

**Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility**

(2006/C 206/07)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

**Having regard to** the Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on *Transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility* COM(2005) 450 final;

**Having regard to** the Council decision of 10 October 2005 to consult it on this subject, under Article 265(1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

**Having regard to** the decision of its President of 10 November 2005 to instruct its Commission for Culture and Education to draw up an opinion on this subject;

**Having regard to** the Opinion of the Commission for Culture, Education and Research, adopted on 1 March 2006 (CdR 34/2006 rev. 1) (rapporteur: **Mr Luciano Caveri, President of the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta (IT/ALDE)**);

**adopted the following opinion at its 64th plenary session, held on 26 and 27 April 2006 (meeting of 27 April):**

**1. Views of the Committee of the Regions**

developing and enhancing their autonomy and communication skills;

**The Committee of the Regions**

1.1 **notes** that, in the Lisbon Strategy, Europe has identified life-long learning as a crucial element of human and professional growth. Education and training, not only in preparation for a career but throughout working life, will be crucial, in terms of technological innovation and competitiveness, for creating jobs and training the people who will take them up;

1.2 **stresses** that learning is more effective when it is planned and undertaken as an active research process rather than as a passive reception of facts. Training programmes for adults are more effective if the changes they bring about succeed in producing those skills and competences that meet the needs of contemporary society. Trainees can then consciously develop their own approaches and future careers, in their role as individuals and citizens. Participation in training programmes comes into its own once individuals take the initiative in planning their future careers and lives so as to contribute to both their own personal growth and society's development;

1.3 **stresses** that educational experience, vocational training and work placements in a foreign country are particularly effective tools which encourage individuals to explore their cognitive maps and strategies and, by applying and adapting their skills in different environments, also help them to fine-tune their approach to using their intellectual resources and

1.4 **declares** that vocational training or work placements in another country, provided they are adequately prepared, guided and supported, have an importance far beyond that of a successful conclusion to the individual's vocational training and are of much wider scope. If culture is taken to mean not only a range of knowledge but the full gamut of behavioural patterns, values and the combined practical knowledge of a given set of people, what better than an experience abroad to pave the way for developing a genuine culture of the European Union?

1.5 **notes** that, given that jobs and training provide the ideal environment to compare and contrast cultural differences and characteristics, a prerequisite to an intercultural approach to different situations is a feeling for exchange and empathy. Indeed, through the esteem in which jobs and training are held, the varied and flexible organisation procedures and interpersonal relations, prejudices and generalisations can be overcome;

1.6 **believes** that the effect of improving the quality of the mobility experience would be to create the conditions for the full recognition of the role of individuals in helping to raise the level of knowledge and qualifications in the home country, and in importing new expertise, cultural stimuli, customs and languages into the host country;

1.7 **welcomes** the Commission's proposal as, in line with the reasoning outlined here, it serves to raise the overall levels of European training quality by suggesting a model which, on the basis of an individual-centred approach, ensures that the individual concerned and society reap the best possible benefits from the training opportunity and that it has the best possible impact;

1.8 **emphasises** that the value which individuals attach to their exchange experience must be matched by the value that the home and host countries, in turn, attach to each experience and to the full range of mobility programmes. The guidelines set out in the European Quality Charter of Mobility are therefore a prerequisite for ensuring that participants have a positive experience not only in the host country but also upon their return home. As it is at the local and regional levels that mobility programmes are coordinated and managed, this paradigm can be brought into sharper focus;

1.9 **believes** that local and regional communities and authorities can ensure the grassroots dissemination of accurate information, motivate people to make use of the opportunity to travel abroad for learning purposes and ensure that it is an integral part of their professional development plans and that the skills acquired are adapted to the working situation in their home countries. Local administrations can therefore play a significant role in determining the quality and effectiveness of mobility programmes;

1.10 **notes** that regional and local authorities are best placed to implement grassroots awareness measures for the public at large, and young people in particular, on the opportunities presented by mobility in terms of cultural and vocational development. In fact, mobility ensures that both economic and cultural obstacles to the professional fulfilment of an individual are overcome;

1.11 furthermore **believes** that individual participants must be offered not only adequate linguistic, educational and practical preparation, but also guided support with a view to developing their own cultural and professional development project. Now more than ever, European professional mobility programmes should be fully geared to the individual and seen as a resource to be brought to the employment market. To this end, assistance must be provided once the training period is over in order that the skills acquired are adapted to the workplace, not least by implementing the current instruments designed to recognise and promote acquired skills (for example, the Europass – Mobility instrument);

1.12 **considers** that in addition to the role of coordinating and liaising with organisations in the host countries, with a view to safeguarding the quality of the logistic and tutoring support, it is vital that there be careful and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the overall mobility experience on the general public and education and production systems. To this end, it is crucial to create synergies drawing in businesses, training institutions, schools and universities for them to promote, each in their respective areas, the formal and non-formal expertise acquired by the participants;

1.13 **stresses** that the fact that implementation of the European Quality Charter for Mobility creates an exchange of knowledge and encounters between local authorities and specialist services in various Member States, in such a way as to be able to outline a jointly shared *modus operandi*, cannot be underestimated. These processes will doubtlessly pave the way for constructive projects in a wide array of areas, from territorial economic development to training and worker exchanges, thereby creating new relations based on trust and cooperation which will lay the foundations for mutual recognition.

## 2. Recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

### Recommendation 1

#### Annex point 1

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>1. Guidance and information</b></p> <p>Potential candidates for mobility should have access to reliable sources of guidance and information on opportunities for mobility and the conditions in which it can be taken up.</p>	<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>1. Guidance and information</b></p> <p>Potential candidates for mobility should have access to reliable sources of guidance and information on opportunities for mobility and the conditions in which it can be taken up.</p> <p><u>The local and regional level plays a key role in providing access to information and, where relevant, contacts with local and regional authorities should be included in the mobility programmes of participants.</u></p>

## Reason

The local and regional level is where potential participants in exchange programmes first turn for information and guidance. It is the level closest to the citizens and the one which is most in touch with the needs of the general public and is therefore in a better position to highlight existing opportunities, project guidance and support actions and services to participants, with a view to ensuring maximum participation and more effective programmes.

*Recommendation 2*

## Annex point 3

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>3. Personalisation</b></p> <p>Mobility undertaken for education or training purposes should fit in as much as possible with the personal learning pathways, skills and motivation of the participants, and be designed to develop or supplement them.</p>	<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>3. Personalisation</b></p> <p><i>Mobility undertaken for education or training purposes should fit in as much as possible with the personal learning pathways, skills and motivation of the participants, and be designed to develop or supplement them, <u>whether in formal or non-formal education, using non-exclusive educational methods and paying particular attention to the influences of informal education on younger students.</u></i></p>

## Reason

Formal and non-formal education should be treated as equally important.

*Recommendation 3*

## Annex point 5

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>5. Linguistic aspects</b></p> <p>Language skills are essential for effective learning. Participants, and their sending and host institutions, should pay special attention to linguistic preparation. Mobility arrangements should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— before departure, language assessment and the opportunity to follow courses in the language of the host country and in the language of instruction, if different;</li> <li>— in the host country, linguistic support and advice.</li> </ul>	<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>5. Linguistic aspects</b></p> <p>Language skills are essential for effective learning. Participants, and their sending and host institutions, should pay special attention to linguistic preparation, <u>in particular where minority languages are spoken, in order to facilitate greater integration.</u> Mobility arrangements should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— before departure, language assessment and the opportunity to follow courses in the language of the host country and in the language of instruction, if different;</li> <li>— in the host country, linguistic support and advice.</li> </ul>

**Reason**

National and Community agencies should work closely with local and regional authorities and universities in areas where minority languages are spoken, to encourage more students to take courses in these languages before departing for their chosen exchange programme.

*Recommendation 4*

## Annex point 8

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>8. Recognition</b></p> <p>If a study or placement period abroad is an integral part of a formal study or training programme, this fact should be stated in the learning plan, and participants should be provided with assistance to ensure its adequate recognition and certification. The way in which the recognition will work should be set out in the learning plan. For other types of mobility, and particularly those in the context of non-formal education and training, a certificate should be issued so that the participant is able to demonstrate his or her active participation and learning outcomes in a satisfactory and credible way.</p>	<p><b>European Mobility Quality Charter</b></p> <p><b>8. Recognition</b></p> <p>If a study or placement period abroad is an integral part of a formal study or training programme, this fact should be stated in the learning plan, and participants should be provided with assistance to ensure its adequate recognition and certification. The way in which the recognition will work should be set out in the learning plan. For other types of mobility, and particularly those in the context of non-formal education and training, a certificate should be issued so that the participant is able to demonstrate his or her active participation and learning outcomes in a satisfactory and credible way.</p> <p><u>The CoR stresses the importance of recognition and calls on the Member States to put the existing instruments for recognition into practice or to create them if they do not yet exist. Full use should be made of the existing instruments for recognition, in particular the Europass mobility document, to ensure a positive conclusion to the participants' experience.</u></p>

## Reason

The importance of the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired during an exchange programme must be emphasised in order that the transparency of qualifications is improved and, in the process, greater mobility of workers and students is achieved. The CoR calls on Member States to put the existing instruments for recognition into practice.

*Recommendation 5*

## Annex point 9

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
<p><b>9. Reintegration and evaluation</b></p> <p>On return to their home country, participants should be given guidance on how to make use of competences and skills acquired during the stay. Appropriate help with reintegration into the social, educational or professional environment of the home country should be available to people returning after long-term mobility. The experience gained should be properly evaluated by participants, together with the organisations responsible, to assess whether the aims of the learning plan have been met.</p>	<p><b>9. Reintegration and evaluation</b></p> <p>On return to their home country, participants should be given guidance on how to make use of competences and skills acquired during the stay. Appropriate help with reintegration into the social, educational or professional environment of the home country should be available to people returning after long-term mobility. The experience gained should be properly evaluated by participants, together with the organisations responsible, to assess whether the aims of the learning plan have been met.</p> <p><u>The relevant authorities should enlist or recruit, as appropriate, successful participants to act as 'Ambassadors for Mobility', to encourage others to follow their example and to provide others with first hand knowledge and advice.</u></p>

Brussels, 27 April 2006.

The President  
of the Committee of the Regions  
Michel DELEBARRE