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Green Paper Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People Response by the European Consortium of Innovative Universities ECIU

Introduction

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities ECIU is a network of nine European universities and three associate partners in Russia, Mexico and Australia. ECIU is a consortium of research universities focused on collaboration in innovative teaching and learning, enhancement of university – society interaction, internationalization of the student and staff experience, and active engagement in policy development and practice within the evolving European Higher Education Area. Innovation is central to the shared ethos of the member institutions, whether in pedagogic and curriculum development; knowledge and technology exchange; and economic regeneration and links with industry, business and the public sector in their respective regions. All ECIU member institutions have internationalization high on the agenda, and can draw upon a wealth of experience in both student and staff mobility within and beyond the boundaries of Europe. The ECIU Student Wing, the organization of the Student Unions and students' organizations of ECIU members, adds to this experience with the perspective of students.

ECIU welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to start a consultation process with the stakeholders that deal in their everyday business with mobility of students and staff. The issues raised in the Green Paper "Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People" are very important and have to be addressed in order to further develop the European Higher Education Area. The following paper comprises our views on the topics that we as the members of ECIU believe to be the most relevant ones. The ECIU members agree in their assessment of the challenges and opportunities of mobility. To illustrate our perspective, we have chosen to add to this paper a number of selected examples of what we believe to be good practices from our member institutions. This is, however, not an exhaustive listing of all the initiatives that ECIU member institutions are carrying out to support mobility.

1. Preparing for a Period of Learning Mobility (Outgoing Mobility)

1.1 Information and guidance

How can the availability of information and guidance related to mobility be improved?

Additional funding to support staff:

- Further investment in terms of staff resourcing would be desirable to promote and co-ordinate both the Erasmus study and Erasmus placement opportunities. Making funds available for staff costs through Erasmus would help to substantially increase the information available, and thus promote participation. Funding bids should cover not only subsidies for individual participants, but also for staffing, training and management costs.

Get student representatives involved:

- Student associations and student unions can play an important role in promoting mobility, through presenting examples of study abroad experiences in special information days for the students. While the Erasmus Network already plays an important role that is focussed on social integration, their activities could be extended and specified into an informative role as well. Student representatives that share their positive experiences are also credible witnesses when it comes to addressing barriers like the concerns about studying in a foreign language, about leaving home, family and friends or about adapting to a foreign culture. A more coordinated role at the EU level among students' unions should be supported in tight cooperation with relevant EU networks.

Make information on a national level available:

- More structured and coordinated information is necessary taking inspiration from already existing best practices both at the EU and extra-EU level. National web portals of information, such as the Australian Government's recently launched portal on Australians studying overseas <http://www.studyoverseas.gov.au/>, or portals attributed to the Erasmus National Agencies: <http://www.nuffic.nl/nederlandse-studenten>, work as "one-stop-shops" that make relevant information transparent and easily accessible. EU and International awards could be put in place around the creation of the EU international mobility day where mobility actions and best practices can be showcased around a number of initiatives bringing together universities, students and families.

Good examples:

- The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona is performing several sessions called "In&Out" to promote mobility through sharing personal experiences. In these sessions students after they have come back from their mobility period are asked to participate in a conference with local students to share their experience abroad and to motivate them. At the same time, international students from other countries (incoming students) help the local students by answering any question concerning their country or university.
- Both the University of Strathclyde and TU Dortmund University encourage exchange returnees to take part in all of its Open Day events and information

sessions to promote study abroad to prospective students and first and second year students.

- The University of Twente organizes a yearly “Let’s Go” study abroad fair. This is organized together with international student organizations. Dutch students who have been abroad inform interested students, sharing their experience; the National Agency, embassies and consortium partners are invited to promote study abroad; a photo contest is held with a prize for the best picture taken during a period abroad.

1.2 Promotion and motivation

**What can be done to better promote and motivate young people to be mobile?
How should this be done to ensure maximum effect?**

Communicate the value of mobility through relevant stakeholders:

- Develop a clear link between the Study Abroad experience and a student’s professional and career development which will lead them to be a ‘Global Graduate’, citing employer perceptions. An example of such research to be utilized in this manner is “The attitudes and perceptions of Australian employers towards an overseas study experience” in 2006 by IEAA (International Education Association of Australia) and QETI (Queensland Government).

Integrate mobility periods in curricula:

- Promote to integrate study abroad periods or international traineeships into the curricula of BA or MA studies as compulsory elements. By this, young people know already when choosing that particular study program that they have to spend a period abroad. This seems to make it easier to become mobile - and for some young people the study abroad period is even the decisive factor for choosing that very program. Aalborg University, for example, has internationally oriented programs that work that way and that are quite successful.

Communicate through the appointment of Mobility Ambassadors

- Mobility ambassadors could be appointed in student’s unions associations with the role to promote mobility regionally, nationally and at the EU level. These ambassadors can work at different levels of the education system and start awareness raising actions, thus inspiring young students in a creative way.

What do you see as the main barriers to the motivation of young people to become mobile?

Concern about study success:

- Many students are generally fairly aware of Erasmus study abroad opportunities, however many still perceive study abroad as an academic risk and a delay in finishing their studies (thus delaying higher earnings). Students need to be convinced that the university and prospective employers will value any work or study abroad experience, and that they are not putting their home degree at risk by studying abroad.
- But not only students still have to be convinced. Also professors and national governments are stakeholders which constantly need convincing. One way to

convince them is by trying to aim for pre-agreed curricula during an exchange (twin programs).

Insufficient support through academic advisors:

- The ECIU Student Mobility Group has concluded in a recent workshop meeting that the most important lacking link towards promoting student mobility is the teacher/professor. Professors should be addressed directly by the EC. If the EC would promote more widely a specific teacher/professor exchange and visiting professor mobility, then professors might be more inclined to motivate students to do the same.
- Academics need to be convinced of the value of study abroad as they are often the people who promote the schemes to students. More workshops aimed at academics could be helpful in convincing them of the benefits of exchange programs.
- Academics should be therefore more engaged in mobility actions themselves and experience what mobility means in order to better promote the opportunity to students. The Erasmus program should be enriched by teachers/professors mobility strands.

Financial restrains:

- There is a lack of adequate financing instruments. Many students have to work part-time to fund their studies. They are unable to give up their part-time employment to study abroad, also because they would be without a job after they return to their home country. Economic issues can also be difficult when students from a country with a lower living standard wish to study in a country with a higher living standard.
- In addition, Erasmus student mobility grants are confirmed at a very late stage. Students need to know at the planning and application stage how much funding they are going to receive so that they can decide if they can afford a stay abroad.
- From the universities' perspective, there is no reason why a university should encourage its students to go abroad when the whole funding scheme is based on own students passing examinations each semester, which is the case for example in Denmark. This basically means that when one of the students chooses to go abroad, the university loses the money it would have received for that student's work that semester (i.e. passing examinations). This does not mean that universities do not wish for their students that they spend a semester abroad in general, but they are trying to be careful not to cannibalize particular areas of study where there are only few students.
- Joint European study programmes are increasing. There are no specific mobility grants according to their specific needs. Because of this, European students can not attend this high quality programmes due to a lack of financial support. At a European level a solution should be found to fund full circles of study abroad.
- Grants should be allocated before the kick off of the mobility actions and students should be offered support and guidance on how to get part-time jobs once they move to a new country.

Concerns about "leaving home":

- Many students have never lived away from home and may be apprehensive about leaving friends and family. On the one hand, students require information on application procedures at the host institution; housing arrangements, costs,

- cultural circumstances etc., and the processes have to be clear and transparent. On the other hand one must not underestimate the fact that cultural enrichment and academic freedom should still be important values for modern European students. Going abroad is about growing up, being independent and making experiences in a new cultural environment. These characteristics should be advertised as benefits rather than threats by all stakeholders.
- An organized exchange of experiences among students as suggested under item 1.1 can help lowering the threshold.

Language barriers:

- Language issues still need to be addressed. Students frequently lack sufficient language knowledge so that they will not be able to follow classes at their host institution. This often results in students not being able to fulfill the requirements of their home institution and in them having to return home early or having to pay back the ERASMUS grant.
- Many students are not feeling comfortable with their communication skills in a foreign language. While the EC supports financially foreign language courses for "small" European languages through the Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC), this is not the case for Spanish, English, French, and German. However, in practice this problem still refers to these four "big" European languages.
- Intensive language courses, one or two months before leaving, should be made available by both the universities of origin and the hosting ones. The costs for the organization of these courses should be part of revised Erasmus program.

Structure of educational programs:

- One of the main objectives of the Bologna process was to remove obstacles to student and academic mobility. In the case of Germany, most universities detect a backlash of the Bologna Process, as the numbers of student mobility are decreasing due to higher pressure on students to fulfill their curricula requirements. The aftermath of this can be seen at German universities today where students are protesting against the rigid structures of Bachelor and Master programs.
- Some BA and MA programs not only in Germany, but all throughout Europe are structured in a way that makes it almost impossible to 'miss' one semester because of the internal cohesion of the program content. Some programs (e.g. in engineering) seem to be specialized to an extent that makes it very difficult to go abroad and learn something that is not exactly the same as what is taught at the home institution. Institutions and professors need to be flexible over curriculum match and awarding credits for qualifications/work experience taken outwith the home institutions. With many professors, this is still not the case, and students have to work extra hard to learn what they have "missed" during their stay abroad.
- For universities applying innovative forms of teaching like a group-oriented way of teaching (e.g. at Aalborg University), there may be a specific barrier. If a student is happy about his or her fellow students in the group, it may be difficult to decide to go abroad and risk that the other group members find a new member to replace oneself. This would imply that when the student returns, he or she will either have to find a new group or work on individual projects.

1.3 Languages and culture

How can the linguistic and cultural obstacles to mobility be best addressed?

Linguistic obstacles

- Increase language learning opportunities in primary and secondary schools
- Make a modern language compulsory up to higher level
- Educate young people to understand that they are competing in a global market for employment. i.e. study/work abroad needs to be sold to students on the basis of career development and increased employability.
- Provide language learning and cultural studies opportunities within universities for all students.
- Provide and fund language summer schools to offer the opportunity to learn the language of the host institution (e.g. the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona offers an extensive language programme, with free or 50% funded courses, and online linguistic tools)
- Offer English courses to lecturers and give incentives for offering courses taught in English.
- Organize mentoring programs to increase interaction between international students and native speakers (“Language twins” at TU Dortmund University, “Tandem Program at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; ESN Twente: offers a linguistic exchange between students, and links cultural and linguistic issues. Two students from different countries help mutually to improve their language and share their time and experiences).
- Have home institutions focus on the language skills before the students’ departure and maybe introduce mandatory language tests.
- Support Language Programs not only for certain languages, such as in the ERASMUS Intensive Language Program (EILC) but for all languages and with more money from the EU. Supporting language courses would solve many problems in terms of motivation, integration and course recognition. Since language courses are often expensive, students cannot afford to do language preparatory courses before their study abroad experience.

Cultural obstacles:

- Strong pre-departure preparation through compulsory sessions. Example of good practice are: The state of Victoria (Australia) where all Victorian universities bring Victorian students together for country-specific pre-departure sessions, as well as each university holding own general pre-departure sessions for all students. At Tec de Monterrey in Mexico, the Intercultural Communication course is compulsory for all students going abroad.
- Welcome event: “International weeks” to welcome international students, with workshops and activities to facilitate intercultural comprehension, as well as trips and cultural activities for international students to improve their integration and their knowledge of the country (Examples: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, TU Dortmund University; UTwente, organized by International Office, Student Union and ESNTwente).
- In order to integrate students into their new culture beyond the university campus TU Dortmund University offers a “Students into schools”-programme that places interested exchange students into local Dortmund schools to act as cultural and linguistic resources for Dortmund pupils. The program has been very successful in the past and has been a very rewarding experience for exchange students as well as the pupils in school.

- At TU Dortmund University, outgoing students keep close contact to the Office of International Relations during the preparatory phase of their study abroad experience as well as after their return. They can take part in special courses on intercultural competence in order to prepare for their experience in their host culture. Furthermore students are strongly encouraged to show international commitment by actively engaging incoming students or by serving as a resource for future outgoing students.

1.4 Legal Issues

What are the main legal obstacles to mobility that you have encountered?

Recognition of study abroad:

- See item 2.2

Documents required

- Legal issues are some of the main obstacles for incoming international students and researchers, especially for those coming from non-EU countries. Embassies take too long to issue students' visa, and many times they finally issue it when the course has already started. For example, Spain does not yet have the "Scientific Visa", according to the European directive. Researchers are required to provide too high economic means. In many cases the required amounts are much higher than the research scholarships awarded by the Ministry of Education.
- A blue card for students' mobility should be put in place to give the European students the possibility to speed up admin procedures in a coordinated way among EU and non EU countries as part of the scientific and cooperation agreement periodically signed between the EU and Third countries.
- The documents required in order to obtain or renew residence permits often do not coincide with the university schedule for admission, registering, assessing, etc. and it complicates the possibility to provide the documents related to these procedures. A blue card given to students at the moment of their enrolment in university should solve this problem. All students are in principle ready to move thanks to the blue card.
- Health and Safety of Students on work/study placements. For example in the UK, institutions are now legally bound to engage in full pre-departure briefings with outbound students on an individual basis to assess any risks involved. This is currently a highly labor intensive exercise and if numbers increase this issue could become a major challenge for most institutions.

Good practice:

- The International Welcome Point at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona directly contacts consulates in order to facilitate the visa procedure in those cases where it is needed. Catalan universities and the Catalan Research Foundation have settled up a lobby in order to be able to expose the problems related to legal procedures and to try to find solutions. A work team has been established with representatives from universities and from the government.

1.5 Portability of Grants and Loans

What kind of obstacles have you encountered regarding the portability of grants and loans and access to benefits?

Grants:

- One of the main problems occurs when students arrive with a document certifying that they have a grant that covers tuition fees and there is no previous agreement with the institution awarding the grant/scholarship where it is clearly stated which concepts the grant covers, when and how they are going to pay to the university, etc.
- Another problem is the schedule of the grant programme and the admissions procedure at the university. When applying for the scholarship, students have to demonstrate that they have been admitted into the study programme. This is usually due some months in advance of the formal admission period is open. This obliges the university to establish a special parallel procedure in order to be able to facilitate, at least, a pre-admission letter.

1.6 Mobility to and from the European Union

What more should be done to promote mobility to and from the European Union? How should this be done? (in terms of study/work permits etc)

Legal obstacles:

- See item 1.4

Increase information:

- More European partner universities could become involved in the Australian Fair Circuit, to promote their universities to Australian students, in order to attract Australian students to Europe. <http://www.exchangeaircircuit.info/>

Funding

- Again, funding is a major issue, with all the implications explained under item 1.2. Increasing Erasmus Mundus and opening it to all students would increase the mobility numbers.

1.7 Preparation of the mobility period and quality assurance issues

What measures can be taken to ensure that the mobility period is of high quality?

Quality assurance

- Quality assurance is a major issue in student mobility particularly with regard to work placements where individual students may be responsible for organizing their own placement. Ideally some common measurements should be agreed whereby institutions could evaluate both qualitative and quantitative data.
- Academic real correspondence for the period study abroad in the case of exchange programmes, and academic real integration between partner institutions, in the case of joint programmes.
- Quality is also related to the services the students receive when studying abroad. Universities should make sure they provide good academic and practical information in advance and that upon arrival students are easily integrated.
- Possible options include adding extra activities students could undertake whilst abroad to heighten their development of intercultural understanding and global graduate skills. A small number of Australian institutions have started Global

Graduate or Global Leadership programs, i.e. Macquarie University:

<http://www.international.mq.edu.au/GLP>

- An Erasmus qualification scheme (ERQS) should be put in place to ensure coherence, coordination and comparable quality measurements of Erasmus mobility activities across Europe and the rest of the world.

1.8 Reaching out to Disadvantaged Groups

Which are the most important difficulties encountered by disadvantaged groups with regard to learning mobility?

- Financial difficulties experienced by disadvantaged cohorts: scholarship incentives with eligibility based on equity.
- Lack of information on the level of special services and provisions available at a potential host university for students with special needs.

2. Incoming Mobility

2.1 Mentoring and Integration

Can you give some concrete examples of good practice in this area?

University of Strathclyde

- Welcome Program – there is a joint initiative involving six institutions in Glasgow who have joined forces to welcome new international students to the City.
- Weekly e-message – this takes the form of an email to international students updating them on any social events taking place in the University or around the City and sharing information generally.
- Weekly International Evening – international students are invited to meet every Wednesday evening at a different venue within the City. This helps them to integrate with each other and get to know the City at the same time.

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona:

- Good Practice: The Mentor Programme helps international students to integrate faster and better in the campus life, and to secure that all new international students receive help and feedback by older students at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, both before, during and after they have settled in the university.
- In this Programme, a local student is in charge of three or four international students. In order to improve the skills of mentor students, they receive support training to prepare them for their role. A significant part of the Programme is about providing support for new international students but the Programme also fulfils an important social function, with events such as “international lunches”.

TU Dortmund University

- Incoming students have the opportunity to start their study abroad experience at TU Dortmund University by participating in special intensive language classes and orientation programs.
- All exchange students are encouraged to take part in the four-week intensive German Courses during the months of September (prior to the winter semester) and March (prior to the summer semester). German language classes on all levels (beginners, intermediate, advanced) are offered. This course is only open to students participating in the following exchange programs: ERASMUS, ECIU, exchange program with US partner universities, and ISEP. For these students

- the course is free of charge. This is a special service by TU Dortmund University for students within exchange programs.
- The German Language Course is accompanied by a mandatory tutorial program. The tutorial program includes excursions and activities that are organized for the students.
 - Local students are encouraged to actively engage in orientation activities for exchange students. These student initiatives, such as the ERASMUS Student Network Dortmund (ESN), the Dortmund Doubles Program or the International Student Society (ISS) help international students to get accustomed to campus life in Dortmund. TU Dortmund University actively approaches and recruits returnees and the students who want to study abroad for these kind of activities, which has been very successful in the past.

Swinburne University of Technology

- Swinburne's 'SwinMates' mentor program and student club, where students can be part of a buddy system and extra-curricular activities are arranged through a student club. <http://www.international.swinburne.edu.au/study-abroad/incoming/experience/index.html#mentor>

University of Twente

- International Students Meet Enschede: a joint initiative of the four higher education institutions in the city of Enschede with the support of the municipality
- Day of the International Student, organized yearly by Nuffic in The Hague
- ESNTwente buddy program: every ESN member is mentor to a small group of international students.
- ESNTwente organizes trips around the country all year round, supported financially by the university.
- The yearly Food Festival, where all international and national students cook traditional food.
- The Christian Student Society organizes a yearly "Dine with the Dutch" event; international students are invited to have dinner with a Dutch family or student home.

2.2 Recognition and Validation

In your experience is the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning still a significant obstacle to mobility?

Recognition

- The recognition of a study period abroad (Formal learning) is still a major problem for many students in the past and even today. They might have a formal learning agreement properly signed before departure, but when they return with the modules in the learning agreement accomplished at the host institution, they still have to re-sit the exams at the home institution. The European Commission must take clear actions to prevent this. The students are always at a disadvantage and the institution not following the rules must be corrected from a body outside the institution, a body to which the student can complain. This is possible today already, but it is not clearly stated and the procedure is not transparent. In the future programme this must be given special attention.
- Incoming ERASMUS students often face the problem that they have to return to their home country with exactly 30 ECTS-Credit Points. If they do not obtain

- these 30 ECTS points, they have to pay back their ERASMUS grant to their home institution. This, of course, puts a lot of pressure on the departmental coordinators at the university. National Agencies do not have the authority to impose a change or liberalization of this rule. Thus, this is an issue that has to be solved on the level of the European Union as it is a significant obstacle to mobility.
- In fact, curriculum recognition and credit transfer have become very important issues to students, especially since the Bachelor- and Master Programs have been introduced. The number of ECTS credit points differs from institution to institution and the allocation is often not very transparent and not comparable. The European Credit Transfer System should be more flexible, so that students may have the chance to study abroad without being forced to achieve 30 ECTS credit points. The idea of studying abroad and the cultural experience seems to become less important and unfortunately the main focus has shifted to obtaining 30 ECTS credits. With regard to this rather unfortunate development mechanisms should be introduced that place more value on the actual cultural experience of a study abroad period than the factual amount of credits.

3. A New Partnership for Mobility

3.1 Mobilising Actors and Resources

How can all actors and resources at national, regional and local levels be better mobilized in the interest of youth mobility?

Good examples

- Regional committees, such as VicX – Victorian Exchange practitioners in Australia. Such a committee brought together the Australian fair circuit to effectively promote student mobility to all Australian students at the same time every year so that overseas partner institutions could visit Australia and have the most productive time to promote their institution.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark has created a hotline for the international offices at the Danish universities and other higher education institutions. The phone number is 'secret', i.e. can only be used by employees from these institutions. When you call that number, there is always somebody available who will help fast and efficiently, which is a tremendous help for the international offices because they do not have to wait in line on the telephone with foreigners that have all kinds of different problems.
- The same office is more than willing to visit the universities and explain about their procedures for visas and permits in order to help everybody get the best service possible. Getting all relevant staff at the university together and explain the procedures for them (i.e. who does what when an international student applies for a study period, who takes care of housing, etc.) and letting them ask questions and suggest ways to improve the procedures seen from their side can be a good way of involving the experience of relevant stakeholders.
- TU Dortmund University has sought to integrate local industries and sponsors in its internationalization process. The construction of an “International Meeting Center” (Internationales Begegnungszentrum, IBZ) is a good example for this. Sponsors have given more than half a million Euros to help erect a building especially for international purposes. This involvement of local sponsors, businesses and institutions is a good example of how a university can reach out

to its local and regional surroundings and how to integrate local and regional protagonists and supporters in campus activities. By engaging in these new partnerships international activities taking place at the IBZ are promoted, a successive emphasis on internationalization processes furthers the “internationalization at home”, and eventually also mobility.

3.2 More active involvement from the business world

How can businesses be motivated to become more strongly involved in youth Mobility?

Act as an ambassador for mobility

- Businesses can play an important role in helping put across the message to students as to how important they regard a mobility career as a relevant factor in their hiring policy. Universities could invite business representatives to address students on this matter in the perspective of their future employment. This adds another dimension of collaboration to the relationship between universities and businesses, and promotes mobility in a credible way.

3.3 Virtual Networking and eTwinning

How can we best make use of ICTs to provide valuable virtual mobility opportunities to enrich the physical mobility?

3.4 Engaging the ‘multipliers’

Should mobility opportunities for ‘multipliers’ be given additional support and prominence in European programs?

What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of teachers and trainers in promoting mobility?

Little recognition

- Erasmus Coordinators are often academics who are given little or no academic or financial recognition by their department/faculty for what is often a very time-consuming task.
- Another main obstacle for stronger engagement with teachers is that developing Student Mobility programs is not built in to the expectations of teaching, so it is seen above and beyond what their salary covers.
- More recognition should be given to the teachers' stay abroad periods. Not only if they end up writing a research article about something they did when abroad, but credit for the stay itself. A major obstacle for going to another university seems to be the constant pressure of publishing research articles, so if a stay abroad also counted in the internal recognition scheme, it would probably be more attractive for researchers to go abroad.

Level of internationalization throughout the institution:

- It is very important that all people involved in European universities internationalise, and not only those from international offices. The best way is to give incentives promoting mobility periods and to helping professors to take part in other university programmes. Current Erasmus scholarships are in many cases not enough to motivate them.

- But internationalisation is also a topic for administrative and management staff. The ECIU has been running a Leadership Development Programme for six years: The programme offers a contribution to leadership development by providing a structured learning experience in a multi-national context for a group of selected leaders and aspiring leaders in university management. The basic idea behind the design of the programme is of a multinational group coming together to learn from their experience. Participants typically come from different working environments, where each is involved in different activities and faced with individual challenges. A key component of the programme are project teams of five or six participants drawn from the ECIU universities from eleven different countries. During the program the participants not only reflect on the particular characteristics and challenges of leadership and strategic management in the university context, but they also deepen their knowledge of important policy developments in European Higher Education. The Leadership Development Program consists of three seminars; each of the seminars are held by three different ECIU universities over a period of eight months. The programme is structured around strategic projects which are tailored to the specific interests of the hosting universities. Participants are enthusiastic about their experience, and they carry back to their home institutions an understanding of international collaboration and exchange of experience.

3.5 Mobility Targets

Do you consider targets a useful tool in defining a mobility strategy and if so, at what level (European, national institutional, sectoral etc)?

- Institutional targets are used at Swinburne University of Technology, and are important in securing internal stakeholder buy-in. Joint responsibility for targets within an institution (i.e., across faculties and schools) means a more unified approach with more staff feeling responsible to contribute.

Summary

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities believes that this response to the Green Paper on Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People reflects the many years of experience of its members based on their strong commitment towards internationalization and the promotion of student and staff mobility. ECIU shares the view of the European Commission that the issues raised in the Green Paper are the most pressing ones when it comes both to promoting mobility of young people and to further improving the quality of a study or work abroad experience. We would, however, like to single out three issues that we believe to have the potential for raising mobility numbers substantially, once they have been addressed.

- **Recognition and legal, financial and procedural issues related to mobility:** Although much progress has already been made in setting up structures that make a stay abroad possible for young people, in practice there are still many organizational issues that could be optimized. Obstacles have been mentioned in this paper, e.g. recognition problems, lack of flexibility regarding the number of ECTS points to be obtained, non-matching deadlines for funding and program application, contradicting regulations at sending and hosting universities with regard to study fees,... Even though the general Erasmus scheme is working well, many students still encounter concrete problems here. This is a fact that does not only have severe effects on the individual career of the respective student, but causes a general climate of insecurity and reluctance among students that are interested in studying abroad. The EC could play an important role in harmonizing the conditions and making regulations universally valid, transparent and available. In some cases, like for example with regard to ECTS points, program structures that allow for more flexibility would be an improvement. And concerning the still prevailing problems with recognition, a mediation body at EC level that is nevertheless easily accessible for students should be established on the European level, as well as clear, binding rules for the professors and sanctions in case of failure to comply with these rules.
- **Win academic advisors as promoters:** The ECIU working group on Student Mobility has identified the academic advisors as crucial link when it comes to stimulating and reassuring a student's wish to study abroad. Only academic advisors that are personally convinced that studying abroad is a valuable experience will promote the opportunities to gain that experience. Academic advisors that do not yet share this conviction have to be won. This can be achieved by a combination of incentives for gaining more international experience themselves, and by setting up instruments that appreciate and reward the engagement of academic advisors in promoting mobility. Special attention should be given this area in future funding schemes.
- **Involve student representatives:** At many universities today, study abroad advisors involve students that already have gained international experience in their promotional activities. However, we believe that students should also be encouraged to promote mobility in self-organized ways, i.e. through their own organizations. Fostering the dialogue between organizational units of the universities like the International Offices and students' organizations can help to develop a better understanding of each others' perspective, thus taking the needs of students as a target group more into account. At ECIU, representatives of the ECIU Student Wing participate in every meeting of the ECIU Executive Board, as well as in working group meetings. This model has proven to be

successful in integrating the students' perspective into our activities. We believe that fostering the dialogue between students and university administrations through an institutionalized structure is an aim worth promoting.

ECIU and its member institutions hope that our response to the Green Paper will be helpful for the European Commission. We would like to see that the challenges to mobility that we have laid out in this paper will be considered in future programmes. We also believe that the examples that have been included in this paper - and that we believe to be good practices - can be models to address the difficulties in promoting and facilitating mobility. However, we are convinced that one should not be satisfied with having a number of good examples and promoting the adaptation of these practices at other institutions. The further development of good practices should be stimulated in order to explore the possibilities of better practices. Funding schemes that consider sharing and disseminating good practices as well as schemes aiming at further development of existing good practices should be stimulated. The European Consortium of Innovative Universities has been founded to pursue these goals, and we appreciate the opportunity to share our views with the European Commission.