European Perspectives
on Music Education

17

Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn, Lauren Steinmetz (Eds.)

Future-making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development

TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC

Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

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European Perspectives on Music Education 17
edited by Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn & Lauren Steinmetz
www.eas-music.org
www.teacher-academy-music.org

European Perspectives on Music Education is a peer-reviewed book series.

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Cover design: Marinas Medien- und Werbeagentur GmbH, Innsbruck (basic design);
Georg Toll, tollmedia, Innsbruck (design & layout)
Cover image design: Salomon Kraus
Layout and typesetting: Georg Toll, tollmedia, Innsbruck
Language Check: Lauren Steinmetz
Style Check: Hannah Juval Lessing
Print: Opolgraf SA, Opole
Helbling Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.H., A-6063 Rum, Kaplanstr. 9, productsafety@helbling.com

1st edition / 1st print run 2026
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371131268
ISBN 978-3-7113-1268-6
ISMN 979-0-2071-0815-9

www.helbling.com

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Table of Contents

Ruth Jakobi & Simone Dudt
Foreword **7**

Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn & Lauren Steinmetz
Addressing Music Education Futures in Europe
Through Research and Development: An Introduction **11**

I. MUSIC EDUCATION AND FUTURE-MAKING

Philip Stade, Thade Buchborn, Jonė Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė,
Anna Houmann, Elissavet Perakaki, Branka Rotar Pance,
Michael Rumpeltes, Lina Van Dooren & Lena Widdermann
Music Education for Future-making:
Integrating Sustainability, Democracy and Digitalisation
through Participatory Design-Based Research **21**

II. MOBILITY FOR MUSIC EDUCATION STUDENTS

Angeliki Triantafyllaki & Jens Knigge
Section Introduction **53**

Jens Knigge, Thomas De Baets, Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Solveig Fretheim,
Rūta Girdzijauskienė, Runa Hestad Jenssen, Kirsti Nørstebø & Lorraine O'Connell
Redesigning Mobility in European Music Teacher Education:
From Barriers to Opportunities **61**

Lauren Steinmetz, Isolde Malmberg, Smaragda Chrysostomou,
Stefanie Kreuzwieser, Angeliki Triantafyllaki, Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos,
Verena Bons & Wilfried Aigner
Design-Based Research in an International,
Multilingual and Interprofessional Setting:
Facilitating School Internships Abroad
in European Music Teacher Education **79**

Isolde Malmberg, Angeliki Triantafyllaki & Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos
Mentoring in Collaboration:
Co-constructing Music Education Competencies
in School Internships Abroad **109**

Lauren Steinmetz & Smaragda Chrysostomou
Crossing Borders, Shaping Professional Selves:
Preservice Music Teachers in School Internships Abroad **129**

Runa Hestad Jenssen & Lauren Steinmetz
Designing for Leaks:
An Outro in Movement **151**

III. MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE: MAPPING THE FIELD

Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Smaragda Chrysostomou, Angeliki Triantafyllaki, Elissavet Perakaki & Thekla Andreou
Mapping Music Teacher Education in Europe:
From Design to Implementation **161**

Rūta Girdzijauskienė, Lorraine O'Connell & Karla Stolle
Mapping the Present and Shaping the Future:
Insights on School Music Education in Europe **187**

IV. ADVOCATING FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE

Thomas De Baets, Ann-Sophie De Praitere, Marina Gall & Isolde Malmberg
The *TEAM* Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education
in Europe **209**

Isolde Malmberg, Marina Gall, Michaela Hahn & Finn Schumacker
Advocating for Music Education:
Strategies to Sustain Music in General Schools
and in the Wider Music Education Sector **227**

APPENDIX A–H

I. WORK PACKAGE 5
SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS ABROAD AND MENTORING

A: Design Principles for School Internships Abroad & Mentoring **247**

B: Introductory Conversation Guide **251**

C: Cultural Reflection Tree **255**

D: Voice Memo Prompts **257**

E: Photo Journal Prompts **259**

F: Debrief Conversation Guide **261**

G: Checklist for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching **263**

II. WORK PACKAGE 8
MAPPING MUSIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

H: Music Lessons in European Schools **267**

The Editors **273**
The Authors **274**

Jens Knigge, Thomas De Baets,
Natassa Economidou Stavrou, Solveig Fretheim,
Rūta Girdzijauskienė, Runa Hestad Jenssen,
Kirsti Nørstebø & Lorraine O'Connell

Redesigning Mobility in European Music Teacher Education

From Barriers to Opportunities

Abstract

Student mobility is a key ambition of European higher education policy, yet participation in music teacher education remains low. This chapter reports on a strand of the *TEAM* project examining how mobility is organised, experienced and potentially redesigned. Drawing on design-based research, we combined document analysis of 13 partner institutions with interviews and focus groups involving students, academic and administrative staff from seven countries. The analysis highlights barriers and conditions across practical, curricular, socio-cultural and emotional dimensions. We developed an online tool for reflection and planning, building on five focus areas and thirteen design principles that address cultures of mobility, information and support structures, curriculum alignment, partnership development and student well-being. We situate this framework within debates on inclusive internationalisation.

Keywords: music teacher education; international student mobility; design principles; design-based research; higher education internationalisation

Introduction

International student mobility has become a central ambition of European higher education policy, framed as a driver of quality, employability and intercultural competence (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2020; Teichler, 2017). Yet the everyday reality for many music education students can look different. As one student put it, "When we got there we realised how isolated we were (…) the days just felt longer …" Another described the physical strain of everyday logistics abroad: "I cycled 50 minutes each way with my trombone, laptop and food. I felt like a donkey." Voices such as this, gathered from the *TEAM* project[1] interview study (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review), capture the gap between optimistic institutional rhetoric and the often messy, unpredictable lived experience of mobility. The students' voices point to a central paradox: mobility is undermined both by the absence of clear structures and by the rigidity of existing programme frameworks (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022). Navigating between these two poles – developing structures strong enough to handle uncertainty without constraining students – is essential if mobility is to become accessible, equitable, and genuinely educational.

Mobility in European Higher Education and Teacher Education

In recent years, Europe's leaders have doubled down on mobility as a cornerstone of internationalisation. The Council of the European Union has set a target that "at least 23 % of graduates in higher education should have a learning mobility experience by 2030" (Council of the European Union, 2024). These policy goals rest on the widely held belief that study abroad fosters personal growth, intercultural competence, and professional skills (Teichler, 2017). Research corroborates many of these benefits: for example, preservice teachers who complete an international placement often report increased independence, self-awareness, and adaptability (Leutwyler & Meierhans, 2013). Mobility is championed as a high-impact practice to broaden students' horizons.

Yet mobility participation rates tell a sobering story. Mobility is unequally distributed across disciplines and student populations. Overall, all European countries remain far from the 23 % target in many fields, and teacher education is especially under-represented (Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Schirmer, 2024). In some countries, almost no student teachers go abroad; in Serbia and Poland, for instance, the number was close to zero as of a few years ago (Vögtle, 2019). Even in traditionally outward-looking educational systems like Finland and Norway, only about 10–12 % of student teachers had international

[1] *TEAM* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

experience around 2019 (Vögtle, 2019). Unfortunately, specific data on music teacher education (MTE) is scarce, but their mobility figures are likely to be even lower.

Some of the challenges relevant in this context have already been identified in MTE research: One-to-one tuition, locally embedded pedagogical traditions and diverse programme structures across Europe create significant constraints (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022). On the other hand, studies confirm that mobility in MTE can offer significant personal and professional benefits – enhanced independence, intercultural awareness, and expanded pedagogical perspectives (Bayley & Mio, 2020; McBride & Nicholson, 2023; Walling, 2020). However, these outcomes are far from guaranteed. Without curricular alignment, supportive guidance and social integration opportunities, mobility risks become fragmented, stressful or academically disconnected. Despite these insights, research on mobility in MTE remains limited, particularly regarding system-level obstacles and multi-stakeholder perspectives.[2] Most studies focus on student experiences, rarely examining the viewpoints of teacher educators, international coordinators, or programme leaders who ultimately shape whether mobility is encouraged, feasible, and educationally meaningful.

Therefore, our study addresses this gap by adopting a holistic approach spanning programme structures, administrative processes, academic considerations, and lived experiences. Rather than treating mobility as an individual endeavour, we approach it as a design challenge that requires coordinated attention to institutional culture, curricula, partnerships and student support. This perspective frames mobility not only as movement across borders, but as a pedagogical and organisational challenge requiring intentional design to unlock its full potential in MTE.

The TEAM *Project and its Work Package on Mobility*

This chapter arises from the *ERASMUS+ Teacher Education Academy for Music (TEAM)* project, a pan-European initiative to reshape music teacher education in Europe. *TEAM* addresses multiple fronts, ranging from digital innovation to networking, and one key focus is student mobility and intercultural learning. *Work Package 4*, titled *Mobility in Music Teacher Education*, focused on examining and improving international mobility as an integral part of MTE. In the *TEAM* project's broader vision, mobility is not viewed as an add-on but rather as a catalyst for innovation. By enabling future music teachers to step outside their home contexts, there is the aim to offer new perspectives, skills, and networks that will ultimately enrich music education across Europe.

Within *TEAM*, our work package had a dual mission to understand the current barriers and enablers for mobility in music teacher education, and to redesign mobility practices through research-based innovation. To do this, we combined empirical research

[2] A more comprehensive literature review can be found in Economidou Stavrou et al., in review.

with a design-based development process. First, we mapped the status quo of mobility in MTE programmes by analysing documents and gathering stakeholders' experiences. Then, we used those insights to develop and test new design principles for mobility structures. Crucially, our study brought together perspectives from students, academic staff, and administrators across multiple institutions, recognising that meaningful change in mobility requires buy-in and insight from all stakeholder groups.

Research Design and Data Material

Our study is inspired by a design-based research (DBR) approach (e. g. McKenney & Reeves, 2018), moving from an initial mapping of existing mobility practices in MTE to the development and refinement of design principles for future mobility practices. The purpose of this approach was not to produce a single empirical study, but to generate actionable knowledge through iterative cycles of investigation, reflection and redesign.

Our first step was to understand how mobility is currently organised. By conducting a systematic document analysis, we reviewed study plans, course catalogues and mobility guidelines from 13 European *TEAM* partner institutions to map the structural conditions for incoming and outgoing students. To complement this structural overview, we conducted semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews with students, music teacher educators and international office staff across multiple institutions. These conversations were interview guide-based and explored motivations, expectations, academic and social experiences, administrative challenges and perceptions of support before, during and after mobility. In total, our dataset comprises interviews with 27 participants (13 students, 9 teacher educators, and 5 administrative staff) from seven higher music education institutions in seven European countries (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway), yielding a rich dataset of over 90,000 transcribed words. Data was analysed using the constant comparative method (e. g. Boeije, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a well-established approach in qualitative research that is rooted in Grounded Theory Methodology but also widely applied beyond grounded theory studies. This method involves a systematic process of continuously comparing data segments during coding and categorisation to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across the dataset. This analysis forms the empirical foundation of the preliminary design principles introduced later in this chapter.[3]

In a third step, we brought those preliminary design principles back to students, academic and administrative staff familiar with mobility in MTE. Through facilitated group discussions at four partner institutions, 41 participants assessed the clarity, relevance and

[3] A more detailed description of our methodological approach in the interview study can be found in Economidou Stavrou et al., in review.

feasibility of our preliminary set of design principles derived from the interview analysis. In addition, we presented and discussed the design principles with the *TEAM* scientific advisory board (seven participants which represent national perspectives from Türkiye and the UK as well as international music education networks like *AEC*, *EAS*, *EMC*, *EMU*, ISME),[4] which brought in further perspectives from additional countries and institutional settings. Together, this feedback helped refine both the substance and the formulation of the principles, ensuring they are usable across diverse institutional contexts.

Together, these three strands – document mapping, stakeholder interviews and collaborative refinement – constitute an integrated research process. Rather than treating findings as the end point, we used them as the basis for developing and iteratively improving a framework that institutions can apply to redesign mobility in MTE.

Results I: Barriers and Enabling Conditions in Mobility for MTE

The empirical basis for this initial results section is presented in two publications drawing on our interview material: a qualitative study of students', teachers' and administrators' perspectives on mobility in MTE (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) and a poetic-inquiry study focusing on students' 'not-so-glossy' mobility narratives (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review).[5] While student experiences form the most visible thread in the following synthesis – as they are the primary experiencers of mobility – the analysis systematically draws on teacher educator and administrator perspectives to contextualise and complement student accounts. Together, our studies show that mobility in MTE is shaped by interlocking practical, structural, curricular, socio-cultural and emotional conditions. Barriers and enabling factors are thus rarely separate lists; they are different outcomes of the same design choices and institutional cultures. The following synthesis introduces the main thematic areas that later inform our design principles.

Practical Conditions: Housing, Visas, Finances, and Administrative Load

A first cluster of themes relates to basic practical conditions. Housing was a recurring concern: students described difficulties securing affordable, suitable accommodation and, in some cases, experiences of being scammed or forced into long daily commutes (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Visa procedures, insurance requirements and

[4] Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (*AEC*), European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*), European Music Council (*EMC*), European Music School Union (*EMU*), International Society for Music Education (ISME).

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, the findings reported in this section draw on the publications: Economidou Stavrou et al., in review and Fretheim & Jenssen, in review. Specific citations are provided where a finding derives predominantly from one source.

unfamiliar welfare systems added further layers of uncertainty, particularly beyond the EU/EEA area, and demanded substantial administrative expertise from institutional staff. Financially, although *Erasmus* and national grants mitigated costs, many students still experienced mobility as economically demanding, which discouraged participation among those with fewer resources. Administrative processes such as learning agreements and credit transfer were perceived either as manageable learning experiences when guided by named contact persons, or as opaque and exclusionary when institutional support was weak. Administrators echoed these concerns but from a different vantage point. They described the administrative workload involved in managing learning agreements, insurance obligations and visa procedures – particularly for non-EU destinations – as substantial and often underestimated by their institutions. Several emphasised that without dedicated training and adequate staffing, administrative staff cannot provide the reliable guidance that students depend on. One administrator also highlighted the value of staff visits to partner institutions, noting that first-hand knowledge of host campuses and cities enabled her to give students realistic, trust-building information – a resource that no website or brochure could replace (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review).

Information, Communication and Programme Structures

A second group of themes concerns information and the organisation of exchange programmes. Students often struggled to find reliable, up-to-date information on institutional websites, particularly regarding what courses were available for exchange students, in what language, and how courses could be combined (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). In practice, many relied on informal channels such as peer networks and social media, which they perceived as helpful but also unreliable. Information sessions at home institutions, along with accessible departmental mobility coordinators, emerged as key enabling structures that made mobility appear realistic and legitimate. From the perspective of programme coordinators and administrative staff, long-term, trusted partnerships with precise knowledge of each other's curricula and academic calendars enabled smoother learning agreements and credit recognition, whereas superficial or poorly maintained partnerships tended to generate mismatches and additional work for all parties (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review).

Curriculum Experiences: Alignment, Flexibility and Local Specificity

Curriculum design appeared as a double-edged condition. On the one hand, tightly structured teacher education curricula and music-specific components such as one-to-one tuition and school placements often made it challenging to integrate a mobility period without delays or gaps. Students feared that credits would not be fully recognised or that they would miss essential content, and staff described the complexity of aligning different systems as a deterrent (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Notably, administrators and programme coordinators navigated a tension that students were often unaware of: the need to remain both

flexible and academically accountable. As one administrator put it, she wanted to be flexible but also "correct in a way that in the end we do not disappoint the students" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) – balancing individual adaptation with institutional obligations. Some programme leaders also pointed to a structural paradox: the more individualised adjustments each mobility case required, the less sustainable and scalable the process became. One administrator argued that mobility would be far easier to promote if it required fewer ad hoc modifications, suggesting that the real challenge lies not in accommodating individual students but in redesigning programme structures so that mobility becomes a standard rather than an exceptional pathway. On the other hand, where institutions created mobility windows, allowed flexible combinations of courses and collaborated across home and host institutions on individual study plans, mobility became a way to access distinctive local offerings and pedagogical approaches. In such cases, students reported that mobility broadened their musical and professional perspectives rather than disrupting their study trajectory.

Motivations, Participation and Unequal Access

Students' motivations to go abroad centred around personal development, cultural curiosity and specific academic or artistic interests, such as studying with particular teachers or encountering different musical traditions. Staff generally endorsed these motivations and framed mobility as a "golden opportunity" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) for growth. However, the studies highlight persistent inequalities in participation: financial constraints, caring responsibilities, language insecurities, concerns about academic or musical "standards" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) and a general fear of the unknown discouraged many from applying. In several contexts, mobility appeared to attract those who were already confident and resource-rich, reinforcing rather than reducing inequalities. Staff attitudes also mattered: supportive teachers who helped redesign study plans enabled participation, whereas sceptical or reluctant staff effectively signalled that mobility was an exception rather than a normalised part of the programme.

Socio-Cultural Experiences, Language and Belonging

Our findings underline that mobility is a socio-cultural as much as an academic experience. Belonging and friendship emerged as central to whether exchanges were perceived as enriching or isolating. Music-making in small ensembles or projects often facilitated integration, while large lecture-based courses could leave exchange students at the margins (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Institutional support structures such as welcome weeks, buddy schemes and student-led events played a significant role in creating bridges between local and international students; where these were absent or superficial, students reported loneliness and being reduced to national stereotypes (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review). Language functioned simultaneously as a barrier and a resource. English-taught courses and linguistically confident peers eased participation, whereas local-language-only

settings and separate "international" tracks sometimes reinforced segregation, even as several students identified language learning and communicative flexibility as important outcomes of their stay.

Well-Being, Emotional Labour and the Fragility of Transformation

Finally, our findings foreground the affective and existential dimensions of mobility. Many students described their exchanges as transformative, pointing to increased confidence, broader horizons and changed professional aspirations. At the same time, their narratives included episodes of loneliness, anxiety, exhaustion and encounters with unfamiliar or distressing social realities, such as financial challenges and perceived insecurity in host cities (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review). Fretheim and Jenssen conceptualise mobility as "stepping into the world" in ways that expose both privileges and vulnerabilities, and that demand considerable emotional labour from students. Whether these demanding moments became meaningful learning experiences or overwhelming burdens depended strongly on the availability of support: realistic pre-departure preparation, ongoing academic and pastoral care during the stay, and structured opportunities for post-return reflection all functioned as crucial enabling conditions. Without such structures, the much-invoked transformative potential of mobility remained fragile and unevenly distributed.

Results II: From Empirical Insights to Focus Areas and Design Principles

Having identified the barriers and key conditions for successful mobility, the next step in our work was to translate these insights into a set of design principles. This section explains our rationale for creating design principles, how we developed and refined them, and provides an overview of the focus areas into which the design principles are grouped.

Why Design Principles for Mobility?

Design principles are a common outcome in design-based research and educational development projects. They bridge research and practice by articulating what needs to be achieved without dictating a single implementation pathway. We chose this format for several reasons. Firstly, mobility in teacher education involves many stakeholders and context-specific variables. A single standard solution (implement programme X everywhere) is neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, design principles provide a flexible template: they name what matters most, while allowing institutions to adapt how they get there. Secondly, the challenges we identified are systemic and interconnected. They cannot be resolved through isolated fixes but require coordinated changes in policy, curricula and everyday practice. Principles help to keep the broader goals in view (such as student support or curriculum alignment) while leaving room for multiple concrete actions. Thirdly,

we wanted the findings to be directly usable for practitioners and decision-makers. Long research reports rarely tell a programme leader what to do next. Clear, concise principles can function as a checklist or source of inspiration, answering the question: What should we pay attention to if we want to improve mobility in music teacher education? Finally, design principles can also be used for reflection and evaluation. Institutions can employ them to review current practices (Do we foster a culture of mobility? How robust is our student support?) and identify gaps. In this way, they offer a shared language for discussing and improving mobility across institutions and systems.

How the Design Principles Were Developed

The principles emerged from a design-based research process combining document analysis, interview findings, and iterative practitioner feedback (see the "Research Design and Data" section). A preliminary version of design principles (v1.0) was developed from the thematic analysis of interview data and institutional documents (section 3). This version was then refined through structured group discussions at partner institutions, leading to a revised and more coherent set of design principles (v2.0). The refinement process strengthened clarity, removed overlap, and ensured that the principles were meaningful, feasible, and aligned with real institutional needs. Finally, this process yielded 13 design principles which could be grouped into five focus areas that reflect the most salient domains requiring attention (see Fig. 1): (1) Foundations and Motivations for Mobility, (2) Institutional collaboration and communication, (3) Curriculum and Course Design, (4) Cultural Immersion and Socio-Cultural Experiences, (5) Student Support.



Fig. 1: Focus areas and design principles for mobility in music teacher education (Screenshot *TEAM* website)[6]

[6] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/study-abroad

Focus Areas and Design Principles in Detail

Below, each focus area is first introduced in general terms, followed by concise descriptions of its associated design principles (DP). Full, expanded versions that include detailed examples, roles, and implementation strategies are available in our digital tool, *The Mobility Designer* (see the Mobility Designer section).

Focus Area 1 – Foundations and Motivations for Mobility: This focus area addresses how institutions frame and value mobility. Our findings showed that where mobility was treated as marginal or optional extra, participation remained low and unequally distributed. By contrast, institutions that communicated mobility as a standard, expected and educationally meaningful part of the programme created more robust participation patterns. Focus Area I, therefore, concentrates on institutional culture and the narratives surrounding mobility.

> DP 1.1 – Promote a Culture of Mobility: Many institutions treat mobility as an add-on rather than an integrated part of the study programme. DP1 aims to embed mobility into programme identity and communication from the outset, so that going abroad is seen as a realistic and legitimate option for a broad range of students. (Example: First-year orientation sessions introduce mobility opportunities, their timing in the programme, and funding options.)

> DP 1.2 – Promote Mobility as a Growth Opportunity: Students emphasised that mobility boosted their confidence, adaptability and musical development. Institutions should frame mobility not primarily as a logistical challenge but as an educational pathway for personal and professional growth and recognise these outcomes explicitly. (Example: Returning students share mobility reflections in core courses, linking exchange experiences to teacher competences and career trajectories.)

Focus Area 2 – Institutional Collaboration and Communication: Mobility depends on more than individual student initiative; it is enabled or blocked by relationships between institutions and by internal coordination. The data revealed that weak or inactive partnerships, unclear responsibilities and fragmented communication often undermined otherwise promising mobility plans. Focus Area II, therefore, targets how institutions collaborate, both externally and internally, to make mobility workable.

> DP 2.1 – Strategic Institutional Partnerships: Not all exchange partnerships are equally useful for MTE. This DP calls for deliberate, reciprocal partnerships with institutions whose programme structures, pedagogical approaches and language

offerings align with MTE needs. (Example: Programme leaders annually review partner institutions and prioritise a small set of well-aligned mobility partners for targeted promotion and development.)

DP 2.2 – Academic and Administrative Collaboration and Communication: Breakdowns in communication between academic and administrative staff frequently hinder mobility. Therefore, this DP encourages joint processes, clear responsibilities and regular coordination within and between institutions to ensure consistent information and coherent support for students. (Example: Before departure, a brief joint meeting between the student, the programme leader and the international coordinator is used to finalise the learning agreement and clarify roles.)

Focus Area 3 – Curriculum and Course Design: Structural rigidity was one of the most pervasive barriers we found in our data: tightly sequenced curricula, incompatible course formats and opaque recognition rules made mobility risky and unpredictable. This area concentrates on the design of curricula and courses, aiming to create structures that enable rather than obstruct mobility, while preserving academic standards.

DP 3.1 – Alignment of Partner Curricula: Differences in course structures, credit systems and assessment formats often block mobility. Aligning core elements between partners makes mobility more predictable and reduces the burden on individual students to negotiate ad hoc solutions. (Example: Institutions jointly create a mobility matrix mapping equivalent courses and workloads across programmes.)

DP 3.2 – Student-Specific Curriculum and Course Planning: Even with aligned curricula, students need flexible, personalised planning. This DP facilitates adaptations before and during mobility, guided by learning outcomes rather than rigid course lists, and backed by trust in students' capacity to make well-informed choices. (Example: If a student discovers a particularly relevant local ensemble project, advisors could swiftly approve it as a substitute for an elective course.)

DP 3.3 – Predefined Mobility Packages: Predefined packages offer structured sets of courses and co-curricular experiences, reducing uncertainty and making exchange options more transparent and attractive. (Example: A Community Music Semester package could combine pedagogy courses, a school-based practicum, ensemble participation and a local culture module.)

DP 3.4 – Transfer of Credits Process: Students often experience anxiety around credit recognition and graduation timing. Institutions should ensure transparent, efficient and predictable credit transfer procedures. (Example: Concise guidelines outlining grade conversion rules, required documentation and a maximum processing time for recognising exchange credits.)

Focus Area 4 – Cultural Immersion and Socio-Cultural Experiences: Students described mobility as transformative when they were able to participate meaningfully in local musical and social life; conversely, isolation and cultural disorientation were significant sources of dissatisfaction. Focus Area IV emphasises the socio-cultural dimensions of mobility, recognising that intercultural learning is not automatic but requires intentional preparation and facilitation.

DP 4.1 – Communication Competence (General and Music-Related): Language and communication challenges influence both learning and social integration. Institutions should support students' communicative readiness and highlight musical communication as a core intercultural skill. (Example: Incoming students receive access to short host-language courses and are paired with language buddies from the music student community.)

DP 4.2 – Socio-Cultural Awareness and Engagement: Cultural disorientation and loneliness were frequent challenges. Structured social opportunities and transparent cultural information can mitigate these effects and turn difference into a resource for learning. (Example: Host institutions organise welcome events and ensemble projects where international and local students rehearse and perform together.)

DP 4.3 – Culture as Part of Exchange Study Plans: The local culture should not remain purely extracurricular. Integrating culturally specific artistic and educational practices into formal study plans enriches mobility and strengthens intercultural pedagogy. (Example: Exchange students enrol in a course on local music traditions or join a folk music ensemble as a recognised component of their academic programme.)

Focus Area 5 – Student Support: Finally, even the most well-designed curriculum and partnerships cannot compensate for serious practical or emotional difficulties. The participants in our study highlighted housing, finances, health and well-being as decisive factors for whether mobility remained sustainable. Focus Area V, therefore, consolidates principles related to practical support and care.

> DP 5.1 – Practical Support Services (Housing, Visa, Finances): Practical obstacles such as housing insecurity, unclear visa procedures or financial strain can overshadow the academic value of mobility. Institutions should provide reliable, centralised support before and during mobility. (Example: Host institutions maintain a verified housing list, provide up-to-date visa guides for common countries they receive students from, and coordinate with home institutions on available funding schemes.)
>
> DP 5.2 – Health and Well-Being: Students' emotional and physical well-being directly affects their capacity to learn abroad. Dedicated points of contact and structured check-ins help maintain safety and support throughout the mobility cycle. (Example: Each outgoing student is assigned a named contact person who checks on them during the first weeks abroad and can facilitate access to counselling or other services if or when needed.)

Together, these five focus areas and 13 design principles form the basis for our *Mobility Designer* framework (Section 5). In practice, they are not isolated silos, rather they reinforce one another. For instance, a strong partnership (Focus II) is what makes curriculum alignment (Focus III) feasible, and both are bolstered by a culture that values mobility (Focus I). Likewise, good support (Focus V) ensures students can fully engage in cultural experiences (Focus IV).

The Mobility Designer: From Principles to a Digital Tool

Design principles are only beneficial if they are actually used. To support institutions in applying the design principles introduced above, we developed the *Mobility Designer* (link to website), which is an online tool that translates the principles into a practical and accessible resource. While the principles provide conceptual direction, the tool offers a structured way for programme leaders, teachers, international office staff and students to explore, reflect on and operationalise these principles in their own contexts.

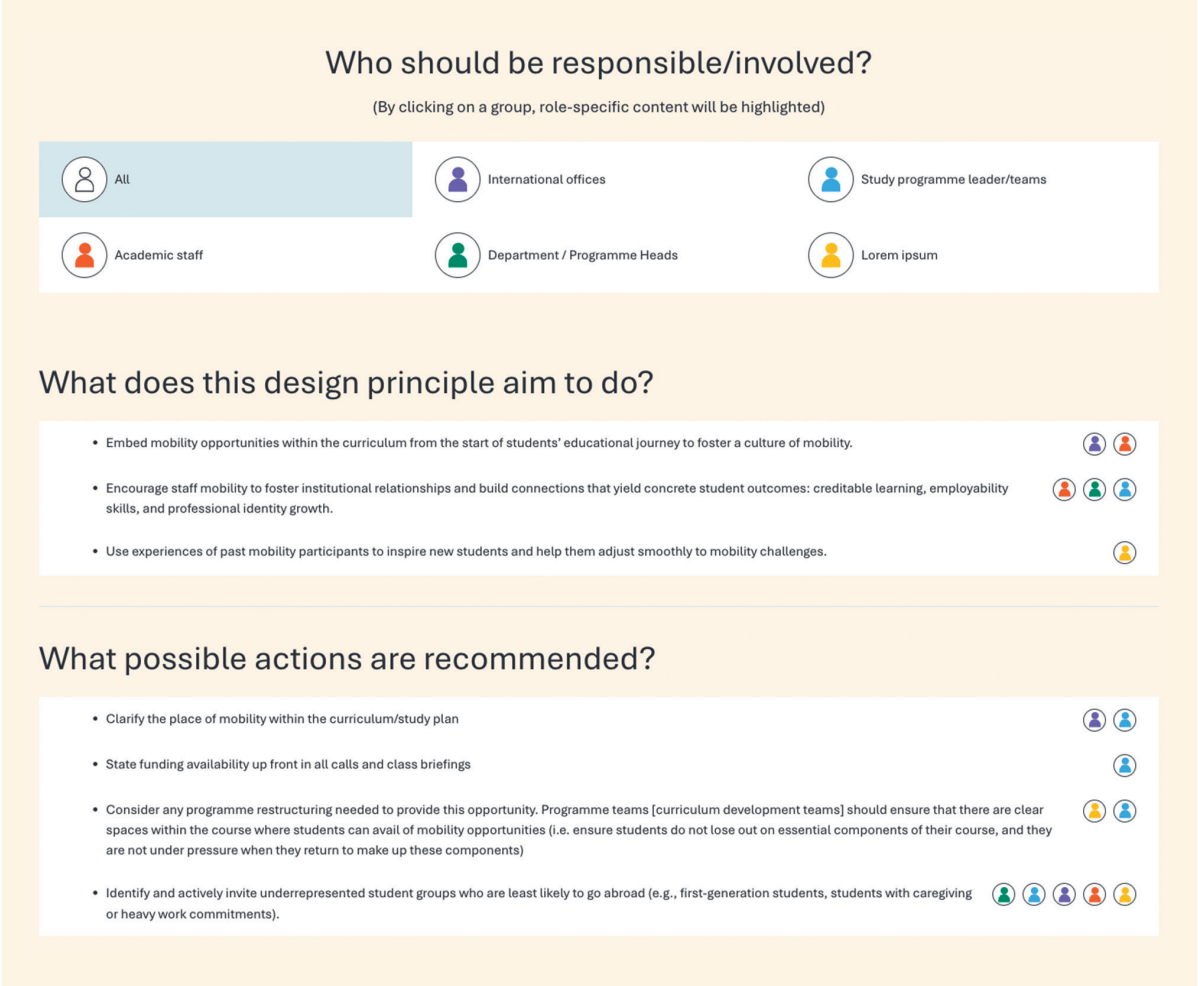


Fig. 2: Actions section as part of design principle 1.1 in the *Mobility Designer* (Screenshot *TEAM* website)

The tool is organised around the five focus areas and 13 design principles, each presented through concise explanations and key considerations. Before users are invited to explore the various design principles across multiple levels, from overarching goals to concrete implementation details, the *Mobility Designer* first introduces each focus area through a short video. In these videos, students, teachers and international office staff share their experiences, giving an initial sense of what each focus area is about and why it matters for mobility in MTE.

In addition to the content of each design principle as outlined in Section 4, the *Mobility Designer* adds two further layers. First, for each design principle, the tool indicates when in the overall timeline of mobility, it is most relevant, from preparation through the mobility period itself to post-return follow-up. Second, it offers a range of "specific actions" for each design principle that institutions can use as concrete inspiration for implementation in their own contexts.

Furthermore, users can navigate the tool according to their role or primary interests: programme leaders may focus on curriculum alignment or partnership development, while students may be more interested in cultural engagement or support services. A role-specific filter function allows users to activate a particular role; the *Mobility Designer* then highlights the aspects of each design principle that are especially relevant for that role, making the principles more directly actionable. At the same time, the *Mobility Designer* allows institutions to self-assess their current mobility practices. By comparing existing structures with the design principles, users can identify strengths, gaps and areas for improvement. Therefore, the tool functions as a developmental guide and as an evaluative instrument for monitoring progress over time. Its modular structure allows institutions to work incrementally, focusing on selected focus areas or principles rather than attempting comprehensive reform all at once.

As this chapter cannot provide extensive detail on each design principle, readers are encouraged to engage directly with the open-access *Mobility Designer* in its online form.[7]

Discussion and Outlook: Towards Cultures of Mobility in MTE

The design principles and the digital tool developed highlight a shift from understanding mobility as a series of logistical arrangements to viewing it as an intercultural and pedagogical endeavour – one in which students' encounters with unfamiliar educational traditions, musical practices and social norms become central to their professional formation. The findings presented in this chapter emphasise that mobility becomes meaningful and sustainable when institutions move beyond treating it as an exceptional opportunity to embedding it into everyday structures, expectations and relationships. This requires not only curricular and administrative adjustments, but a broader transformation of institutional culture – that is, in how institutions collectively imagine, value and support international experiences for their students.

Normalising mobility begins with acknowledging its complexity. For many students, going abroad is not simply a matter of choosing a destination, but rather involves navigating uncertainty, negotiating identity and, in some cases, overcoming genuine barriers related to finances, well-being or access. Institutions that recognise these realities and respond with coherent strategies such as clear structures, active partnerships, flexible curricula and reliable support, in turn, create the conditions for mobility to become a realistic option for a broader and more diverse group of students. In doing so, they also help shift mobility from a peripheral activity to a recognised component of becoming a music teacher in a globalised educational landscape.

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[7] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/study-abroad

At the same time, our work points to the need for continued research. The design principles and the *Mobility Designer* represent a significant step in conceptualising how mobility can be redesigned, but they also open new avenues for inquiry. From this stage, future research projects should focus on how institutions actually engage with the tool, which principles are prioritised, and what kinds of changes occur when programmes and international offices adopt them in practice. Evaluating implementation processes and subsequent student experiences will be essential for refining the framework further.

Future work may also explore how the principles intersect with broader developments in higher education, such as hybrid mobility formats, digital exchange platforms or evolving teacher education policies across Europe and beyond. Understanding how these innovations interact with the existing challenges identified in this study will help ensure that mobility in music teacher education remains responsive, inclusive and educationally grounded.

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