



European Youth Forum  
Resolution on

# MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE

Adopted by the General Assembly  
Brussels (Belgium)  
19-21 October 2000

## Introduction

Mobility of young people, be it in groups or individually, is a vital contribution to intercultural understanding. This is true primarily on the individual level, while the social potential of mobility remains to be fully seized, as the total number of young people taking part in exchanges, or studying or volunteering in another country still is marginal.

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 be at the centre of concern in European educational policies.

Living in another country for some time, intercultural exchanges and training put young people in a position where they can reflect on their cultural background and come to a proper appreciation of the diversity of Europe. They can learn to co-operate with people of different cultural backgrounds, which is a skill already highly valued by employers and which will most probably become more important in the future. The basis for such a skill is most effectively laid at an early age in life. The same is true for language skills.

The benefit of such an experience is not exclusive to the individuals involved in the exchanges. Through their interaction, they promote intercultural learning, both in the hosting community and in the one of origin (their people, their institutions, etc.).

Mobility is a right enshrined in the treaty (Article 18 TEC). The Community and the Member States have to take the appropriate measures to safeguard that all citizens have adequate resources and support in order to allow for equal opportunities in making use of this right. Currently this right remains theory for most young people. The reasons are lack of opportunities and resources, lack of recognition of the value of mobility as such and the skills acquired through mobility, uneven distribution of opportunities, social and cultural resistance to the idea of mobility, legal and administrative barriers. The Union and the Member States should develop a policy mix to tackle these obstacles. Special attention, adequate resources and support need to be given to provide equal rights for non-EU nationals residing within the Union in this respect.

Furthermore, the Union needs to be open to young people from outside of the EU, and avoid overly bureaucratic procedures and fees for obtaining visas, which greatly hinder the mobility of non-EU nationals in particular.

The mobility of young people has been a prime concern for the European Youth Forum for a long time, and it has contributed to the discussions and policy making in this respect at several instances.<sup>1</sup> The European Youth Forum, the representative European platform of non-governmental youth organisations, therefore welcomes the initiative taken by the French Presidency of the Council to set up an Action Plan on Mobility, as well as the initiative taken by the Commission in proposing a Recommendation that aims to remove the obstacles to the mobility of students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers (COM (1999) 708) (henceforth referred to as "Mobility Recommendation").

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<sup>1</sup> Policy documents and Resolutions on mobility adopted by the Youth Forum: Means for improvement of the visa for young people participating in international exchanges and co-operation activities MOB D96-191, adopted April 1996; Youth Forum Position on the EU green paper "Education, training, research - the obstacles to transnational mobility" MOB CP/EDUCA 310; Young People at the Heart of Youth Policy - Working Document CP-SOCIA D97-294.rev; Position of the European Youth Forum on the Proposal for a Recommendation on mobility within the Community (COM (1999) 708final) Bureau 0331-2k

The Youth Forum believes that it is very important to involve all stakeholders and relevant social, political and economic actors when one wants to overcome the obstacles to mobility, in particular because these obstacles have very diverse dimensions. I.e. they have legal, financial, social, administrative, cultural, educational, and informational aspects.

### Recommendations in view to removing obstacles to mobility and to promote the access to mobility for all young people.

The European Youth Forum calls upon the EU institutions, the Member States and the governments of Europe to make co-ordinated efforts to increase the mobility of young people and to take into account the following recommendations:

1. The potential of medium and long-term mobility at an early age should be promoted by the Community and supported by the Member States.

The European Union should achieve by 2010 that at least one in three young women and men ending compulsory education have spent at least six months in another country, and that this period of education is fully recognized by the country of origin as an integral and valuable part of their secondary education.

2. The resources available for the support of young people's mobility on all levels need to be at least tripled over the next three years. Public-private partnerships should be explored to achieve this ambitious objective.

3. The European Union and the Member States should promote mobility by a large scale campaign targeting young people themselves as well as decision makers and multipliers (employers, educational institutions, general media, etc.) promoting the individual, social and economic value of mobility.

4. A one-stop-shop information system on opportunities for all sorts of mobility (internships abroad, city partnerships, transnational volunteering, youth exchanges, mobility in secondary, higher and vocational education, etc.) should be developed within the shortest possible frame of time, and be based on a co-operation of the public, the private and the third sector. Such a system should include a internet based focal point as well as relays (virtual and physical) across Europe.

5. The mobility of teachers and trainers should be further promoted and supported by the Member States and by the Community. The Member States should make extra efforts to facilitate the intercultural training of the staff of educational institutions, as this will facilitate both their own mobility as well as a better support of young people in mobility and the broader recognition (by schools, universities, etc.) of periods that young people spent in another country.

6. Particular attention still needs to be given to administrative obstacles, which exist in the Member States in regard to social insurance, taxation<sup>2</sup>, residence rights, work permits and academic recognition of skills acquired both formally as well as through means of non-formal and informal education.

7. The Member States must make a special commitment to make available the opportunities to mobility (short and longer term) also to the young unemployed. Otherwise young job seekers will be doubly excluded and their disadvantage exacerbated. Therefore the participation in vocational training abroad, exchanges, international voluntary service etc. must suspend the obligation to be at the disposal of the home labour market (in order to receive unemployment

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2 e.g. the taxation of pocket money of volunteers or of students' allowances.

benefits) for a period of up to one year. Member States should multilaterally agree that these young people do not have to prove that they will "not become a burden" to the hosting Member State. In that respect the Member States should issue a document to young unemployed wishing to take part in mobility schemes for a limited time, which states that the national social system of the country of origin will cover the person in question for a specified period.

8. Member States should agree to abolish fees for visa and residence cards and comparable documents at least for all young people under the age of 26, regardless of their origin. Financial resources of a young person should not be a selective mechanism and mobility must not be taxed.

## Call for Action

The European Youth Forum calls upon

- the Council of the EU to adopt, at its meeting of November 9<sup>th</sup> 2000, a Common Position on the Mobility Recommendation, which takes into account the above recommendations and all amendments made by European Parliament in first reading<sup>3</sup> as far as they are reflected in the Proposal as revised by the Commission, thus facilitating a quick adoption of the Recommendation;
- the EU Member States governments to quickly implement the measures foreseen in the proposed Mobility Recommendation;
- the Council of the EU to include clear benchmarks in its Action Plan on Mobility, and to take into account the above recommendations in the interest of all young people,
- the Council of the EU and the Member States to implement the Action Plan on Mobility in close co-operation with the social partners and non-governmental organisations in the field of youth and education;
- the Commission and the Council to facilitate equal access to mobility for third country nationals residing in the EU, in particular in view to the adoption of legal instruments as envisaged in Article 62(3) and Article 63(4) TEC<sup>4</sup>, thereby taking into account specifically the situation of young people and including volunteers;
- all Member States of the Council of Europe to adopt measures similar to the ones foreseen in the Action Plan and the Recommendation;
- all Member States of the Council of Europe to sign the European Convention on the Promotion of Transnational Long-term Voluntary Service for Young People<sup>5</sup> in the course of 2001, which is the International Year of Volunteers, proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations<sup>6</sup>.

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3 Evans Report, 19 Sept. 2000, A5-0255/2000

4 Cf. also Commission Communication "Scoreboard to review progress on the creation of an area of 'Freedom, Security, and Justice' in the European Union, COM (2000) 167 final, p. 11/12

5 ETS no. 175. The Convention is open for signature since May 11th 2000. As of September 29th it has been signed by France, Romania, San Marino, and the United Kingdom.

6 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly in its 52nd session (Agenda item 12), November 20th 1997