Report on ICSE Academy Final Round Table

Milestone 11 / WP6

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WP6

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1. INTRODUCTION

The final Policy Round Table of the ICSE Academy was successfully held on May 9, 2025, in Limassol, Cyprus, with over 40 participants representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders in STEM education. The event aimed to engage experts in discussing the opportunities and challenges of STEM teacher mobility in Europe and to collaboratively generate practical policy recommendations to support and enhance such mobility across Europe. The third round table, which was a follow up from two succesful round tables that took place online during the first two years of the Project, was organized as a day event. The Round Table combined an introductory keynote, panel discussions, and an interactive World Café format to foster deep engagement, knowledge exchange, and co-construction of ideas.

1.1. Opening and Keynote Address

The day commenced with a plenary talk by **Professor Hilda Borko** from Stanford University's Center to Support Excellence in Teaching. Her presentation, titled *"The Learning to Facilitate Framework: Preparing and Supporting Professional Development Leaders"*, introduced participants to a structured approach for supporting teacher learning and professional development through problem-solving cycles. Her insights set the tone for a day of critical reflection on the support mechanisms needed to empower STEM educators in increasingly mobile and dynamic educational environments.

This was followed by a welcome from the Conference Chair, Maria Evagorou (University of Nicosia, Cyprus), who also introduce ICSE Academy, the different learning formats and the different type of mobilities that were introduced as part of the Project. Then Marta Romero-Ariza (ICSE Academy & University of Jaén, Spain) emphasised the importance of teacher mobility and international collaboration in addressing persistent challenges in STEM education and presented outcomes from the teacher mobilities within the ICSE Academy project.

1.2. Expert Panel Discussion

The panel discussion, *"Empowering STEM Teachers for Mobility: Crafting Effective Policies for Future Success"*, brought together policy and institutional leaders:

- **Agueda Gras-Velazquez** (European SchoolNet, Belgium)
- **Verena Bodenbender** (Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg, Germany)
- **Maria Podlasek-Ziegler** (DG EAC – European Commission, Brussels)
- **Gregory Makrides** (STEAME Teacher Academy, Poland)

The panel explored critical themes such as: existing policy barriers and enablers; the role of certification, funding, and institutional support and broader impacts on teaching quality and student learning outcomes. The panelists shared examples of successful programs, gaps in policy implementation, and proposed concrete actions to promote mobility opportunities for educators.

Photo 1. The panelists

1.3. World Café: Collaborative Policy Exploration

The core of the Round Table was an engaging World Café session where participants divided into four moderated discussion groups. Each group focused on a specific set of questions, rotating across key themes such as:

- Benefits and current barriers of STEM teacher mobility
- Policy and institutional mechanisms to enhance mobility
- Best practices and innovations from European contexts
- Role of digital tools and technology in supporting mobility

Facilitators Project partners, with each table using visual tools like posters and markers to record and summarise ideas. The discussions generated rich insights into the structural and systemic conditions needed to enable meaningful and sustained teacher mobility. Each group presented their key takeaways in a plenary session that followed.
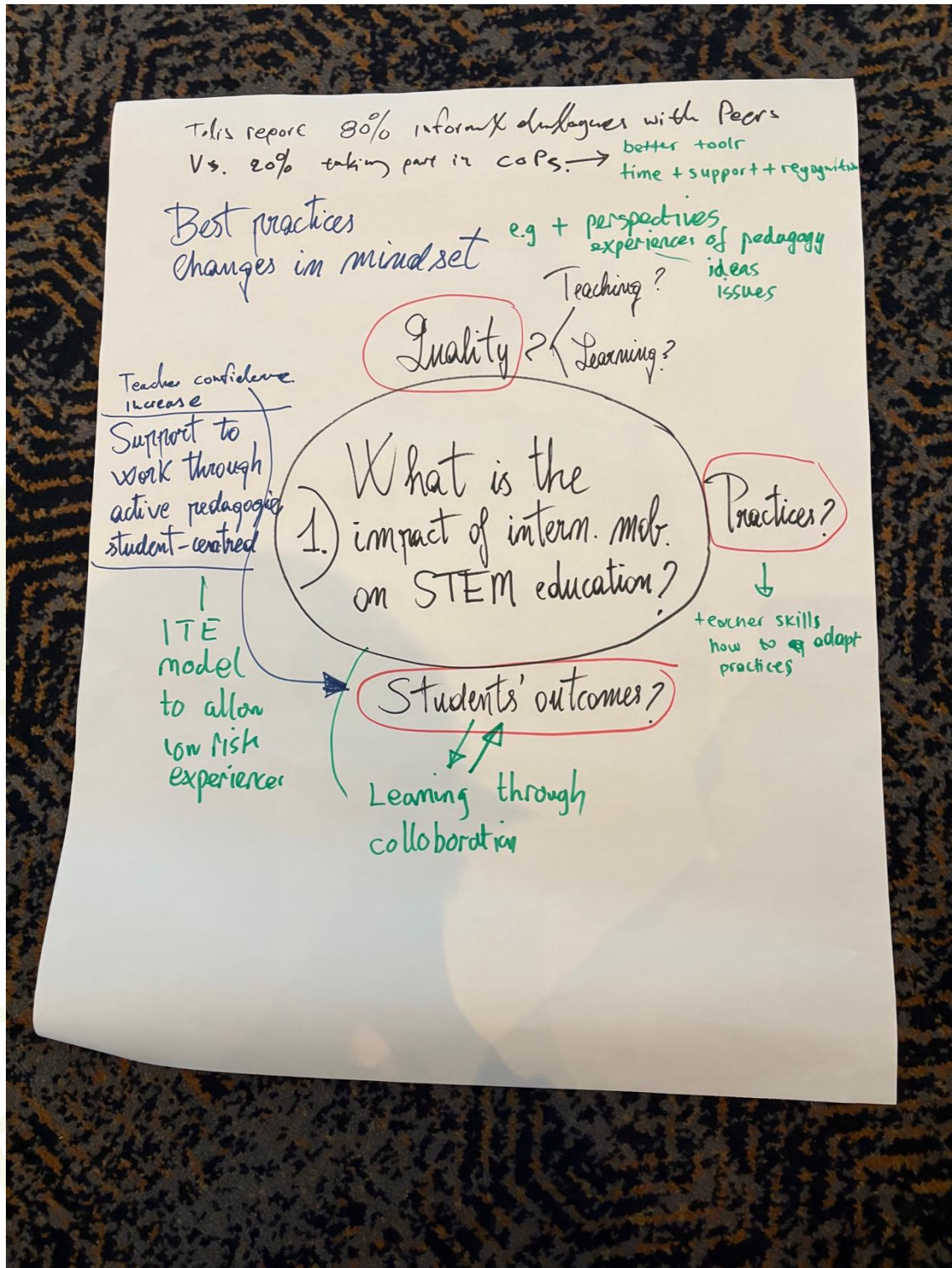

Photo 2. World Café discusión

Photo 3. A poster prepared during the world café discussion

1.4. Sharing of Best Practices and Closing

The closing session of the Round Table showcased effective practices from various ICSE-related initiatives:

- **Michiel Doorman** shared experiences from the ICSE Academy
- **Gregory Makrides** presented insights from the STEAME Teacher Academy
- **Natalia Spyropoulou** highlighted SPICE Academy outcomes
- **Mirjam Hotlkemper** from the NBS4S project provided examples of nature-based learning in transnational teacher collaborations.

These case studies offered practical and adaptable models for enhancing teacher mobility and collaboration at both institutional and national levels.

The event concluded with a summary of "flashlight" reflections based on the discusions taking place during the interaction with teachers, researchers and policy makers.

Photo 4. Presentation of a mobility from the NBS4S project

2. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

During the panel discussion and the World Café discussions, participants shared a range of reflections, ideas, and concerns related to STEM teacher mobility. A recurring theme was the practical difficulty teachers face when engaging in mobility opportunities, including logistical barriers such as travel costs, time away from regular duties, and limited institutional support. Participants emphasized that even when opportunities exist, the lack of flexible structures and resources often hinders teacher participation.

One of the cited examples of effective practice was job shadowing, which allows teachers to observe peers in different educational systems, fostering meaningful professional exchange and reflection. Similarly, increasing access to international teacher conferences was discussed as a low-barrier but impactful form of mobility that encourages networking and the dissemination of innovative teaching practices. Participants also discussed systemic needs, including better digital tools, dedicated time, and consistent institutional support to make mobility feasible and meaningful. The lack of recognition or formal certification for teachers who engage in mobility activities was raised as a demotivating factor. Attendees agreed on the importance of developing a European-wide framework for recognizing and accrediting teacher mobility experiences, but at the same time discussed the systemic difficulties in doing so. Finally, the groups reflected on the influence of larger-scale projects like the Teacher Academies (ICSE, STEAME, SPICE). These initiatives were seen as essential drivers of mobility by providing structured opportunities, partnerships, and sustained professional growth for teachers.

Photo 5. Round table participants