

GREEN PAPER ON PROMOTING THE LEARNING MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Position of the Student Council of Higher Education of the Slovak Republic

1. PREPARING FOR A PERIOD OF LEARNING MOBILITY

1.1. Information and Guidance

How can the availability of information and guidance related to mobility be improved? Please provide examples of good practice, including appropriate tools and ways to make such information available.

- An informative brochure about the programme Erasmus Mundus and many others should be distributed to schools and universities in the country
- To distribute the informative brochure to particular student unions and student autonomy bodies on the level of universities/faculties which could use this material and inform students on an enrolment day
- To focus on first year students primarily on the enrolment day (the very first day of semester) and inform them about mobilities, as well as to provide them with the contact with a person at university who is responsible for mobilities and is able to answer further questions
- To create a comprehensive database of partner schools/universities, exchange programmes, types of mobilities under management of the ministry of education of the respective country; to present particular mobility types on a special webpage, for whom they are actually designated and provide topical list of partner schools/universities, like current scholarship/fellowship mobilities; to advertise and publicize the web page as means of the information campaign
- To encourage and support ESU and its national members to be more active in the advertisement and information campaign about mobilities, e. g. by organization of short informative seminars at universities, distribution of informative materials, etc.
- Students involved in exchange programme/mobility should also take part in the informative campaign so that they would be able to present their own experiences
- To appoint a person responsible for mobility at every university, e.g. "official/coordinator for mobilities" who would provide informative-advisory service to all mobility applicants

1.2. Promotion and motivation

What can be done to better promote and motivate young people to be mobile? How should this be done to ensure maximum effect? Please provide concrete examples of good practice in this area.

- Except for the comments mentioned above, short films about the stories of students involved in mobility, who are willing to share their experiences and talk about improved social and study skills, could be used as presentation material and could serve as an effective tool for motivating other students
- The best mobility advertisement is the presentation of immediate experience and personal mobility experience, a clear and comprehensible presentation of advantages which can mobility

bring to the participants, etc. – the best way to gain information is to talk to students who participated in mobility programme by means of discussions, etc.

What do you see as the main barriers to the motivation of young people to become mobile?

- Insufficient financial support of mobility: great differences between grants acknowledged to a student at individual universities; need of interconnection of real living and study costs in a country, i. e. differentiation of grant amounts for particular states according to their real financial burden during the mobility period is necessary
- Language barriers
- Unclear and sometimes not objective criteria used when selecting students for mobility from the respective university/faculty's side, e. g. automatic preference of senior students – it is a possible demotivating factor for younger students at university who would like to apply for mobility

1.3. Languages and culture

How can the linguistic and cultural obstacles to mobility be best addressed?

Please provide examples of good practice.

- Home faculty, except for personal interview, should also require a verification of language skills of an applicant, which are really needed for a successful completion of a study abroad
- Sufficient knowledgeable about the cultural differences in the mobility country and preparation for these differences prior travelling abroad. This should be made by means of browsing web pages of hosting universities as well as by help and sufficient knowledge of officials/coordinators of mobilities of home universities.
- Language barriers should be solved on the individual level, or with help of an organization of a series of short free language courses
- For overcoming of cultural barriers after the arrival to the country, it would be very useful to have an institute of “mediator”, that is a local student who is willing to help applicants with bureaucracy duties at the beginning of the mobility and other cultural obstacles – he/she should also support development of interpersonal relations, tolerance and multiculturalism

1.4. Legal issues

What are the main legal obstacles to mobility that you have encountered?

Please give concrete examples.

Can you provide examples of good practice in overcoming legal obstacles to mobility?

- Correct ECTS usage in all member states- correct transfer of credits and their validation
- Excessively complicated bureaucracy of the whole process prior, during and also after the mobility, which is usually a great burden for a student as well as for the home/incoming university – we propose the creation of a unified electronic system which would be accessible for each university without any need to fill in long and complicated application forms, attachments, etc.

1.7. Preparation of the mobility period and quality assurance issues

What measures can be taken to ensure that the mobility period is of high quality?

Please provide examples of good practice.

- Important to obtain feedback from students participating in mobilities that should lead to regular amendments and further development of the mobility partnership between the involved universities

2. THE STAY ABROAD AND FOLLOW-UP

2.1. Mentoring and Integration

Can you give some concrete examples of good practice in this area?

- As already mentioned above, for overcoming of cultural and language barriers the institute of “mediator” has proved to be effective – that is a local student willing to help applicants with bureaucracy duties at the beginning of the mobility and other cultural obstacles – he/she should also support development of interpersonal relations, tolerance and multiculturalism
- Example: the “Flemish buddy” program at the Katholiek University of Leuven – a network of Flemish students studying at K. U. Leuven who are prepared to assist and help the incoming Erasmus students with the day-to-day problems after their arrival to Belgium, e. g. provide transport to the student upon his/her arrival, assistance with registration at local authorities and at the university, town sight-seeing, invitation to their house, creating friendship etc. The program is supported by the local university authorities and the contact person at the university informs every incoming student prior to his/her arrival about the possibility to take part in the program and ask for a Flemish buddy.
- We would like to point out the Erasmus Student Network’s (ESN) activities in this field.
- The integration of incoming students into the academic life at the new university can be facilitated by offering a wide range of free-time activities, organised either by the receiving university or by student groups/clubs – e. g. trips to the surroundings/countryside, introductory get-together parties, sport activities, etc.
- To provide sufficient accommodation for incoming students in student dormitory facilities together with local students (not separated), since this supports multi-cultural environment and establishment of social ties

2.2. Recognition and Validation

In your experience, is the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning still a significant obstacle to mobility?

Please give concrete examples and your views on what can be done to improve the situation.

- The validation of credits still poses a serious problem at some universities, for example:
 - 1) The home university does not recognize the full number of credits granted for finishing a course by the foreign university while arguing that for the same/similar course at the home university less credits are granted,
 - 2) The home university does not validate and recognize credits for a course arguing that its syllabus has not been approved by the home university

- Students also get into logistic and time problems after their arrival from the mobility in June/July, as he has to pass some mandatory courses at his home university before the end of the academic year, however the teachers are often not cooperative and do not take into account the mobility of the students.

3. A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR MOBILITY

How can all actors and resources at national, regional and local levels be better mobilised in the interest of youth mobility?

Can you provide examples of successful territorial partnerships?

Can you provide good examples and innovative ideas on the funding of youth mobility?

- The local/regional authorities shall be encouraged to co-finance selected mobility programs in order to contribute to the development of professional and personal skills of students in those economic sectors which are prioritized in the region
- Co-financing of mobilities could be also established in the framework of twin cities agreements, thus deepening mutual partnership.

3.2. More active involvement from the business world

How can businesses be motivated to become more strongly involved in youth mobility?

Please provide examples of good practice.

- By encouraging companies to support specific mobility types that could contribute to professional, social and other skills and knowledge of students in spheres linked with the business activities of the companies

3.4. Engaging the "multipliers"

Should mobility opportunities for "multipliers" (teachers, trainers, youth workers, etc.) be given additional support and prominence in European programmes?

What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of teachers and trainers in promoting mobility?

- Each university should support the idea of a teacher participating in mobility because through their experience gained abroad they could contribute to the "old" teaching system by showing new modern teaching methods, techniques, etc. seen at the host university.