



**Proposal for a
RECOMMENDATION
of the European Parliament and of the Council
on mobility within the Community for students, persons
undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and
trainers**

COM (1999) 708 final
2000/0021 (COD)

POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

– Endorsed by the Bureau of the European Youth Forum
at its meeting on 01–02 April 2000 –

The EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM, representing some 90 non-governmental non-profit-making international youth organisations and national youth councils in Europe and through them some 10 million young people, IS CONVINCED THAT

Mobility of young people is a key element of any youth policy with transnational ambitions.

"Mobility" in this context means:

- ⇒ exchanges of groups and individuals, young people coming together for seminars or hands-on projects, work camps etc.;

- ⇒ young people participating in non-profit projects abroad as volunteers;
- ⇒ young people studying in another country, spending a part of their primary or secondary education or their vocational training in another country;
- ⇒ encounters of young people with people of different social and cultural backgrounds;
- ⇒ broadening horizons;
- ⇒ working towards more understanding and co-operation of present and future generations in Europe.

Mobility is de facto an important tool in all educational programmes of the EU (Leonardo II, Socrates II, and Youth).

Mobility of students, trainees and apprentices, volunteers and trainers contributes to intercultural understanding in Europe and internationally.

Intercultural skills become ever more important in the globalised economies and multicultural societies of Europe. If Europe as a whole is actually to become a educational area with citizens capable of actively facing the challenges of drastic economic and societal change, both *language skills* and *the capacity to interact and co-operate with people from different cultures* **must not be neglected in European educational policies.**

Article 18 of the EC Treaty entitles every citizen the right to move and reside freely within the EU. Or, as the proposal submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council quite rightly states: "Mobility for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers , teachers and trainers (...) is an integral part of freedom of movement for people. This is one of the fundamental freedoms protected by the EC Treaty."

HOWEVER currently young people cannot benefit from transnational activities equally, not the least because obstacles to mobility persist,

are manifold and effect young people differently depending on their social status and background.

These obstacles – be they related to the right of residence, social benefits and health care, or any other regulations pertaining to the national administrations – are experienced by young people and their organisations regularly, when they try to put into practice the objectives of the Community programmes, engage in transnational youth projects, when they wish to make use of their rights as European citizens. Furthermore, these obstacles have been recognised by European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on several occasions¹.

The YOUTH FORUM therefore very much WELCOMES the initiative taken by the European Commission by drafting a "Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council".

The European Youth Forum is confident that the Recommendation will make a contribution to overcoming the obstacles to mobility.

The European Youth Forum wishes that both Council and the European Parliament make every effort to agree on adopting the Recommendation within the shortest possible delay, thus contributing to pave the way for an ever better implementation of the mobility measures of the new programmes and making headway for mobility of all young citizens in Europe in general.

¹ To mention just a few instances: The Green Paper "Education , Training Research: The obstacles to transnational Mobility" (COM (96) 462 final, the Guinebertière Report "On a Youth Policy for Europe" (A4-0100/99), the Council of Youth ministers conclusions of 30 November 1994 (OJ C 348 9.12.94, p. 2) – referring particularly to participants of the Youth for Europe programme and young volunteers.

While the Youth Forum believes that the proposal as presented by the Commission is of very good quality and certainly a valuable contribution to overcoming the obstacles to transnational mobility, we wish to contribute to the further discussion of the Recommendation by making some very concrete suggestions as to how to take the recommendation some steps further towards its aims and objectives, and to even better serve the needs of the Recommendation's target groups.

A. Youth Forum recommendations for amendments re. "Measures which concern all categories of people covered by the proposed Recommendation"

Article 1. a) could be improved by also making reference to the expertise and *acquis* acquired through the *Youth for Europe* programme and by referring to means of non-formal education, especially when it comes to taking into account that awareness and understanding of cultural concepts and differences must also be improved (Intercultural Learning):

"1. a) to take appropriate measures to encourage the mobility – which should never be hindered – of people who would like to undertake a course of studies, a period of training, a voluntary activity, or provide teaching or training in another Member State, regardless of whether this is in the context of a Community programme or not; these measures should complement those implemented by the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service Community programmes and should draw on the good practice developed in the context of these programmes; these measures should respond in particular to the financial problems of mobility by providing for financial assistance for mobility; they should also promote language learning and intercultural understanding by means of non-formal education and by enhancing the opportunities for language learning, as a lack of knowledge of languages is a major obstacle to mobility; ~~these measures should enable Member States to direct the mobility of those concerned towards~~

~~activities which are not available in their own country or towards activities which are innovative and offer good prospects;"~~

The YOUTH FORUM also recommends to insert a paragraph relative to those dealing with the target groups on a professional basis:

"1. f) to facilitate the cultural preparation and initiation into living, learning and working practices in different European countries, as well as their social reintegration back into the home community, namely by training relevant contact persons of the target groups (university teachers and administration, vocational teachers and trainers, teachers and head teachers, staff of sending and hosting organisations etc.) interculturally, and to encourage educational institutions to appoint staff to co-ordinate and facilitate their intercultural training;"

B. Youth Forum recommendations for amendments re. "Measures which specifically concern students"

The provisions of the Recommendation as proposed, are targeted mainly to the obstacles encountered by students in higher education. The Youth Forum believes that, in the context of the proposed Recommendation, **it would be useful to also tackle the obstacles encountered by students in primary and secondary education**. This seems especially useful as the Proposal rightly recognises language skills as an obstacle to mobility. Mobility of school students is especially well suited to enhance language skills.

The YOUTH FORUM therefore **RECOMMENDS** to amend the Proposal by **adding a sub-paragraph** to the measures concerning all students which would

particularly deal with students in school education. The following recommendations therefore seem to in place:

2.2 Measures which specifically concern students in school education.

- (a) To ensure that the measures mentioned under 1. and under 2.1² are applied also to students in school education and their educational institutions, wherever this is applicable;
- (b) ensure the recognition in the home Member State of periods of education in another Member State, whether they are due to an exchange or because of parents working in another country; such measures should in particular aim to increase the transparency and comparability of curricula, thus facilitating the recognition of the skills and qualifications between the Member States in general; the development and use of standardised trilateral agreements between the school student and the educational establishments in question should be encouraged by the Member States in co-operation with the European Commission;
- (c) to encourage the development of self study material and the use of study guidance by means of the Internet for those students studying abroad in order to facilitate the compensation of differences in curricula between the Member States;
- (d) to facilitate the integration of students into the education system of the host country and the hosting educational institution, as well as their reintegration into the education system of the home country by means of inter alia academic guidance and educational psychology;
- (e) to consider measures which would help to co-ordinate the structure of the academic year and examination periods, in particular by introducing terms or semesters;

² This refers to the original point 2 in the proposal "Measures which specifically concern students"; namely the point 2 b, 2c and 2 e appear to be applicable also to students in school education.

**C. Youth Forum recommendations for amendments re.
"Measures which specifically concern persons
undergoing training"**

The YOUTH FORUM considers that the measures recommended under 2. e) and 2 f)³ are also relevant for persons undergoing training and should therefore be reiterated for this target group.

**D. Youth Forum recommendations for amendments re.
"Measures which specifically concern young
volunteers"**

The YOUTH FORUM considers that special mention should be made to the educational value of voluntary service activities, which are a form of non-formal education, provided by community and youth NGO's, in particular in regard to the social and occupational integration of young people and their personal development and self-empowerment as active citizens.

Therefore we would recommend that a recital should be inserted:

(15) [Whereas] Transnational mobility of volunteers is a means of non-formal education, which contributes to the personal development of the volunteers as European citizens, enabling them to actively participate in the democratic societies of Europe and enhancing their opportunities of successful integration into the labour market, which increasingly requires pro-active and interculturally trained work force with well developed social and language skills;

³ 2e) concerns the transfer of grant and financial assistance; 2f) regards the risk of double taxation

The YOUTH FORUM believes that the provisions in the proposal are too narrowly targeted towards the participants of the European Voluntary Service programme, while Community Action Programmes should always be seen as complementary to similar activities already in place at the different levels. One should also bear in mind that these activities have a value of their own, and that their value does not depend on whether they are undertaken within a Community programme or outside. Therefore the Recommendation should not take over the age limits as they apply to the EVS. The YOUTH FORUM thus recommends not to define age limits for the Recommendation, namely in the Annex (III Young Volunteers), just as there are no age limits defined for the target group of "students".

The YOUTH FORUM welcomes that the proposed Recommendation underlines the necessity to "create a specific framework suited to the situation of young volunteers, when this does not exist". The Youth Forum would welcome if this provision was amended in a way that such frameworks are developed with *coherence* across the Union and that the situation of volunteers would be contrasted more explicitly with that of waged labour:

"4.a) to create a specific framework suited to the situation of young volunteers, (which recognizes that voluntary service is an activity distinct from waged labour), when this does not exist, and to take into account the situation and development in other Member States in that regard, seen that all issues of transnational nature require co-ordination and coherent approaches within the Community."

The European Voluntary Service programme has by now become an action of the new YOUTH programme, which unites the different non-formal educational activities for young people. Therefore, the reference should be to the YOUTH programme and not to the European Voluntary Service programme (which was a two-years programme coming to an end in 1999):

"4.b) to ensure the validation in the home Member State of the voluntary activity undertaken in the host Member State; to this end, the use of documents such as the attestation document provided for in Article 8 and the Annex of Decision No XXX/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 July 1998 establishing the Community action programme "YOUTH European Voluntary Service for Young People", amongst others, should be encouraged";

The YOUTH FORUM recommends that a **new paragraph be added** making sure that the volunteers, after their period of service, do not find themselves in a situation without social protection (social insurance):⁴

"4.g) to ensure that volunteers upon their return to their home country have the full rights and cover in regard to social protection, which they enjoyed before the period of service."

E. Youth Forum recommendations for amendments re. "Measures which specifically concern teachers and trainers"

The Youth Forum considers the experience gained in the Youth for Europe programme – especially in regard to non-formal methodology and intercultural training – as very valuable. It should also be taken into account in the realm of formal education and vocational training.

Therefore we suggest to amend paragraph 5 d):

"5. d) to encourage the introduction of a European dimension in the training programmes of teachers and trainers, on the basis of experience gained in the context of the Socrates,~~—and—~~Leonardo and Youth for Europe programmes, by converging training programmes, and

⁴ This also relates to those who prior to their service are covered by social security as employees

organising exchanges and training periods in another Member State;

Finally, the YOUTH FORUM considers the monitoring of how the Recommendation is implemented as crucial, especially seeing the legal nature of a Recommendation. In that regard it is necessary to involve experts, which *represent* the target groups. The ANNEX should therefore be amended accordingly:

"III a) to set up a group of experts which represent all Member States and include representatives of the different people ~~who know the different client~~ groups covered by this Recommendation, in order to enable the exchange of information and experience on the different aspects of this Recommendation;"

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