



**Discussion Paper - Thematic session 2:**  
**Across sectors and disciplines: the mobility of talent**

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Panel:

**Moderator:** *Jordi Currell Gotor* - Director of Life-long-learning, Higher Education and International Affairs, DG Education and Culture, European Commission

**Panellists:**

*Dr. Giovanni Colombo* - EIT Governing Board and Executive Committee

*Mika Helenius* - Aalto University, Director of Service Design and Engineering Master programme and EIT ICT Labs representative

*Danny Goderis* - Vice-President, Bell Labs Belgium

*Alexa Mabonga* - Global Vice-President, Information Management, AIESEC International

**Rapporteur:** *Christian Tauch* - Head of the Education Department, German Rectors conference

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**The objective:**

This session's objective is to underline the importance of inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary mobility for students, academic staff and employees in the context of the KICs and their co-location centres. The discussions should lead to 3-5 recommendations from the panel and the audience to the EIT.

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**The context:**

Mobility as a term has several meanings in relation to higher education institutions and industry. Firstly it can refer to inter-disciplinarily, i.e. exposing students, academic staff and employees to issues and problems outside their core discipline. This mental concept can contribute to the creation of an open-mindedness and sensitivity that should be explicitly encouraged as it will help Europe to live up to the big challenges it is facing.

Secondly, physical mobility is widely used as a tool to promote knowledge transfer between both sectors through the mobility of researchers and post docs who spend time in short and long term industry placements. Another popular form of mobility is the placement of students in companies to get first-hand working experience, to help industry improve their understanding of the types of skills available among students and to instil a sense of entrepreneurship and innovation into students and postgraduates.

Other types of mobility include on the one hand the placement of teachers and lecturers in firms and on the other hand the use of industry staff to teach short academic courses with direct relevance to their industry to increase students' direct knowledge and understanding of labour market needs. Finally, the mobility of talent also includes the move of practitioners, such as engineers, managers, etc., from business to academia. All these different types of inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral mobility can of course be combined with trans-national mobility, since intercultural competences can underpin a mobile and creative mindset.

A lot has happened in this regard in the past years but the overall level of contact, interaction and mobility between universities and businesses is still far too low. Targeted action needs to be taken, and the KICs can take a leading role in this.

The KICs should ensure that internships, research mobility programmes and collaborative projects, which allow students to work with or within a company, alone or in interdisciplinary groups, become an integral part of learning programmes in all disciplines and should carry ECTS credits.



However, mobility within the KICs should also involve academic and university management staff, thereby allowing universities to build up the networks from which future internships, employment and projects for students can be developed. The direct exposure of staff to the reality of business will help to understand and anticipate the changing training and innovation needs of industry.

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**Discussion Questions:**

- How should the mobility-related needs of the participating businesses be communicated to higher education institutions within the KICs and vice versa? How can KIC co-location centres facilitate this communication?
- How is learning mobility of students/graduates (internships) viewed and supported by the universities and by industry?
- What are the respective benefits and obstacles for academics spending time in industry and for practitioners spending time in academia?
- How can partnerships within KIC co-location centres facilitate a smooth transition of students and staff between academia and business as well as optimise the placement of students in the participating companies?
- How can an interdisciplinary mobility be encouraged among students, academic staff and employees?
- How can mobility periods, both geographical and inter-sectoral be incorporated into the KIC study programmes as part of the curriculum and accredited?