

# Quality in Educational Mobility

## A Statement of Principles

### 1. Introduction

The Mobility Action Plan endorsed by the 2000 Nice Council and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001<sup>1</sup> gave the impetus for a series of measures to be taken by the Member States and the Commission. The importance of educational mobility (in the broad sense) was confirmed in the “Work programme on the objectives of education and training”<sup>2</sup> approved by the 2002 Barcelona European Council, and is again underlined in the joint Council /Commission report to the Spring European Council this year<sup>3</sup>. Finally, it should be noted that the Commission’s report on the follow-up of the 2001 Recommendation<sup>4</sup> summarises the progress accomplished since 2001 and contains a number of recommendations to improve the context for mobility, including the following:

"The Commission and the Member States will develop by the end of 2004 a European quality charter for mobility. This should define a common European set of principles, to be implemented on a voluntary basis, offering the opportunity to build mutual trust between all parties and providing Member States with a European context for defining their own policies".

A set of principles which could underpin that Charter, based on the work of the Mobility Working Group, can be found in section 3 of this paper.

### 2. Comment

The benefits derived from educational mobility depend mainly on the quality of the practical arrangements: preparation, learning environment, monitoring, support, recognition. Educational mobility should be a useful learning experience, and this can be made much more likely if proper attention is paid to proper planning, implementation and evaluation.

The set of common principles in section 3 could apply to all forms of mobility abroad for learning purposes. It lists a series of issues that should be thought about when mobility is being planned, and provides a set of guidelines that should be used as needed when education mobility is being organised.

It is, of course, voluntary; mobility is not an issue for binding rules, nor should we add bureaucratic complexities which might hinder the growth of transnational mobility. However, as mobility and exchanges do grow in number, and as the recognition of educational periods spent in other countries therefore becomes more important, the principles can help to build

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<sup>1</sup> 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 (2000/C 371/03), OJ C 371 of 12.12.2000, p. 4. Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001 on the mobility of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers and teachers and trainers, OJ L 215 of 9.8.2001, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2001)501 final.

<sup>3</sup> “Education and Training 2010 - The success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms”: OJ C104/1 of 30 April 2004.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2004)21 final of 23 January 2004.

mutual trust between all those involved in mobility, including public authorities, organisations and other stakeholders.

The principles set out in section 3 are “universal” in the sense that they can be applied to all possible types of mobility for learning purposes: formal, informal and non-formal learning, short and long periods, school- or university-based and on-the-job learning, for young and adult learners, etc. Obviously, the way the principles apply will change with the sorts of mobility concerned: a long-term student mobility of 10 months should be prepared in quite different ways to a short placement of four weeks or a school exchange of 10 days. There will be cases where some principles are more important than others. Some Member States might also wish to make certain of the points compulsory, while others may be considered as options. In this sense, the principles provide a reference or a template to be tailored to the particular case.

The principles set out in section 3 are not in final form, and further work maybe needed to make them more complete and more user-friendly to read.

### 3. Statement of Principles on Quality in Educational Mobility

- (1) *Learning plan.* Where mobility has an educational purpose, a learning plan should be drawn up in advance and agreed by everyone involved: sending institution, hosting organisation and participant. The agreement should set out the learning aims and expected outcomes, and show how these will be reached.
- (2) *Recognition and transparency.* If a study or placement period abroad is an integral part of a formal study or training programme, this fact should be stated, and the way in which recognition will work should be set out in the learning agreement. For other types of mobility, and particularly those in the context of non-formal or informal education and training, a certificate should be issued so that the participant is able to record his or her participation or learning outcomes in a satisfactory and credible way.
- (3) *Preparation.* Preparation should where possible include linguistic, cultural, practical, pedagogical and personal aspects. It may be appropriate also (e.g. for disadvantaged groups) to discuss motivational issues.
- (4) *Linguistic preparation and assistance.* Participants should be given the opportunity to become acquainted with, or to increase their knowledge, of the language of the host country. This may include language assessment and language learning before departure, as well as linguistic support in the host country.
- (5) *A mentor.* The hosting organisation (educational establishment, enterprise, etc.) should appoint a mentor who will be responsible for the proper integration of the participant into the host environment and will act as a contact and support person if needed.
- (6) *Logistical assistance.* Adequate logistical assistance (information and practical assistance with travel arrangements, insurance, residence and/or working permits, social security, accommodation etc.) should be provided.
- (7) *Debriefing and evaluation.* Guidance on how to make use of competences and skills acquired during the stay should be offered to participants when they return to their home country. The stay should be properly evaluated, to see whether the aims of the learning agreement have been met.
- (8) *Assistance with re-integration.* Appropriate help with re-integration into the social, educational or professional environment of the home country should be available to people returning after long-term mobility.
- (9) *Commitments and responsibilities.* The responsibilities arising from these quality criteria should be clearly defined and communicated to everyone involved – including participants. It should be clear who is responsible for what, and this should be confirmed in writing.