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2.1. THE BENEFITS OF EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Education and training play a central role in the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment and constitute a key element for achieving the goals envisaged by the European Commission for the year 2020.

On July 8th 2009 the European Commission issued a Green Paper "Promoting the learning mobility of young people", an open and public consultation in order to foster the mobility of young people in Europe.

The importance of mobility of young people is stressed in this green paper:

*"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. Furthermore, employers recognise and value these benefits. Europeans who are mobile as young learners are more likely to be mobile as workers later in life. Learning mobility has played an important role in making education and training systems and institutions more open, more European and international, more accessible and efficient. It can also strengthen Europe's competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society, thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives set out in the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs."*²

*"In the context of the current international economic crisis, the Commission has stressed that investment in education and training is crucial. It has also underlined that while there may be a temptation in such circumstances to divert resources from such activities, it is precisely in times of economic difficulty that investment in knowledge and skills needs to be safeguarded."*³

*"Learning mobility has other positive features. It can, for example, help combat the risks of isolationism, protectionism and xenophobia which arise in times of economic crisis. It can help foster a deepened sense of European identity and citizenship among young people. It also boosts the circulation of knowledge which is key to Europe's knowledge-based future."*⁴

In the EU there are some longstanding traditions in support of learning mobility by means of different programmes and initiatives, especially via the Lifelong Learning programme for the period 2007-2013. The main goals of the programme are to contribute to the development of the European Community as a knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better work opportunities and greater social cohesion while at the same time providing enhanced protection of the environment for future generations.

² Green paper, Promoting the learning mobility of young people. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/mobility/com329_en.pdf

³ Idem

⁴ Idem

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The Lifelong Learning Programme enables individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. There are four sub-programmes focusing on different stages of education and training and continuing previous programmes:

Comenius⁵: “seeks to develop knowledge and understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures, languages and values. It helps young people acquire the basic life skills and competences necessary for their personal development, for future employment and for active citizenship.”

Erasmus⁶: “has become a driver in the modernisation of higher education in Europe and inspired the establishment of the Bologna Process. The general aim of the Programme is to create a European Higher Education Area and foster innovation throughout Europe. The Programme seeks to expand its mobility actions even further in coming years, with the target of 3 million Erasmus students by 2012.”

Leonardo da Vinci⁷: “the programme funds a wide range of actions, notably cross-border mobility initiatives; co-operation projects to develop and spread innovation; and thematic networks. The potential beneficiaries are similarly wide – from trainees in initial vocational training, to people already in the labour market, as well as VET professionals and private or public organisations active in this field.”

Grundtvig⁸: “aims to provide adults with ways to improve their knowledge and skills, keeping them mentally fit and potentially more employable. It not only covers learners in adult education, but also the teachers, trainers, education staff and facilities that provide these services. These include relevant associations, counselling organisations, information services, policy-making bodies and others involved in lifelong learning and adult education at local, regional and national levels, such as NGOs, enterprises, voluntary groups and research centres.”

Learning mobility is also supported by the Structural Funds in some EU countries.

“In addition, the European Commission has helped to develop a number of tools to facilitate mobility, such as the Europass, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS, for higher education), the Diploma Supplement, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Youthpass, EURAXESS, the “students visa Directive” and the “scientific visa” package”⁹

⁵ Lifelong learning programme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc84_en.htm

⁶ Lifelong learning programme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

⁷ Lifelong learning programme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc82_en.htm

⁸ Lifelong learning programme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc86_en.htm

⁹ Green paper, Promoting the learning mobility of young people. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/mobility/com329_en.pdf

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“Taken together, the current mobility programmes, tools and initiatives reach out to the different strata of Europe's youth population. However, mobility still remains the exception rather than the rule and it is more accessible by some groups, e.g. students, than others, e.g. vocational trainees and apprentices for whom many practical obstacles remain.”¹⁰

The challenges arising from demographic changes, as well as the necessity for regular updating and developing of peoples' competences and keeping up with changing economic and social circumstances demand the adoption of the lifelong learning approach as well as education and training systems which are more easily adaptable to these changes and are more open to the whole world. Unlike our time when learning mobility is rather the exception, it must become a natural characteristic of European identity and an opportunity which can be taken by all young people in Europe. This way it can become an important factor in guaranteeing the future competitiveness and solidarity of the European Union.

Mobility in a context of education and training differs substantially from the other types of mobility in that it is primarily a pedagogical exercise: it is a tool used to produce certain kinds of learning of an affective and/or cognitive nature with the participant. Placements abroad can be a means for achieving intercultural understanding, learning how to live peacefully together in Europe and in the world and develop a sense of "European Citizenship".

The benefits for mobility are very well detailed for each player in the MoVE-iT survey issued by the European Commission:

“For the employers, transnational placements in IVET can serve as a tool for developing skills and competences of future employees and as a tool for stimulating internationalisation. Transnational placements can help develop (international) skills and competences of future employees that are important for operating successfully on the international market and for the economic development in Europe. These skills concern (among others): learning to learn, information processing, decision making skills, communication and foreign language skills, creative thinking and problem solving skills, self-management and self-development and flexibility.”¹¹

“Benefits of transnational placements for employers do not only refer to competence development of future employees, though this often is seen (by employers) as the most important benefit. Other benefits for employers are:

- *valuable multi-cultural experiences and a potentially further internationalising labour force;*
- *getting an international touch within the company;*
- *new impulses, ideas and knowledge of new markets;*
- *possibility of students bringing in new approaches and new (working) methods;*
- *improved language attainment of staff;*
- *greater cultural awareness and technical understanding;*
- *improving the profile and attractiveness of the particular sector.”¹²*

¹⁰ Idem

¹¹ 'Study on the obstacles to transnational mobility faced apprentices and other young people in initial vocational training and on ways of overcoming them' also referred to as the MoVE-iT project. April 2007: http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/moveitsum_en.pdf

¹² Idem

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“Benefits of international IVET mobility from the perspective of IVET institutions:

Transnational mobility can contribute towards improving the attractiveness of IVET in general, and the apprenticeship system in particular, both at the level of the VET system and at the level of VET institutions and separate VET programmes. Offering the possibility of transnational placements can enhance the profile of both the VET institutions as such as well as of particular programmes, making them more attractive. Moreover, providing the opportunity of transnational placements enriches VET programmes.

Pro-active internationalisation strategies and policies:

Many VET institutions establish partnerships with similar institutions abroad in order to carry out mobility projects. If initial experiences are good, often the collaboration continues. For VET institutions this often is the first step towards the internationalisation process, in which the management becomes convinced of the importance of international cooperation, which in its turn is the first step towards developing more comprehensive internationalisation policies and strategies for the own institution.”¹³

“For teachers and trainers as well as tutors in host companies, incoming mobility represents a challenge to develop both linguistic and intercultural (teaching) skills.

The offset of such experiences can be twofold:

- *an increased involvement with the sending aspects of mobility – motivating and preparing IVET participants to go on a transnational placement;*
- *getting mobile themselves, using the opportunities of e.g. the Leonardo da Vinci programme for a stay abroad.”¹⁴*

Benefits of international IVET mobility from the perspective of IVET participants:

“Triple competence development: the merit of international mobility lies first and foremost in the development of European citizenship by individual IVET participants and in their acquisition of vocational, international and personal skills. More precisely it concerns: concrete vocational or professional skills, international skills and personal skills and competences.

¹³ Idem

¹⁴ Idem

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Benefits according to IVET participants:

- *Increased cultural awareness.*
- *Increased language ability.*
- *Increased self-confidence.*
- *Willingness to go again.*
- *Understanding other countries in Europe.*
- *Improved communication skills.*
- *Work relationships.*
- *Personal relations.*
- *Higher motivation for study completion.*
- *Increased interest in other people.*
- *Expected positive impact on career opportunities.*
- *Improved vocational knowledge.*¹⁵

International mobility of students can ensure a number of **benefits for society in general**. Mobility and the possibility for European citizens to move across countries is positively viewed as a great advantage and benefit of the European Union, yet mobility and work placement still affect a very small percentage of workers and IVET students. An increase in mobility contributes to promoting and sustaining understanding and respect among EU citizens and would contribute at a later stage to greater worker mobility, thus increasing the flexibility of the European labour market. An increase in students' involvement in mobility in IVET would contribute to social cohesion and mutual understanding in a society characterized by greater multicultural and multiethnic composition.

Learning mobility has an important role in making education and training systems and institutions more open more European and international, more accessible and efficient. It can also strengthen Europe's competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society, thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives set out in the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment.

2.2. A NEED FOR EUROPEAN WORKPLACE TRAINING FOR IVET STUDENTS

Workplace training is a basic element of professional training and education because it is a structured model for knowledge acquisition in a work environment. Learning mobility enhances the possibilities for finding a job as well as enhancing students' adaptability. The experience acquired in a different cultural environment encourages the students and makes them more flexible, helping them adapt better to their work. It also helps them become more independent and mature.

Enterprises in their turn are facing the need for qualified work force with diversified skills which affect the organization's performance, functions and economic activities: technological development, internationalization and new technologies.

¹⁵ Idem

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*"The right to be mobile across national borders is one of the fundamental freedoms which the EU bestows on its citizens."*¹⁶ Mobility helps foreign language acquisition and contributes to breaking the barriers between people from different nationalities. Mobility is also instrumental in effectuating experience and knowledge exchange between educational institutions and companies, thus rendering the latter more competitive and innovative.

Promoting a willingness to be mobile is the particular focus of the EU mobility actions, notably but not exclusively on the mobility actions under the Lifelong Learning Programme and other Programmes run by the DG Education and Training.

2.3. RELATED EUROPEAN PROJECTS

The global economy demands more and more competitive industries that need innovative workers with international skills and experience. The Lifelong Learning Programme thus defines a 2009-2011 priority as expanding learning mobility in Europe and worldwide. There is a need to improve mobility both in quantity and quality at the European level, and consequently a strong concern on the part of EU institutions to reach this goal.

The EU is issuing documents, surveys and recommendations for this purpose, and it is also supporting several projects where mobility stakeholders are doing their best to improve European mobility.

In that sense, the Q-Placements project, being a Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project, is compiling the related information on European Mobility that could be useful to Q-Placements handbook readers.

As stated in the Commission's Green paper *"Promoting the learning mobility of young people: In January 2008, the European Commission established a High Level Expert Forum with the mandate to explore how to expand mobility, not only within the university sector, but among young people more generally. The Forum presented its report in June 2008 which called for learning mobility to become the rule, not the exception among Europe's young people. In July 2008, the "Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe" affirmed that the Commission would continue to develop a "fifth freedom" by removing barriers to the free movement of knowledge and promoting the mobility of specific groups like young people. It signalled that a Green Paper was planned for 2009 on the latter issue."*¹⁷

As per the conclusions of the Council of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on youth mobility, the Council invites Member States and the Commission to several measures for the improvement of mobility.¹⁸

¹⁶ Report of the high level expert forum on mobility "Making learning mobility an opportunity for all"

¹⁷ Green paper, Promoting the learning mobility of young people. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/mobility/com329_en.pdf

¹⁸ Conclusions of the Council of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on youth mobility, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:320:0006:0009:EN:PDF>

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In addition, in the recent years the European Parliament has created a specific budget line to foster mobility.

“To find innovative solutions for increasing transnational mobility in IVET – both quantitatively and qualitatively – the European Parliament in 2005 created a specific budget line and made it available to the European Commission in order to finance innovative actions addressing this issue. As one of the initiatives arising out of this, twelve pilot projects have been grant-aided by the European Commission in the years 2007-8 in order to identify and develop innovative solutions; in particular for the promotion of individual, long-term mobility of apprentices and other young persons in IVET.”¹⁹

As a result of this initiative of the European Parliament, 12 projects and 3 studies were launched providing useful information on European mobility.

The reader can find further information on the results of these 12 projects at http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/mobilityguide_en.pdf.

The three studies are the following:

MoVE-iT:

A study on overcoming obstacles to mobility for apprentices and young people in initial vocational education and training; the state of the art in the Member States and solutions to obstacles.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/moveitsum_en.pdf

Reflector:

Focussed on the relation between a European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET) and the different systems of certification in the Member States.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc144_en.pdf

Connexion:

Focussed on the relations between ECVET and the offer of initial VET, apprenticeship included, and viability of utilisation of the ECVET tools.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc171_en.pdf

¹⁹ Tools and good examples of practice for organising transnational mobility in IVET”, EAC/44/06 Support for Mobility, November 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/mobilityguide_en.pdf.

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The Q-Placements handbook also highlights some of the most interesting and useful best practices for mobility stakeholders that can be a perfect source of information and templates to be used when managing mobilities.

Euronaver Network:

The Euronaver platform equips intermediary bodies to function as support structures for SMEs by providing information and tools in nine languages. The platform gives mobility organisers access to state-of-the-art knowledge and experiences and introduces them to a large network and database of other mobility actors all over Europe.²⁰

More info at: <http://www.euronaver.net/en/home.html>

The Placement Contract Customizer:

This is a web-based tool which can generate individualised contracts for placements abroad, and which has been developed jointly by experts on legal matters and mobility practitioners. Users fill in information on the placement (e.g. nature of placement, sending and hosting country, duration, age of participant, sector of activity.), and subsequently the tool generates a draft placement agreement which includes all the important issues with reference to national and international law.²¹

More info at: <http://www.european-mobility.eu/>

i2i: Internship to Industry:

Within the i2i project useful web based manuals were developed to secure the whole process of workplace training from preparation to the point of admission of the placement. The manuals support schools, companies, exchange organizations, and participants. A list of forms, templates and useful links are also provided.

More info at: <http://www.internship2industry.eu/>

Ap n' go:

Ap 'n go is a platform where students/apprentices can register a request for a placement abroad, and where companies interested in hosting young people on placements can describe their requirements. Through the website, a matching between the two is facilitated.²²

More Info at: <http://www.ap-and-go.eu>

APIK (Auslandpraktika- interkulturelle kompetenz):

APIK helps German companies to send their employees and trainees to other countries to broaden their horizons concerning working methods, as well as soft skills and cross-cultural competences.

More info: www.apik-sachsen.de

²⁰ "Tools and good examples of practice for organising transnational mobility in IVET", EAC/44/06 Support for Mobility, November 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/mobilityguide_en.pdf

²¹ Idem.

²² Idem.

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Training without borders:

A network of mobility coaches in German Chambers of Commerce and Industry and in Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses to motivate small and middle sized enterprises and their trainees and to enhance their professional experiences abroad.

More info: <http://www.mobilitaetscoach.de/>

EPTE 6 Placements for live entertainment 6:

Project promoted by the Escola Superior de Tècniques de les Arts de l'Espectacle at the Institut del Teatre run by Barcelona Provincial Council in Spain in order to promote 4 weeks workplace training in theatres in different European countries.

More info at: www.institutdelteatre.org

TACTIC:

This European consortium for international placements has drawn up a handbook that can be downloaded by registered users in a number of different languages. It sets out the methodology and minimum quality requirements for international mobility project planning, preparation for the project, implementation and end of project.

More info at: www.tactic.dep.net