



## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### ***THE IMPACT AND ADDED VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING MOBILITY SCHEMES TO DEVELOP PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES***

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 - Brussels**

## ***GENERAL REPORT***

A range of transnational mobility schemes offers pupils, students, trainees, adults, professionals, professors and teachers a unique chance to obtain education, training and work experience in a foreign country. Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning or Citizens' for Europe programmes have been providing opportunities to individuals and organizations to work on common challenges and to find possible solutions. They enabled them to learn about other cultures but also about other practices. The benefits in terms of new competences acquired are huge for personal, social and professional development, for society at large but also for education, training and youth providers. The impact assessments made on EU mobility programmes confirm these results that still remain difficult to evaluate. How to measure individual's capacity to be more open to diversity? Does this affect their capacity to enter and adapt to labour market needs? What are the impacts at systemic and at society level?

The impact of transnational learning mobility, in terms of social cohesion and active citizenship, are as important as those fostering better employability. But some barriers still remain as for example the lack of language skills, lack of information or insufficient preparation. The Commission as well as the Member States are aware of these issues and should take appropriate measures. By deciding to put the highlight on "Youth on the Move" in the Europe 2020 strategy, young persons will have higher expectations. Today, the budget allocated to mobility programmes is too limited to achieve this goal. Furthermore, some studies have shown that mobility programmes are too often limited to a privileged few even when they target disadvantaged publics. It is crucial to have stronger programmes in education, training and youth for 2013+. The goal of this public hearing is to present some good projects supported by EU programmes in order to better understand their impact in terms of new competences learned.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 EUCIS-LLL organised a public hearing on «The impact and added value of transnational learning mobility to develop personal, social and civic competences» at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. This hearing took place in the context of the first «Lifelong Learning Week» organised by EUCIS-LLL to raise awareness on lifelong learning. Around 70 participants participated in a very interesting debate on key and transversal competences acquired via learning mobility, including the presentation of good projects/practices supported by EU programmes. Participants came up with some policy-recommendations on competences and mobility programmes. This document is a brief summary of the rich discussions that took place.

## WELCOME WORDS



Pavel TRANTINA, European Economic and Social Committee (GR11-CZ), welcomed the participants to the EESC and reminded them that the topic of the hearing is strongly linked to the Commission's flagship initiative Youth on the Move (YoM). As rapporteur of the EESC opinion on this initiative, he highlighted some key elements related to learning mobility such as the European Skills Passport, which has the potential to enhance the validation of non-formal learning and increase the visibility of skills acquired outside the formal education system. The EESC backs the Commission's efforts to identify the most effective ways of supporting youth employment. However, the initiative does not put sufficient emphasis on developing social capital and youth participation in European civil society. He also pointed out that means are available to develop and mainstream the current Youth in Action (YiA) programmes as well as other programmes that support youth mobility. This is also linked to the debates taking place on the next multiannual financial perspective.



Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD, European Association of History Educators (EURO-CLIO), introduced the key and transversal competences for lifelong learning (LLL) in the EU framework and presented the methodology of the two panel discussions to be tackled during the debate: the first one on mobility experiences and the second on recommendations for the future EU mobility programmes. She explained the participatory methodology chosen for this public hearing aimed at answering concrete questions and at making policy-recommendations based on practices/experiences in a lifelong learning perspective.

## PANEL 1: MOBILITY EXPERIENCES/PROJECTS

### Q1: What is the added value of learning mobility to foster key and transversal competences?



Eva NTOVOLOU, Erasmus Student Network (ESN), presented the Project "Exchange Ability" which aims at supporting disabled students' mobility in higher education. The project works in two directions: helping disabled students to get involved in everyday activities with other students and ensuring that Universities are more accessible for them. The added value of the project, apart from offering a mobile opportunity to a group of people who does not usually participate, is the acquired learning skills. Ms Ntovolou remarked that, even if the Erasmus programme takes place in the formal sector, most of the learning takes place in non-formal and informal settings. It strongly develops cultural awareness of those involved directly or indirectly in the project.



Philippe PERFETTI, Chambre de Métiers de l'Artisanat (APCM), France, introduced the "Euroapprenticeship project" that aims at building and developing a network of competent bodies and intermediary organisations which provides expertise, information, help and support to any learning mobility project promoted by vocational education and training providers, for the benefit of skilled crafts companies and apprentices. He agreed with the previous speaker that learning skills acquired during the mobility period were the main added value of the learning experience. Such skills are for instance the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship or the capacity to take risks that are part of the key and transversal competences on lifelong learning. Apprentices' mobility should be as important as students' mobility because it gives mobile learners better chances of employability afterwards and it also encourages new ideas in the craft sector in Europe.

Thomas LESZKE, European Students' Forum (AEGEE), presented the project "Beyond Europe" which aims at empowering young people in and outside Europe to tackle global challenges. Financed by the Youth in Action programme, the project is very much related to mobility as it brings together students from Europe, Asia and South Africa. The aim is to encourage young people to take an active stand and develop a sense of responsibility for World changes. It directly addresses most of the key competences defined in the EU framework and especially active citizenship, participation and intercultural dialogue. It represents the main added value of the project.



Davide DI PIETRO, LUNARIA, Italy, set up an international network of organisations promoting senior volunteer exchanges (SEVEN Network) in 2007. What people learnt depended on the way the exchange took place but he could observe two main category of learning: intercultural learning and transversal competences such as listening to others, cooperating, etc. These were the main benefits of these experiences.

Anna-Lena LARSSON-LONNQVIST, DG EAC, Unit B-3 started her intervention remarking that the YoM initiative was partly a response to the crisis and the high rates of youth unemployment and partly a response to the need of investing in human capital especially in young people many of whom are currently unemployed. She observed that mobility has a greatest impact at individual level. It contributes to personal development and enhances transversal skills and notably communication skills, cultural awareness and adaptability to new situations/environments. These transversal skills are very valuable and they will be even more in the future. She also highlighted the European Skills Passport as an opportunity to recognize non-formal learning and a possibility to translate them into national curriculums.



## Q2: What do we mean by mobility?

There is not a unique/generic definition of mobility. Participants outlined various types of mobility including the so-called "virtual mobility" and reminded that the EU is mainly supporting mobility within the formal education system. There is a need to set up a qualitative framework to support non-formal and informal learning mobility, for instance regarding volunteers' mobility.

In this context, it is better to look at the different situations/purposes for mobility periods instead of focusing on the concept. Two main contexts can be distinguished. On the one hand mobility periods that do not aim at the acquisition of particular skills or competences; much of the learning takes place in non-formal or informal settings; learners acquire or develop transversal skills by experiencing a new setting/environment. On the other hand learning mobility aiming at acquiring specific skills and competences, in that case there is an agreed skills framework; it is more formal and controlled. Different purposes also mean different competences gained through mobility. There was also the idea that learning mobility makes sense when hosting and sending organisations have a mobility agreement.

## Q3: How can we reach EU mobility targets if we do not have a clear definition of mobility?

The EU has ambitious goals on learning mobility as expressed in the YiA flagship initiative as well as in various processes (20% on mobility benchmark in the Bologna process and the idea of having specific targets introduced in the Bruges Communiqué/Copenhagen process). In spite of these political ambitions only a small minority of learners/educators are taking part in mobility schemes. If the EU and its Member states want to reach the high targets they set they need to show a strong political commitment and provide adequate financial support at regional, national and European levels.

Barriers to mobility were also mentioned such as the "fear of the unknown" and foreign languages. The EU set ambitious goals in this field too. In 2002, it established the Barcelona objective to enable citizens to communicate in two languages plus their mother tongue. More efforts should be done in this field. In this sense, participants highlighted two crucial elements: the financial perspective for community programmes and supporting language competences.

## Q4. What are the lasting effects of these experiences and how to measure them?

There is not a unique way of measuring the effects of learning mobility periods. The definition of standards could be very different according to the person undergoing mobility, the organisers (sending/hosting organisations), the duration (short/long term), etc. Nevertheless, we have to develop tools and figures to measure the impacts ("labour

value” and “society value”) because EU programmes are working on an impact assessment basis. Bodies like EUCIS-LLL in cooperation with the EU institutions could develop such tools. But it is important to keep in mind that this is a very complex issue and that learners should be at the center.

According to an ESN survey on mobility, the most relevant visible effects remarked by the students were language skills (88%) and social and civic competences (willingness to be active in society, to give back what they have learnt). Learning mobility had an impact mostly on developing European active citizenship. These effects can be measured for example via surveys.

In more formalised learning mobility schemes like in vocational education and training, there is always a training center, a director and an internship supervisor to measure the impact. Even if it is difficult to measure, the agreement sets clear objectives on which to measure. In general, the following competences/skills are observed as having the strongest impact: autonomy, the capacity to take action, motivation and a different perspective on crafts. Language should not be prerequisite to access mobility; if one does not master the language of the host country then he/she will have to develop new competences.

Participants concluded that it could be useful to have a common approach on how to measure the impact of learning mobility. Participants highlighted that these effects should be tackled in a long-term perspective (e.g. personal autonomy, sense of initiative, languages skills, etc.) and be broad enough. For example it should consider the parental role: when a senior volunteer undertake a mobility exchange it has an impact not only on him/her but also on his/her relatives.



#### **Q5. Do we really address the target groups? Were opportunities missed?**

Learning mobility should target all European citizens and more particularly those further away of learning. Today, learners’ mobility is still limited to privileged socio-economic groups and is not always available for those who really need it. It is difficult for organisations to involve less privileged publics without human or financial resources. It requires commitment and creativity. It is important to find a trigger to encourage them do a learning mobility period (“mental move”). Multipliers like teachers have a crucial role to play in this context. It is also about ensuring decent conditions for learning periods abroad (sufficient grants, housing and social security) and to simplify administration. Furthermore, to reach these target groups it is important to encourage local organisations such as social or youth centres (non-formal education settings) that are directly in contact with these groups to participate in European exchange programmes.

#### **Q6. What are the obstacles/challenges within current mobility schemes?**

Creating spaces for long-term cooperation is a basic prerequisite to promote mobility partnerships. This is extremely difficult as it involves many actors at all levels. The EU should try to foster informal discussions that enable this dialogue, especially at the local level, and promote innovative management measures, particularly concerning accessible funding (i.e. co-funding mechanisms). The political engagement at all governmental levels is a fundamental prerequisite to develop such strategies.

Another obstacle highlighted by the participants was the recognition of mobility periods, especially when it comes to non-formal/informal learning. The focus should be on learning outcomes. Other remarks were made regarding support to teachers’ and educators’ mobility, targeting disadvantaged groups and enhancing the programmes to all Europeans, not only EU citizens.

#### **Q7 – Could we do this without EU funding?**

Participants shared a common answer: no, it would not have been possible.

## PANEL II: EU MOBILITY PROGRAMMES

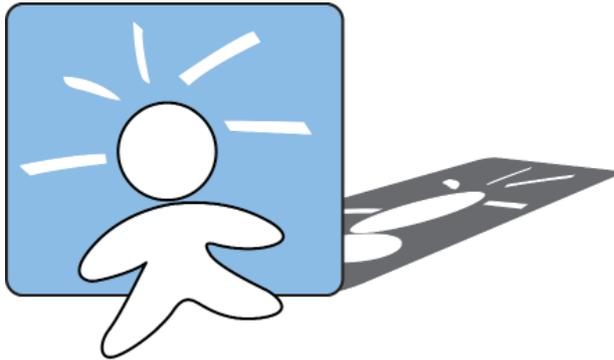
Key recommendations to ensure a greater participation of individuals in learning mobility:

- Promoting a holistic vision of learning taking into account formal, non-formal and informal learning and enabling bridges between them.
- Enhancing the focus of the programmes – not just on Higher Education but taking into account the whole lifelong learning spectrum including non-formal and informal settings – not just focusing on professional skills development but also on personal development.
- Focus on societal challenges: diversity and intercultural dialogue to address xenophobia or racism or gender equality for example.
- Supporting individual mobility through quality guidance instead of just focusing on quantitative benchmarks.
- Ensuring the recognition of reached qualifications and/or of the learning experience abroad, including different ways of learning (recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning across all sectors of society);
- Using the full potential of ICT tools to reach other audiences, to stimulate learners to go abroad and as a tool to develop staff/educators trainings.
- Developing a system-based approach: supporting sending and hosting organisations before/during/after the mobility period.
- Encouraging partnerships and policy cooperation between institutions, employers, organisations and learners.
- Allowing better flexibility to innovative projects that are transversal, flexible and involving various actors.
- Promoting best practices exchange and enabling the sustainability of good European projects/networks based on policy evidence.
- Simplifying the administrative management of mobility projects: if we want the programmes to target all EU citizens regardless of their social or geographic background, they should become user-friendly.
- Giving more visibility to mobility programmes. This can be done by using existing networks/stakeholders as multipliers in informing and raising awareness on the programmes to a wider audience.
- Enhancing access to mobility programmes to EU neighbouring countries. Transnational experience should be seen as an effective way to connect possible future members and partners of the EU.
- Stressing the importance of language teaching.
- Bridging the gap between ambitious political targets on mobility and funding available by assigning specific financial support to enable socially excluded groups to participate and to ensure the dignity of those undergoing mobility (i.e. proper financial support and mentoring).
- Identifying and ensuring possibilities of the further (co)funding from other EU resources as well as from the private, national, regional levels.
- Developing the use of lump sums that enable smaller organisations to take part in EU projects and basing project evaluation on qualitative terms - and not on how each Euro is spent.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ms Leeuw-Roord concluded the debates by stressing the need that came back out several times in the debates to broaden EU focus on employability to soft skills. It is about changing our perspective: from adapting individuals to the market to enabling individuals to act on the market and society. Participants strongly outlined that learning mobility develops citizens' skills; beyond building a European society it is about building an open society. Motivation was also a key element in the debates. Learning mobility should be possible at all ages and in all kind of settings (formal and non-formal) and the benefits are always shared with others. It is crucial to raise awareness and foster a stronger political commitment from Member States to support community programmes. The latter should recognise and support the role of civil society organizations in a sustainable way and be more open to the neighbouring countries ("non-fortress Europe"). They should be given a greater visibility. Concerning mobility, the question of hosting and sending organizations was strongly stressed as a prerequisite to qualitative mobility. Other important issues were raised such as the need to have user-friendly programmes, to adopt qualitative monitoring and to better use new technologies.





**EUCIS-LLL**

*The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning*

**EUCIS-LLL Platform**  
25 rue d'Arlon  
B-1050 Brussels  
Contact: [info@eucis-lll.eu](mailto:info@eucis-lll.eu)  
More info: [www.eucis-lll.eu](http://www.eucis-lll.eu)