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Statement
On
Green Paper
Promoting the learning mobility of young people

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Introduction

The members of the EUF-CE agree that publicly funded mobility, especially for university students, should have the primary purpose and goal for the students to acquire new skills. The EUF-CE doubts the opinion that “employers recognise and value these benefits”. The Green Paper mentioned in footnote 2 that about half of the Erasmus movers “believe, that the period abroad was helpful in obtaining a first job”. This shows an unexplained progress towards the situation found in 2000 in the employers and alumni survey about the importance of generic competences made in the Tuning project. The ability to work in a multicultural and international environment were rated at the time as the less important competences. Therefore to stress as the main value of mobility the future employment opportunities will lead to disappointments and will underestimate other very positive features of mobility programmes, like tolerance and respect for social and cultural differences in a world more and more global.

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?

In general two stages of information can best distinguished. The first stage might be called the screening information stage, the second the targeted information stage:

Screening information:

During this stage students collect general information on where to go, when to go and how to go. A variety of exchange programs is offered

along with different funding opportunities. For the benefit of the student information must be easily accessible. At a university level in the framework of ERASMUS, the international office of the sending universities usually supplies this information. At this stage the different opportunities must be listed comprehensively, easily comparable and set in the context of the host university studies. It is indispensable to mention contact partners for further inquiries.

A first improvement must be made on the local level in assuring the quality of information. This relates to the extent as well as the up-to-dateness. Competent counseling facilities must be easily available. Expectation management at this stage is indispensable.

Targeted information

After having selected an exchange path (program and destination) students face the initial preparation stage. This included practical matters as well as academic issues.

In the practical realms topics such as financial support, accommodation, insurance and social security are mandatory. In the academic sense, questions such as selection of the host University, Learning Agreements and recognition of courses arise.

Substantially, an effective information system links qualitative information platforms with active counseling.

Example of good practice

Throughout the preparation, as well as during their stay at the host university CE-students can avail of counseling facilities in form of local coordinators as well as local students. Thus, a confidential and comfortable way of addressing questions and problematic issues is regularly available.

Beside general information about grants etc. EUF-CE provides information concentrated on the partner universities of the network. Two facts are of greater importance in the decision making process:

1. Financing: It makes no sense to name a general figure about the living costs in one country. The difference in living costs for students between Hamburg and Greifswald, between Lisbon and Aveiro, between Nancy and Paris, between Belgrade and Novi Sad are up to one third. EUF-CE has build up a special survey on the living cost LIVIS. The dates for this statistic come directly from CE-movers and are oriented to student needs.

2. Recognition: EUF-CE has developed by its Subject Committees a system of "Ex-ante-recognition". Students have the opportunity to see before signing any contract in which of the partner-universities they will find the relevant lectures and seminars for their study program. These lectures and seminars have been approved by the CE-subject committees several months before the start of each study year. The matrices are published on the CE-webpage and open for all CE-movers. The system is in progress. (See also under 2.2)

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.

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

1. The greatest and most influential barrier for learning mobility is the home university, if it is not actively supporting and promoting the mobility for the added value it represents to the student, but just as means to obtain additional income by student fees. This attitude

leads to the preference for non-european students neglect fundamental targets of the European mobility programs, like Erasmus. The discussion about recognition is another big obstacle. It gives the signal that the home university do not really believe in the quality and the relevance of mobility, especially if the recognition of courses from the host university does not lead to a replacement of lectures at the home university. Sometimes this attitude will hinder students to think about mobility at all and they will never get in contact with the international department of their university.

2. Evaluation of the mobility activities have shown that there is one group of students who is "structurally excluded" from mobility: those who have to earn a part of their living costs beside their studies. EUROSTUDENT numbered this group with about 40 to 50 per cent, depending on the country. It does not seem realistic to expect that this group will be financed by European, national or regional grants in the near future. Also full-time work-placements or paid internships will not lead to an acceptable solution because students have to combine studying and earning a part of their living costs. Campus Europae tries to develop an alternative (See example of good practice).

3. The language (learning) problem. (see under 1.3)

Example of good practice

1. In the Campus Europae network a success factor has been the promotion and constructive exploitation of good practice exchange routes. Close partnerships between two universities including good cooperation on administrative and academic levels can be extended to other universities and thus create exchange clusters that can function as role models for other universities.

Campus Europae insists on a votum of the Rectorate or the relevant

central organ of the university to agree to the basics of Campus Europae before applying for a membership in EUF-CE. The future university has also to contribute 2.500 € to the fond of the European University Foundation. By this the university openly states its commitment to be international.

2. To give students the possibility to combine working and studying while staying abroad Campus Europae has developed the concept "Learning Employability Places" (LEPs). It is based on an 8 - 12 hrs study-related working possibility (unpaid internship). This type of "working experience" seems to be less stressful to companies than the typically study-Integrated Internships. On behalf of the different labor regulations in the European countries students will get a grant from CE for this which is related to their financial needs. The grants will be financed by donations and other voluntary contributions from employers.

3. Language problems (see under 1.3)

1.3. Languages and culture

How can the linguistic and cultural obstacles to mobility be best addressed? Please provide examples of good practice.

For foreign students the acquisition of the language of the host university is of utmost importance. Student can only fully immerse in the cultural, social and academic environment via the means of the respective language. This will also be a precondition for getting an understanding of the "unity in diversity" in Europe.

Because at schools mostly the "major" languages are taught as regular subjects it is necessary to find methods to get into a "minor" language without losing a lot of time. An additional disadvantage of the "minor" languages is that often students have to pay fees for these courses, if they want to learn them before the start of the study

year.

The actual offered language programs like EILC, are not efficient enough to bring the students without a prior knowledge of the local language to more than a good A 1 level. Having this competence it will be impossible for them to follow the lectures in then local language, even after an additional semester of language learning.

Example of good practice

Understanding foreign culture

An important factor in acquiring substantial language skills and cultural understanding is the length of stay. Students who only move for one semester, traditionally stay for 3-4 months, which, given the usual framework of exchange programs, is not sufficient to reach a satisfactory language proficiency level. It also leads to more prejudices than to a deeper understanding of the foreign society

Therefore Campus Europae.insists on one academic year abroad for each CE-mover. In this framework, we believe, it is easier to effectively learn a new foreign language.

Language learning

Campus Europae has organized a three step programme, which has been proved in Finnish, German, Polish, Portuguese and Serbian.

Step 1: Preparation by e-learning

Even before the start of the academic year at the host university students should get acquainted with the language of the host institution. A first introduction can make the student loose certain fears and equip him/her with a positive attitude towards the

language. This can serve as an encouragement to later break out the predominant ERASMUS enclaves and indulge in local environments.

Campus Europae has recently established an online-learning platform for future movers. The "Hook Up!"-program is partly financed by the European Commission and combines individual e-learning with interactive elements. Language teachers are supervising the progress over several weeks. The programme leads students to the A1-level before going abroad.

Step 2: Intensive language course at the host university

Students should arrive at the host university four to six weeks before the start of the study year. During this time they will get intensive language with 5 to 7 hrs per day. Naturally those courses should be free of charge, not to discriminate against groups of students with less financial potential. At the moment they are financed by Campus Europae. They will finish with the A2 or B1 level.

Step 3: During the stay

During the following study year the students will get at least 4 hrs per week. The purpose is to bring them to the B1/C1 level at the end of their stay.

1.4 Legal Issues

Non comment

1.5 Portability of Grants and Loans

No comment

1.6 Mobility to and from the European Union

No comment

1.7 Preparation of the mobility period and quality assurance issues

The paragraph in the Green Papers has a tendency of "over-regulation". The "personal learning pathways, skills and motivation of the individual participant" are by definition personal and individual. Learning as such is an individual process, which could not be handled like a "Procrustes-bed". Students In internships should get a realistic work-experience, not a learning experience, based on a learning contract or a study plan, which will be far away from the later working life.

Example of good practice

1. The alternative to such over-regulations is to offer possibilities for study-related experiences. To find such places Campus Europae has a network of partners who try to find study-related "learning employability places". These places are related to the study field of the students, but the company, administration or organization is not obliged to design a "learning pathway" or to describe a study plan. The student should be a productive employee. To avoid local or national labor restrictions students will not be paid by the employer, but will get a grant.

2. The quality of the study-plans will be guaranteed by the Campus Europae Subject Committee as described under 1.1 and 2.2

1.8 Reaching out to disadvantaged groups

No comment

2. THEY STAY ABROAD AND FOLLOW UP

It will be of great importance that the European Council of Student Affairs (ECSTA) and its local and national member organizations would be a more relevant partner in student exchange. Universities are mostly not interested in the social situation of students.

The establishment of former mobile students association, that would be active in contacts with present students, is a way to encourage mobility.

In is in CE plans to develop further this idea creating the basis for an association of former CE movers.

2.1 Mentoring and Integration

See 1.2 Example of good practice.

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 recognition of formal learning, let aside informal learning, is still a significant obstacle for mobility. Faculties make differences between "recognition" and "replacement". They recognize the ECTS from other universities as "academic qualifications". But they do not recognize them in the sense that these ECTS replace ECTS from the study programme at the home university even if they are from the same area. This is a consequence of the profiling of study programmes: The lectures and seminar students had studied at the host university would be academically ok, but they do not fit into the special profile of the home university. The result is in some cases

that students have to make for example about 200 ECTS instead of 180 for their Bachelor. Following the newest publication of the German DAAD, about one third of university students are complaining about this problem.

Example of good practice

Campus Europae has established seven Subject Committees that develop systems to facilitate recognition of studies. Through close cooperation and enhanced information sharing, academics from the participating universities try to safeguard that students profit from their exchange year academically, in the sense that they do not need to retake courses. The underlying idea is to integrate the exchange year into the national curriculum.

The most advanced example as regard flexibility of academic recognition has been developed by the Subject Committee Law. Most member universities acknowledged that fully comparable courses cannot be found at any given pair of universities. Thus the notion of mutual recognition dominates the recognition in the field of law. Courses are categorized in pre-defined study fields which are the relevant factor in finding equivalent courses. This goes as far as that most law faculties are able to recognize foreign domestic law courses as carrying the same academic values as domestic courses. An important aspect is the acceptance of the academic quality of all partners.

In March 2010 participating universities will sign an agreement making this system of recognition binding on all law faculties creating a right for students to have courses, completed at the host university, from the same study field, given a comparable amount of ECTS credits, recognized by their home university. This agreement will become a pilot for the other six subject areas.

3. A New partnership for mobility

See under **Proposal**

Proposal EUF-CE: Open Laboratory for European Mobility

The examples of good practice described above, which have been already achieved or are in a stage of development, by the European University Foundation - Campus Europae (EUF-CE) are connected very closely. Some of them are based on Erasmus experiences, some are modified, some are new and allow the qualification of the EUF-CE as an "Erasmus+", as it has been called by former Commissioner Jan Figel. They are necessary components of an integrated system. Therefore we propose to use the EUF-CE network as a "laboratory for European mobility", in which the interaction of the elements should be developed, proved, evaluated and revised and then be disseminated to all universities who will take internationalization seriously.

Components

1. Internationalization has to be a target of the entire university, comprising all faculties and departments, and should become an attitude of the scientific community as a whole. Internationalization needs the active participation of a great number of teachers and researchers, but could not sustainably be based on accidental personal contacts among two researchers. Therefore the universities are members of EUF-CE. To protect the network against "partner-collecting" institutions, the members are obliged to pay an entry contribution to the foundation.
2. To make mobility a *realistic* offer to students, the universities are obliged to offer intensive language courses in connection with e-learning courses before the start of the study year, which will lead to the B1-level. Additional lectures and e-learning courses will be given

during the year, by which students will get the opportunity to reach B2 or C1 level also in minor languages which have not been taught at school.

3. The most visible and important aspect of internationalization is the willingness of the faculties and the teaching staff to recognize ECTS attained by outgoing students at partner universities. EUF-CE has developed by its Subject Committees a system of "ex-ante-recognition"(called "matrices"). These matrices give the students the survey about all courses which will be given in the partner universities in their study fields and which will replace courses at the home university. Matrices are published on the EUF-CE webpage. They make individual learning agreements - and their possible amendments during the study year abroad - unnecessary and will reduce bureaucracy. To give the recognition - and replacement - a stable framework, the partner faculties/departments describe their obligations in an agreement, signed by all partner faculties/departments.

4. If mobility should lead to a better understanding of foreign societies and cultures the stay in the foreign country has to be long enough, a whole study year, to overcome the first months of adaptation/strangeness. In order to create and intensify the European citizenship of young academic, there should be a second year in a second society and culture during the whole study program (the 2 Bologna Cycles or a long Integrated program) .

5. At the end of their studies CE-movers who completed two years of studies abroad will get a "CE-degree" based on the Luxemburg law about Higher Education Institutions. In this one-page-document all qualifications are mentioned which will be of interest for future employers. Students that have just spent one year abroad will receive a CE certificate

6. Understanding of other societies and cultures should not be reduced to some knowledge about the academic system, university

life and student rituals. Students should have the opportunity to get in everyday contact with foreign working environments, to get experience in the foreign labor market and to combine learning and working while studying abroad.

7. Under these conditions mobility for all - or at least a high percentage of - students will only be realistic if there will be an additional system of financing beside grants and credits. A high number of students are using this system already: They earn a part of their living costs while studying. Mobility for these working students will only be realistic if they have the opportunity to earn money in the host country. Campus Europae has developed a financing system that allows to give these students a grant which covers equivalent part of their living costs abroad which otherwise is covered by their work income at home. The funds for the grants will be covered by donations and voluntarily contributions of the employers.