



## Mobility for Better Learning

## Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)



### I. Mobility aims and targets

Promoting high quality mobility of students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education has been a central objective of the Bologna Process from the very beginning. High quality mobility pursues educational goals such as enhancing the competences, knowledge and skills of those involved. It contributes to expanding and improving academic collaboration and dissemination of innovations and knowledge within the EHEA, further internationalising higher education systems and institutions and improving them through comparison with one another, promoting the employability and personal development of the mobile people and strengthening the cultural identity of Europe. Mobility is essential to ensure high quality higher education and it is also an important pillar for exchange and collaboration with other parts of the world. In the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, we have formulated a mobility target that in 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad. Further to our declarations and communiqués hitherto and building up on our mobility target for 2020, we want to undertake the following measures which shall be implemented at institutional, national or European level:

### II. Measures for the implementation of the mobility aims and targets

#### 1. We agree that all member countries develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies or policies with concrete aims and measurable mobility targets.

They will include mobility aims for exchanges with partners inside and outside the EHEA, concrete measures for the expansion of mobility and the removal of obstacles to mobility, building on the action taken in this field in accordance with the London Communiqué. Measures will be defined with regard to improving the recognition of studies and training periods spent abroad, foreign language proficiency of mobile students and staff as well as regarding financial support. The strategies of the EHEA countries should include measurable and realistic mobility targets, improved monitoring tools and strategies for information and promotion of mobility opportunities.

#### 2. We reaffirm and elaborate our mobility target formulated at Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve and lay down additional targets.

1. We define our mobility target from the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué more precisely as follows:

(a) We measure physical mobility in all three cycles of the Bologna Process.

(b) We include in our mobility target the periods spent abroad corresponding to at least 15 ECTS credit points or three months within any of the three cycles (credit mobility) as well as stays in which a degree is obtained abroad (degree mobility).

2. In Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve we decided to include only outward mobility in our mobility target. In addition to our quantitative target for the outward mobility of graduates in the

EHEA, we now also want to draw attention to mobility into the EHEA such as the number of students enrolled in the EHEA who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA as one possible indicator of its international attractiveness. We invite the European Commission (in particular Eurostat with the collaboration of the European Statistical System and its partners in international organisations) to collect corresponding data so that we can assess the progress in achieving the target for outward mobility and establish a reliable data basis regarding inward mobility with the possible aim of defining a target in 2015.

3. Therefore, in support of the specified indicators, we invite the European Commission (Eurostat) to develop and provide data:

(a) On degree and credit mobility to and from countries outside the EHEA.

(b) On the various mobility types (degree and credit mobility), in addition also short-term mobility corresponding to less than 15 ECTS credit points or three months.

In addition and where applicable, EHEA countries in co-operation with the European Commission and Eurostudent to develop and provide data:

(c) On mobility of early stage researchers, teachers, and staff in higher education.

(d) On the social dimension of mobility.

### **3. We strive for open higher education systems and better balanced mobility in the EHEA.**

Our demand for more balanced mobility is directed particularly at degree mobility since it can have a sustained effect on the host and home countries, can facilitate capacity building and cooperation and may lead to brain gain on the one side and to brain drain on the other. Efforts made by governments as well as higher education institutions confronted with high levels of incoming degree and credit mobility deserve our acknowledgement and attention in order to strengthen the EHEA.

Joint study programmes, multilateral summer schools and regional forms of higher education collaboration are promising instruments to support a better balance in mobility flows. The return of graduates to their home countries can be supported through the creation of attractive working conditions and specific incentive systems (e.g. return grants).

In order to be able to better evaluate the development of degree mobility in the EHEA and react in good time to possible negative consequences for certain countries and regions, we intend in future to analyse the mobility flows systematically and regularly.

If the findings show greater imbalances over longer periods of time, the governments concerned should jointly investigate the causes, consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of the specific imbalance and seek solutions if deemed necessary. Dealing with the matter multilaterally might also be considered.

### **4. We encourage the member countries to strive for more and better balanced mobility of the EHEA with countries outside the EHEA.**

In each of our countries, we commit to intensifying structural collaboration with developing and emerging countries and using appropriate measures to motivate more Europeans, in particular, to study, teach and research in these countries. At the same time, in order to become more attractive for students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff from non-EHEA

countries, we call on the EHEA countries to develop new study programmes and better promote programmes and other incentives for mobility periods in the EHEA.

**5. We shall take measures to dismantle existing obstacles to mobility.**

While increasing the motivation of students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff to be mobile is of paramount importance for the success of any mobility measures, there is still a series of obstacles on different levels which impact on the substantial expansion of mobility inside and outside the EHEA. In order to reduce them, we intend to take the following measures:

- (1) As far as possible, to expand mobility funding and to enable a wide-reaching portability of grants, loans and scholarships provided by our countries as well as to further improve the exchange of information regarding the portability of national grants and loans across the EHEA to reach the mobility targets agreed upon in the EHEA.
- (2) To work with higher education institutions to increase the quality and relevance of mobility periods, ensuring that they contribute to high academic standards, to the employability as well as the linguistic and intercultural competence of graduates and to the excellence of academic staff.
- (3) We request that the European Union secures adequate mobility funding with appropriate funding through its education programmes. We acknowledge mobility funding by national, regional and private sources and commit to furthering co-funding.<sup>1</sup>
- (4) We will ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention are taken up in national legislation and that recognition of qualifications or credits obtained elsewhere is guided by an open minded and positive approach.
- (5) We will identify in our countries problems, e.g. in relation to issuing visas, residence and work permits in the higher education field, and we will take measures accordingly to make mobility easier. The work of the European Commission to monitor progress in removing the obstacles on the framework conditions for learning mobility can serve as a model.
- (6) We welcome the work of the European Commission as well as of national supplementary pension providers on further promoting ideas and concepts to overcome the mobility obstacles linked to the national supplementary pension systems as far as the mobility of staff in higher education is concerned.
- (7) We will give extra attention and opportunities to under-represented groups to be mobile and recognise the importance of adequate student support services to this end.
- (8) As a prerequisite for mobility and internationalisation, we support the teaching of foreign languages at all levels, starting from primary education. We also strongly support the improvement of the language capabilities of teachers.

**6. We will use quality assurance and transparency tools for promoting high quality mobility inside and outside the EHEA.**

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<sup>1</sup> Without prejudice to the budget.

Transparency of structures and instruments and mutual trust in the higher education systems of all the EHEA countries are at the core of the EHEA and a necessary prerequisite for mobility. We further encourage the application of the qualifications framework for the EHEA, of the ECTS and of the Diploma Supplement and intend to strengthen the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) by using the register better as a reference instrument especially by deploying the quality assurance agencies listed in it consistently in the respective member countries.

Furthermore, in accrediting or recognising study programmes we must pay even greater attention to ensuring that the professional perspectives opened up by a study programme are clearly set out. We aim to facilitate the alignment of EU legislation on professional qualifications with the EHEA (e.g. reference to learning outcomes, promoting even greater comparability in the use of ECTS as the basis for such recognition). We request the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) to engage in a dialogue with the European Commission and the national authorities responsible for professional qualifications in order to establish effective cooperation to this end. In addition, we ask the BFUG to explore the feasibility of entrusting agencies registered in the EQAR with the assessment of the conformity of regulated qualifications.

We also seek dialogue with other parts of the world and suggest more intensive collaboration in the field of quality assurance with regions outside Europe. We call on the networks active in this field to investigate the possibility of establishing greater transparency and better reciprocal understanding of already existing quality assurance procedures with countries or regions outside Europe. Worldwide collaboration in quality assurance can also be intensified by more quality assurance agencies from outside Europe being included in the EQAR on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

**7. In the spirit of enhancing mobility, we advocate that countries pass on the flexibilities of the Bologna framework to the higher education institutions and restrict the state regulation of study courses to a minimum**

We want to leave our higher education institutions the greatest possible room for manoeuvre within the framework which we have created with the EHEA so that they can intensify their cooperation and set up joint programmes more easily. National rules should not be a barrier for individual mobility and university cooperation. Therefore we will avoid rigid regulations and allow more flexibility. We will support the joint efforts of competent authorities and quality assurance agencies to create external quality assurance processes that minimize the bureaucratic burden on joint programmes. Single accreditation procedures that substitute the different national accreditation procedures should fit the different national purposes of all partners.

**8. We want to increase mobility through improved information about study programmes.**

Within our respective national systems, we undertake to shorten response times for international applications, to set up or improve a national website providing information about the study programmes of its higher education institutions as well as the existing professional student support structures, and link it to a common website that is attractive and highly visible for students. Furthermore, we mandate the BFUG to conduct a needs analysis amongst students and higher education institutions, to take stock of and to map existing admission systems, to collect examples of good practice and to explore

- the potential of using common standards for the description of study programmes,

- ways to facilitate access to relevant information while avoiding additional burden on institutions, making best use of information already available,
- how universities involved in organising ERASMUS Mundus Masters classes or their successors could cooperate in setting up a joint internet-based admission system,
- ways to assist interested member countries in developing their national internet-based admission systems by benchmarking good practices and the possibility of regional cooperation as a means to developing common or compatible internet-based admission systems,
- the possibility of enhancing cooperation in verifying the documentation of foreign qualifications in order to support institutions during the admission process.

**9. We will improve the communication of the individual, institutional and social benefits of periods spent abroad.**

The communication should target parents, career advisors and students. In order to systematically record the private and social returns of learning mobility, also with regard to the employability of higher education graduates, we suggest regular accompanying research and particularly the preparation of graduate surveys.

**10. We call on higher education institutions**

- to adopt and implement their own strategy for their internationalisation and for the promotion of mobility in accordance with their respective profile involving the stakeholders (in particular students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education);
- to pay attention to the mobility and international competence of their staff, in particular to give fair and formal recognition for competences gained abroad, to offer attractive incentives for their greater participation in internationalisation and mobility measures as well as to ensure good working conditions for mobile staff;
- to create mobility-friendly structures and framework conditions for mobility abroad;
- to develop other possibilities for mobility such as virtual mobility and enable non-mobile students to have an "international experience at home";

**In order to give us an overview regarding the implementation of our mobility strategy and the measures it contains, we request the BFUG to report on progress at the next ministerial conference in 2015.**

We will look at the impact of national higher education policies on learning mobility and on the balance of mobility flows. As a basis for this, the member countries will, in their national reports for the next ministerial conference, provide information about the development and implementation of the national strategies and the progress towards achieving their mobility targets and on the removal of obstacles to mobility. Reports and further efforts will be made to improve the availability of internationally comparable data on the issue in order to promote policy learning.