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Mobility around Europe !! The European Programmes on mobility

The European Union encourages a constant exchange of people through its mobility policies around Europe, towards the achievement of the Lisbon strategy goals for 2010 which foresee that EU will become the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world...". In this regard intercultural dialogue and exchange, through a direct contact with 'the others', can represent a significant way for the enhancement of personal and social life, along with the enrichment of educational and/or vocational aspects of life.

EU support mobility, since a young age, through specific programmes and actions, which therefore implement European policies and strategies.

The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 (LLP - http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm) allows mobility for different target groups, from the children to the adults, through specific actions . In this regard, the LLP general objective states "...In particular, it aims to foster interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference." (ref. Dec. 1720/2006)

The LLP's 4 sub-programmes will be listed and shortly described below, only in relation to their 'mobility' aspects.

✓ **COMENIUS – for pre-school and school education (till upper secondary education)**

Comenius foresees exchange of pupils and educational staff, with mobility to schools for pupils and placements in schools or enterprises for educational staff. The 80 % of the amount of funds allocated to the Comenius programme in the period 2007-'13 is devoted to support mobility actions.

✓ **ERASMUS - formal higher education and vocational education and training**

(University and doctoral studies)

Erasmus, among other aspects, aims "to increase the volume of student and teaching staff mobility throughout Europe, so as to contribute to the achievement by 2012 of at least 3

million individual participants in student mobility under the Erasmus programme and its predecessor programmes". Even in this case, the 80 % of the amount of Erasmus funds in 2007-'13 are devoted to support mobility actions.

✓ **LEONARDO da VINCI – for vocational education and training**

The Leonardo sub-programme, among its aims, has the improvement of the quality and increasing of mobility's volume throughout Europe for people involved in initial vocational education and training and in continuing training. The goal is to increase the placements in enterprises to at least 80.000 per year by the end of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2013).

✓ **GRUNDTVIG – for all forms of adult education**

Concerning mobility actions, Grundtvig aims at improving the quality and accessibility of mobility, along with increasing of its volume so as to support the mobility of at least 7 000 individuals per year by 2013.

Read other articles on the Europemobility web site to know more in details the peculiarities of each LLP sub-programmes.

Ambassadors: Ane in Glasgow

My name is Ane, I am 20 and I am doing my Higher Secretarial Studies here in the Basque Country. Last summer I had the opportunity to do my vocational training in Glasgow, Scotland. I spent there 3 months and I can say it has been one of the most exciting experiences in my life.

Firstly, when my tutor offered me this chance, I had some doubts. I had never been abroad such a long time and this grant was for a period of three months in summer. Moreover, after being working and attending classes all year long I was looking forward to spending my holidays relaxed on the beach. Even so I decided to take this grant as it was a unique opportunity which would give me the chance to discover the differences between the Basque Country and Scotland in the area of Administration and how work is carried out in a Scottish office. It was a challenge for me.

So one day after finishing my final exams I was in Glasgow. I took accommodation in a residence which was full of students. I had my own bedroom and met a lot of young people from different countries. During the first week I attended some classes where, in addition to English lessons, the teacher gave us many information about Scotland.

After that, the second Monday I was in Glasgow, I started my work experience at a University. I was assigned to the training unit helping the International Affairs Manager with the student exchanges. We worked together organizing student placements in many countries such as Malta, Italy, France and Spain. At the beginning I was very nervous but immediately she was guiding me through the university and explaining in what my work would consist. At first, I was in charge of simple duties and as time went by I carried out more complex tasks. Within a



very short period of time I felt at home both at the work and within the town. People at work were very friendly and helpful and I learnt a lot about how is the work in an office, it was something new for me. Above all, I improved my English considerably because in the office there was nobody who could speak Spanish. Furthermore, I also learnt some words in Gaelic!

My Leonardo exchange in Glasgow was also a chance for me to visit this beautiful country. During my stay I travelled around Scotland and I also visited some parts of Ireland. I felt in love with the landscape of the countryside and particularly with Edinburg.

In conclusion, this was for me such an amazing experience that I would thoroughly recommend to any student looking to broaden their lives, both educationally and culturally. These three months helped me to gain self-confidence and open my mind in many aspects.

Leonardo is a life-enhancing experience !



What the literature says about overcoming obstacles to mobility

In relation to obstacles identified, the following paragraphs set out in detail specific proposals and recommendations for consideration in relation to improving mobility of young people, apprentices and in some cases workers. These recommendations are purely based on desk research and served as inspiration for developing recommendations related to mobility in IVET.

Lack of pedagogical know-how on learning in placements

Recommendations

Virtual mobility; whereby students can follow modules to collaborate with VET students on joint projects, or whereby VET teachers can share/develop curriculum and practices.

Training/study plan; for every stay abroad undertaken for a learning purpose a learning plan should be elaborated beforehand and agreed by all parties: sending institution, hosting organisation and the participant. This agreement should enumerate the learning aims and expected outcomes and indicate how these will be reached.

Career development; enhancement of the participant's line of study or occupation. The learning experience abroad should be designed in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the participants' educational pathway, both in terms of matching with his/her previous education and of recognising its results for the future.

Lack of (access to) placements abroad

These recommendations seek to ensure an appropriate balance (in terms of their background) of individuals who benefit from student mobility. Some of the recommendations focus on support mechanisms to ensure an appropriate balance of institutions offering placements/work experience, and that marginalised groups of individuals are recognised and adequately provided for. The following table indicates the type of recommendations which are proposed.

Recommendations in improving (access to) placements abroad

"Differentiation"; refers here not only to the different groups of Europeans who are seeking to gain work experience, but also to the differences between large, medium-sized and small companies.

Widening the scope of placements; in Europe, one must consider not only placements within companies but also the possibilities that exist within government bodies and non-profit organisations. With the help of the latest technology, all parties throughout Europe who have an interest in the issue should have access to the necessary information.

Expanding the demographic profile of students; so it reflects better the underlying demographic profile of the European Union.

Mainstreaming-plus; taking concrete measures to redress socio-demographic imbalances in participation. Specific recommendations include: Institutional support structures including user-friendly information, mutual recognition and accreditation arrangements; Personal



support including personal mentoring to improve self-confidence, and; support measures, for example, provision of childcare services.

There are numerous recommendations proposed in this area which cover, for the most part, the provision of information, advice and guidance to students and apprentices wishing to travel to another EU member state. The following table summarises the main recommendations made in relation to this.

Recommendations in relation to information, organisation and administration

Information and advice on opportunities; Provide and exchange information and advice on vacancies and job applications as well as on living and working conditions and other relevant information related to the labour markets in the cross-border region. In addition, production of an inventory of the training opportunities and its provision to the public; possibly trying to study the cross-border needs for vocational training and to propose the organisation of cross-border training activities by using funds from other programmes, in particular Interreg III.

National co-ordination; better coordination of the national structures responsible for providing information in the field of education, training and research and wider distribution of national guides and information leaflets explaining citizens' rights and obligations under the 'citizens first' initiative;

Regional coordination of information; Contribute to the development of this flow of information by direct and regular contacts between the EURES advisers in the region.

Dissemination: wider dissemination of information on the possibility and conditions for achieving transnational mobility.

Logistical assistance in host country; adequate logistical assistance in the shape of information and practical assistance with travel arrangements, insurance, residence and/or working permits, social security, accommodation etc. should be provided.

Information society; action to encourage greater use of the tools arising from the information society

Partnership; encouragement of university-industry partnerships.

A common curriculum vitae; to encourage mobility by helping to improve assessment, by education and training establishments and employers, of knowledge acquired.

Assistance with re-integration; participants in long-term mobility activities should receive adequate assistance with the re-integration into the social, educational or professional environment of the home country.

Lack of language and cultural skills

There is an extensive range of recommendations proposed to facilitate the linguistic and cultural preparation/competence of students and apprentices. Specific recommendations for linguistic and cultural preparation include those set out in the table below.

Recommendations



Internationalisation; courses offered in a language other than the native language and with an international dimension in the curriculum including comprehensive opportunities for language and inter-cultural training.

Learning two community languages; the education system in Member States should provide greater language learning, particular facilitating the learning of at least two Community languages.

Integration; facilitate the integration (academic guidance, educational psychology, etc.), of students undergoing mobility into the education system of the host Member State, as well as their reintegration into the education system of the home Member State, following the example of the Socrates programme.

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. Where appropriate, this should include language assessment and language learning prior to departure as well as linguistic support in the host country.

Pilot activities; to make people more aware of European citizenship and to increase respect for cultural and social differences.

Additional help; for people wishing to undertake training in a Member State whose language is less widely used and taught.

ECTS; At university level there is a recommendation for the greater use of ECTS to provide better flexibility for transfer and accumulation of points in university courses

Lack of financial means

There are numerous recommendations proposed to improve the funding mechanisms available to support student/apprentice mobility. The following table outlines the main recommendations in relation to finances.

Recommendations in relation to finances

At an EU and national policy making level

Measures to improve financial allocation; development of various measures offering financial support (allowances, grants, subsidies and loans).

National distribution of grants; proper national policy for the distribution of Socrates/Erasmus grants.

Tax incentives; to encourage companies to welcome trainees or others receiving training

Subsidies; reductions in public transport, financial assistance with accommodation and meals etc.

Increases in budget for human resources and mobility; the 6th Framework Programme has an increase in budget of approximately 17%.

Flat rate grants; greater use of flat rate grants and scales of unit costs.



Tax relief; the use of tax relief for frontier workers who may be liable for tax in two jurisdictions.

Mortgages; banks should be requested to consider recognising periods of employment in several different EU countries when assessing applications.

Reintegration; funding bodies should give consideration to reintegration grants to allow individuals who have been involved in research, training and work placements to reintegrate back into their home country.

In relation to the sponsoring/host company/organisation

Co-financing from educational establishments, host companies etc. and extending co-financing through the use of *contributions* in-kind.

Legislation, social security & taxation

There are a diverse range of issues which fall under the broad heading of legislation, social security and taxation. The responsibility for many of these issues fall within the jurisdiction of the Member State governments, therefore, what can be achieved at best is better co-ordination of national systems to ensure that students and apprentices can travel and work on similar terms to those gainfully employed. The following table sets out the main recommendations in relation to these groups.

Recommendations in relation to legislation, social security and taxation

Training in Community law; and its implementation for decision makers and administrators in MS.

Integrated legislation; integrated European wide employment legislation with pan-European contracts, including benefits and social security, pensions, sickness benefits, minimum remuneration, holiday provision and termination/notice periods.

Status of trainees; trainees and student interns are the most varied group within the different Member States. This large group should be divided into subgroups, each with as clearly defined status

Equal treatment of trainees; with regard to insurance, taxes and payment, for example, student-trainees need to be protected by law. This protection could be achieved through a contract that is signed in advance.

Administration burden; take or encourage appropriate measures to enable students more easily to prove that they have health cover or insurance in order to obtain their residence permits. In addition, take measures they consider appropriate from an administrative point of view to make it easier to obtain proof that a person undergoing training in another Member State has sufficient resources, as provided for by Directive 90/364/EEC.

Unemployment benefit for spouse; determine a limited period during which spouses would receive unemployment benefit from the country of departure, to give them the time to find a job in the country of arrival (i.e. : 12 months).



Taxation of expatriation benefits; adopt tax break measures to minimize the impact of extra-cost of expatriation on income taxes.

Vehicle Registration Tax; a rebate on VRT should be provided, under certain circumstances, to frontier workers.

Tax-deductibility of social security contributions; recognize automatically the tax deductibility of social security contributions not paid in the country of activity, when authorised under the EU convention.

Pensions; consideration should be given to the establishment of a reciprocal arrangement between member states through the use, for example, of a 'transfer club'.

Childcare; provision of funding for voluntary organisations to provide childcare facilities.

Recognition

Without the full recognition of periods of study/training throughout the European Union, there is little impetus for students to engage in such activities. This area covers a broad range of issues including those related to greater recognition of periods of training, greater transparency in qualifications/training and appropriate validation of skills acquired. The following table sets out the main recommendations in the area of recognition.

Recommendations in relation to recognition

Recognition and transparency; if a study or placement period abroad takes place as an integral part of a formal study or training programme, the stay should be recognised as a part of this on the basis of a set of transparent criteria that have been agreed beforehand. For other stays and in particular stays undertaken 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.

Recognition; facilitating the recognition of qualifications between Member States by incorporating into Directive 89/48/EEC the obligation for the host Member State to take into consideration experience acquired after obtaining a diploma.

Validation; encouraging, at a European level, the acquisition, recognition and validation of skills on a lifelong basis.

Basic skills and European curricula vitae; the establishment of a European framework of basic skills and a common European format for curricula vitae.

Transparency;

facilitate the recognition, for the purposes, in the home Member State of the period of study undertaken in the host Member State; for this purpose the use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) throughout the Community should be encouraged; *and*

Issuing, with official national certificates, a translation of such certificates and/or a European certificate supplement.