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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Subject : Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on 20 and 21 November 2008, on youth mobility

Delegations will find attached the text of the above conclusions as adopted at the Education, Youth and Culture Council on 21 November 2008.

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

on 21 November 2008,

ON YOUTH MOBILITY

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

WHEREAS:

1. At its meetings in Lisbon in March 2000 and Barcelona in March 2002 the European Council agreed to set a strategic goal for the European Union to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy and society in the world by 2010, to make the education and training systems of the European Union a world quality reference by 2010 and to create a European Research and Innovation Area.
2. The European Council, meeting in Brussels in March 2008, agreed on the objective of removing barriers to the free movement of knowledge by creating a "fifth freedom" which, *inter alia*, would involve increased cross-border mobility of researchers, as well as students, scientists and university teaching staff.
3. The decisions of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Action Programmes for the period 2007-2013 in the field of education and training for life and throughout youth all aim to promote mobility; furthermore, European programmes and measures in the field of research and enterprise policy, as well as the Structural Funds, also share that same goal.

4. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Quality Charter for Mobility (2006) suggested key principles to ensure the best possible conditions for preparing, assisting and assessing the period of mobility of a young person in another Member State.
5. The purpose of the Bologna process in the case of higher education and the Copenhagen process in the case of vocational education and training is to establish a European area offering greater student and teacher mobility, greater transparency in the recognition of qualifications and of periods of study and training, and improved cooperation between institutions.
6. The various European instruments, both existing (EQF, ECTS and *Europass*) and forthcoming (ECVET), are intended to enable European citizens to achieve better recognition of their qualifications and skills and to enhance them, as well as to provide them with information on learning opportunities throughout Europe (the PLOTEUS and 'Study in Europe' portals).¹
7. The conclusions of the Council on intercultural competences in May 2008 emphasise the contribution of mobility to the acquisition of such competences.
8. The Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers Across the European Union of 20 November 2008 addresses the issues relating specifically to the mobility of young volunteers.

¹ <http://www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus>, <http://www.study-in-europe.org>

WELCOMES the report by the High Level Expert Forum on Mobility published by the European Commission in June 2008¹ in response to the Council's call for mobility to be promoted and extended beyond students to benefit other young target groups, and the European Economic and Social Committee's report of 29 May 2008 entitled "Better promoting the mobility of young people in Europe: practicalities and timetable".

AWARE that:

youth mobility in Europe, based on the principle of free movement benefiting every European citizen, a central component of European cooperation on education and training, whether formal, informal or non-formal, and a crucial challenge for a knowledge-based Europe, is an important instrument in:

- fostering a sense of belonging to Europe;
- promoting social and occupational integration;
- ensuring the competitiveness of the European economy within a globalised environment.

NOTES that:

Whilst the Erasmus programme has been successful, youth mobility nevertheless all too often remains the exception; that is true even for students, of whom only a small proportion travels to another Member State to study or undergo a period of training in an enterprise. It is still unevenly distributed, depending on types of training and sectors, study subjects, countries and social background, as a result in particular of lack of information, funding problems and insufficient recognition of periods of study abroad in courses. Mobility continues to be insufficiently known, owing to the lack of good quality information and of reliable and comparable statistics outside the framework of Community programmes.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/2008/mobilityreport_en.pdf

UNDERLINES THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

1. Mobility concerns all young Europeans, whether they be schoolchildren, students, apprentices, volunteers, teachers, young researchers, trainers, youth workers, entrepreneurs or young people on the labour market.
2. Mobility is to be understood primarily as physical mobility, which means staying in another country for study, a work placement, community work or additional training in the context of lifelong learning. Nevertheless, "virtual mobility", i.e. the use of ICTs to develop partnerships or long-distance exchanges with young people in other countries as part of a structured educational or training project, can also make a significant contribution to mobility, particularly in the context of schools.
3. Mobility should be seen not as an end in itself but as a preferred means of strengthening European citizenship and competitiveness, expanding and enriching the training and experience of young people, enhancing their versatility and employability and developing their intercultural understanding through language skills and exposure to other cultures.
4. For an ambitious, cross-cutting policy for mobility in Europe to succeed, it must spark interest in mobility among all young people, have the objective of gradually making a period of mobility in another European country the rule for all and be allocated appropriate financial resources to meet that challenge. Particular attention should be given to students who, given their socio-economic background or special needs, require additional financial support. Such a policy should also focus on arrangements for preparing and supporting mobility, as well as recognising the learning outcomes of a period of mobility, and should promote the development of mobility for teachers and trainers, who play a key part in these arrangements.
5. This mobility policy is aimed above all at intra-European mobility but it may also contribute towards developing mobility between Europe and third countries.

INVITES MEMBER STATES TO:

1. adopt the objective of gradually making periods of learning abroad the rule rather than the exception for all young Europeans by increasing cross-border mobility opportunities in the various education and training areas and, while having due regard to their national frameworks and legislation, in the field of voluntary activities;
2. with that in mind, meet the objectives set by the European Union programmes in the fields of education, youth, culture, citizenship and research for the period 2007-2013;
3. on the basis of the proceedings of the High Level Expert Forum, strive as far as possible for the following aims beyond 2013:
 - 3.1. every young person should have the opportunity to take part in some form of mobility, whether this be during their studies or training, in the form of a work placement, or in the context of voluntary activities. In particular:
 - every schoolchild in general education or vocational education and training should have the opportunity to participate in a mobility scheme in the course of their school studies;
 - every student in higher education should have the opportunity to follow a period of study or training or a work placement abroad. Higher Education Institutions should be encouraged to make such periods of mobility a part of their degree courses, either in the first or second cycle;
 - opportunities for mobility in the context of vocational education and training should increase significantly.
 - 3.2. The mobility of teachers, trainers and other educational staff, especially within the framework of existing programmes, should be increased;

4. put these objectives into practice at various levels in order to increase the opportunities for mobility available to young people and implement partnerships for mobility involving all stakeholders – public authorities, enterprises and education and training establishments – and civil society.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, to adopt measures which take account of national situations and national legislation, with a view to removing barriers to mobility in different areas and ensuring that periods of study and training abroad are recognised. Within the framework of the various exercises of the open method of coordination for education, training, culture and youth, they should seek in particular to:

1. Develop scope for mobility for all young persons

- 1.1. improve the management of public sector support for mobility by encouraging coordinated action on the part of stakeholders, both political (European Union, State, regional and local authorities) and administrative (in particular the national agencies responsible for managing Community programmes);
- 1.2. make full use of all current mobility opportunities afforded by European Union programmes which provide for virtual mobility and involve not only young people, but also more generally education staff;
- 1.3. take into account the needs, particularly with regard to funding, of less-favoured students who would otherwise be unable to take advantage of mobility programmes;

- 1.4. promote the development of new mobility opportunities, in particular by:
- extending partnerships involving recognised periods of mobility in other establishments or frameworks, in particular associations;
 - increasing the number of double or joint diplomas;
 - stepping up support for the vocational training mobility of young people, including apprentices;
 - making more extensive use of cultural and language visits;
 - promoting groupings of students, including those from European art schools, for the purposes of carrying out joint projects;
 - establishing additional training modules delivered by higher education institutions, for example summer courses;
 - increasing mobility between enterprises and between enterprises and the – academic, training and research communities;
 - creating opportunities for exchanges in the framework of voluntary activities.

2. Provide better information about existing mobility programmes

- 2.1. raise awareness of the advantages of mobility among young people, the staff in charge of them and their social circle (in particular their family, teachers and education staff), and youth workers; to that end, promote access to information for these target groups by all means possible;
- 2.2. further enhance the promotion and implementation of European Union programmes in the fields of education, youth, culture, citizenship and research.

3. Simplify procedures

- 3.1. continue to simplify provisions for the implementation of European Union programmes, taking care in particular to make general use of multiannual agreements, especially in the field of education and vocational training. Such agreements are a precondition for establishing lasting partnerships between training establishments and enterprises;
- 3.2. implement or encourage the development of a financial incentive strategy for bodies and stakeholders, in particular teachers, trainers and youth workers who organise mobility across Europe for the young people in their charge;
- 3.3. improve recognition of mobility-related learning outcomes by generalising as far as possible validation of learning outcomes for all periods of mobility in Europe – an objective facilitated by the forthcoming correlation, by 2010, of the qualifications systems of the Member States with the European Qualifications Framework and by European instruments such as *Europass*, *Youthpass*, ECTS credits and the ECVET system.

4. Widen and diversify the sources of funding for youth mobility

- 4.1. support youth mobility through appropriate Community financing, within the ceilings of the Financial Framework, in particular from the Structural Funds – mainly by better use of the possibilities afforded by the European Social Fund – and in the long term by adapting their guidelines and their management in line with the Member States' priorities to take the mobility objective into account;

- 4.2. encourage broader diversification and better complementarity of the financing methods of youth mobility projects, by resorting to public- and private-sector sources of financing within the limits of their respective capabilities (State, regional and local authorities, enterprises, banking institutions including the European Investment Bank, foundations, European trade associations, etc.);
- 4.3 take into consideration the particular financial needs of students from less favourable socio-economic backgrounds or with special needs so as to enable their participation in mobility programmes.

5. Apply the principles enshrined in the European Quality Charter for Mobility in education and training to all forms of youth mobility, in particular as regards arrangements for preparing, supporting and assessing periods of mobility

- 5.1. encourage exchanges of best practice with respect to increasing the capacity and improving the quality of reception for young Europeans on mobility schemes;
- 5.2. call upon the responsible stakeholders to improve the accommodation, living and working conditions of young Europeans on mobility schemes, in particular on higher education campuses;
- 5.3. improve linguistic and cultural preparation for youth mobility.

6. Increase knowledge of youth mobility

- 6.1. take stock of mobility flows in Europe by consolidating and, where applicable, compiling reliable and comparable statistics;
- 6.2. disseminate and pool available survey results more efficiently;

- 6.3. conduct impact studies as appropriate in order to assess the practical benefits of mobility for young Europeans from a cultural, educational and professional point of view.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

1. establish a work plan to include cross-border mobility measures in all European programmes, in particular by setting up mechanisms for the promotion of programmes among young people and facilitating the development, together with the competent authorities, of "one-stop-shops", as well as a European youth mobility portal, to improve the dissemination of information among young people and the relevant institutions, exploit each programme's possibilities for virtual mobility schemes, and generate multiplier effects among the various programmes;
2. publish, in before the end of 2010, a report on the medium-term development of youth mobility across Europe and draw up regular reports included in the joint interim report every 4 years on the state of youth and teacher mobility in the European Union;
3. produce a guide for Member States, regional and local authorities and education and training establishments and the actors associated with youth policies intended to help them benefit from other European policies which support mobility, such as the Structural Funds and the research programmes and policies;
4. explore the feasibility of developing new means of financial support to help young people undergo periods of cross-border learning mobility, including the possibility of "European student loans", and to report back to the Council on the progress made.