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SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Accompanying document to the

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

Youth on the Move – promoting the learning mobility of young people

{COM(2010) 478 final}
{SEC(2010) 1049}

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This impact assessment will accompany the proposal for a Recommendation of the Council to promote the learning mobility of young people, which will be one part of a suite of actions to be pursued within the framework of a Youth on the Move initiative.

1. BACKGROUND

Youth on the Move (YoM) is a flagship EU initiative to support the Europe 2020 Strategy. The aim is to "enhance the performance and international attractiveness of Europe's higher education institutions and raise the overall quality of all levels of education and training in the EU, combining both excellence and equity, by promoting student mobility and trainees' mobility, and improve the employment situation of young people¹.

Promoting learning mobility is a core objective of Youth on the Move. It will aim to boost (and improve the quality of) student mobility substantially. It will also aim to spread learning mobility opportunities more broadly, for all young people, notably among groups such as vocational training students and young people with fewer opportunities.

It is, however, clear that EU programmes cannot on their own meet the high ambitions which lie behind the initiative. For that reason, the Youth on the Move Communication envisages that EU programme support should be complemented by a mobilisation of the efforts of Member States and other actors in support of learning mobility. An important element will involve work in identifying and eliminating barriers to mobility.

The Commission proposes a draft Council Recommendation as the means to synthesize good policy approaches at the national level to promoting learning mobility and to serve as a policy guide for the Member States in making their contribution to the general Youth on the Move objectives. This Impact Assessment focuses directly on this element of the Youth on the Move package, in particular to tackle obstacles to mobility.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

As part of the freedom of movement of persons, learning mobility, i.e. transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new skills, is one of the fundamental ways in which individuals, particularly young people, can strengthen their future employability as well as their personal development.

The European Union has a long and highly-regarded record in promoting and supporting learning mobility; a domain of direct and tangible benefit to the European citizen. Initiatives such as the Erasmus programme have made it possible for more than 2 million people to study in another country and to have those studies formally recognised.

However, for too many of Europe's young people learning mobility is still not a realistic opportunity. Still relatively few young people reap the benefits of a learning experience abroad and some groups, such as young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly underrepresented. Linguistic, cultural, financial, legal and administrative

¹ COM(2010) 2020.

obstacles persist, including recognition, validation and perception of quality of learning completed abroad, **in particular outside the structured EU mobility programmes**. In addition, awareness of mobility opportunities remains low among young people. Moreover, the current legislative framework adopts a sectoral focus (i.e. tertiary education, vocational education and training, volunteering, teachers and trainers, young researchers) which can hinder joined up approaches. Whilst additional resources at both national and European levels (via existing programmes) can boost mobility, more money will not be sufficient alone to realise the vision of mobility as a realistic opportunity for all. Member States must do more to remove obstacles which persist at national and regional levels.

A 2001 Council Recommendation² on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers exists but has fallen into disuse and is now somewhat out of date. Evaluation of the effectiveness of this 2001 Council Recommendation³ demonstrated that the Recommendation has been effective to a certain extent but information regarding progress in implementing the specific provisions of the Recommendation is not comprehensive and easily accessible. There is a pressing need to **update, refocus and revitalise this Recommendation**.

3. ANALYSIS OF SUBSIDIARITY

Education, Youth and Training Policy is an area where the EU has **supporting competence** as defined by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Lisbon Treaty). The Treaty (article 165) provides that *'The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action'* and in particular, foresees that European Union action shall be aimed at *'encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study'* as well as at *"encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors"*.

The EU adopts a twin-track approach to taking forward this mission, through policy cooperation with EU Member States, and through the implementation of the Lifelong Learning (i.e. Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo, Grundtvig) and Youth in Action Programmes which provide funding in support of mobility actions.

4. OBJECTIVES OF EU INITIATIVE

The main policy objectives to be achieved are to make learning mobility an opportunity for all, via:

- The elimination of barriers to learning mobility at national/regional levels
- The promotion of learning mobility

Specific objectives will be pursued as below:

- improve the availability and accessibility of information on the possibilities and benefits of study abroad

² 2001/613/EC.

³ COM(2004) 21.

- improve language skills, consistent with the aims of the multilingualism strategy⁴, including the target of "Mother tongue plus two (foreign languages) for every citizen"
- remove legal and administrative barriers to the development of cross-border joint study programmes and other forms of learning mobility
- reduce legal and administrative barriers relating to health and social security coverage for young researchers, trainees and volunteers
- promote a coherent legal framework for the mobility of minors
- reduce or remove restrictions on the portability of student financial support
- improve recognition and validation for formal, non-formal and informal learning completed abroad
- increase opportunities for young people from underrepresented groups (lower socio economic backgrounds, minority ethnic, disabled people) to participate in mobility
- encourage a focus on improving the quality of mobility
- encourage cross-sectoral working to facilitate shared solutions common to different target groups
- enable a better comparison of progress between Member States and reinforce peer learning

It should be stressed that whilst it is appropriate to set out the areas where action is particularly needed by Member States, Recommendations at the EU level in the area of education and training should not be overly prescriptive: it will be for Member States themselves, in respect of the subsidiarity principle, to define how this will be taken forward in light of their specific circumstances.

5. POLICY OPTIONS

Following an initial assessment of possible options, three main options emerge as those most realistic and feasible, and are in line with the narrow scope for EU intervention in the field of education and training.

5.1. Option 1: No EU Action/Status Quo (baseline scenario)

An existing 2001 Council Recommendation on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers, which has fallen into disuse.

5.2. Option 2: A Council Recommendation: Youth on the Move: Promoting the learning mobility for young people

A new Council Recommendation, updating and refocusing the 2001 Recommendation and promoting a cross-sectoral approach to removing barriers to mobility common to several target groups and more focussed monitoring.

5.3. Option 3: A new Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) for the learning mobility of young people

A new stand-alone 'Open Method of Co-ordination' to monitor and report upon existing Member State actions to increase learning mobility and to share best practice.

⁴ 2008/C 320/01.

6. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF OPTIONS

6.1. Likely economic, social and environmental impacts of the short-listed options

Whilst the option "status quo" would have a small but limited economic and social and environmental impact because it implies no further action at EU level, options 2 and 3 would lead to more substantial positive economic and social impacts through more young people engaging in learning mobility, which has proven benefits for their employment and cultural integration via the development of increased and broader skills. This increase in mobility is expected to result from more information, better recognition, smoother administrative procedures, and improved support structures. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or for whom mobility was beyond reach, are expected to benefit particularly from the removal of specific barriers which disadvantage them and as a result may benefit from increased social and economic (re)integration.

6.2. Assessment of administrative burden

Option 1 requires no additional administrative burden because it involves no further action on the part of the EU or national authorities. Option 2 will imply some additional costs for implementing agencies, institutions and government departments in responding to the Recommendation e.g. in the design of new strategies or revision of legislation to make learning mobility easier for young people. Some additional costs will result from the creation of a mobility scorecard, although the overall effect will be neutral because it will be offset by a re-orientation of the existing monitoring and reporting requirements. Option 3 represents the most significant increase in administrative burden: whilst implementation costs would be broadly in line with Option 2, additional costs would result at both EU and national levels associated with the establishment of a new OMC monitoring and reporting framework.

6.3. Impacts outside the EU

Option 1 is expected to have a limited impact on extra EU mobility, since the 2001 Council Recommendation does not address this specifically. Option 2 will bring positive impacts for mobility outside the EU, given that a new Council Recommendation will explicitly target this aspect, which will provide an important update and enhancement compared to the baseline. Option 3 will have more limited impact for extra-EU mobility as the absence of a legal instrument might provide less of an incentive for action by Member States.

7. COMPARISON OF THE OPTIONS BASED UPON THEIR LIKELY IMPACTS

The status quo might allow for some improvements in evolution, but these are likely to be insufficient to realise the aspiration of learning mobility as an opportunity for all. The 2001 Recommendation does not cater for important developments in recent years within the education and training sector which have influence on learning mobility. Furthermore, its sectoral approach makes it difficult to address issues common to more than one target group. In addition, longstanding obstacles to mobility which are not adequately recognised or addressed, are likely to remain areas of concern. Even if fully implemented, the 2001 Recommendation and its follow-up as part of the Education and Training OMC would be insufficient to address all current obstacles to mobility. Further action is therefore necessary to achieve the objectives set out in section 4 above.

Options 2 and 3 offer much increased potential to bring about changes in Member State provisions to deliver upon the objectives outlined above. A new Council Recommendation, as put forward in Option 2, has the advantage of setting out a comprehensive and clear agenda

for change in specific areas of identified shortcoming against which progress can be assessed. This option would offer the potential to re-launch, revitalise and update work in this area via a new legal instrument focussing on horizontal obstacles common across sectors and give fresh impetus and an increased visibility to mobility issues, combined with the potential for clear comparison of progress between countries; and therefore would be expected to act as a stimulus to drive forward progress in this area. Option 3 is limited to its nature of 'soft law' which could weaken its potential impact compared to a legal instrument, in particular as regards addressing legal and administrative barriers at the Member State level. As compared with Option 2, the absence of a Recommendation as the initial driver of the exercise risks to weaken the collective effort. Finally, the additional administrative burden, both at national and EU levels which would result from the establishment and operation of a new OMC would be significant and would most likely meet strong opposition from the Member States.

7.1. Preferred policy option

On the basis of the assessment above, the preferred option is Option 2 (A Council Recommendation) which represents the best combination of expected impact balanced with cost and administrative burden.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting would take place within the existing Strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (Open Method of Co-ordination), which will be reoriented to this end. Based upon the national reports, the Commission would present a biennial assessment of progress across Member States and observations at country-level regarding strengths and weaknesses in removing obstacles to learning mobility in the format of a 'Mobility Scoreboard' which will allow for comparative assessment across countries.

Core indicators of progress towards meeting the objectives will be based upon the following:

- Decrease in significant problems with obstacles to mobility reported by mobile students/volunteers/researchers (as measured by surveys)
- Specific indicators to be elaborated based upon progress in each field of obstacle, to be monitored via a proposed 'Mobility Scoreboard'
- An increase in the number of young people (15-35) engaging in learning mobility
- An EU-level mobility benchmark(s) for learning mobility will be proposed (foreseen in the context of the Strategic Framework on Education and Training ET2020)
- In higher education: by 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad (Bologna Process mobility benchmark)

An independent external evaluation is proposed to assess progress after the first four years of implementation of the Recommendation (i.e. by end 2014).