, must be short and concise, and must be provided on the channels that the target groups access most frequently.

In order to adhere to the principle of a concerted, coordinated public image, these formats and activities would admittedly need to be established/organised under the overall leadership of the institution concerned. In terms of their content and any coordination of their timing that might be required, however, they would need to be aligned with the other institutions’ activities.

Examples of activities include the following: At economic chamber level (apprenticeship office, provincial chambers, industry sectors, etc.), advisors specially trained in mobility abroad could get in touch with training companies and trainers, give them some basic information about the various aspects (general possibility, benefits) of a placement abroad, and refer them on to institutions providing support/advice (IFA and others).¹²⁰ Vocational schools could include in their programme “compulsory” activities that tell their pupils about opportunities for and the benefits of a placement abroad (e.g. in lesson time or via events such as parents’ evenings), discuss any expectations and fears/reservations that they might have with them, etc. Just like at the employers, there could also be advisors for mobility abroad in vocational schools, i.e. teachers who are trained in this area (corresponding in-service training courses would need to be created). Events where people could share their experiences could be organised by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber/provincial chambers/apprenticeship offices/industry sectors for the training companies, for example, and by the boards of education for the vocational schools. Networking meetings between the stakeholders (trainers, vocational schools) could be organised by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the boards of education, for instance. As examples of best practice, section 3.2.3 also lists a number of approaches and initiatives (from Germany and Switzerland) that might serve as a source of ideas (e.g. using young people with experience of living abroad as multipliers – EuroApprentices, vocational school pupils, opportunity for vocational school pupils to gain an additional qualification in “international professional mobility”, specific in-service training modules/courses for vocational school teachers).

Potential course of action I (“overall national strategy”) is essentially a broad-based communications strategy that also adopts a target-group-specific approach. This will hinge on...

- ... all relevant stakeholders being involved, in terms of both content and responsibilities (who does what and who is charge of/responsible for what). This will require everyone to liaise with one another in advance.
- ... a **joint “centralised” public image** being created, e.g. in the form of an officially presented central communication platform/website/“point of contact”.

¹²⁰ The following example of activities undertaken at company level shows why it makes sense to adopt a nuanced, target-group-specific approach. In large companies, many apprentices can be reached via HR managers and trainers for whom training is their sole responsibility, who will often already be aware of the possibility of doing a placement abroad. Nevertheless, many of them still need to be given more detailed information (as the trainer survey by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET showed). There is likely to be significant untapped potential at the smaller companies because the staff responsible for training have no or only rudimentary knowledge about the possibility of doing a placement abroad. In these cases, people’s interest would first need to be aroused before following up with more details (about the support/funding options available).

... the activities launched, organised, and implemented by the various stakeholders being coordinated in terms of both content and scheduling.

⇒ Likely effects: positioning the issue prominently in the public sphere and consciousness; activities arranged logically in terms of content, timing, and focus on target group(s).

This will require as many stakeholders as possible to **liaise with one another in advance**. This would preserve and harness the expertise and commitment already present in the institutions and, by pooling activities, create a much more focused public image and thus raise public awareness of the issue.

In view of the very great need for information, advice, and support indicated by the study, every strategy geared towards significantly increasing the uptake of placements abroad by apprentices – which would thus include any overall national strategy – would need to be accompanied by suitable financial resources (i.e. an increase in existing funding) for these same supporting measures/institutions. Many of these tasks take up a great deal of time and human resources and cannot be dealt with simply by providing information in various formats (brochures, flyers, website, etc.).

Potential course of action II: “list of possible ‘standalone measures’”

A few more potential courses of action will be outlined in this section by way of reflections on “standalone measures”. Needless to say, however, they could/should also be part of an overall national strategy.

Some options are geared towards encouraging mobility abroad by being embedded/offered within an organisational framework. **Sector-specific approaches** (e.g. in seasonal sectors such as tourism and construction) would enable mobility placements abroad to be offered within a certain time window, either in the form of **reciprocal exchanges** (i.e. between two partner companies) or as **sector-based mobility alliances** (involving several companies based in Austria and abroad). This would allow several Austrian training companies to join forces in order to arrange mobility placements abroad for (some of) their apprentices (e.g. by forming a pool of partner companies abroad, offering rotation options in Austria during apprentices’ mobility abroad, etc.). See footnote 90 on the difficulties of getting reciprocal exchanges off the ground. Although sector-based mobility alliances could address some of these difficulties (e.g. aligning the potential windows for exchanges), they would undoubtedly require more time and effort to coordinate and organise. Bodies representing employers in the particular industry/sector could play a supportive role in this regard. Linking to/accessing a **database of Austrian and international partner companies potentially interested in mobility abroad** that would need to be established would be another possible supporting measure.

A similar approach would be to place the focus less on individual sectors and more on geographical regions, e.g. to encourage **regional mobility abroad near/across national borders**. Certain fears/reservations that some young people have/might have if they undertake a mobility placement far from home could be eased by staying close to their home/hometown (and thus also to their families and peers).¹²¹ These mobility placements could be organised either as blocks (of several weeks) or on a day-by-day basis, e.g. only one or two days a week but over (several) months. However, a new, additional funding scheme would need to be set up for this “day-by-day” option.

Three options are geared towards **giving mobility placements a higher/more focused profile** and promoting mobility abroad in general as an attractiveness factor for the training company, the apprentice, and apprenticeships in general. One possibility would be to include/highlight completion of a mobility placement abroad **on apprenticeship certificates**. A second would be to **present awards to training**

¹²¹ However, not all apprentices would be interested in a regional mobility placement, since the distance aspect is undoubtedly one of the things that makes mobility attractive for many of them. Nevertheless, regional/cross-border mobility options could prove an additional source of interest as part of a broad-based offering.

companies. This option actually already exists, with the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs and the IFA honouring training companies that demonstrate a particularly high level of commitment and quality in their apprentices' mobility.¹²² As part of an overall national strategy, corresponding efforts would need to be made to raise awareness of this awards scheme. A third option would be to **award a national prize** for mobility abroad.

Representatives from vocational schools have floated the idea of making **mobility abroad an integral part of the curriculum as an elective.** There are numerous unanswered questions in this regard, however, particularly since mobility abroad is already optional in its current guise. All stakeholders (training company, apprentice, and, potentially, vocational school as well) have to agree, otherwise no mobility placement will come about. A more realistic option would be to **validate the (professional) skills acquired during the mobility placement abroad** following a portfolio approach as well (including digital tools such as digital work trials, a digital record of the foreign work setting/assignment, etc.). This kind of "record of skills acquired" could help to clear up the uncertainties that currently surround how prolonged stays abroad should count towards a pupil's overall achievements.

Most stays abroad happen in the second and third year of an apprenticeship. However, **mobility placements** can also be undertaken **during the retention period (i.e. after taking the final apprenticeship exam).** This option would ease the pressure to learn/work that is a characteristic feature of mobility placements taken in the academic year prior to sitting the final exam, potentially making a mobility placement during their retention period a more attractive proposition for the apprentice. Apprentices would have turned 18 by this point, meaning that their parents are also likely to have fewer reservations about them going abroad. From the perspective of the training company, this would allow the "reward" aspect of mobility placements to be emphasised more strongly.

One package of measures geared less towards apprentices (or training companies or vocational schools as the case may be) and more towards the trainers themselves would be to devise strategies for encouraging mobility abroad amongst in-company trainers (and vocational school teachers). As the surveys by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET have shown, they more so than other people are often fairly unaware that they too can do placements abroad (and get funding for them). Efforts would need to be made to raise their level of knowledge, make them more aware of the benefits, give them more information, and persuade them to take up the opportunity. People who have completed placements abroad themselves are thus "better", more highly motivated multipliers.

Finally, there are two more aspects that should not go unmentioned: the monitoring of mobility placements abroad and the amount of research done into mobility abroad.

The amount of data to hand on the **monitoring of mobility placements abroad** has to be regarded as unsatisfactory. There is currently no way of knowing exactly how many apprentices undertake a placement abroad in any given year as they are supported and logged via various funding schemes. Basic year-by-year figures on the number of participants approved for funding (broken down by destination country) are generally the only data available. However, there are also apprentices doing placements abroad who are not logged at all, because companies organise these themselves and do not claim any funding. The situation regarding the recording of apprentices' mobility placements abroad organised by vocational schools is also unsatisfactory. A documentation/monitoring procedure would thus need to be put in place that pooled and harmonised all the information coming from different

¹²² The criteria for awarding this quality label are being drawn up as part of the EQAMOB project being run by the Europe-wide EuroApprenticeship network. They include aspects relating to the organisation of and preparation for placements abroad, the support given during the stay, and the recognition accorded to the placements as part of overall apprenticeship training (quoted from <https://docplayer.org/107788648-Den-antrag-fuer-die-auszeichnung-koennen-sie-bei-ifa-internationaler-fachkraefteausch-stellen.html>; in German).

sources. One possibility would be to require mobility placements abroad to be “reported” to the apprenticeship offices.¹²³

As a basic principle, the **state of empirical research** in Austria into apprentices’ mobility abroad is **unsatisfactory**. This study is the first of its kind in Austria. It has attempted to generate empirical evidence on key topic areas and aspects relevant to people’s interest and participation in mobility placements abroad (e.g. how much the various stakeholders know about the possibility of spending time and about the support and funding available and what their motives, interests, and expectations are). Many topics/aspects could only be touched on in the course of the study and highlight the importance of further, more in-depth analyses concerning the stakeholders to be surveyed (particularly the apprentices themselves¹²⁴) as well as topic areas such as an assessment of the benefits derived from having completed mobility placements abroad (from the perspective of the training companies, the vocational schools, and the apprentices). The only data collected to date has been anecdotal evidence and expertise from the (funding) institutions supporting the mobility placements. As this study has hopefully been able to demonstrate, research findings are relevant, not least to enable the formulation of evidence-based indications and conclusions on potential courses of action that have the potential to increase mobility abroad in the apprenticeship sector (especially amongst apprentices but also amongst trainers and vocational school teachers).

Trainers were surveyed for this study based on the assumption that they have a good overview of how things are done in their companies and know the apprentices well. For the next step, it would make sense to find out what obstacles they see on the path to a mobility placement abroad, what support they need, and what would make mobility abroad a more attractive proposition for them.

¹²³ By both the training company and the vocational school, for instance. This database could then also incorporate information on the people whose participation had been funded/approved by OeAD.

¹²⁴ Trainers were surveyed for this study based on the assumption that they have a good overview of how things are done in their companies and know the apprentices well. For the next step, it would make sense to find out what obstacles they see on the path to a mobility placement abroad, what support they need, and what would make mobility abroad a more attractive proposition for them.

7 Appendix

7.1 Survey of trainers: description of the sample

Trainers were questioned for the survey by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET. Assuming that one trainer corresponds to one training company (i.e. that only one trainer from each training company – even from larger ones – took part in the survey), the representative nature of the survey can be estimated approximately by comparing this data with the breakdown of training companies.

Yellow means a disproportionately large number of and **red** means fewer participants in the study than in a whole-of-Austria comparison.

Thus, the breakdown of the companies participating in the study should largely match the general makeup of companies in Austria by federal province according to *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick 2020*. There are only the following minor differences:

- ➔ A disproportionately large number of companies from Upper Austria and Vienna took part in the study.
- ➔ A disproportionately small number of companies from Carinthia and Salzburg took part in the study.

Table 7-1: Sample/survey versus statistical population by federal province: makeup of trainers (ibw survey) versus training companies (population as per the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber's apprentice statistics)

Federal province	Sample/Survey		Population ¹	
	absolute	as a %	absolute	as a %
Burgenland	10	2.5	807	2.8
Carinthia	14	3.6	2,294	7.9
Lower Austria	58	14.8	4,586	15.8
Upper Austria	92	23.4	5,645	19.4
Salzburg	22	5.6	2,737	9.4
Styria	56	14.2	4,036	13.9
Tyrol	50	12.7	3,520	12.1
Vorarlberg	22	5.6	1,902	6.6
Vienna	69	17.6	3,507	12.1
Total	393	100.0	29,034	100.0

Sources: March 2021 survey by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 391); *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick 2020* (Dornmayr H., Nowak S. 2020)

In the same way as the comparison by federal province, the representative nature of the survey can also be gauged in terms of what sector the training companies work in. This reveals that, in a whole-of-Austria comparison, a disproportionately small number of companies in the trade/skilled crafts and retail/wholesale sectors took part. By contrast, a disproportionately high number of industry and traffic/transport companies were involved in the survey:

Table 7-2: Sample/survey versus statistical population by sector: makeup of trainers (ibw survey) versus companies (population as per the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber's apprentice statistics)

Sector	Sample/Survey		Population ¹	
	absolute	as a %	absolute	as a %
Trade and skilled crafts	170	43.5	16,337	56.9
Industry	58	14.8	1,208	4.2
Retail and wholesale	43	11.0	3,729	13.0
Banking and insurance	6	1.5	260	0.9

Traffic and transport	13	3.3	412	1.4
Tourism and leisure	45	11.5	2,925	10.2
Information and consulting	17	4.3	1,323	4.6
Other organisations providing apprenticeship training ²⁾			2,431	8.5
Education ⁴⁾	12	3.1		
Civil service ⁴⁾	15	3.8		
Other ⁴⁾	12	3.1		
Total at training companies	391	100.0	28,625	99.7
Cross-company apprenticeship training ³⁾			86	0.3
TOTAL			28,711	100.0

1) This method of calculating the total training companies by sector (as per the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber's apprentice statistics) produces a higher number than counting by chamber memberships (27,540 – counting each member once per federal province) because some companies will hold multiple memberships. However, it must be borne in mind that a chamber member with sites in several federal provinces could be included in this total up to nine times.

2) Not companies belonging to the chamber for the commercial industry (e.g. lawyers, municipal authorities, etc.). The category "Other organisations providing apprenticeship training" was called "Nichtkammer" ("Non-chamber") until 2012.

3) Training institutions under the Austrian Vocational Training Act (e.g. intercompany apprenticeship training facilities working on behalf of the AMS, independent training institutions).

4) The three areas "Education", "Civil service", and "Other" were combined into a single category – "Other" – in the questionnaire, with respondents given the opportunity to be more specific by giving a freeform answer. With "Education" and "Civil service" making up the bulk of the answers, these were treated as a single category in the evaluation.

Any rounding differences were not balanced out.

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 391), apprentice statistics for Austria for 2020, Austrian Economic Chambers

Around a third of respondents said that they worked at a company employing 250 or more people, with the rest spread more or less equally amongst micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises. A total of 139 respondents did not say anything in this regard. Participation relative to the population was disproportionately high amongst trainers from small training companies (employing fewer than 10 staff) and somewhat disproportionately low amongst those from companies with between 10 and 49 employees and from large enterprises (250 or more staff).

Table 7-3: Breakdown of respondents by company size (ibw survey) versus training companies (population as per the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber's apprentice statistics)

Company size	Sample/Survey		Population of training companies
	absolute	as a %	as a %
Fewer than 10 employees	65	25.3	14.7
10–49 employees	52	20.2	26.9
50–249 employees	54	21.0	20.2
250 or more employees	86	33.5	38.3
Total	257	100.0	100.0
Unknown (no data on company size)	139		

Sources: March 2021 survey by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 257); *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick 2020* (Dornmayr H., Nowak S. 2020)

No information on the remaining structural characteristics of the trainer survey is available for the population.

Around 28 per cent of the companies that took part had branches abroad or were part of an international corporate group. As many as 69 per cent did not have any international relationships of this kind, with the remaining companies either not providing any information or falling into the “Other” category.

Table 7-4: Respondents’ international links

Company part of international corporate group or with branches abroad?					
		Frequency	%	Valid %	Aggregate %
Valid	Part of international group	63	15.9	16.4	16.4
	Branches abroad	45	11.4	11.7	28.1
	Neither of these international links	265	66.9	68.8	96.9
	Other	12	3.0	3.1	100.0
	Total	385	97.2	100.0	
Unknown	System	11	2.8		
Total		396	100.0		

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 385)

Table 7-5: Years of training experience at the company

For how many years has the company been training apprentices?					
		Frequency	%	Valid %	Aggregate %
Valid	1–5	40	10.1	10.7	10.7
	6–10	33	8.3	8.8	19.5
	11–20	77	19.4	20.5	40.0
	>20	225	56.8	60.0	100.0
	Total	375	94.7	100.0	
Unknown	System	21	5.3		
Total		396	100.0		

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 375)

Table 7-6: Respondents’ training experience in years

Trainers’ years of experience grouped into four categories					
		Frequency	%	Valid %	Aggregate %
Valid	0–3	91	23.0	23.5	23.5
	3.1–10	126	31.8	32.6	56.1
	10.1–20	73	18.4	18.9	74.9
	>20	97	24.5	25.1	100.0
	Total	387	97.7	100.0	
Unknown	System	9	2.3		
Total		396	100.0		

Source: March 2021 survey of trainers by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 387)

7.2 Questionnaire for the trainer survey

ROLE/JOB TITLE WITHIN THE COMPANY

- 1. In what capacity are you responsible for training apprentices at your company?**
 - Business owner with training responsibilities
 - Trainer as my main job, i.e. I spend almost all my time at the company training apprentices.
 - Trainer "on the side", i.e. I am also a trainer alongside my substantive duties.
 - Something else, specifically:

- 2. For how many years have you worked as a trainer?**
 Approximately year(s)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS PREMISES AND COMPANY

- 3. What federal province are your business premises in?**
 - Burgenland
 - Carinthia
 - Lower Austria
 - Upper Austria
 - Salzburg
 - Styria
 - Tyrol
 - Vorarlberg
 - Vienna

- 4. How many people work at your company in Austria/at your business premises?**
Employees including apprentices, part-time staff, and freelance workers (but excluding those in marginal employment)

	Employees	of which apprentices
Company (in Austria)		
Business premises		

- 5. Is your company part of an international corporate group, or does it have branches abroad?**
 - Part of an international group
 - Branches abroad
 - Neither of these international links
 - Something else, specifically:

- 6. For how many years have apprentices been trained at your business premises?**
 Approximately year(s)

7. In which industry (sector as defined by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) does your company operate?

- Trade and skilled crafts
- Industry
- Retail and wholesale
- Banking and insurance
- Traffic and transport
- Tourism and leisure
- Information and consulting
- Other sectors, specifically:

8. For which groups of professions (in accordance with the AMS's profession information system [BIS]) do your business premises mainly train apprentices?

- Construction and related trades, wood, building services engineering
- Mining, raw materials, glass, ceramics, stone
- Office work, marketing, finance, law, safety/security
- Chemicals, biotechnology, food, plastics
- Electrical engineering, electronics, telecommunications, IT
- Retail/wholesale, logistics, traffic/transport
- Agriculture, horticulture, forestry
- Mechanical engineering, automotive, metal
- Media, graphics, design, printing, art, handicrafts
- Cleaning, domiciliary care, un- and semi-skilled professions
- Care, health, beauty care
- Textile and clothing industry, fashion, leather
- Tourism, hospitality, leisure
- Environment
- Science, education, research, and development
- Other professions, specifically:

INTRODUCTION AND TRAINERS' LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

Despite the availability of numerous **services providing advice and support** (e.g. [IFA](#), [Let's Walz, xchange](#), [Tyroleans take to the road](#), [EUMOST](#), [SCET-NET](#), [Auxilium](#), [Young Styrians GO Europe!](#), [ALE](#)) and **funding instruments** (e.g. [mobility projects in vocational education and training via Erasmus+](#), [funding for placements and preparatory language courses via the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber](#)), only a relatively small percentage of apprentices undertake a placement abroad at present.

As well as learning professional skills, the main aims of these two- to six-week stays abroad are to boost self-confidence, improve foreign language skills, and have the opportunity to get to know other cultures and work settings.

9. How much do you know about mobility abroad in apprenticeship training? I know that...

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
...apprentices (as per Section 13 [2] of the Austrian Vocational Training Act) are able to undertake a placement abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...various support and funding schemes are available for apprentices' placements abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...participation and funding criteria apply to funding schemes, and I have been given enough information about them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are support schemes out there that will provide general information and advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are support schemes out there that will help with or take care of preparation and actual implementation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are support schemes out there that will help or deal with funding applications/actual funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are funding instruments out there that will contribute to travel expenses and the cost of a stay.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are funding instruments out there that will cover the allowance usually paid to an apprentice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are funding instruments out there that will cover the cost of language courses taken abroad to prepare an apprentice for their placement there.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...there are funding instruments out there that will support apprentices by paying them a bonus (daily allowance).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Has an apprentice based at your business premises undertaken a placement abroad in the past three years?

Yes (11–24, 26)

No (25)

DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING COMPANIES WITH EXPERIENCE

11. How many apprentices were involved in total?

..... apprentices undertook a placement abroad in the past three years.

12. Did you make any use of support or funding schemes?

Yes (13–14) No (15–16)

13. Which support and/or funding opportunities did you make use of?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
General information and advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding placements and/or partner companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparation and actual implementation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dealing with funding applications/actual funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding for travel expenses and the cost of a stay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Covering the apprentice's usual allowance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Covering the cost of language courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonus (daily allowance) for apprentices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Who helped your company with organisational matters or took care of them on its behalf?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Support scheme (e.g. IFA, Let's Walz, xchange)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocational school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Why did you not make use of any support or funding schemes?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Because we did not meet the requirements or the participation criteria were not suitable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of the significant outlay involved in processing and/or the necessary formalities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Because we were focusing on our company's own needs and wanted to stay flexible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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16. Please briefly explain the specific reasons or factors influencing your decision not to make use of any support or funding schemes:

17. How relevant for your company is mobility abroad in apprenticeship training?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Apprentices at our company regularly undertake placements abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trainers and other skilled workers at our company regularly undertake placements abroad.	<input type="radio"/> (18)	<input type="radio"/> (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have a dedicated contact point (competent person or department) in our company for apprentices' placements abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We run an exchange programme in our company or organise placements abroad at selected partner companies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. How important is it to your company to have trainers and other skilled workers spend time abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
They serve primarily to provide support at the other end to apprentices doing placements abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are key to building up expertise within the company and thus make a lasting contribution to efforts to encourage interest amongst apprentices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. What were the apprentices' sources of motivation for engaging in mobility abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
The apprentice's own interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Their parents and/or other people close to them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impetus came from the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impetus came from the vocational school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Other sources of motivation for placements abroad:

.....

21. How were apprentices chosen for placements abroad?

- All our apprentices can do a placement abroad.
- The apprentices were chosen based on specific criteria. (22, 0)
- Something else, specifically:

22. What criteria were used to choose apprentices for placements abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Their motivation and/or dedication within the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Their performance and/or marks at vocational school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Their social and/or language skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Other criteria for selecting apprentices:

.....

24. Do you have any specific requests or suggestions for improvement that would make it easier for companies to organise a placement abroad?

.....

DESCRIPTION OF COMPANIES WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

25. Why did no apprentices based at your business premises undertake a placement abroad in the past three years?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
We would have been interested but were not given enough information about the support or funding opportunities available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The company was not interested as a matter of principle.	<input type="radio"/> (25.1)	<input type="radio"/> (25.1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices would have been interested but were not given enough information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices were not interested as a matter of principle.	<input type="radio"/> (25.2)	<input type="radio"/> (25.2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25.1. Why was the company not interested in apprentices undertaking placements abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
It would have been too time-consuming and expensive despite the support measures available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices would not have been able to contribute their time and labour to the company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We do not have any suitable apprentices who would have been ready for this challenge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The company does not believe that a placement abroad would bring sufficient benefit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25.2. Why do you think that apprentices were not interested in undertaking a placement abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
The cost of the stay (i.e. the amount they would need to stump up themselves) would be too high for the apprentice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices did not want to be away from their friends and family for the duration of their placement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices lacked the confidence to work in a different country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The apprentices did not believe that a placement abroad would bring sufficient benefit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25.3. Why else did none of your apprentices undertake a placement abroad in the past three years?

.....

INTEREST AND INCENTIVES ON THE PART OF COMPANIES

26. Regardless of whether or not you already have some experience of placements abroad, how interested is your company generally in enabling apprentices to undertake a placement abroad?

- very interested (26.1) fairly interested (26.1) not very interested not at all interested

26.1. Which of the following motives make your company keen to enable apprentices to undertake a placement abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree

To reward and motivate them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To hone their professional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve their foreign language skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To boost their social skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Other motives for the company to facilitate placements abroad:

.....

28. How important are the following support services?

	very important	fairly important	not very important	not at all important
General information and advice on participation and funding criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding placements and/or partner companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding suitable accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help with determining placement content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting apprentices prepared (on an organisational and cultural level)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organising language courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organising transport (outward and return journeys and locally when abroad)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Looking after apprentices at the other end (named contact/person accompanying them, supporting programme)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advice on taking out insurance and help with actually doing so (personal liability, private health and accident, and repatriation insurance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support with submitting applications and dealing with funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Other areas where support services are important:

.....

30. Should more measures be put in place to make companies more interested in facilitating placements abroad for their apprentices?

strongly agree (30.1) would tend to agree (30.1) would tend to disagree completely disagree

30.1. In what areas are additional measures needed to make more companies willing to enable apprentices to undertake a placement abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Sharing and preparing general information (participation and funding criteria, benefits)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting existing support and funding schemes (presence on platforms, at events, and at the vocational school)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sharing experiences amongst companies (e.g. via a dedicated platform or events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the funding available (to offset the productivity lost through the apprentice's absence)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. Other measures to get companies more interested:

.....

INTEREST AND INCENTIVES ON THE PART OF APPRENTICES

32. How interested would you say your apprentices were generally in undertaking a placement abroad?

- very interested fairly interested not very interested not at all interested

33. Should more measures be put in place to make apprentices more interested in undertaking a placement abroad?

- strongly agree (33.1) would tend to agree (33.1) would tend to disagree completely disagree

33.1. In what areas are additional measures needed to make more apprentices willing to undertake a placement abroad?

	strongly agree	would tend to agree	would tend to disagree	completely disagree
Sharing and preparing general information (participation and funding criteria, benefits)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting existing support and funding schemes (presence on platforms, at events, and at the vocational school)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sharing experiences amongst apprentices (e.g. via a dedicated platform or events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the funding available (to cover the apprentice's living expenses)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33.2. Other measures to get apprentices more interested:

.....

INTEREST AMONGST TRAINERS AND BENEFITS

34. Besides apprentices, trainers are also able to undertake placements abroad. Did you know that funding was also available for this (stays abroad for vocational education and training specialists)?

- Yes No

35. Have you already spent time abroad yourself (in your capacity as a trainer or other skilled worker)?

- Yes No

36. How interested would you be generally in spending time abroad (in your capacity as a trainer or other skilled worker)?

- very interested fairly interested not very interested (36.1) not at all interested (36.1)

36.1. Why would you have little or no interest in engaging in an exchange of experiences as part of a stay abroad?

.....

37. How would you rate the benefits of mobility placements abroad in apprenticeship training for the following areas?

	very high	fairly high	fairly low	very low
Rewarding and motivating apprentices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boosting apprentices' independence and personal development (soft skills)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Honing apprentices' professional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving apprentices' foreign language and intercultural skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gaining an edge in recruiting particularly motivated and dedicated apprentices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanding networks of contacts and/or partnerships with international companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising the profile of the company and/or improving its reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising the profile of apprenticeship training in general and/or improving its reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

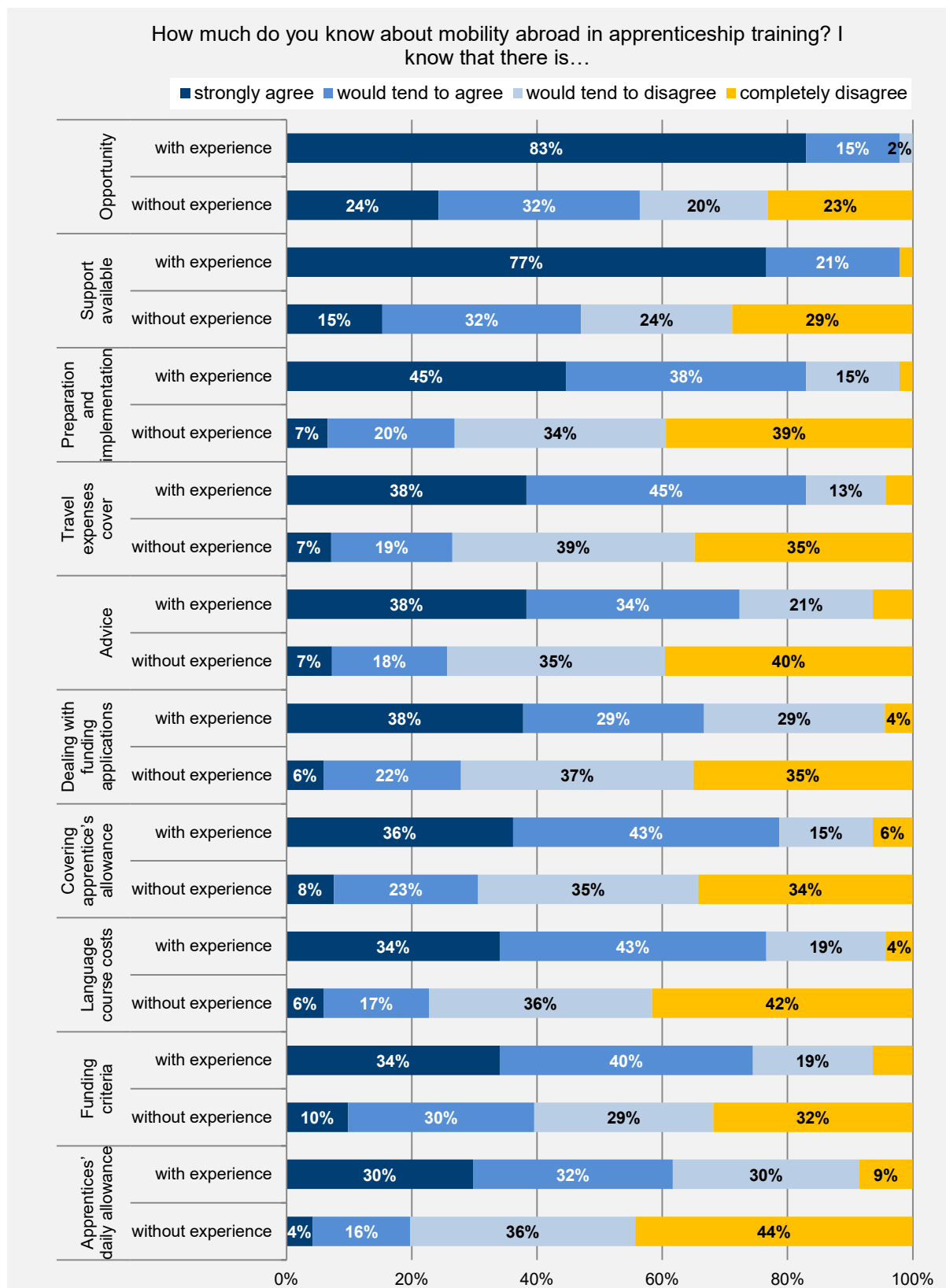
INTEREST AMONGST TRAINERS AND BENEFITS

38. Would you like to be kept informed about the results of the study?

Yes, I would like information to be sent directly to the following email address:
.....

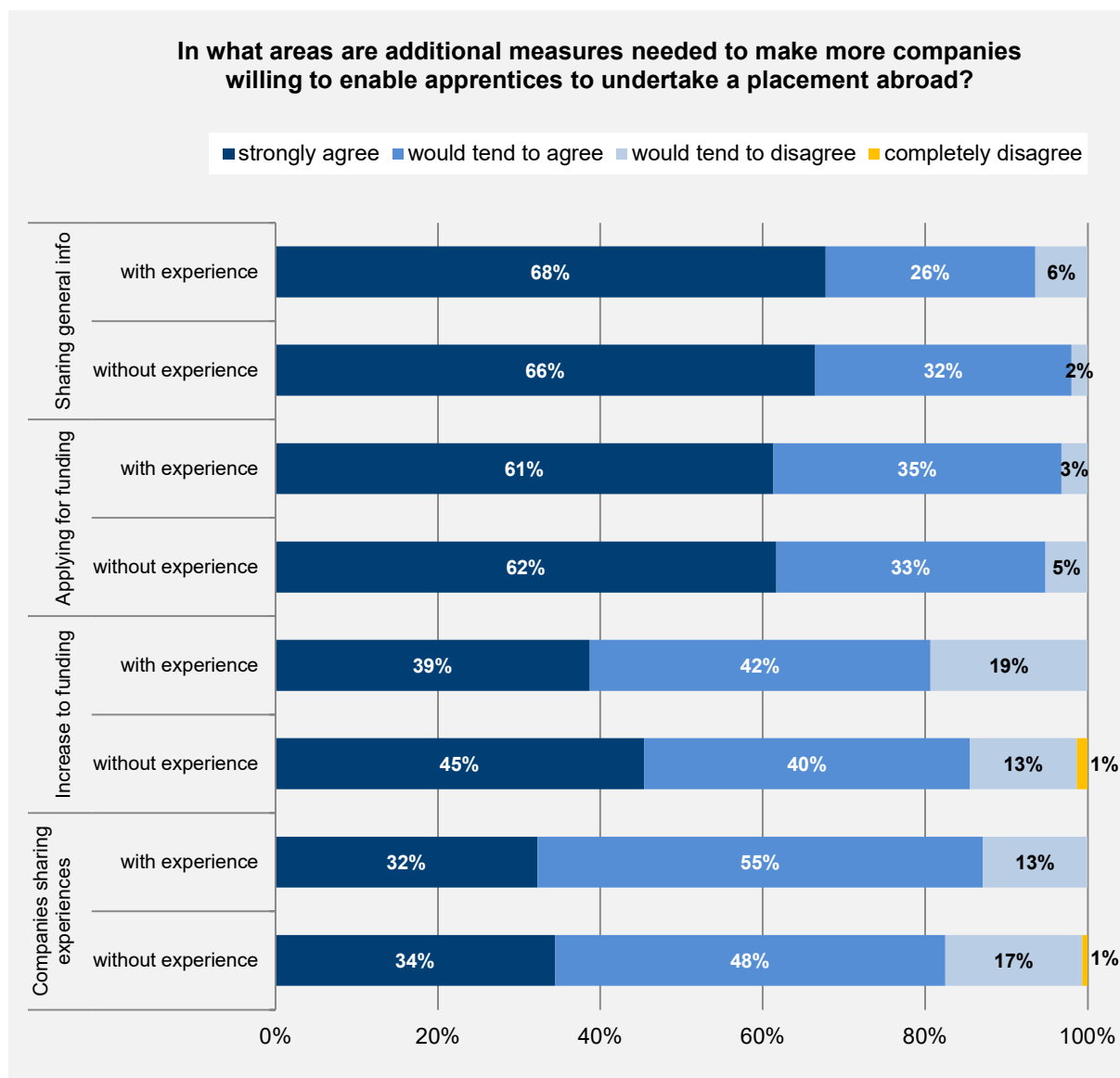
7.3 Trainer survey: specific/in-depth evaluations

Chart 7-1: General level of knowledge possessed by trainers regarding mobility abroad: comparison between trainers who consider themselves to be (well) informed and those with little/no information



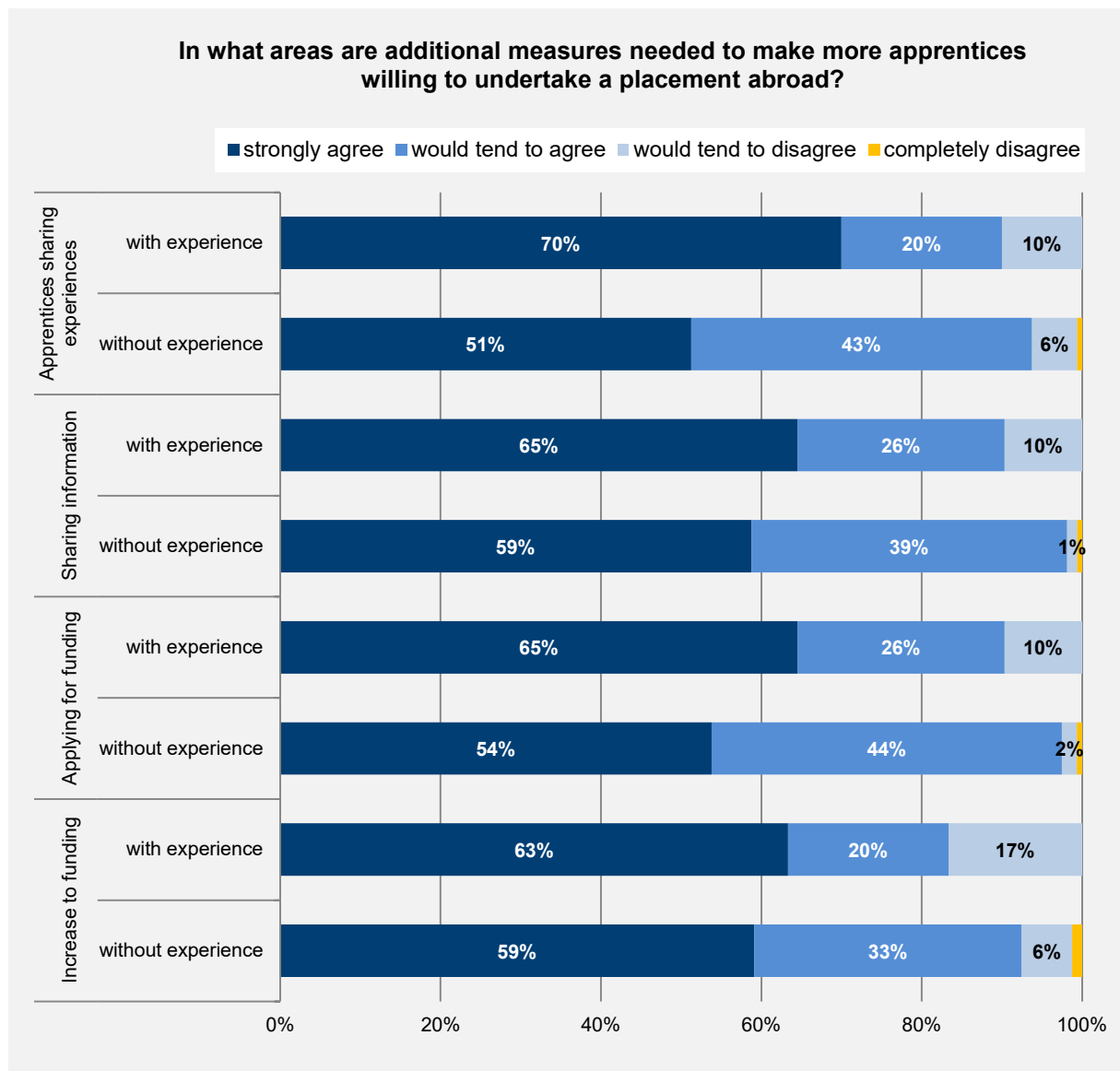
Source: March 2021 survey of companies by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (n = 383–391)

Chart 7-2: Additional support measures for companies: comparison between companies with experience and those without



Source: March 2021 survey of companies by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 31; companies without experience: n = 152–154)

Chart 7-3: Measures to get apprentices more interested as identified by their trainers (comparison between companies with experience and those without)



Source: March 2021 survey of companies by ibw Austria – Research and Development in VET (companies with experience: n = 30–31; companies without experience: n = 158–160)

7.4 Interview guide for vocational schools

Mobility abroad in apprenticeship training

There is a complex interrelationship between apprentices, training companies, and vocational schools that underlies mobility abroad in apprenticeship training. The interests, level of knowledge, and expectations of these stakeholders are key to a stay abroad actually coming about.

The study is geared towards answering the following key questions:

- How much information about placements abroad is available?
- How much basic interest is there in taking part in such placements, and to what degree is this accepted?
- What expectations encourage or discourage participation in such placements?
- Who are the instigators or stakeholders who initiate or facilitate this participation?
- What incentives could be introduced to reduce existing barriers to mobility?

Finally, relevant aspects and potential courses of action are to be identified that are key to securing lasting support for mobility abroad in apprenticeship training.

Interview guide for surveying vocational schools

Vocational school:

Groups of professions taught:

Name:

Job title:

Contact details:

Vocational school

1. What experience have you or has your vocational school had with placements abroad?
2. How much basic interest is there at the vocational school in taking part in them, and to what degree is this accepted?
3. What are the vocational school's expectations and motives?
4. What challenges and/or barriers are hindering participation by the vocational school?
5. What incentives could be introduced to encourage participation by vocational schools?

Apprentices and parents/guardians

6. How much do apprentices and their parents/guardians know about placements abroad?
7. How much basic interest is there amongst apprentices in taking part in them, and to what degree is this accepted?
8. What are the apprentices' expectations and motives?
9. What challenges and/or barriers are hindering participation by the apprentices?
10. What incentives could be introduced to encourage participation by apprentices?

Training companies and trainers

11. How much do training companies and trainers know about placements abroad?
12. How much basic interest is there amongst training companies in taking part in them, and to what degree is this accepted?
13. What are the training companies' expectations and motives?
14. What challenges and/or barriers are hindering participation by training companies?
15. What incentives could be introduced to encourage participation by companies?

Aspects relevant to all stakeholders

16. What initiatives for encouraging mobility in apprenticeship training are you aware of?
17. Who tend to be the key instigators of participation?

18. What factors decide successful implementation?
 19. What is the best way to demonstrate or prove the success or impact of mobility?
 20. What measures should be introduced to increase interest in placements abroad?
 21.

Interviewees at the vocational schools

Vocational school	Interviewee	Job title
Berufsschule für Handel und Reisen (Vienna)	Günter Moser	Headmaster
Berufsschule für Baugewerbe (Vienna)	Thomas Prigl	Deputy Head
Fachberufsschule Villach 1 (Carinthia)	Walter Werner	Headmaster
Landesberufsschule St. Pölten (Lower Austria)	Susanne Zuser Helmut Eder Peter Schwarzenpoller	Headmistress Deputy Head Business Administration Teacher
Landesberufsschule Tamsweg (Salzburg)	Christine Lassacher	Guidance Counsellor
Landesberufsschule Salzburg 3 (Salzburg)	Gabriele Pacher	School Integrated Vocational Training Coordinator; Erasmus+ Coordinator for the federal province of Salzburg

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