



Directorate General Internal Policies of the Union

Policy Department Structural and Cohesion Policies

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Education and Mobility

BRIEFING NOTE

Content:

In view of a delegation to the Inter-parliamentary conference ASEP-IV (Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership), which took place on 4-5 May 2005 in Helsinki, the Directorate General of External Policies asked for a briefing note on the subject of “Education and Mobility”.

This note provides essential information on the main EU policies and outputs in the fields of education and training. A special focus will be on mobility. The note concludes with an overview over EU-Asia co-operation in higher education, as well as on student and scholar mobility between the two regions.

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1. European Union Education and Training policies: Main objectives

On 23 February 2006, a ministerial meeting marked thirty years of European cooperation in education. It was essentially with the entry into force of the **Maastricht Treaty** that a comprehensive reference was made to the contribution of the EU in this area. In accordance with **Articles 149 and 150** of the Treaty, the Community's role is to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, especially with a view to developing the European dimension in education, encouraging mobility and promoting cooperation among European schools and universities.

1.1. "Education and Training 2010", an integrated Policy Framework

To achieve the **Lisbon goal** of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, Heads of States and Government in 2000 asked for "not only a radical transformation of the European economy, but also a challenging programme for the modernisation of social welfare and education systems". In 2002, they went on to say that by 2010, Europe should be the world leader in terms of the quality of its education and training systems.

In 2002, the Education Council and the Commission endorsed a **10-year work programme**¹, to be implemented through the open method of coordination. It constitutes the new and coherent Community strategic framework of co-operation, integrating all actions in the fields of education and training at European level, including vocational education and training. Ministers of education agreed on three major goals to be achieved by 2010 for the benefit of the citizens and the EU as a whole:

- to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems;
- to ensure that they are accessible to all;
- to open up education and training to the wider world.

Since then, working groups have been working on one or more objectives of the work programme. Gathering experts from 31 European countries as well as stakeholders and interested EU and international organisations, their role is to support the implementation of the objectives for education and training systems at national level through exchanges of "good practices", study visits, peer reviews, etc. With the support of the *Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks* set up by the Commission in 2002, indicators and benchmarks are being developed to monitor progress.

In 2005, **European Parliament** adopted a resolution based on an own-initiative report on **education as the cornerstone of the Lisbon process**². The resolution states that the European Union should as a matter of urgency promote the convergence of the national education systems towards higher performance standards. Parliament also called for speeding up mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications and ensure universal and non-discriminatory access to quality education. Parliament also called on the Member States to take suitable measures to reduce the high number of young people leaving school prematurely without any kind of

¹ (2002/C 142/01).

² INI/2004/2272.

qualification, and to ensure a 15% increase in the number of science graduates between now and 2010 while at the same time correcting the imbalance between men and women. It also called for adequate investment and financial resources to be granted to education.

2. Lifelong learning

To facilitate the transition to a knowledge-based society, the EU promotes the establishing of strategies and specific activities for lifelong learning, with a view to achieving a **European area of lifelong learning**.

Following the adoption by the Commission on 21 November 2001 of the *Communication on Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*³, lifelong learning has become the guiding principle for the development of education and training policy. The aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities, and to break down barriers between different forms of learning.

2.1. The lifelong learning programme

One of the important steps towards achieving this goal is the upcoming establishment of the **lifelong learning programme**, which aims at providing financial support to the European education sector for the period 2007-2013⁴. The new integrated programme will comprise four sub-programmes already existing within the current Socrates programme: Comenius (school education), Erasmus (higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education and training), and Grundtvig (adult education). It will also include a “transversal” programme incorporating four key activities (policy development, language learning, innovative approaches and dissemination of project results), plus a Jean Monnet programme to support action related to European integration and European institutions and associations.

2.2. Key competences for lifelong learning

One of the other key issues on the current European agenda is the **definition of basic skills** to be provided through lifelong learning, aimed at meeting the labour market's need of highly skilled workers. In its proposal for a *recommendation on key competences in lifelong learning*⁵, the Commission sets out eight key competences, which include communication skills in the mother tongue and in foreign languages, digital competence, learning competence and others.

2.3. Information and Communication technology for lifelong learning

Helping the active population to adapt continuously to technological change is one of the main tools in the fight against unemployment and in building a genuine Europe of knowledge. But despite a high level of education, the EU remains behind the US and Japan in particular as regards new information and communication technologies. The Commission has therefore adopted the “**eLearning**” initiative to adapt the Member States' education and training systems to the latest developments in this field. In 2003, an “**eLearning**” **Programme** was established⁶. It aims at the effective integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in

³ COM(2001) 678.

⁴ COM(2004)0474; COD/2004/0153.

⁵ COM(2005)548.

⁶ 2318/2003/EC.

education and training systems in Europe. Its four main action lines are: promoting digital literacy, European virtual campuses, e-Twinning of schools in Europe and promotion of teacher training and transversal actions for the promotion of e-learning in Europe.

3. Quality in education and training

Quality education at all levels is a priority for all EU Member States and essential if the Lisbon objectives of 2000 are to be achieved by 2010.

3.1. School education

Several measures have been taken to ensure quality education at different levels. To ensure a high quality of **secondary education** in Europe, a national experts' *Working Committee on Quality Indicators* has identified a number of key indicators or benchmarks. On the basis of the list of quality indicators presented by the committee, a *European report on quality of school education*⁷ was prepared in June 2000. The report, presenting a selection of 16 indicators covering the areas of attainment, success and transition, monitoring of school education, resources and structures, promises to be an important European tool for assisting national evaluation of systems in the area of school standards.

Measures in secondary education are funded by **Comenius**, one of the actions that are part of the **Socrates** programme. Comenius seeks to reinforce the European dimension of school education (from pre-school to secondary education) and to encourage transnational co-operation between schools.

3.2. Higher education

The **Bologna Declaration** on the European Dimension for Higher Education, signed on the 19th of June 1999 by 29 countries, aims at the establishment of a **European area of higher education** by the end of this decade. This area should facilitate mobility of people, transparency and recognition of qualification, quality and European dimension in higher education, as well as the attractiveness of European institutions for third country students.

The so-called "**Bologna process**", now involving 45 countries, aims at a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, at the adoption of a system with two main cycles throughout Europe, at the establishment of a system of credits, and at the promotion of mobility and of European co-operation in quality assurance.

The European dimension in higher education is fostered by **Erasmus**, one of the actions part of the **Socrates programme**. Erasmus encourages transnational co-operation between universities and the mobility of university students.

In the field of **quality assurance**, the Commission has submitted a proposal for a *recommendation on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education*⁸. The proposal is a further step towards an EU-wide mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and assessments through accreditation agencies. In its first reading report on the Commission proposal, the **European Parliament** underlines that education institutions should

⁷ See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/indic/rapinen.pdf>.

⁸ COM(2004)0642.

develop rigorous internal quality assurance mechanisms in accordance with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area adopted in Bergen in the context of the Bologna process. According to the opinion of the European Parliament, cooperation between agencies should also be promoted, in order to improve the recognition of quality assurance and accreditation assessments and to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications in the context of mobility. Furthermore, the European Parliament promotes public access to the assessments made by the quality assurance or accreditation agencies listed in the European register⁹. The Council adopted the recommendation by accepting all amendments suggested by the European Parliament¹⁰.

In 2005, a proposal to establish a **European Institute of Technology (EIT)** was put forward as part of the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy. The key elements of this proposal are defined in a Communication of the Commission of 22 February 2006¹¹. The EIT is supposed to integrate the three areas of education, research and innovation, and to attract the best and most talented students, researchers and staff worldwide. Its structure should be based on two levels: a Governing Board, which will be the EIT's central core, and a set of Knowledge Communities, distributed all over Europe, carrying out the activities in strategic, trans-disciplinary areas.

3.3. Vocational training

The support of governments for European cooperation in vocational training was secured earlier than in the case of education. As early as 1975, a **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)** was established. It contributes to the development of vocational training in the EU through its academic and technical activities, focusing on trends, studies, analyses and information exchanges. The **European Training Foundation** took up activities in 1995 as an EU agency working in many non-EU countries. Its mission is to assist and support its partner countries in reforming and modernising their vocational education systems.

In 2002, education Ministers of 31 European countries adopted the **Copenhagen Declaration** on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training. The declaration gives a mandate to develop concrete actions in the fields of transparency, recognition and quality in vocational education and training. It gave its name to the so-called "**Copenhagen process**" of enhanced European co-operation in the field of vocational education and training, which aims at fulfilling the Lisbon objectives.

The European dimension in vocational training is fostered by the **Leonardo da Vinci programme**, which had already been established in 1994, and which is designed to support and supplement action taken by the Member States. The programme supports transnational mobility, placement and exchange projects, study visits, pilot projects, transnational networks, linguistic and cultural skills, as well as disseminating good practice and compiling reference material.

⁹ T6-0380/2005.

¹⁰ See Recommendation 2006/143/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education.

¹¹ COM(2006) 77.

4. Language learning

The European Union's programmes for co-operation in the field of education and vocational training include specific measures to promote language teaching and learning.

The **Lingua** action of the **Socrates programme** enables institutions from different countries to work together to develop innovative language-learning material which fills gaps in the existing market. It also supports projects that encourage language learning by making people aware of the advantages to be gained, by providing information on courses available or by improving access to resources. Within the **Comenius** action of the same programme, millions of Euros are invested each year in language exchange visits between schools in different countries, in teacher-training courses and in providing language assistants for schools and adult education centres. The **Leonardo da Vinci** vocational training programme provides funds for multinational projects to develop new methods and materials for teaching languages and for assessing the language needs of business.

Following the 2001 **European Parliament Resolution recommending measures to promote linguistic diversity and language learning**¹² and a 2002 Resolution of the Education and Youth Council¹³, the European Commission adopted in 2003 an **Action Plan for Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity**¹⁴. Its objectives are, inter alia, to extend the benefits of language learning to all citizens as a lifelong activity and to improve the quality of language teaching at all levels. It also aims to promote a more effective use of the existing programmes.

In order to be able to measure language competence in the EU, the Commission has recently proposed the introduction of a **European indicator of language competence (EILC)** common to all the Member States.¹⁵ The EILC is to provide an accurate, reliable and comprehensive yardstick for assessing foreign language proficiency, on the basis of specially designed objective tests done by a sample of the population. The EILC, which will be implemented through the "Education and Training 2010" Programme, aims to ensure the learning of at least two foreign languages from an early age. In an own-initiative report on the Commission's communication, the Committee on Culture and Education holds the EILC to be an extremely valuable instrument¹⁶.

The **European Parliament** is of the opinion that a multilingual environment is particularly useful to foster mutual understanding and integration. In a resolution based on an own-initiative report on **integrating immigrants in Europe through schools and multilingual education**¹⁷, adopted in October 2005, the European Parliament proposes to enhance integration of immigrants in Europe through a multilingual environment including the teaching of their mother tongue at school.

¹² T5-0718/2001.

¹³ (2002/C 50/01).

¹⁴ COM(2003) 449.

¹⁵ COM(2005)0356.

¹⁶ A6-0074/2006.

¹⁷ T6-0385/2005.

5. Mobility

5.1. Mobility funding programmes

Mobility in education and training is an integral part of the freedom of movement of persons and one of the main objectives of the EU's action in the field of education and vocational training. Mobility is funded through several action programmes, especially through the **Socrates** and **Leonardo da Vinci programmes**.

Socrates aims to promote a Europe of knowledge and to encourage lifelong education through learning foreign languages, encouraging mobility, promoting cooperation at European level, and increasing the use of new technologies in the field of education. The programme is divided into a number of different 'actions' some of which have already been mentioned (e.g. Comenius, Erasmus, or Lingua). A second phase of the programme was adopted in January 2000 to run from January 2000 to December 2006 with a total budget of €1 850 million.

Leonardo da Vinci promotes access to **vocational training** by improving national vocational training systems. It encourages projects and transnational partnerships with an interest in training.

Out of all the programmes fostering mobility, **Erasmus** has proved particularly successful. It has even recently been described by a MEP as one of the most successful programmes the EU has ever launched. Since 1987, over 1.2 million students have completed exchange courses at universities outside their own countries. In the 2003/2004 academic year over 135,000 students and 2,199 universities in 31 countries participated in the programme.

As has already been mentioned earlier, the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes will be integrated into a new **EU programme in the field of lifelong learning** from 2007.

On several occasions, the **European Parliament** has pleaded in favour of an increase of the new programme's budget, in order to allow more students to take part in mobility. In October 2005, MEPs endorsed a report¹⁸ that calls for a doubling of student grants for the Erasmus exchange sub-programme by 2013. At present students receive a basic rate of just €150 a month - a sum that has remained the same since 1993. MEPs demand an increase in the Erasmus monthly standard grant from €210 in 2007 to €300 in 2013. MEPs also want to increase the participation of pupils and teachers in the Comenius sub-programme, which is designed for schools, from 1 in 20 pupils to 1 in 15.

5.2. Recognition of qualifications

To promote mobility within the EU, several directives have been adopted guaranteeing mutual recognition of professional qualifications between Member States. As regards the recognition of periods of study undertaken abroad university students currently benefit from the **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**. The networks **NARIC** (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) and **ENIC** (set up by the Council of Europe and UNESCO) provide advice and information on the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study undertaken abroad.

¹⁸ T6-0395/2005.

Europass¹⁹ aims to create a uniform portfolio of documents to give citizens the option of setting out their personal abilities, skills and qualifications in a clear, consistent and internationally transparent manner when applying for jobs at home and abroad. The portfolio is supposed to include the European CV, a mobility pass (for periods of education or training abroad), a diploma supplement (for university degrees), a language pass (for language knowledge), and a certificate supplement (for training courses).

A key priority for the European Commission is the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**²⁰. Its objective is to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens, by linking qualifications systems at the national and sectoral levels and by enabling them to relate to each other. The EQF will therefore act as a translation device and will be one of the principal European mechanisms intended to facilitate citizen mobility for work and study, alongside, for example, Erasmus, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Europass. The EQF was submitted to a 6 months consultation in July 2005.

5.3. European Quality Charter for Mobility

In order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in all types of organised mobility for learning purposes, the Commission has recently submitted a proposal for a *Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council to adopt a European Quality Charter for Mobility*, laying down a set of principles in the field of mobility for education and training purposes²¹. The Recommendation consists of ten guidelines, addressed mainly to the sending and receiving organisations responsible for mobility. The **European Parliament's** Committee on Culture and Education is soon to pronounce itself on this proposal.

6. EU-Asia Co-operation in higher education and mobility between the two regions

According to Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty, the EU shall foster **co-operation with third countries** in the fields of education and vocational training. EU activities in these fields have been steadily increasing and, in addition to the above-mentioned programmes, include programmes such as USA-EC, Canada-EU, ALFA and ALBAN (for Latin American countries), **ASIA Link (for several countries in Asia)**, **Erasmus Mundus** and **pilot programmes** with Australia and Japan.

6.1. Asia-Link

The Asia-Link Programme was set up to promote **regional and multilateral networking** between higher education institutions in EU Member States and developing countries in Asia.

The major share of the programme's budget provides co-funding for partnership projects. However, the programme has also funded training workshops, studies on the higher education sector in Europe and Asia, Higher Education Fairs and Stakeholders' Meetings.

During the first four years of operation (2002-2005), a total of 155 partnership projects, involving 707 participating institutions, have been selected for co-funding. The total EU

¹⁹ Decision 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass).

²⁰ Published by the Commission as a Staff Working Document on 8 July 2005, SEC(2005)957.

²¹ COM(2005)0450.

contribution to the 155 projects selected amounts to € 53 million. In general, the EU contributes 75% of costs of the project. 90% funding is possible where Asian partners are exclusively from least developed countries.

- Projects selected in 2005 include issues related to health, human resources, environment and energy management, vocational education and training, climate change, forest restoration etc.

6.2. Erasmus Mundus

The **Erasmus Mundus programme** is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education. It is intended to strengthen European co-operation and international links in higher education by supporting high-quality European Masters Courses, by enabling students and visiting scholars from around the world to engage in postgraduate study at European universities, as well as by encouraging the outgoing mobility of European students and scholars towards third countries. The duration of the programme is five years (2004-2008) with a planned financial envelope of 230 million Euro for the whole period.

Asian Windows within Erasmus Mundus

Five country-specific windows within the general Erasmus Mundus programme are operational in the academic year 2005-2006, notably:

- A 9m€ **China Pilot Window** for the period 2005/6-2007/8 (3 years)²²
- A 33m€ **India Window** for the period 2005/6-2007/8 (3 years)
- 3.2m€ **Thailand Window** for the period 2005/6-2006/7 (2 years)
- 2.1m€ **Malaysia Window** for the period 2005/6-2006/7 (2 years)
- A 10m€ **“Other Asian countries” Window** (covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) for the period 2005/6-2006/7 (2 years)

Asian windows will be earmarked to fund exclusively students (and in the case of the China Pilot Window also scholars and partnerships) from the relevant Asian countries. This will not prevent Erasmus Mundus consortia from selecting other students from the same Asian countries under the normal EM funds, thus contributing to ensure the character of additionality of Asian windows.

Academic Year 2005-2006: Examples of EU-ASIA co-operation under Erasmus Mundus Scholarships

In order to give the Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses a strong external projection, a scholarship scheme for third-country graduate students and scholars allows highly qualified individuals to come to Europe to follow the Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses or to work for them.

- In the Academic Year 2005-2006, 40 scholars and around 430 students from Asian countries were selected; out of which 364 students have been funded with funds specifically earmarked for certain Asian countries (see Asian Windows).

According to the conclusions of a student seminar held in Brussels in May 2005, 80,8% of the participating students thought that the value of this mobility was "extremely valuable" or "very valuable". 92,25% thought that the study programme would have an "extremely positive" or a "positive impact" on their future careers. Improvements seem to be possible when it comes to the

²² The term “pilot” is due to its being the first country-specific window to be launched as well as to the possible launch of a larger China Window in the next years.

process of obtaining visa, the quality of university services in facilitating the integration, and organizational aspects of the mobility within the study program.²³

Partnerships

In order to encourage European universities to open themselves up to the world and to reinforce their world-wide presence, Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses have the possibility of establishing **partnerships with third-country higher education institutions**.

- Partnerships selected for funding in 2006 include Master Courses on Sustainable Development in Agriculture, Forestry, International Legal Studies or Geo Information Science, and are organized by European universities in collaboration with universities in China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines.

6.3. The EU-Japan Pilot Cooperation in Higher Education

In spring 2000, Education Ministers from the G8 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, USA), referring to the success of the Erasmus programme, made a commitment to doubling the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff in the education sector by 2010.

In 2002 a new decade of Japan-Europe Co-operation was launched and an action plan (“Shaping our common future” EU-Japan Agenda for Co-operation) was adopted. People to people co-operation is identified as one of the four pillars of this new era of co-operation and recognises the importance of **strengthening links and exchanges between EU and Japan in the academic world**. Two projects enhancing the mobility of European and Japanese students were funded in 2002 and 2003. However, in 2004, a third EC/Japan Pilot Cooperation in Higher Education was postponed due to financial difficulties.

6.4. Asian students in Europe - some numbers

It is interesting to note that in some European countries, the **largest group of foreign students** enrolled at home universities are of Asian origin. This is the case in Finland, Germany, Malta and the United Kingdom, where the largest group of foreign students is of Chinese origin (15, 11, 15,1 and 12% of all foreign students). In Cyprus, the three most frequent countries of origin of inward mobile university students are China, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Chinese students account for 23,1% of incoming university students. In all other EU Member States, the largest groups of foreign students are of European or Northern African origin.²⁴

²³ See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/seminar/students.pdf>.

²⁴ See Lanzendorf, Ute; Teichler, Ulrich, Student Mobility in secondary and tertiary-level education and in vocational training. Study commissioned by the European Parliament, completed in October 2005, p. 54-103.