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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 28 June 2011

‘Youth on the move’ — promoting the learning mobility of young people

(2011/C 199/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

(1) In its communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020 — A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’, the Commission set out as one of its priorities the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation (‘smart growth’), and highlighted a flagship initiative (‘Youth on the Move’) in order to enhance the performance and international attractiveness of Europe’s higher education institutions and to raise the overall quality of all levels of education and training in the Union, combining both excellence and equity, by promoting the mobility of young people and improving their employment situation. This Recommendation forms part of the ‘Youth on the Move’ initiative, and is consistent with the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines.

(2) Learning mobility, meaning transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences, is one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen their future employability, as well as their intercultural awareness, personal development, creativity and active citizenship. Europeans who are mobile as young learners are more likely to be mobile as workers later in life. Learning mobility can make education and training systems and institutions

more open, more European and international, more accessible and more efficient. It can also strengthen Europe’s competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society.

(3) The benefits of mobility were underlined by the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 14 December 2000 concerning an action plan for mobility ⁽¹⁾, and by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers ⁽²⁾. That 2001 Recommendation invited Member States to take appropriate steps to remove obstacles to the mobility of these groups.

(4) Much has been achieved in the area of youth mobility since the 2001 Recommendation. However, not all instruments and tools are used to the fullest extent possible and many obstacles remain. Moreover, the whole context of learning mobility has changed considerably in the last decade, inter alia, due to globalisation, technological progress, including information and communication technologies (‘ICTs’) and stronger emphasis on employability and on the social dimension.

(5) The conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 22 May 2008 on promoting creativity and innovation through education and training emphasised that diversity and multicultural environments can stimulate creativity.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 371, 23.12.2000, p. 4.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 215, 9.8.2001, p. 30.

- (6) In its conclusions on youth mobility of 21 November 2008, the Council invited Member States to adopt the objective of gradually making periods of learning abroad the rule rather than the exception for all young Europeans. The Council invited the Commission to establish a work plan to include cross-border mobility measures in all European programmes and to support Member States in their efforts to promote mobility.
- (7) The Council conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders recognised that teaching staff at all levels could draw greater benefit from increased learning mobility and networking.
- (8) The Commission published the Green Paper on promoting the learning mobility of young people in July 2009, which launched a public consultation on a number of questions, such as: how best to boost mobility opportunities for young Europeans, what obstacles to mobility still need to be overcome and how all players involved can join forces in a new partnership for learning mobility. The feedback to this consultation has provided important input to this Recommendation, as have opinions received from the European Economic and Social Committee⁽¹⁾ and the Committee of the Regions⁽²⁾.
- (9) Young researchers' mobility must also be encouraged in order to ensure the Union does not lag behind its competitors in research and innovation. The Commission Communication of 23 May 2008 on better careers and more mobility: a European partnership for researchers proposed a set of actions to ensure that researchers across the Union benefit from the right training, attractive careers and removal of barriers to their mobility, while the Council conclusions of 2 March 2010 on European researchers' mobility and careers identified concrete considerations on how to improve researcher mobility and identified several areas for action in order to promote the free movement of knowledge (the 'fifth freedom').
- (10) Union programmes, in addition to providing substantial support to mobility and contributing to the development and internationalisation of education systems, have enabled the dissemination at the level of the Union of good practice and tools, which aim to facilitate the mobility of young people in all learning and training contexts.
- (11) Economic considerations make it particularly necessary to ensure the efficient use and administrative simplification of existing national and Union programmes and tools for the promotion and support of learning mobility.
- (12) This Recommendation refers to young people in Europe in all learning and training contexts, at school, in vocational training (school-based or apprenticeships), in short-cycle programmes and within bachelor, master and doctoral degrees, as well as in youth exchanges, voluntary activities or internships, inside or outside the Union. Learning mobility is seen as relevant to all disciplines and areas, such as culture, science, technology, arts and sports, and also for young entrepreneurs and researchers. Within the meaning of this Recommendation, learning covers formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- (13) This Recommendation seeks to encourage Member States to promote the learning mobility of young people and, where possible, to remove obstacles which are impeding progress in this area. At the same time, it fully respects Member States' competences and responsibilities under national and Union legislation.
- (14) This Recommendation also encourages the Member States to use the full potential of existing Union and Bologna instruments to facilitate mobility, in particular the European Quality Charter for Mobility, Europass (including the Diploma Supplement), Youthpass, the European Qualifications Framework, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.
- (15) This Recommendation provides specific guidance on administrative and institutional issues relating to the learning mobility of young people,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES:

1. Information and guidance on opportunities for learning mobility
 - (a) improve the quality of information and guidance on national, regional and local mobility opportunities and grant availability, targeting specific groups of learners, both within and outside the Union. Member States should make use of new, creative and interactive ways to disseminate information, communicate and exchange with young people and all other stakeholders;
 - (b) make information easily accessible to all young people regarding learning mobility, for example through centralised web portals and other web services, support centres (such as 'European offices'), information and counselling services. The use of Internet-based services can also be helpful. It is recommended to use the Euroguidance network in this context;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 255, 22.9.2010, p. 81.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 175, 1.7.2009, p. 31.

- (c) cooperate with the Commission to further develop and update the PLOTEUS portal on learning opportunities, namely by increasing the number of national information resources that citizens can directly access through the multilingual PLOTEUS interface;
 - (d) encourage the relevant national and regional agencies to ensure that their work is integrated with that of stakeholders in learning mobility to ensure a clear, coherent and simple flow of information.
2. Motivation to participate in transnational learning mobility activities
- (a) promote the added value of learning mobility among learners, their families, teachers, trainers, youth workers and employers in terms of self-fulfilment and the development of professional, linguistic, social and intercultural competences, creativity, active citizenship and future employability, in particular in the context of an increasingly global labour market;
 - (b) encourage networking between the relevant organisations, stakeholders and other actors, in order to ensure a coordinated approach to motivating young people;
 - (c) encourage peer exchange between mobile and not yet mobile learners in order to improve motivation;
 - (d) foster a 'mobility culture', for example by mainstreaming mobility opportunities into all learning contexts and by promoting greater social recognition of the value of learning mobility.
3. Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility, particularly with regard to foreign language skills and intercultural awareness
- (a) acknowledge the importance of language learning and acquiring intercultural competences starting at early stages of education, by encouraging quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility in both general and vocational education;
 - (b) encourage teachers to use more innovative methods for the delivery of language learning, including those based on ICTs. Particular attention should be given to disadvantaged learners and their specific needs;
 - (c) foster the acquisition of basic digital competences by young people so as to ensure that they can prepare their mobility in optimal conditions, as well as take advantage of new opportunities for virtual mobility, which complement physical mobility;
 - (d) encourage the development of partnerships and exchanges between education institutions, as well as between providers of non-formal learning, in order to better prepare periods of mobility.
4. Administrative and institutional issues relating to the learning period abroad
- (a) resolve, where possible, administrative issues that create difficulties in obtaining visas and residency permits for non-European Union residents who wish to pursue a learning opportunity in a Member State;
 - (b) reduce, where possible, administrative burdens in order to promote learning mobility to and from the Union. Greater cooperation and partnerships with third countries, agreements between the relevant authorities across Member States and bilateral agreements between institutions would facilitate learning mobility between the Union and other parts of the world;
 - (c) consider issues resulting from different legal rules across the Union with regard to minors taking part in learning mobility schemes;
 - (d) define clear systems for encouraging apprentices in initial vocational education to engage in learning mobility. To foster the learning mobility of apprentices and also of young researchers, Member States should, in accordance with their national legislation, ensure appropriate access to protection in terms of insurance, labour standards, health and safety requirements and tax, social security and pension arrangements;
 - (e) actively encourage jointly developed and delivered education and training programmes with institutions in other countries;
 - (f) integrate opportunities for learning mobility into the curriculum or training programme, where appropriate. In addition, provide opportunities also for short mobility periods, which may help to encourage more young people to be mobile.
5. Portability of grants and loans
- promote the portability of grants, loans and appropriate access to relevant benefits, in order to facilitate the learning mobility of young people.
6. Quality of learning mobility
- (a) use existing quality charters, such as the European Quality Charter for Mobility and national and regional-level charters, in order to ensure that mobility is of high quality, and promote quality assurance for each aspect of mobility;

- (b) encourage continuous dialogue and clear arrangements between the sending and the hosting institutions, for example by using learning agreements. Encourage the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired, transparent selection procedures, peer exchange and structured learner support;
- (c) encourage regular feedback mechanisms following a period of learning mobility, in order to ensure the high quality of the experience;
- (d) encourage mentoring and peer learning schemes to ensure the integration of mobile learners in the host country or institution;
- (e) encourage the provision of convenient and affordable facilities, such as housing, catering and transport, for mobile learners;
- (f) encourage the provision of guidance to learners on how to make the best use of learning mobility in order to develop their knowledge, skills and competences;
- (g) encourage the provision of guidance to mobile learners after their return on how to make use of the competences acquired during their stay abroad. Provide help with reintegration after a long stay abroad.

7. Recognition of learning outcomes

- (a) promote the implementation and use of Union instruments which facilitate the transfer and validation of the learning outcomes of mobility experiences between Member States. Those instruments should also be better publicised, especially among employers;
- (b) improve procedures and guidelines for the validation and recognition of both informal and non-formal learning in order to facilitate more mobility, for example in voluntary activities and youth work;
- (c) address the issue of validation and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences, such as foreign language skills, acquired during mobility periods abroad;
- (d) support, and enhance the visibility of, contact points where individuals can obtain information on how their qualifications can be recognised and certified after their return from abroad;

8. Disadvantaged learners

provide disadvantaged learners, who may be deprived of opportunities for learning mobility, with targeted information on available programmes and support tailored to their specific needs.

9. Partnerships and funding

- (a) encourage learning mobility partnerships with both public and private actors operating at regional and local level. Chambers of commerce, business, vocational education and training and professional associations and non-governmental organisations can be valuable partners in this context. In addition, networks of schools, universities and enterprises exchanging information, news and experience should be fostered;
- (b) encourage regional and local authorities to play an increasing role in promoting learning mobility by building on existing networks and creating new partnerships;
- (c) stimulate active cooperation and communication, including awareness-raising and advocacy about the value of learning mobility, between the education and the business sector, since the involvement of businesses is an important factor in strengthening youth mobility, for example by providing work placements. Where appropriate, provide incentives, such as special grants to businesses, in accordance with Union and national legislation, aimed at encouraging their engagement in providing placements;
- (d) contribute to the coherence and complementarity of national and Union programmes, with a view to creating synergies and improving the efficiency of mobility programmes.

10. Role of multipliers

- (a) encourage the use of 'multipliers' such as teachers, trainers, families, youth workers and young people who have participated in a mobility experience to inspire and motivate young people to become mobile. Encourage employers in the field of education to recognise and value teachers', trainers' and youth workers' commitment to learning mobility;
- (b) promote and support opportunities for learning mobility as a component in the initial training and continuous professional development of heads of educational institutions, teachers, trainers, administrative staff and youth workers.

11. Monitoring progress

- (a) support — on a voluntary basis — work on the feasibility of creating a methodological framework for monitoring progress in promoting, and removing obstacles to, learning mobility, based on a preparatory study carried out by the Eurydice network with the assistance of experts from the Member States and making full use of existing sources of data and information;

(b) report to the Commission on progress in promoting, and removing obstacles to, learning mobility within the framework of the existing reporting structures of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

HEREBY TAKES NOTE OF THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO:

1. ensure — in close cooperation with the Member States — the full and efficient use of Union programmes and budgets, in particular in the field of lifelong learning, in order to extend and broaden learning opportunities for young people, including by considering use of the European structural and cohesion funds and the European Investment Bank ⁽¹⁾;
2. support Member States' efforts aimed at promoting learning mobility, in particular by considering the implications of this recommendation for the next generation of Union programmes in the fields of education and training and youth and for the next multi-annual financial framework of the Union;
3. improve, in cooperation with the Member States, the statistical framework used to measure transnational learning mobility;
4. study the feasibility, in close cooperation with experts from the Member States, of developing a methodological framework — referred to in the Commission communication on 'Youth on the Move' as a 'Mobility Scoreboard' — for monitoring progress in promoting, and removing obstacles to, learning mobility;
5. evaluate progress in removing obstacles to learning mobility after the first four years of implementation of this Recommendation.

Done at Luxembourg, 28 June 2011.

For the Council
The President
FAZEKAS S.

⁽¹⁾ As well as considering the feasibility of developing new means of financial support — including a possible European student loans' facility — in accordance with the Council's invitation to the Commission in the November 2008 conclusions on youth mobility.