

## Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility

(2011/C 372/08)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

HAVING REGARD TO

- 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 <sup>(1)</sup>.
- 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 <sup>(2)</sup>.
- The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility <sup>(3)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 25 May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training <sup>(4)</sup>.
- The Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union <sup>(5)</sup>.
- The conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 21 November 2008 on youth mobility <sup>(6)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') <sup>(7)</sup>.
- The Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18) <sup>(8)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 16 March 2010 on Europe 2020 <sup>(9)</sup>.

- The conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 18 November 2010 on the priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-20 <sup>(10)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 19 November 2010 on the *Youth on the Move* initiative — an integrated approach in response to the challenges young people face <sup>(11)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 14 February 2011 on the role of education and training in the implementation of the *Europe 2020 Strategy* <sup>(12)</sup>.
- The Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011: *Youth on the Move* — promoting the learning mobility of young people <sup>(13)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 28 November 2011 on the Eastern dimension of youth participation and mobility.
- The Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions of 7 July 2011: Mid-term review of the Lifelong Learning Programme <sup>(14)</sup>;

AND IN THE LIGHT OF

The outcomes of the Presidency conference on learning mobility held in Sopot on 17-19 October 2011.

RECALLING THAT

Learning mobility is widely considered to contribute to enhancing the employability of young people through the acquisition of key skills and competences, including especially language competences and intercultural understanding, but also social and civic skills, entrepreneurship, problem-solving skills and creativity in general. In addition to providing valuable experience for the individuals concerned, learning mobility can help to improve the overall quality of education, especially through closer cooperation between educational institutions. Furthermore, it can help to reinforce a sense of European identity and citizenship.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 371 23.12.2000, p. 4.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 215, 9.8.2001, p. 30.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 5.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 311, 21.12.2007, p. 13.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 320 16.12.2008, p. 6.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

<sup>(8)</sup> OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

<sup>(9)</sup> Doc. 7586/10.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 324, 1.12.2010, p. 5.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 9.

<sup>(12)</sup> OJ C 70, 4.3.2011, p. 1.

<sup>(13)</sup> OJ C 199, 7.7.2011, p. 1.

<sup>(14)</sup> Doc. 12668/11.

For these reasons, providing the widest possible access to mobility for all, including disadvantaged groups, and reducing the remaining obstacles to mobility constitute one of the main strategic objectives of EU policy in the field of education and training.

#### NOTES

- The Council's invitation to the Commission under the 2006 Recommendation for a European Quality Charter for Mobility to improve or develop, in close cooperation with the relevant authorities, gender-specific statistical data on mobility for education and training purposes <sup>(15)</sup>.
- The report of the High Level Expert Forum on Mobility of June 2008 and its proposal that learning mobility should be an opportunity provided to all young people in Europe.
- The target on learning mobility in higher education established under the Bologna process at Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in April 2009.
- The Commission Green Paper of July 2009 on promoting the learning mobility of young people <sup>(16)</sup>.
- The Bruges Communiqué of December 2010, and the conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-20 <sup>(17)</sup>, which stipulate that European VET systems should provide substantially increased opportunities for transnational mobility by the year 2020.
- The Commission staff working paper of 24 May 2011 on the development of benchmarks on education for employability and on learning mobility <sup>(18)</sup>.
- The Council conclusions of 28-29 November 2011 on language competences to enhance mobility.

#### ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

- Learning mobility contributes to both the personal and professional development of young people and enhances employability and competitiveness, as testified not only by the EU programmes in the fields of education, training and youth, but also by a number of qualitative international studies on learning mobility.

<sup>(15)</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>(16)</sup> COM(2009) 329 final.

<sup>(17)</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>(18)</sup> Doc. 10697/11 — SEC(2011) 670 final.

- A European benchmark <sup>(19)</sup> on learning mobility accompanied by relevant indicators <sup>(20)</sup> could help to encourage and monitor the progress of Member States towards the already agreed <sup>(21)</sup> objective of increased mobility, as well as identify examples of good practice and support the development of peer learning initiatives.

- Data collection to measure progress against the European benchmark on learning mobility should be carried out within the limits of available resources.
- In order to take account of different educational environments, such a benchmark should differentiate between two main areas: higher education and initial VET.
- It is also important to accompany the benchmark with an indicator covering any type of learning mobility experienced by young people, including mobility which takes place in formal and non-formal settings.

#### INVITES THE MEMBER STATES,

while taking account of the different situations in individual Member States,

- (1) To adopt, taking into account the provisions of the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on promoting the learning mobility of young people, measures at both national and European level which are aimed at increasing learning mobility and achieving the European benchmark as outlined in the Annex hereto.
- (2) On the basis of the available sources and tools, and whilst minimising administrative burdens and costs, to improve data collection on learning mobility within all cycles of higher education, initial vocational education and training, and youth learning mobility in general, in order to measure progress against the European benchmark and the indicator as outlined in the Annex.
- (3) To promote the implementation and use of EU programmes and tools designed to support learning mobility and lifelong learning, including Europass, Youthpass, EQF, ECTS and ECVET.

<sup>(19)</sup> As outlined in the 2009 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, this is a reference level of European average performance which is not to be considered as a concrete target for each country to reach, but rather as a collective target which Member States are invited to contribute to achieving (O) C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 7).

<sup>(20)</sup> To be established in the framework of the European Statistical System.

<sup>(21)</sup> See the November 2008 Council conclusions on youth mobility (see footnote 6).

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

- (1) Work with and support the Member States, in particular with the help of Eurostat, to improve the availability of relevant indicators and statistics during the period up to 2020. In doing so, the best possible use should be made of the statistical data and household surveys available, with a view to minimising administrative burdens and costs.
- (2) Examine, in particular by means of regular progress reports, the degree to which the mobility objectives set under the 'ET 2020' framework are being met.
- (3) Report back to the Council by the end of 2015, with a view to reviewing and, if necessary, revising the European benchmark on learning mobility as outlined in the Annex.

AND INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMISSION,

- (1) To monitor progress and performance in the field of cross-border learning mobility at both national and European level, including by collecting qualitative information on examples of good practice, as the foundation for evidence-based policymaking.
- (2) With regard to learning mobility in higher education: operating within available resources and in close synergy

with the Bologna process, to improve the collection of data on student mobility (including credit and degree mobility) at all cycles from administrative and other sources — especially at the point of graduation, in order to measure progress against the mobility benchmark outlined in the Annex (Section I — 1).

- (3) With regard to learning mobility in initial VET: to make the best use of available household surveys, in order to collect the kind of learning mobility data needed to support the benchmark outlined in the Annex (Section I — 2).
- (4) With regard to youth learning mobility in general: to make the best use of available household surveys, in order to collect the data needed to develop an indicator on the total of formal and non-formal learning mobility, including breakdowns on non-formal mobility, with a view to complementing the dashboard of EU indicators in the youth field <sup>(22)</sup>, and possibly extending the learning mobility benchmark to include youth mobility in general at some future date (Section II of the Annex).
- (5) To examine the possibility of using available surveys on teachers at all education levels, with a view to developing indicators on teacher mobility and possibly extending the learning mobility benchmark to include teacher mobility <sup>(23)</sup> at some future date.

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<sup>(22)</sup> Doc. 8320/11 — SEC(2011) 401 final.

<sup>(23)</sup> As referred to under the 2009 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (see footnote 7).

## ANNEX

## A REFERENCE LEVEL OF EUROPEAN AVERAGE PERFORMANCE

('European benchmark')

## IN THE FIELD OF LEARNING MOBILITY

As a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, as well as contributing to evidence-based policy making, the Member States agreed in 2009 that reference levels of European average performance ('European benchmarks') should support the objectives outlined in the Council conclusions which they adopted on 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training<sup>(1)</sup>. Agreement was reached at the time on five European benchmarks and a request submitted for the Commission to submit proposals on further benchmarks, including one for learning mobility.

Having examined the proposals contained in the Commission staff working paper of 24 May 2011<sup>(2)</sup>, the Member States also now agree to the following benchmark for learning mobility, which differentiates between two main areas — higher education and initial VET.

The European benchmark for learning mobility in the two areas outlined below complement those already adopted in May 2009. As such, they should be based solely on comparable data and take account of the differing situations in individual Member States. They should not be considered as concrete targets for individual countries to reach by 2020. Rather, Member States are invited to consider, on the basis of national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmark in the areas outlined below through national actions.

In addition to this, an indicator on youth learning mobility in general should be developed in the context of formal as well as non-formal learning, with a view to the possible extension of the learning mobility benchmark to include, at some future date, youth learning mobility taking place in any settings.

Learning mobility is defined as physical mobility and takes worldwide mobility into account.

## I. BENCHMARK FOR LEARNING MOBILITY

1. *Learning mobility in higher education*

With a view to increasing the participation of higher education students in learning mobility:

**By 2020, an EU average of at least 20 % of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of 3 months.**

Shorter periods may be taken into account for measuring national mobility levels, providing these are recognised by the individual Member State within the context of a quality mobility scheme and are recorded separately.

To ensure quality and convergence with the Bologna process, the Member States and the Commission are invited to work with the relevant Bologna fora with a view to establishing harmonised thresholds for the number of ECTS credits and minimum durations of study.

Member States are encouraged to ensure the full recognition of study periods abroad.

2. *Learning mobility in initial vocational education and training (I-VET)*

With a view to increasing the participation of initial vocational education and training students in learning mobility:

**By 2020, an EU average of at least 6 % of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have had an initial VET-related study or training period (including work placements) abroad lasting a minimum of 2 weeks<sup>(3)</sup>, or less if documented by Europass.**

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

<sup>(2)</sup> Doc. 10697/11.

<sup>(3)</sup> = 10 working days.

In order to ensure quality, Member States are encouraged to use relevant tools, such as Europass and the ECVET and EQAVET systems.

The benchmark — including its definition and target level — should, if necessary, be reviewed/revised by the end of 2015.

## **II. INDICATOR ON YOUTH LEARNING MOBILITY IN GENERAL**

This is a global learning mobility indicator which makes it possible to record any kind of learning experience abroad in which young people engage. It covers learning mobility of any duration within the formal education and training systems and at any level, as well as learning mobility in non-formal contexts, including youth exchanges or voluntary activities.

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