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**Green paper: promoting the learning mobility of young people
(08.07.2009; CO(2009) 329 final)**

Answer to the consultation from EUNEC, the European Network of Education Councils

1 What is Eunec ?

EUNEC stands for the European network of education councils. Education councils are national or regional bodies providing national and regional ministers and governments with policy advice on innovation in education policies. All education councils are platforms for consultation and policy advice of governments with the emerging demands of society towards education. A lot of education councils involve close concertation with stakeholders both from the educational field as from social partners. Some education councils are more expert oriented.

Because of their role as strategic advisory bodies education councils play a major role as an interface between national, international and regional policies.

2 Sources for this contribution to the EU consultation on the Green paper : promoting the learning mobility of young people

This contribution is based on the work done by EUNEC during several conferences and seminars discussing learning trajectories and the impact of guidance and mobility in these learning experiences. EUNEC pays a particular attention on the inclusion of vulnerable learners and pupils in the education system.

Education councils formulated in the recent years advices to national governments to integrate the issue of mobility and of international experiences for learners into the main policy lines of their country.

3 General appreciation of the green paper

3.1 Mobility and internationalisation deserve a greater attention of policy makers and at a school level

EUNEC thinks that the issue of mobility deserves greater attention of policymakers. Mobility is a key issue towards achieving the Lisbon objectives.

Schools or training centers should develop a pedagogy and culture of mobility. They should integrate mobility into their mission statement. This way mobility can become a part of a global pedagogic concept.

3.2 Mobility as part of a policy for international and European citizenship

EUNEC underlines mobility should be part of a global policy to strengthen the international dimension in education.

- Mobility is part of a more encompassing movement to enhance a European citizenship and the increase the global (world) perspective of youngsters. Therefore the promotion and coaching of mobility should be a part a global policy of internationalization at every school.
- A second reason for an internationalization policy is the necessity to support youngsters during the mobility experience. As the green paper describes different phases from information and guidance to a debriefing and follow-up are needed . The internationalization dimension in curricula and school culture offers a strong framework to realize this.

Essential levers for this policy are besides mobility : the international orientation of the curriculum (language teaching but also intercultural and social competencies, citizenship, ICT, ..), the international and open character of the school culture and the hidden curriculum, the international orientation and competencies of teachers.

3.3 Mobility should be seen from a broad perspective

EUNEC wants to address the problem of mobility in a wider context.

- Mobility can be local, regional or international, with exchanges between European countries and regions.
- There is mobility within a country, between regions and, at a local level,
- There is mobility between sectors, companies, in the framework of sectors or even between sectors.
- Transnational mobility should lead to a win-win situation, with benefits for all the actors involved. We would also like to stress that some countries have some reservations about

increased mobility in the field of VET, with concerns over potential ‘brain drain’ of talented young people. However, other countries have difficulties promoting mobility amongst their VET students. We are convinced that the proposed recommendations of the MoVE-iT study can promote the development of more successful mobility strategies.

3.4 Target groups

EUNEC emphasizes that mobility should be relevant both in the context of the labour market and in education and training.

Mobility has a different perspective for learners in initial vocational training (IVET) at secondary and at higher education levels. The position of IVET in lifelong vocational education and training is not specified either. Mobility in lifelong learning for adults, for instance, is an almost unexplored area. An appropriate approach for different groups is necessary.

3.5 Mobility as a learning trajectory

EUNEC supports the approach of the green paper paying attention to preparation, stay and follow-up. There must be equal regard given to mobility in education and training.

4 Preparing for a period of learning mobility

4.1 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.

Guidance should be appropriate and available for different target groups.

- The role of teachers, schools and training centers is more important for younger kids than in higher education. Therefore EUNEC suggests focusing on the institutions instead of on an individual responsibility. Mobility in initial VET should be a collective school project rather than an individual project.
- It is necessary to create ICT driven platforms and unique portals providing information for all kinds of mobility. This tools could also provide instruments for self assessment and reflection to the learners. This “portfolio” – reflection tool could offer a sound basis for coaching the choices one makes related to mobility.

1.1 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?

Mobility is often seen as an individual choice. But a lot of measures do not take into account the specific psychological and emotional barriers towards mobility. To leave home means to leave to group to which he/she belongs (sport, friends, youth movement, girlfriend or boyfriend..) and presumes a strong personality.

Besides of the individual and psychological factors, mobility is highly influenced by the context of a learner.

- In adult education and LLL a learner is involved in work, in family life. Therefore long stays abroad for study and learning are not simple to organise. Mobility could better be integrated in the social status of learners.
- For youngsters the way in which parents and the family considers mobility is important. Specific research on the pupils' and parents' attitudes will be necessary.
- For youngsters it is better to focus on the institutions instead of on the individuals. EUNEC wants to stress the fact that the attitude of teachers and trainers is crucial to motivate pupils for mobility. Teachers and trainers have to be motivated, in order to spread the idea rather than muffle the enthusiasm.
- Youngsters are highly influenced by peers. It would be good to make databases with names of persons wishing to share their experiences after a period of learning mobility.

1.2 Languages and culture

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

Language learning is a very important aspect of a global internationalisation policy. But EUNEC wants to stress the international dimension of the curricula: the importance of intercultural, social and citizenship skills, European and world citizenship, the development of intercultural competences and ICT skills. Member states should link their policy for strengthening mobility to a programme for basic skills and a language action plan.

Initiatives have to be taken encouraging, from an early age, a positive attitude towards the correct use of the mother tongue, and towards the learning of foreign languages. It is necessary to motivate teachers and trainers, and to teach them this approach of language learning allowing a certain degree of failure in order to make learners dare to speak another language.

Partnerships and exchanges can be organised between groups of learners studying the same language. This language will fully play its role of means of communication, and will allow contacts without complexes between learners; a direct contact with native speakers might be discouraging, especially in the beginning of the learning of the language.

1.3 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?

There is an absolute need for more security on the legal status of apprentices who are taking part in mobility.

EUNEC also wants to point out that a large part of the target group of the study involves minors. This can cause certain legal problems for stays abroad.

1.4 Portability of Grants and Loans

What kind of obstacles have you encountered regarding the portability of grants and loans and access to benefits? Please give concrete examples?

EUNEC agrees with the proposal of the Commission to ‘publish guidance for public authorities drawing out the key implications of the case law established by the court thus far. This guidance could cover issues such as access to educational institutions, recognition of diplomas, the portability of grants and other rights of students in the host country or in the country of origin’.

1.5 Mobility to and from the EU

What more should be done to promote mobility to and from the EU? How should this be done? Please provide examples of good practice.

1.6 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.

It is clear that institutions involved in mobility (education and training institutes, companies) need to enhance the quality of the learning outcomes, namely both the academic and professional skills. To valorise the learning experience in mobility there will be a greater need for coaching and counselling during the stay and a debriefing afterwards. Institutions should pay more attention to preparation and debriefing of experiences abroad. If there are collective costs, there should be collective benefits. Mobility cannot be reduced to benefits for an individual.

1.7 Reaching out to disadvantaged groups

Which are the most important difficulties encountered by disadvantaged groups with regard to learning mobility? Please provide examples of good practice of how such difficulties can be overcome.

EUNEC agrees and wants to emphasise that there has to be special attention given to vulnerable groups of pupils, students, learners and apprentices. EUNEC strongly believes in the philosophy of equal opportunities. Europe must avoid promoting an elitist mobility. Mobility remains too often the privilege of the socially advantaged groups. Youngsters from the disadvantaged social backgrounds have to be strongly supported in participating in mobility.

EUNEC asks attention for the fact that there are a lot of legal problems if organising a mobility with learners not coming from a European state of the Schengen area. They have to be taken into account from the beginning of the project.

2. The stay abroad and follow-up

2.1 Mentoring and integration

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

Schools or training centres should develop a pedagogy and culture of mobility. They should integrate mobility into their mission statement. This way mobility can become a part of a global pedagogic concept with emphasis on language learning and on intercultural competences.

Schools and training centres should pay more attention to the preparation and the follow-up of a stay abroad. EUNEC recommends mobility becomes part of curricula. Mobility is not an isolated objective. It should be integrated into the whole of learning outcomes of a professional training.

Schools and training centres should transform innovative piecemeal policies into a more structural approach. Therefore they need (financial) support from the European and national authorities. Mobility of teachers and trainers should be an essential element of their professional development.

Networks of schools create win-win situations. They can share information on working places, on experiences, on methodologies etc. Therefore it is very important that mobility programmes should support the already existing networks of school. Now the existence of these networks, created for instance within the Leonardo da Vinci programme, is often limited to a short period or simply to the duration of the project.

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.

If we want to raise the level of mobility EUNEC asks that European policy makers should develop an integrated policy on mobility and reinforce the link with recent developed European tools on transparency of qualifications. The integration of the European Qualifications Framework, national qualifications frameworks, credit systems (ECVET – ECTS), Europass into mobility policies is of an invaluable significance.

We would also recommend that more attention is paid to other important European documents on validation of informal and non-formal learning, on quality management, on guidance, on mobility,...

3. A new partnership for mobility

3.1 Mobilising actors and resources

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?

EUNEC wants to reiterate the importance of using and valorising existing networks. We think there is a lot of experience on mobility available which can be used to build new strategies towards an increased mobility in VET. EUNEC wants to point out that its own network has gained a lot of experience in European issues and could play an irreplaceable role in the development of new strategies. EUNEC also plays an important role in the dissemination of information and results to all stakeholders involved in education and training.

It is necessary to involve social partners and sectors in this discussion. In some countries, the involvement of employers should be seen as a long-term perspective. In other countries employers are already crucial stakeholders in IVET. Therefore it is necessary that each country should look at its own situation and take the necessary steps in creating real alliances between employers, schools and training centres and all other stakeholders involved.

Within the framework of mobility in IVET, EUNEC wants to emphasise the importance of the involvement of parents. When we want to raise the mobility rates of pupils in IVET, we often need to convince their parents of the mobility benefits.

If the innovation is to reach the classroom level, Member States should go further than an administrative reporting process. Within the Member States, there is a need for a national/regional and concerted innovation action plan. In that plan, the focus should be on setting clear policy goals, allowing schools to bring in their own concerns, values, needs and solutions in the local approach. We need a balance between steering mechanisms (financial incentives, inspectorate and accountability, standards) and the recognition of the autonomy and the ownership of school teams.

3.2 More active involvement from the business world

How can business be motivated to become more strongly involved in youth mobility? Please provide examples of good practice.

3.3 Virtual networking and eTwinning

How can we best make use of ICTs to provide valuable virtual mobility opportunities to enrich the physical mobility? Can the eTwinning approach be used in other learning sectors e.g. voluntary service, vocational sector?

Internet, data bases and electronically provided information can be a complementary tool to reach the target group. For that reason, EUNEC wants to emphasise that it is necessary that we keep working on the development of basic and advanced ICT skills for this specific target group. EUNEC finds it important that the communication strategies should be integrated into a global approach on the IVET modernisation. It should also be useful to use communication tools, which are appropriate for youngsters (peer group learning, appropriate use of the media).

Internationalisation without ICT is impossible. ICT offers opportunities for internationalisation and intercultural exchange without leaving the classroom. ICT can offer a virtual meeting place in the preparation of an exchange. However, EUNEC wants to stress the fact that, although ICT can offer extra dimensions for internationalisation, it cannot replace the real international contact. Physical contact of learners with another culture, another language and another way is richer than virtual exchanges. Virtual and real exchanges should be complementary. Moreover, ICT can be a good tool to involve as many learners as possible in the mobility experiences.

3.4 Engaging the 'multipliers'

Should mobility opportunities for 'multipliers' be given additional support and prominence in European programmes?

EUNEC asks for special attention for internationalisation and mobility in initial teacher training and as part of the in-service training of teachers and trainers. Internationalisation should become an appreciated competence of all teaching staff. When we are able to broaden the perspective and to enhance the professional mobility of teachers and trainers, the barriers and obstacles can be removed. EUNEC recommends continuing and intensifying the European mobility actions among this target group, as the multiplying effect on students and apprentices will be very significant.

Possible support:

- To enhance meetings between multipliers to share their experiences, more particularly the way they have been able to find an answer to some barriers to mobility
- To convince the employers of the multipliers to consider the periods of mobility as part of their task; time has to be foreseen for sharing experiences with colleagues, trying to convince them of the importance of mobility

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

The fact that working on mobility is often seen as a voluntary task, not being an integrated part of their job, and thus the lack of time, also due to the administrative work.

3.5 Mobility targets

Do you consider targets a useful tool in defining a mobility strategy and if so, at what level (European, national, institutional, sectoral, etc.)? Please provide examples of good practice.

In the setting of goals the national/regional level(s) should guarantee the principles of equal opportunities for all children with respect for diversity (multicultural, multilinguistic) and social cohesion.

The fact of defining a precise objective for learning mobility can without doubt be a powerful tool; but targets have to be clear and understood by all.