

Expert group says: Make periods of learning abroad a rule, rather than the exception

How can we extend the success of Erasmus, the EU's flagship programme in higher education, beyond the confines of the university sector? This was the question put to a Commission-appointed High-Level Expert Forum on Mobility, whose report is published today. It recommends to expand greatly the opportunities for learning mobility offered, not just to students, but to young people in general including, for instance, apprentices, secondary school-level students as well as young entrepreneurs, artists and volunteers. The report calls for action to address existing barriers to mobility, and proposes a new partnership – of the EU, Member States, regions, education institutions, business and civil society – to boost mobility.

The High Level Expert Forum proposes concrete mid-term targets: by 2020, at least 50% of all young people aged 16-29 should be offered the opportunity to engage in some form of cross-border mobility at some point. This overall target can be realised if, by 2020, mobility reaches just over 6% of university students every year, as well as 3.5% of trainees in vocational education and training, 0.5% of secondary students and just over 1% of those young people who wish to participate in a mobility-based voluntary action (such as the European Voluntary Service, for example).

When presenting the report on 10 July, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel, said, "*We are faced with the pressing challenge of how best to equip Europeans with the skills and competences they will need in the future, in our ever more competitive, globalised, knowledge-based Europe. One thing is clear: a period spent abroad, whether it is during university studies, or during an apprenticeship, is a valuable experience for the individual concerned. People really benefit from the experiences they gain abroad, not only in terms of language knowledge, but also in intercultural know-how. I welcome the recommendation by the High Level Forum on Mobility for encouraging the Member States to make such periods of learning abroad the rule, rather than the exception, for young Europeans.*"

The report, entitled "**Making Learning Mobility an Opportunity for All**", is a result of six months' reflection on how to create more opportunities for mobility of young people between EU Member States. It contains experts' recommendations on how to make learning mobility across borders a natural feature for young Europeans.

It also calls on the European Commission to **mainstream mobility into all relevant EU policies**, notably the Structural Funds and the Framework Programme for Research and Development. It also asks for mobility to be made a top-priority in the mid-term review of the EU's Financial Perspective.

The **special significance of language learning** for cross-border mobility is underlined. The learning of a second and third European language should be supported through better language teaching within all parts of education and training systems. A stronger focus on languages should in particular be an integral part of the preparation of mobility moves.

While the main focus is on learners in academic or vocational courses, the authors of the report also see **more mobility in the cultural sector** as a further key to a more mobile Europe. Removing obstacles that are presently faced by arts professionals means increasing their interaction with others, thereby boosting diversity and creativity in Europe.

The report also includes a package of suggestions with a view to **strengthening the EU's present mobility programmes**. Besides Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, which all form part of the *Lifelong Learning Programme*, recommendations are also made on mobility aspects of other programmes, including the *Erasmus Mundus*, *Youth in Action*, *Culture* and *Europe for Citizens* programmes. The Report recommends that the programmes should be promoted more strongly and that synergies between them should be better developed.

The **High Level Expert Forum on Mobility** was set up in December 2007 by the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', to strengthen and promote the mobility of young people in the 21st century. The Expert Forum brings together 11 mobility experts from 10 EU Member States covering such wide-ranging fields as higher education, youth, vocational training, employment, culture and music.

To know more:

Full text of the report: "Making Learning Mobility an Opportunity for All": http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/2008/mobilityreport_en.pdf

Annexes to the Report: http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/2008/mobilityannex_en.pdf

Press Release, IP/08/85, 24 January 2008: [High level experts discuss future of mobility in EU](#) (includes list of Forum members)

European Commission: [Focus on... Support for mobility](#)