



ETUCE statement on the proposal of the European Commission for a European Quality Charter for Mobility¹

Adopted by the Executive Board on 30-31 October 2006

In the work towards greater quality in the European educational mobility and to further create a European area of education and training, the Commission has proposed a recommendation on a *European Quality Charter for Mobility*. The objective of the proposal is to lay down a common statement of 10 principles whose use is intended to lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in all types of organised mobility for learning purposes. The proposed Charter is characterised as “universal” in the sense that it covers all the possible types of educational and training mobility.

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The 10 proposed principles refer to the practical provisions of mobility: preparation, support and recognition, and are as follows:

- 1) Access to Guidance and Information
- 2) Development of a Learning Plan for the period abroad
- 3) Personalisation in order to fit the individual learning pathways
- 4) General preparation tailored to the individual's specific needs
- 5) Linguistic aspects including language courses, linguistic support and advice
- 6) Logistical support including practical aspect of the period abroad
- 7) Mentoring to help effective integration
- 8) Recognition of qualifications attained abroad
- 9) Reintegration and evaluation including guidance on how to make use of competences and skills acquired during the stay abroad
- 10) Commitments and responsibilities should be clearly agreed upon

ETUCE supports the work towards greater quality in mobility and the increased focus on generating a climate of reciprocal understanding and recognition of qualifications. Unfortunately the 10 principles laid down in the recommendation seem too vague and general in their definitions to reach this objective, as they only provide minimum definitions of quality in mobility. Some relevant aspects of educational mobility are moreover not included in the 10 principles.

The European Parliament finalised their position in the first reading of the recommendation on 26 September 2006. ETUCE calls for some principles in the recommendation to be further strengthened and for consideration of some areas of educational mobility not addressed in the recommendation.

Access and financing of mobility

Obstacles to mobility are often related to socio-economic and socio-cultural inequalities in the access to mobility²; an important issue the Commission's proposal for the Quality Charter for Mobility not explicitly addresses.

¹ Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility. COM (2005) 450 final. 23.9.2005.

² “Survey into the socio-economic background of ERASMUS students” by the European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/survey_en.pdf

In this relation, ETUCE supports the European Parliament's position in their 1st reading³ which gives more consideration to guaranteeing equal access to mobility. The present inequalities in the access to mobility need to be counterbalanced and addressed in the work towards quality of mobility. The development of grant and loan systems throughout Europe and the help to mobile students, who face greater living costs in the host country than in their home country should therefore be kept in mind when dealing with the financing of mobility. In this context, ETUCE supports ESIB in suggesting a European Mobility Fund designed to fill the financial gaps caused by e.g. differences in socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, measures to fight the socio-cultural heritage in the educational mobility are of crucial importance. Information campaigns, better study guidance and the creation of a school system built on equity must here be considered. In this sense, the one-track view on only *quality* in mobility is not enough in order to reach groups who are not likely to be mobile. ETUCE therefore supports the European Parliament in their attention paid to increased information and *promotion* of mobility programmes⁴.

Geographical factors

In the promotion of mobility the differences in the macroeconomic situations in different countries in Europe should be taken into account in order to prevent uneven mobility rates between Eastern and Western Europe. This important question is unfortunately overseen in the recommendation.

Although the EU mobility programmes already take account of this problem, in that the programmes' financial assistance to students consider the level of the national grant, the average cost of living in the country of studies and the GDP of the country of origin of the student, ETUCE stresses that the existing uneven mobility rates between Eastern and Western Europe calls for further development of mechanisms at the European level to counterbalance these inequalities.

Mutual recognition

The importance of recognition of qualifications attained abroad is considered in the Quality Charter for Mobility, as well as the recognition of competences attained through other types of mobility (non-formal education and training). ETUCE welcomes the continuous focus on mutual recognition and stresses that the proposed European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has the potential to play an important role in this regard. The further use of the EUROPASS initiative should also be promoted.

Integration

The Quality Charter for Mobility describes the importance of integration in educational mobility, stressing mentoring, reintegration, evaluation and guidance on how to make use of the competences and skills acquired abroad. ETUCE supports this focus on integration and evaluation, and underlines furthermore that successful integration implies the creation of a tolerant and inclusive environment. Integration can be hampered by a lack of respect for other cultures and there is a need to create a mutual understanding among different cultures involved in mobility.

³ European Parliament's 1st reading: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/omk/sipade3?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2006-0255+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

⁴ European Parliament 1st reading

In this relation, ETUCE supports the European Parliament's increased focus on the cultural benefits of mobility, such as mutual understanding, cultural awareness, solidarity and exchange of different point of views⁵.

Linguistic aspects

The linguistic preparation for a study period abroad is addressed in the Quality Charter for Mobility. ETUCE welcomes this emphasis put on language learning and acknowledges the position of the European Parliament concerning increased focus on linguistic aspects in mobility⁶. Language courses and linguistic support during the stay are of crucial importance in order to provide the participants with the qualifications they need to make the best use of their period abroad. As an additional and long-term policy measure, the language teaching at primary and secondary school level should be strengthened. Increased possibilities for language teachers to undertake educational mobility periods abroad would moreover benefit the language teaching in schools.

Teachers' educational mobility

The educational mobility of teachers is relevant to consider to overall ensure the quality in education. Teachers are multipliers of knowledge and experience and an increased educational mobility for teachers and teacher education students can in this sense contribute to a European Dimension and greater quality in the European education systems. A study or working period abroad will broaden teachers and teacher education students views of other cultures and societies, improving their language skills and promote an exchange of experiences with different learning methods etc., all important competences to be used in their further teaching.

Furthermore, teachers' educational mobility is important in the promotion of the overall mobility. Teacher educational mobility has an important multiplier effect and teacher education students and teachers are like this an obvious and important target group for European educational mobility programmes if they are intended to reach a wider range of people than those directly participating in them.

In this relation, ETUCE calls for support of significant resources to enable a large number of teacher education students and teachers to use their possibilities to be mobile. The COMENIUS programme is in this respect an important instrument, which beneficially could be further developed to ensure increased educational mobility of teachers and teacher education students.

ETUCE highlights that there is a need to put more efforts into removing obstacles for teachers to undertake a period of working abroad as part of their continuous professional development. The most often encountered obstacles relate both to administrative procedures, legal problems (e.g. loss of seniority rights or pension rights), lack of replacement systems in the school in which the teacher is employed in the home country, lack of official recognition of the merits of mobility, as well as more cultural obstacles such as distrust of the pedagogical methods of another country. ETUCE stresses that the national authorities should in a dialogue with teacher unions set in place a coherent policy for enhancing teachers' mobility, including teachers' right to sabbatical leave, official recognition of the period abroad, etc.

⁵ IBID.

⁶ European Parliament 1st reading