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COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND MEDIA

Student mobility

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Draft report

A. Draft resolution

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stresses that international student mobility is one of the core goals of the Bologna Process, which sets up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and an important tool for economic progress, social development and intercultural understanding.
2. International student mobility contributed to a better qualified workforce and a more diversified culture all over Europe and improved the capacity to interact in a globalised world by fostering open-mindedness, adaptability and creativity of millions of European students. These positive developments, however, are hindered by a number of obstacles, such as lack of information, fear of recognition problems, long bureaucratic procedures, doubts about the quality of studies abroad, fear of prolonged studies, and lack of financial resources.
3. The Assembly considers that it is important to remove these obstacles and to provide students with more opportunities to develop competences that are essential in a globalised economic environment and a positive attitude to diversity in a multicultural society.
4. Therefore, the Assembly calls upon Council of Europe member States to review their policies and practices seeking to enhance student mobility as follows:
 - 4.1. Address factors that influence decisions to enter mobility programmes by improving personal perception, social influence and institutional capacity of European universities and by organising public awareness campaigns on the positive impact of student mobility.
 - 4.2. Increase availability of student funding and portability of student support and in particular:
 - 4.2.1. Sign and ratify the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad (CETS 69) and enhance its implementation;
 - 4.2.2. Develop scholarship or grant schemes paying attention to social, academic and geographical criteria and bearing in mind the principles of equality of opportunities and non-discrimination;
 - 4.2.3. Take into consideration the standard of living and the real living costs in the host country when taking decisions as regards the amount of financial support to be provided;
 - 4.2.4. Guarantee students participating in credit- and full-degree mobility the full amount of financial support provided for domestic students;
 - 4.2.5. Encourage private business support to student mobility.

4.3. Improve recognition of learning outcomes and in particular:

4.3.1. Sign and ratify the Convention on the recognition of qualification concerning higher education in the European region (CETS 165) and enhance its implementation;

4.3.2. Implement the Bologna Process structural reforms, including the three-cycle degree system and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), aligning national qualifications framework with the Quality Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

4.3.3. Evaluate recognition policies and practice at national level and participate in external quality assurance processes;

4.3.4. Reduce the bureaucratic burden as regards recognition of qualifications for both the state and the student.

4.4. Streamline administrative procedures that have an impact on student mobility – visas, social cover, residence and work permits – and in particular:

4.4.1. Abolish visa fees for students enrolled in mobility programmes, and reduce the delay of response to applicants;

4.4.2. Issue residence permits in a timely manner for the full period of any granted visa;

4.4.3. Take measures, in coordination with other countries, to remove administrative barriers related to the application of different social security systems and double taxation.

4.5. Develop and implement policy measures to encourage return to their home countries for graduates who took part in student mobility programmes, to prevent brain drain. Facilitate, in particular, their access to employment, recognising student mobility as an added value.

5. With due regard to the fundamental values of academic freedom and university autonomy, the Assembly calls upon higher education institutions to promote student mobility, as follows:

5.1. Raise student's interest and motivation, explaining the benefits of mobility for personal fulfilment and development of personal identity, and better valorise and recognise international student mobility;

5.2. Provide clear information to students about academic mobility programmes, such as Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, including on: financial support they could obtain, study programmes for degree and credit mobility, requirements for accessing such programmes, application procedure, administrative procedure; offer advice and assistance to students for the submission of their applications;

5.3. Include international student mobility as part of university courses rather than just as an extra-curricular possibility. Promote mobility as part of integrated courses allowing students to study in partner universities on an alternating basis;

5.4. Provide joint degrees and promote them through the student population;

5.5. Provide foreign language courses and self-learning opportunities for mobile students, and offer courses taught in a language other than that of the country of residence; encourage students, who take part in the Erasmus+ programme, to take full advantage of its Online Linguistic Support programme;

5.6. Develop training schemes for teaching staff in the partner university and provide information platforms and tools for understanding marking systems so as to simplify the conversion of ECTS credits;

5.7. Promote positive peer influence by developing sponsorship programmes between incoming and outgoing students; strengthen family support and the involvement of students on and off the campus.

6. Calls on the European Union to consider modalities for the possible participation of students of European countries, in particular, of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland, currently not covered by Erasmus+, in this programme.

B. Draft recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, referring to its Resolution (2014)... on student mobility, underlines the value of international student mobility as one of the key objectives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and considers that the Council of Europe should play a greater role in encouraging the adoption of measures that would foster student mobility.

2. Therefore, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers:

2.1. to instruct the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), through its informal ad hoc working group on higher education issues:

2.1.1. to develop guidelines and identify measures to remove obstacles to student mobility, including those regarding visas, social cover, residence and work permits;

2.1.2. to encourage the harmonisation of administrative procedures that have an impact on student mobility and to share good practice;

2.1.3. to make proposals for strengthening the action of ENIC-NARIC centres and networks;

2.1.4. to consider a revision of the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad (CETS 69), to introduce new measures for financial support and new recommendations that take into account the current trends in Europe.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Barilaro, Rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. On 30 September 2013, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe referred to our committee for report the motion for a resolution on “Student mobility” which I had tabled with twenty other colleagues (Doc. 13283, Reference 4002). I was appointed Rapporteur on 3 October 2013. On 10 April 2014 in Strasbourg, the Sub-committee on Education, Youth and Sport, held an exchange of views with Ms Erin Nordal, Member of the Executive Committee of the European Students Union. On 4 June 2014 in Paris, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media held an exchange of views with Ms Fatou Estéoule, Head of the International Relations Office of the University Paris Diderot, Member of the Bureau of International Relations in Higher Education (RI Sup) Network, and Mr David Crosier, Co-ordinating Author, Eurydice. On 31 October 2014, I met with Ms Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of Sector, Erasmus+ Higher Education, and Ms Ragnhild Solvi Berg, Policy Officer, International cooperation, Higher Education in the world, Erasmus+, at the Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission. On 24 November 2014, I met with Mr Jean-Philippe Restoueix, Head of Higher Education and Qualifications Unit, Education Department, Council of Europe.

2. Student mobility is defined as any academic mobility which takes place within a student’s program of study in post-secondary education.¹ The scope of my report will be slightly different in two directions. On the one hand it will focus only on the “international” mobility of students in post-secondary education programmes (i.e. university), thus excluding mobility between institutions of a country, but including also the mobility of post-graduate students and young researchers in Masters’ and PhD programmes, primarily within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).²

3. There are two types of international post-secondary student mobility: degree and credit mobility. With “degree mobility”, students are completing a full programme of studies abroad. Consequently, they are earning a full diploma from the university where they have completed their studies. Most often this type of mobility is used by students in the second and third cycle of their higher education.

4. In “credit mobility”, students complete, most frequently, one semester or one year of studies outside their home university. When they complete the programme, they earn credits from the courses that they have finished in the host university. Those credits should be transferred to and recognised by their home university. Transferability of credits is enhanced by the implementation of the requirements of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), including its Diploma Supplement.

5. The “credit mobility” can take place in an organised manner through “joint degree” programmes, where universities from different countries sign co-operation agreements that specify student exchange conditions.

6. Mobility of post-graduate students and young researchers was until recently a marginal phenomenon in quantitative terms. These students need specific support, including, for instance, access to industrial equipment or targeted funding (including from the private sector) for their research. New opportunities are created through the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, for example, through the new Marie Curie Action or Master Student Loan Guarantee facility, referred to in Chapter 4.

7. In the following sections I will highlight the benefits of international student mobility, present the current mobility flows and trends, and consider the existing barriers to student mobility with an aim to identify measures, which could improve the quality of mobility programmes and increase the number of students who are using such programmes. The overall goal is to encourage national decision makers to reconsider their action (or lack of action) in this respect and to develop a more strategic approach. The design of coherent national strategies on “student mobility” is, indeed, a necessity, within the wider framework of higher education reform processes (intended to enhance the quality of higher education and the competitiveness of the national overall economic system). This would also support the implementation of the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué, which states that in 2020 at least 20% of those graduating in EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad.³

¹ “Student mobility and credit transfer”, A National and Global Survey, by Sean Junor and Alex Usher, 2008.

² The report will not address issues relating to the mobility of groups of population such as migrants, refugees or displaced persons.

³ Bucharest communiqué “Making the Most of Our Potential Consolidating the European Higher Education Area”, Bucharest, 2012.

2. Benefits from academic mobility

8. Student mobility is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process establishing the EHEA. The reason is that it is highly beneficial both for students and universities. But it also benefits States and Europe, as a whole.

For students

9. Academic mobility has a positive impact on personal development of those involved.⁴ Research shows that mobility impacts on the development of the student's identity. Living in another country for some time helps students build up better understanding of diversity and the capacity to co-operate with people of different cultural backgrounds. As Jeffrey F. Milem put it in his recent study, "*students benefit significantly from education that takes place within a diverse setting. In the course of their university education, students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. As we seek to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century, the educational value of such encounters will become more important, not less, than in the past*".⁵

10. Mobility equips students with a wide range of competences and skills which are increasingly valued by employers – from foreign languages⁶ and greater intercultural awareness, to open-mindedness and tolerance, curiosity and problem-solving skills, quick adaptability to changes and an entrepreneurial mind set. Such skills and competences do not only serve the labour market and the wider European economy, but also contribute more broadly to developing active and engaged European citizens, contributing to a holistic education for Europe's youth. In general, research shows that academic mobility encourages the employability of students who feel more confident to search for jobs abroad and who consider obstacles for labour mobility less important than their non-mobile peers.⁷

11. The Erasmus Impact Study,⁸ – a new study on the impact of the European Union's Erasmus student exchange programme, delivered in September 2014 – confirms that young people who study or train abroad strengthen key transversal skills which are highly valued on the job market. It also shows that graduates with international experience are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with the others and, five years after graduation, their unemployment rate is 23% lower; they can also expect greater professional responsibility and faster career advancement.

12. Finally, academic mobility increases the size of social networks of European young people, which can enhance the possibilities of finding a job in Europe through connections gained during the exchange.⁹ Again, the Erasmus Impact Study, points out that international studies also offers students broader horizons and social links, make it easier for them to envisage moving abroad and double the number of those that change their country of residence or work at least once since graduation.

For universities

13. International student mobility brings valuable experience for progress to the Universities, which participate in the process. Students' and academic staff' exchanges deconstruct the stereotypes and help build bridges between the different academic cultures. This also facilitates the exchange of good practices between the academic institutions. Diversity in the educational process improves the quality of education overall. These are the reasons why the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition convention states clearly that higher education "*should be designed to enable all people of the region to benefit fully from this*

⁴ Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?, by K. Mitchell, Journal of Contemporary European Research. 8 (4), pp. 490-518, 2012.

⁵ The Educational Benefits of Diversity: Evidence from Multiple Sectors, by Jeffrey F. Milem, University of Maryland.

⁶ The recent study of the International Exchange Erasmus Student Network "International Experience and Language Learning", found that students generally improve the language of tuition after their stay abroad. This is particularly true for English (34%), German (43.7%), French (61.9%), Spanish (68.3%) and Italian (75.8%). See "International Experience and Language Learning", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2014, by Jesús Escrivá Muñoz (ed.), Emanuel Alfranseder, Paula Danciu, Julia Fellingner, Roberta Piscone, Sandra Rimavičiūtė, Jurgita Stasiukaitytė, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2014_WEB.pdf.

⁷ "Exchange, employment and added value", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2011, by Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Jesús Escrivá, Julia Fellingner, Aimee Haley, Asror Nigmonov & Marge Taivere, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/esnsurvey2011_web.pdf.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf.

⁹ "Creating ideas, opportunities and identity", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2013, by Julia Fellingner (ed.), Jesús Escrivá, Eleni Kalantzi, Karina Oborune & Jurgita Stasiukaityte, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2013_WEB.pdf.

rich asset of diversity by facilitating access by the inhabitants of each State and by the students of each Party's educational institutions to the educational resources of the other Parties".¹⁰

14. Incoming mobility also creates a positive effect on local students who might not have the possibility to go abroad. The presence of international students immerses local students in an international environment which causes the latter to develop similar skills as the ones exchange students obtain. This is known as "internationalisation at home".

For States

15. International student mobility embraces several different dimensions – political, social, economic, as well as academic and cultural¹¹ – and has a major impact on the developments in all these areas. It helps develop highly skilled labour force and gradually modernise the education systems. Academic competences and language skills acquired through mobility help young people find jobs in the modern labour market, boost job prospects and encourage job mobility later in life. Thus, international student mobility can contribute to economic development, and to economic stability, of the countries concerned.

16. This also applies to host countries. The latter charge to foreign students the costs inherent to the provision of places of study, accommodation and advisory services (in full or a part of all costs). They also benefit from the presence of these foreign students. According to the research conducted by Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst e.V., DAAD, economies of host countries benefit significantly from value creation resulting from student mobility and, in particular, positive macro-economic effects are caused by job creation and revenues accruing to the state.¹²

For Europe

17. International student mobility is a powerful tool for enhancing intercultural understanding in Europe. It was found that Erasmus students compared with non-mobile students were more interested in other European countries and in other European people and cultures. The experience of studying in another country made them feel more European.¹³ Student mobility breaks the stereotypes and prejudices as regards other cultures and nationalities, and provides a basis for inter-cultural understanding. Moreover, by contributing to the economic development of the European countries, it strengthens Europe's economic position at global level. Student mobility, overall, plays a vital role in promoting peace, mutual understanding and tolerance and in creating mutual confidence among peoples and nations, which is one of the major goals of European construction.¹⁴

3. International student mobility trends and flows

3.1. International student mobility flows in Europe

18. The statistical data presented below refers to international degree mobility. Credit mobility, including participation in joint degree programmes, is not covered.

19. Although the Erasmus+ statistics show that mobility is increasing, it is important to keep in mind that international mobility seems currently to be a relatively minor phenomenon in the European continent.¹⁵

20. When reporting on incoming degree mobility, all but two countries (Austria and Switzerland) had shown an incoming degree mobility rate of less than 10 % of total number of students enrolled, with the majority of countries reporting incoming mobility below 5% of a total number of students enrolled¹⁶ (this study refers to the academic year 2008-2009).

¹⁰ Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region", Lisbon, 1997

¹¹ Berlin Communiqué "Realising the European Higher Education Area".

¹² The Financial Impact of Cross-border Student Mobility on the Economy of the Host Country, C. Münch, M. Hoch, Berlin, November 2013.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon, 1997.

¹⁵ The EU Erasmus+ Programme is designed to be implemented in the period 2014-2020 with an overall budget of €14.7 billion, which is a 40% increase compared to current spending levels. It aims to provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. The Erasmus+ Programme will support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organizations to foster cooperation and facilitate access to employment by tackling the skills gaps in Europe.

¹⁶ This refers to mobility between EHEA member States.

21. Based on Eurostat data (2008-2009 academic year), the average number of students studying in the EHEA coming from abroad reaches slightly less than 4% of the total number of students enrolled (degree mobility only). It should be kept in mind that many countries only provide data on students with foreign citizenship/nationality.¹⁷

22. The same study shows that:

- As regards incoming mobility, only UK, Germany, France and Austria received more than 50000 incoming students. Italy, Russia, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Switzerland and Spain had between 50000 and 25000 incoming students. Twenty six countries had less than 25000 incoming students.
- As regards outgoing mobility, with more than 75500 students, Germany has the greatest share of outgoing mobility. It is followed by France and Russia with more than 30000 outgoing students and Ukraine, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Greece with more than 22500 outgoing students.

23. The Erasmus Programme of the European Union contributed to a large extent to the increase in the number of students studying abroad. In the 2012/2013 academic year, 268 143 students went to another European country to study in 33 Erasmus Programme Countries,¹⁸ covering roughly 5% of all graduates in these countries. This year was also marked by a key milestone: the 3 millionth student went abroad to study since the launch of the Erasmus programme in 1987. The number of Erasmus students more than doubled in the period of its implementation. Besides high students' interest, this growth is a result of the increased number of countries taking part in the programme and overall growth of the Erasmus budget. The European Students Union (ESU) noted, however, that students from lower income families have fewer possibilities to study abroad. Therefore, students from these categories have rarely an opportunity to upgrade their education with studies abroad.

24. Smaller countries and countries which are not EU member States do not have a big number of students engaging in incoming and outgoing mobility. Concerning smaller countries, this is of course a direct consequence of their population size and of the reduced overall capacity of their university structures. In Luxemburg, in the academic year 2011/2012, only 424 students used the Erasmus programme (i.e. 7,25% of the total number of students in the country that year), followed by 400 students in 2012/2013. For the same academic year in Liechtenstein only 21 students used the Erasmus programme (i.e. 3,86% of the total number of students), followed by 23 students in 2012/2013.¹⁹ The statistical data should however be understood also in relative terms. For example, comparatively, in Spain for the same academic years, there were 38 553 students that used the Erasmus programme, which however represent only 1.86% of the total student population in Spain.²⁰ Spain is the largest sending country with 33 548 students who went to study abroad in 2012/2013, and also the most popular destination, receiving about 40 000 students the same year. The other popular destinations include Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy.

25. In the new Erasmus+ programme, all participating Programme Country organisations (both sending and receiving) must be higher education institutions awarded with an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). Every year, the European Commission – via the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency – publishes a specific call for proposals that sets the detailed conditions to be followed and qualitative criteria to be met in order to be awarded with an ECHE.

26. The international component of the Erasmus+, which includes international credit mobility of individuals and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, allows for greater mobility for students and staff to and from Partner Countries²¹ worldwide, at all levels of higher education. All Partner Country organisations

¹⁷ The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (data source, Eurostat).

¹⁸ The Programme Countries include the 28 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey; See "Erasmus – Facts, Figures and Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012-2013".

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ "On the way to Erasmus+", A statistical overview of the Erasmus Programme in 2011-2012, issued by the European Commission, November 2013.

²¹ The following countries are listed as Partner Countries for the student mobility component of the Erasmus+ Programme: *Western Balkans (Region 1)*: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.), Montenegro, Serbia; *Eastern Partnership countries (Region 2)*: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law; *South-Mediterranean countries (Region 3)*: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine (This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the EU Member States on this issue), Syria, Tunisia; *Russian Federation (Region 4)*: Territory of Russia as recognised by international law. See the Erasmus+

must be higher education institutions accredited by the relevant national accreditation organisation and have signed inter-institutional agreements, which encapsulates the principles of the ECHE, with their Programme Country partners before the mobility takes place. The inter-institutional agreements will also facilitate the recognition of qualifications.

27. The value of student mobility is highly recognized in Monaco. The Prince's Government underlines the importance of encouraging young people to gain experience abroad. One example is the Youth Mobility Scheme in Monaco, which makes it possible for young Monaco nationals aged from 18 to 30 to benefit from a visa allowing them entry to the UK for a maximum period of two years, to gain professional experience.²²

28. Monaco Universities cannot, however, provide programs that will satisfy every Monegasque student's interest to enter higher education. More precisely, Monaco has one university offering a degree in management, finance, science and business – the International University of Monaco – and two others, the “École Supérieure d'Arts Plastiques” for art and dance, and the “Institut de Formation en Soins Infirmiers” for nursing. Countries, such as Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, are in a similar situation. They have only one university each, which does not offer provisions in all subject areas. This is the reason why student mobility becomes so important for smaller countries.

29. Overall, in Europe, the flow of students is imbalanced between the countries, with significant differences between the mobility flows in the EU and mobility flows in non-EU countries. The general tendency of movement is from the Eastern part of Europe to the Western part.

30. Inside the EHEA in 2008/2009 academic year, the difference between incoming and outgoing mobility was the highest in Cyprus, the UK and Austria.

31. In Cyprus there were about 7,5 times more students who were leaving the country to study abroad (12191 students) compared to foreign students coming from abroad (1615 students);

32. Similar differences in favour of outward mobility occur in Iceland (incoming: 613, outgoing: 2120), Ireland (incoming: 5079, outgoing: 16751), Malta (incoming: 257 outgoing: 1076), Moldova (incoming: 797 outgoing: 12028), Slovakia (incoming: 5545, outgoing 27434).

33. The phenomenon of the imbalanced flow of students between countries is often coupled with another one: a significantly larger amount of students and researchers leaving their country of origin and settling to work in the host country compared to the number of incoming students, who stay. This is often referred to as “brain drain”.

34. As opposed to Cyprus, in the UK there were about 13,6 times more students who came to study from abroad (130203 students) compared to the number of students leaving the country (9539 students);

35. In Austria, there were about 5,5 times more students who came to study from abroad (52191 students) compared to the number of students leaving the country (9450 students), and in Switzerland, there were, respectively, 25500 incoming and 8488 outgoing students.

36. Most of the countries (17 countries) with a bigger number of incoming than outgoing students are counted as “attractive countries” for higher education. There is a significant group of countries that have low level of outgoing mobility and even lower in incoming students, tendency which is indicating inferior degree of attractiveness of these countries higher education institutions to foreign students. This group of countries includes Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Armenia, and Ukraine.²³ Balancing mobility flow across the continent is one of the greatest challenges as regards student mobility.

37. The process of decision making for studying abroad is influenced by several factors such as personal, social, and institutional. The personal factors weigh more heavily in affecting the student's attitude and their decision. The most significant personal factors are:

- student's internal drive and motivations;
- perceived outcomes of personal growth through study abroad, and
- personal identity.

Programme Guide:

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.

²² See Monaco's government website, <http://en.gouv.mc/Policy-Practice/Youth/Time-spent-abroad-a-valuable-asset>.

²³ The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (data source, Eurostat).

38. The most significant social factors are:
- influence of peers/significant others,
 - the opinion of past participants,
 - family/culture support, and
 - student engagement on and off campus.

39. Lastly, the most noteworthy institutional factors influencing their decision were effective marketing/outreach, study abroad promoted in campus/University culture, variety of program offerings, and effective advising.²⁴

3.2. International student mobility flows from and to Europe

40. An important element which should be considered further is the question of the international student mobility flows from and to Europe, in particular the incoming and outgoing flows between Europe and the USA and between Europe and Asian countries.

41. At global level, United States and Western European countries are the main recipients of foreign students while Asian countries have the greatest prevalence of outgoing students. In 2012, China had 694 400 students studying abroad, followed by India with 189 500 and Republic of Korea with 123 700 students studying abroad. In Europe, Germany with 117 600 students and France with 62 400 students had the greatest number of students studying abroad.²⁵

42. According to 2012 data, United States welcomes 18% of the total number of mobile students in the world, followed by United Kingdom with 11%, France with 7%, Australia 6%, Germany 5% and the Russian Federation 4%.

43. The majority of the international student population in Europe is coming from the non-European countries. For example, in UK the greatest numbers of students are coming from China, India and Nigeria; in France from Morocco, China, Algeria and Tunisia; in Germany from China, Turkey and Russian Federation; and in Austria a great number of incoming students are from Turkey.

44. When students from the US want to study abroad, most frequently they go to EU member states (UK, Germany and France) and when students from Europe want to study out of the continent they go most often to the US.

45. The European Commission supports mobility between EU and US through the EU ATLANTIS Programme, which supports consortia of higher education and training institutions working together at undergraduates or graduates levels to improve their educational services, to compare and modernise curricula and to develop joint study programmes with full recognition of credits and qualifications.²⁶

46. In addition to mobility programmes, universities or even countries sign cooperation agreements allowing students to study abroad. For example Australian government has a contract for recognition of qualifications with France, Spain and the UK.²⁷ Universities or faculties can also establish direct cooperation with universities or faculties from other countries. MICFA – *Mission Interuniversitaire de Coordonation des échanges franco-américains* – is an example of such a consortium, which includes most of the Universities of Paris and its region. It was created in 1985 to promote cultural and scientific cooperation between France and Anglophone North America, having 80 university partners from US and Canada.²⁸

47. However there are considerable differences in higher education in US and in Europe, which affects the exchange programs between EHEA universities and the US ones. When it comes to the use of joint and

²⁴ When analysing what lies behind a student's choice to study abroad, social life motivation was highlighted as one of the main determinants. See: "Study Abroad Motivations, Destination Selection and Pre-Trip Attitude Formation", by Gyan P. Nyaupane, Cody Morris Paris, and Victor Teye.

²⁵ Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students, UNESCO Institute of Statistics:
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>.

²⁶ EU-USA Atlantis Programme: Bilateral cooperation in higher education:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/bilateral_cooperation/eu_us/programme/about_eu_usa_en.php#intro.

²⁷ The voice of Australia Universities: International co-operation and agreements:
<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/global-engagement/international-collaboration/international-agreements-and-agreements#.U5dsnvmSzgA> ; and Cooperation with universities in the UK:
<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/global-engagement/international-collaboration/international-agreements-and-activities/Engagement-with-the-UK>.

²⁸ « Mission Interuniversitaire de Coordonation des échanges franco-américains » : <http://micefa.org/>.

double degrees between the EU and the US, a survey found that there were several challenges, such as issuing certificates in cooperation with foreign institutions, or different practices for subject or degree of studies.²⁹

48. Educational opportunities (or lack thereof) are an important factor driving outward flows of PhD students. Studies that tend to explain what influences international students mobility, stress that the quality of the host country university system, measured by the relative impact of a country's scientific publications, and especially the number of universities a country has in the top 200 of the Shanghai ranking are factors that determine the size and direction of student mobility flows in a sample of 31 European countries. For the mobility patterns of students in advanced research studies (e.g. doctoral students), the quality is heavily correlated with the university ranking. For example, as many UK universities appear in the "Times Education Supplement" ranking, the UK becomes a dominant destination country for PhD students (the so-called "UK effect").

49. Removing barriers to student mobility in Europe could have a positive effect on improving university quality. This in turn will have a positive impact on international flows of tertiary students, since they are significantly guided by quality considerations.

4. Obstacles to international student mobility

50. There are several elements which may act as barriers to mobility, such as lack of recognition of learning outcomes, lack of financial support and access to information on student mobility, or burdensome administrative procedures – in particular on visas, social security coverage and residence/work permits – that may prevent participation in mobility programs. The European Students Union (ESU) stressed that "mobility remains an opportunity for the few and the elite, as problems related especially to funding and recognition have only haphazardly been tackled".³⁰

4.1. Lack of funding and low portability of student support

51. From the perspective of students and their representatives, such as the European Students Union (ESU), lack of financial resources is the biggest obstacle to student mobility (additional financial burden associated with a foreign enrolment period, loss of opportunities to earn money, loss of social benefits problems with accommodation in the home country), and this is even more so for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The Eurostudent study in 2009/2010 showed that in Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Estonia and Turkey over 70% of students cited finance issues as the main obstacle.³¹ Similar conclusions were brought by a survey conducted by Vossensteyen et al. (2010), where 57 % of non-Erasmus students say that studying abroad is too expensive to consider³² and 29% of students reject Erasmus after consideration because the grant provided is insufficient to cover incurred costs.³³

52. Living expenses and housing costs are important cost components of foreign education.³⁴ They have a major impact on the enrolment of foreign students. Therefore, a factor that affects mobility flows is the living costs differences. Regional imbalances in mobility are deepened by a lack of support to cover the changes in living costs while students are abroad, especially when students from poorer countries travel to countries with higher living costs than those in their home country.

53. The 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report confirms that the biggest obstacle for obtaining mobility is the funding. The report analysed several financial measures available in the countries and described the financial practices for mobility used in every country, such as encompassing grants and scholarships as well as loans. In 2011/2012 academic year less than half of the countries implemented financial support measures in the form of loans for outward students³⁵ in credit and degree mobility and only

²⁹ Kudey Matthias and Obst Daniel (2009) *Joint and Double Degree Programs in the Transatlantic Context: A Survey Report*, Freie Universität Berlin and Institute of International Education.

³⁰ "Bologna with Student Eyes 2012", by European Students Union, Project coordination and editing: Magnus Malnes, Nevena Vuksanovic, Mari Simola, Brussels, April 2012.

³¹ "Short – term mobility and mobility obstacles", Eurostudent, 2009/2010.

³² This was confirmed more recently by the Research report "International Experience and Language Learning" of the ESNSurvey 2014, by Jesús Escrivá Muñoz (ed.), Emanuel Alfranseder, Paula Danciu, Julia Fellingner, Roberta Piscione, Sandra Rimavičiūtė, Jurgita Stasiukaitytė, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2014_WEB.pdf.

³³ "Improving the participation in the Erasmus Programme", by Vossensteyn, J.J., Beerkens, M. et al., Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), 2010, Report prepared for the European Parliament.

³⁴ Study on the use of credit systems in higher education cooperation between the EU and the US, October 2011.

http://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_9_politikalar/1_9_4_egitim_politikasi/us_en.pdf.

³⁵ In France, for example, financial support programmes were mainly aimed at domestic students whose place of

a few did so for incoming students. Around two thirds of countries provided grants and scholarships for both outward and incoming students for degree mobility.³⁶

54. Scholarships, grants and loans are the most frequently used financial measures.³⁷ Only Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany and Hungary are providing other measures for degree mobility. Scholarships are used more than loans. 27 countries of the Council of Europe member states provide scholarship or grants for incoming degree mobility and 23 for credit incoming mobility. Support for outgoing mobility is slightly higher: 27 countries provide grants and scholarships for outgoing degree mobility and 30 for outgoing credit mobility.

55. As regards student loans, only 7 countries provide loans for incoming degree mobility and only 2 for incoming credit mobility. Countries prefer to offer loans to support outgoing mobility of national students. More precisely, 22 countries provide public loans for outgoing degree mobility and 19 for outgoing credit mobility. Monaco (which was not part of the Bologna Process Implementation Report) voted on 11 June 2014 a new Law on the establishment of State financial aid to support the provision of student loans.³⁸ This law states explicitly that state aid to student loans may be awarded for the preparation of competitions for education and development in disciplines directly linked to public service, economy, maintaining and increasing the influence of Monaco in the artistic, intellectual and scientific fields or for job categories, where there is an insufficient number of job-holders; as well as for learning a language of wider communication by studying in a foreign country.

56. I welcome the decision to establish a Master Student Loan Guarantee facility within the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union.³⁹ This facility is intended to enable young people to gain access to loans to support their studies abroad over the lifetime of the Erasmus+ Programme. The EU budget allocation will leverage financing from the banking sector for loans to mobile masters students.

57. The facility will provide a partial guarantee against loan defaults for banks or student loan agencies in Programme Countries who will participate. The EU partial guarantee will thus mitigate risk for financial institutions lending to a group they currently do not consider. In return for access to the partial guarantee, banks will be required to offer loans on affordable conditions to mobile students, including better than market interest rates and up to two years to allow graduates to get into a job before beginning repayment. The management of the facility at the EU level will be entrusted to the European Investment Fund, which is part of the European Investment Bank.

58. Beside these financial measures, tuition fees have a big impact on student mobility. Only 15 member States have equal tuition fees for their home students and for the international students.⁴⁰ Others have higher tuition fees for the international students.

59. Indeed, enabling incoming students to work part-time can help them finance their studies in a country other than their own, dealing with financial problems in a better way. For example in Norway students from EU can work part-time job up to 20 hours per week, for up to three months without any work permit. When students from EU are granted with student residence permit they are automatically awarded with work permit for part-time work. Student out of EU can apply for part time job work permit as well. The difference is that the non EU students are not automatically awarded with part time job permit, but they have to submit a statement from the higher education institution confirming that the work will not affect the study progress and a letter from the employer stating that the student has a job offer.⁴¹

60. In France students that have student visa can apply for temporary work permit, which will provide them the right to work for a limited number of hours per week. However students must fulfil the financial requirements (a monthly financial guarantee of approximately \$600) in order to be eligible to apply for student visa.⁴² French law authorises students to work a maximum of 964 hours a year, which means about

residence was in their home country.

³⁶ The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report.

³⁷ The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf).

³⁸ Text available on the website of the National Council of Monaco (in French): <http://www.conseil-national.mc/index.php/textes-et-lois/propositions-de-loi/item/317-212-proposition-de-loi-portant-creation-d-une-aide-financiere-de-l-etat-aux-prets-etudiants>.

³⁹ See "Erasmus+ Programme Guide", version 3, 09/04/2014.

⁴⁰ EU member States define "international students" as every nationality out of EU, and countries which are not EU member States, refer to "international students" for every other nationality except their own.

⁴¹ <http://www.studyinnorway.no/Study-in-Norway/Student-residence-permit/Working-permit-for-students>.

⁴² <http://french.about.com/od/travelfrance/a/liveworkinfrance.htm>.

twenty hours per week.⁴³ In Russia every foreign student that enrolls studies in some Russian university can get legal employment on the basis of his/her student visa.⁴⁴

61. Through the Bologna Process, ministers of the EHEA have agreed to the full portability of student support for both credit- and full-degree mobility since 2005,⁴⁵ meaning that grant and/or loans for credit and degree mobility are subject to equivalent requirements if students study in the home country or abroad. However, from 33 analysed countries only in some countries full portability is possible (German and Flemish communities of Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Finland, Iceland, and Liechtenstein), while in other countries either there was no portability (public grants and/or loans were only provided if students study in the home country or in exceptional cases), or there was no considerable student support that could be portable (less than 10 % of students receive potentially portable student support) (Walloon Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovak Republic).⁴⁶ Most countries have yet to make this a reality. Student mobility will increase, if countries will guarantee students participating in credit- and full-degree mobility the full amount of financial support provided for domestic students.

62. Besides the problem of low portability, students receive inadequate support to cover the costs associated with living abroad. Surveys conducted among ESU's member unions say that there is not even one country where students who are studying abroad are not dealing with problems related to their studying and living expenses.⁴⁷ Many students rely on support from their parents to cover costs.

63. Countries and higher education institutions exploit mobility and internationalisation by using it as a source of revenue or by perceiving it through financial perspective. This is done through charging tuition fees for third-country nationals (outside of the EU/EEA-area) and in some cases for students within the EU/EEA-area. By charging several times higher tuition fees for students out of the EU, European universities limit access to higher education programs for non-EU students.

64. Tuition fees influence the level of mobility. For example, in Sweden, the number of international students from countries outside the EEA and Switzerland declined by almost 60%, from 10234 in the fourth quarter of 2010 to 4269 in the fourth quarter of 2011 after the introduction of tuition fees for foreign students.⁴⁸

4.2. Difficulties with regard to recognition of qualifications

65. In the last 25 years, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was set up. One of the main goals of the ECTS is to provide academic mobility which brings consistency of learning outcomes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), expands international study opportunities and contributes to the recognition of periods of study abroad. Improvement of student mobility is directly related to the implementation of the ECTS and at the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area overall. One should note, however, that the implementation of the ECTS requires substantial efforts and commitment by both sending and host universities. University administrators and professors should be better trained to apply the ECTS, when their university takes part in exchange programmes.

66. The recognition of knowledge acquired through a student mobility programme, and of the qualifications received as a result, is the second most common obstacle, especially for outgoing students. The 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report shows that difficulties with recognition of mobility periods are mentioned by only eight countries for incoming mobility but by 24 in connection with outward mobility. The most common concern for credit mobility is recognition while the most relevant obstacle to degree mobility is funding.⁴⁹

⁴³ <http://www.en.u-pec.fr/working-in-france-473540.kjsp>.

⁴⁴ http://eeua.ru/news/detail_layout/127.

⁴⁵ "Portability of student support" means portability of public grants (i.e. public financial support that does not need to be paid back) and loans. Portability entails the possibility for students to receive public grants and loans in another country on the same terms as when they study at home or to use loans received at home for studies abroad. Student grants and loans are portable in the Dutch and German-speaking parts of Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden. In contrast, student financial support systems are most restrictive in the French-speaking part of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia, See EU Press Release IP-14-9 of 10 January 2014 "EU Mobility Scoreboard: more effort needed to promote studies and training abroad for students".

⁴⁶ Exchange of views with Mr David Crosier, Co-ordinating Author, Eurydice, on 4 June 2014, in Paris.

⁴⁷ "Bologna with Student Eyes 2012", by European Students Union, Project coordination and editing: Magnus Malnes, Nevena Vuksanovic, Mari Simola, Brussels, April 2012.

⁴⁸ "Skills beyond Schools", Education indicators in focus, OECD, 2013.

⁴⁹ The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report.

67. As regards credit mobility, only 73% of the students receive the full recognition of the credits successfully gained abroad and previously included in the Learning Agreement with the host university. 24% of the students receive only partial recognition for certain courses and almost 3% do not get any of their credits recognised. Moreover, 21.6% of the students had to repeat at least some (or in 3.6% all) of their courses and/or exams upon return, regardless of receiving or not full recognition of their studies abroad.⁵⁰ As far as full-degree mobility is concerned, 9% of students that have taken a full degree abroad encounter problems with regards to the recognition of their degree.

68. Foreign degree recognition issues occur particularly in connection with further education, state employment and for regulated professions. Many students complain about long, and sometimes costly, administrative procedures for recognition. Tools such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention are not widely known amongst students and almost 50% of individuals that did not get their degree recognised indicate not having turned to potential support organisations, such as national students' unions or NARICs.⁵¹

69. It should also be mentioned that, according to a survey amongst the national unions of students in ESU from 2012, students either anticipate the absence from the home university, or in many cases for those who return from studies abroad, experience a longer duration of studies due to study abroad, upon return. This implies additional costs in the form of tuition fees and/or delayed entrance in the labour market and the loss of income as a consequence.

70. Moreover, according to the Berlin Communiqué, a Diploma Supplement describing the acquired qualifications should be issued for free and in English to every student.⁵² Although this recommendation was accepted by every country participating in the Bologna Process, many countries still do not issue Diploma Supplements to their students.

71. 36 out of the 47 Council of Europe member states issue a Diploma Supplement to more than 75% of student population. These countries also issue Diploma Supplements in English and free of charge, following the recommendations of the Berlin Communiqué. In other countries it is issued upon request, or not issued at all.⁵³

72. However, only 17 member States monitor how higher education institutions use the Diploma Supplement and only 12 evaluate the recognition policy and practices in external quality assurance processes.

73. Another measure that supports the implementation of ECTS is the availability of joint degrees. In only 10 member states the percentage of institutions that award joint degree is higher than 50%. That includes Denmark, Malta, Portugal and Switzerland, where from 50% to 75% of the institutions award joint degree. Unfortunately this is not the case with the other countries members of EHEA. In 6 member states the percentage of students that have graduated with a joint degree (academic year 2009/10) is between 2,5% and 10%. In the other member states the percentage is below 2,5%.

4.3. Language barriers

74. Language competence is one of the basic conditions for studying in a foreign country and therefore it is one of the most common barriers to student mobility. 25 higher education systems identify insufficient knowledge of language by incoming students and 12 higher education systems do so for outward mobility. Around one third of countries outline provision of language courses for outward and incoming students, and develop curricula/programmes in English or other foreign languages, including joint programmes degrees.⁵⁴ In addition, the central role of the English language in higher education is not always taken into account. Not calling into question the goal of multilingualism and diversity in language learning, special attention to ensure widespread proficiency in the English language is needed to support student mobility.

⁵⁰ Problems of recognition in making Erasmus (PRIME 2010) Study, by Eren Dicle, Julia Fellingner, Luyedan Huang, Igor Kalinic, Justyna Pisera, Julia Trawińska, Edona Vinca:

<http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESN%20PRIME%20Booklet%202010%20Web.pdf>.

⁵¹ Automatic Recognition of Full Degrees, Erasmus Student Network AISBL, by Emanuel Alfranseder, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/Automatic%20Recognition%20of%20Full%20Degrees_Final.pdf.

⁵² Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, Berlin, 2003.

⁵³ See for the implementation of ECTS measures and recommendations on recognition of qualifications "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report":

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf).

⁵⁴ "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report".

75. The capacity to speak foreign languages is also important for host university lecturers and other academic staff. Unfortunately, a significant number of academic staff representatives lack foreign language competences. Moreover, lecturers and academic staff cannot improve their knowledge of foreign languages by obtaining mobility in other country, unless they enrol as students themselves. There are, in some cases, higher education institutions that provide foreign language courses for their outward staff and others that offer language courses for incoming staff. Nevertheless, while some countries highlight provision and financing of language courses as a challenge, others consider that language learning is a personal responsibility.

76. Some scholarship programs provide language courses before the beginning of the studies abroad. This way student can learn the language and the culture of the host country where they are going to live in. Such example is the DAAD scholarship program which provides intensive language courses for German language for the students that are enrolling study programme in German universities⁵⁵.

77. Also in the Czech Republic, where the number of foreign students increased recently, there are positive practices in terms of language policies. The Czech Republic provides free educational services to foreign students if they are enrolling in Czech language programs. Besides that, they also provide one year paid language proficiency course, after which they are able to continue their studies in Czech language.

78. The EU Erasmus+ Programme has financed specialised courses in the less widely used and taught languages for students going abroad as part of the programme, thus encouraging mobility from North to the South and from West to the East of Europe. Some 465 courses were organised in 26 countries in 2012/2013 academic year, which represents an increase of 7% compared to the previous year. Overall, a total of nearly 55 000 Erasmus students have benefited from language courses prior to their study exchange or traineeship since 1999. In 2012/2013, 7 247 students participated in an Intensive Language Course, which represents 2,7 % of the total number of students participating in the Programme. In addition, new language learning opportunities have been created, namely, the Online Linguistic Support programme launched on 1 October 2014. It allows students who take part in Erasmus+ to assess and improve their language skills in six languages: German, Spanish, English, French, Italian, and Dutch. National Agencies will implement this programme.⁵⁶

4.4. Heavy administrative procedures

79. Students, especially the one out of the EU, are confronted with a number of administrative and legislation difficulties when they apply to study in another country. This is particularly the case of teaching assistants, who are post-graduate students and academic staff members at the same time. As regards academic staff mobility, which is an issue that needs to be addressed in a new report, the administrative procedure is quoted as the second common obstacle, according to the 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report. Legal difficulties are mostly related to the differences in the social security systems, double taxation in certain countries along with immigration restriction and the difficulty to obtaining a visa (for non-EU countries).

80. To obtain a visa, students should prove that they have the sum required for their accommodation and subsistence for the whole period of their studies abroad. This request, though understandable, creates difficulties and, in many cases, prevents academic mobility. Students coming to the EU from non-EU countries face additional difficulties to obtain their visas. This includes expensive Visa costs, long waiting times for Visa and appeal procedures, unclear requirements on the necessary supporting documents, and often incoherent and unclear information policies. Research from the Erasmus Student Network shows that, on average, a person from a relatively poor non-EU Schengen country has to pay around 270 Euro to obtain a visa.⁵⁷ The ongoing revision of the Visa Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing is a key step in eliminating such barriers.⁵⁸ For example, young people from

⁵⁵ <https://www.daad.org/about>

⁵⁶ EU Erasmus+Online Linguistic Support: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support_en.htm.

⁵⁷ Research study on visas and residence permits, by Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Agnieszka Czarnojan, 2013, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/201310_Visas&ResidencePermit_Report.pdf.

⁵⁸ See the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing, (COM(2013)151 final). http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/immigration/study-or-training/docs/students_and_researchers_proposal_com_2013_151_en.pdf.

Monaco who wish to study in the UK find it difficult to obtain a visa. Moreover, in the UK, school fees for EU nationals are lower than for non-EU nationals. Again, there could be reasons for such a difference, but it clearly hampers non-EU students.

81. Higher education institutions continue their dialogue with public authorities regarding immigration policy, and some countries have already adopted measures lessening immigration restrictions for non-EU researchers and/or have regular reviews of such matters. Thorough implementation of the EU Scientific Visa Directive and its two accompanying recommendations (the so-called Scientific Visa Package) is an important step forward. It facilitates short and long stays (less than or more than three months) of researchers from third countries in the EU Member States for the purpose of scientific research.

82. I would suggest taking into account other existing practices as regards visa arrangements. The current practice in the United States allows for specific arrangements for cultural exchange visa (type J). After the permitted stay, the expatriate is required to return home for a two-year period before applying for re-admittance to the USA. Also, some scholarships (ex. Fulbright) that tend to promote development in less developed regions have similar regulations. Scholarship recipient is obliged to return to his/her home country after completing the studies, and cannot apply for US visa for the next two years.

83. In addition to visa requirements, there are administrative procedures that may be perceived as an obstacle to mobility, which includes procedures of obtaining a residence permit, allowing long-term stay in a given country. The Erasmus Student Network Research study on visas and residence permits shows that:

- obstacles most often mentioned are time-consuming, expensive and unclear rules and procedures;
- in general, respondents from the EU and Schengen area need less documentation to prove they dispose of the financial means required to obtain a residence permit;
- the average price (fee only) of a residence permit is more than three times higher for citizens from outside the EU and Schengen area (EUR 167.2 for relatively poorer countries) compared to EU and Schengen area respondents (EUR 54.9);
- on average, a person from a relatively poorer non-EU Schengen country has to pay EUR 388.3 to obtain a residence permit, while EU and Schengen citizens only spend around EUR 104.3, and richer non-EU Schengen states need EUR 287.8;
- it takes substantially less time for EU/Schengen citizens to obtain a residence permit taking into account the whole process. More than 50% of applicants from relatively poorer countries outside of the EU and Schengen area need more than four weeks for the whole process.⁵⁹

4.5. Side-effects of e-learning

84. The benefits of online courses and digital learning are widely recognised and their usage is rapidly increasing. In some cases, technological progress may be seen as taking away the need for mobility. The fact that universities are now offering distance-learning opportunities through Internet is used as an argument to prevent effective travelling abroad, saying that it allows universities to save resources in the current harsh economic climate. Indeed, having access to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)⁶⁰ allows students in European universities to follow courses in highly reputable faculties in the United States, such as Harvard University or Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). However, online learning as different type of education cannot replace the live learning approach in the education. Although it contributes for accessibility of the higher education its impact is not the same as the impact of the academic mobility on a student's life. E-learning cannot replace academic mobility and the benefits brought by it. Intercultural experience and cultural diversity as a big element in education cannot be provided without direct contact and interactions between people.

4.6. Limited support from private sector to student mobility

85. Although public sector's role is crucial, private sector can also help improve student mobility, even though such practices are yet to be developed in Europe. One of the main reasons for this is the fact that companies have incentives to finance education only if employees stay with them and only for a certain period of time. These days labour market is characterised with dynamic staff mobility. This phenomenon occurs as a result of the ambition for carrier development, but also as a result from the increased number of

⁵⁹ Research study on visas and residence permits, by Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Agnieszka Czarnojan, 2013, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/201310_Visas&ResidencePermit_Report.pdf.

⁶⁰ Online courses could be followed through Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/>); Udacity (<https://www.udacity.com/>); Udemy (<https://www.udemy.com/>); Harvard and MIT-backed nonprofit MOOC provider edX (<https://www.edx.org/>); e-learning companies Lynda.com (<http://www.lynda.com/>) and Skillsoft (<http://www.skillsoft.com/>), and Pearson (http://labs.pearson.com/tag/mooc/?doing_wp_cron=1395422861.1303749084472656250000).

short contracts. These types of labour mobility create resistance among the companies for investing in student mobility. They are facing the fear that qualified workers may leave the company and they will not be able to enjoy the benefit from their investment.

86. However, there are several successful examples of this kind of support. The Singapore-Industry Scholarship (SgIS) is offered by some of the finest enterprises in Singapore's strategic sectors in collaboration with the Singapore Government. The scholarship is aimed at nurturing a strong core of Singapore talent with the requisite skills and capabilities to steer and contribute to these strategic sectors.⁶¹

87. In Spain, private banks contribute to the promotion of mobility through regional networks or national-level programmes. Spanish students do not receive state loans to support them while studying. In 2008-2009, private funding for outward mobility amounted to EUR 4.01m (or 3% of all mobility funding), while local or state banks contributed a further EUR 7.1m (or 7.1%). Another means by which funding for mobility has been diversified is through mixed models involving business and government co-funding. Such examples are United States Fulbright scholarships and the Endeavour Cheung Kong Student Exchange Programme which is a partnership between property investment company and the Australian government.⁶²

4.7. The problem of brain drain and other obstacles to mobility

88. Imbalanced mobility flow is related with the problem of brain drain and brain gain. On the one hand, the Western part of Europe benefits from applications from a great number of young educated people, who want to develop and promote themselves, and, on the other hand, the Eastern parts of Europe are faced with the problem of brain drain, when the same highly educated young people are leaving their country of origin for good.

89. Public authorities may feel reluctant to promote outgoing international student mobility by fear of brain drain. One cannot deny that the risk of brain drain exists, but the benefits of international student mobility are so important that they compensate to a large extent the negative effects that may arise following an increase in academic mobility.

90. The other factor affecting mobility flows is requirements of reciprocity. In some cases student mobility develops based on agreements between countries or higher education institutions, which specify the terms of student exchange programmes. This, however, is not always possible. Big European countries (UK, Germany, France) cannot expect reciprocity of benefits, compared to the smaller countries, such as Luxembourg, Andorra and Liechtenstein, due to the limited number of students that can be enrolled per year in the smaller countries.

91. As opposed to sending countries fearing brain drain, the host countries often fear that students that come to study will stay and work in the host country. Overall, among the OECD countries with available data in 2008 and 2009, the stay rate is up to 25% and the large majority of them see over 20% of students stay on. In Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic and France, the rate is more than 30%, thereby affecting the labour market.⁶³

92. Finally, there are difficulties in applying the principles of equality and non-discrimination as regards participation in mobility programmes. Disabled students, for example, are under-represented in the mobility programmes. Often universities are not accessible for disabled students. There is only a limited number of initiatives which help foster international mobility for disabled students. One of these initiatives is the project "MapAbility", which allows getting an overview of accessible universities that disabled students can be encouraged to attend. Several criteria are taken into account, from user-friendliness of university websites to the presence of a disability office and at least one suitable hall of residence. This is followed by an evaluation of the physical accessibility of each building on campus.⁶⁴

93. Erasmus+ programme of the European Union actively supports the participation of students with special needs by offering a supplementary grant. The number of students with special needs taking part has increased in the past few years. In 2012-2013, 388 students with special needs received additional funding

⁶¹ <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/scholarships/#scholarships-private>.

⁶² Recommendations to support UK Outward Student Mobility, March 2012.
<http://www.international.ac.uk/media/1515947/Recommendations%20to%20Support%20UK%20Outward%20Student%20Mobility.pdf>.

⁶³ Education indicators in focus, OECD, 2013.

⁶⁴ <http://dcr.coe.int/Wires/WiresLectureF.asp?WiresID=238896>.

to participate in Erasmus, a 15 % increase compared to 2011-2012.⁶⁵ These figures are still, however, quite low, which also shows the low level of access to higher education for students with special needs.

5. Steps forward: strategies for improving student mobility

94. Financial issues and personal ties are still major obstacles for students to become mobile. However, lack of information, fear of recognition problems, long bureaucratic procedures, doubts about the quality of studies abroad or the fear of prolonged studies still play a role in the minds of potential students. In addition, many countries lack a clear strategy and measures to balance mobility flows. Monitoring mechanisms as regards mobility flows were absent until now in many parts of Europe. Not all the countries that adopt programmes or measures to tackle obstacles to student mobility monitor their effects. Even those that undertake monitoring do so often in the framework of general statistical monitoring. Countries should analyse academic mobility and create strategies to tackle the concrete weakness in their respective higher education systems.

95. This situation is expected to improve in the European Union. A Mobility Scoreboard will monitor progress in this area by regularly assessing international student mobility based on five indicators: information and guidance on learning mobility, preparation of opportunities for learning mobility (i.e. foreign language skills), portability of public grants and publicly-subsidised loans, recognition of learning outcomes, and mobility support provided to students with low socio-economic background (see the Summary of scoreboard indicators in the Appendix).⁶⁶

96. The following paragraphs include the proposals I would put forward as elements to consider in order to improve student mobility in Europe.

5.1. Addressing the factors that influence decisions to enter mobility programmes

97. Several personal, social and institutional factors affect decisions to enter student mobility programmes.⁶⁷ The personal factors include the student's interest and motivation, and the expected benefits of mobility for personal fulfilment, and development of personal identity.

98. The social factors include peer influence, family support and the involvement of students on and off the campus, including sponsorship programmes between incoming and outgoing students.

99. The institutional factors include on-campus information campaigns, the promotion of study abroad as part of the university culture, the range of offers with international courses.

100. Improving personal perception, social influence and institutional capacity of European universities will have a major impact on raising student mobility.

5.2. Improving the information and guidance on student mobility

101. Universities should improve their provision of information to students about academic mobility programmes.

102. Students need clear, relevant and exhaustive information on: financial support they could obtain, study programs including degree and credit mobility, requirements for accessing such programmes, application procedure, administrative procedure, etc. They also need to be provided with advice and assistance for submission of their applications.

103. The information should be easily accessible to all. Therefore new, creative and interactive ways for its dissemination should be used. The individual approach is very important; therefore countries should be stimulated to open personal services or centres for informing and providing detailed guidance.

5.3. Increasing availability of student funding and portability of student support

104. To address the inadequacy of the financial and logistical support, scholarships or grants should be

⁶⁵ See "Erasmus – Facts, Figures and Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012-2013".

⁶⁶ See the Eurydice Report "Towards a Mobility Scoreboard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe", 2013.

⁶⁷ Exchange of views with Ms Fatous Estéoule, Head of Head of the International Relations Office of the University Paris Diderot, Member of the Bureau of International Relations in Higher Education (RI Sup) Network on 4 June 2014, in Paris

provided on the basis of social, academic and geographical criteria. Portability of public financial support for students is too limited and should be widened.

105. The European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad (CETS 69), which was ratified by 20 Council of Europe Member States, sets the bases for providing portability of public grants/scholarships and loans. However, it should be upgraded with new measures for financial support and with new recommendations consolidated with the current trends in Europe.

106. The Report of the Working Group Portability of Grants and Loans, recommends that countries should undertake joint actions to identify and address the situations where they can assist each other on the implementation of national systems of portable support of grants and loans for students studying abroad. This report also recommends that countries should use residence requirements as part of general eligibility criteria, in order to prevent unreasonable burden for individual countries.⁶⁸

107. Public authorities' decisions as regards the amount of financial support to be provided must take into consideration the standard of living and the real living costs. Scholarships and grants, especially the ones for living expenses, should be in adequacy with the standard of living in the incoming country.

5.4. Improving recognition of learning outcomes

108. Recognition of learning outcomes is a key to fostering international student mobility. ECTS must be fully implemented in all countries, and the ECTS users' guide must be used as a basis for recognition of qualifications earned abroad. Diploma Supplement must be issued to every student in every country member of the EHEA. Besides that, countries should monitor how higher education institutions use the Diploma Supplement.

109. The "Convention on the recognition of qualification concerning higher education in the European region" (CETS 165) requires ensuring timely recognition of qualifications. Such recognition can only be refused if the education institution can prove that the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country.

110. Despite the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention by most of the EHEA countries, there are still legal problems preventing its implementation in those countries that have not amended their legislation adopting the principles of the Convention.⁶⁹ Countries should also evaluate their recognition policies and practice and should participate in external quality assurance processes. Full implementation of the Bologna Process structural reforms could significantly contribute to enhancing student mobility. The reforms include the implementation of the three-cycle degree system and of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), aligning of the national qualifications framework with the QF-EHEA, registering quality assurance agency in EQAR and automatic issuing of the Diploma Supplement. This would reduce the bureaucratic burden for both the state and the student, and especially reduce anticipated risk of students not receiving full recognition of qualifications earned abroad.⁷⁰

111. Student mobility should be part of students' home courses. It can be arranged along the lines of integrated courses for which mobility takes place on an alternating basis between the partners over the three years of bachelor's studies or two years of master's studies. Mobility or placements should be planned for as part of courses, rather than just as an extra-curricular possibility. Teaching staff should also receive training in the partner university systems and be provided with information platforms and with tools for understanding marking systems so as to simplify the conversion of ECTS credits. Institutions should be stimulated to provide joint degrees and to promote them through the student population.

112. Member States should do more to support the ENIC-NARIC centres and networks⁷¹ (which are responsible for the academic recognition and recognition for the purpose of access to the labour market, including regulated professions) in the implementation of actions undertaken in accordance with the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of activities and services⁷².

⁶⁸ Working Group Portability of Grants and Loans, Report to the Bologna Follow Up Group.

⁶⁹ Report by the EHEA working group on recognition, 2012, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf).

⁷⁰ See also Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1906 (2012) and Recommendation 2005 (2012) on "The consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area".

⁷¹ European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC): <http://www.enic-naric.net/>

⁷² See the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of activities and services (<http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Charter.en.pdf>).

5.5. Enhancing proficiency in foreign languages

113. Students need support to develop their language skills to be able to follow courses taught in a foreign language. This is not the case for a very large number of students. To that end, lifelong language learning should be fostered. It is necessary to develop language courses and self-learning courses in universities and offer courses taught in a language other than that of the country of residence. I would also suggest to encourage scholarship programmes providing language courses.

5.6. Streamlining administrative procedures

114. Public authorities should strive to clarify the procedures (visas, social cover, residence and work permits), while seeking to harmonise procedures to some extent.

115. Bearing in mind the importance of the youth mobility, European youth forum requested the Council of Europe and European Parliament to support their demands for facilitation of visa regime, as follows:

- maximum 60 days for a reaction on an appeal from a decision;
- abolition of visa fees;
- visas should be granted for the entire territory of the EU/Schengen Area;
- immediate implementation by all Member States of the provisions of the Scientific Visa Directive, without derogations;
- automatic and timely provision of residence permits for the full period of any granted visa;
- an accreditation system for organizations that facilitates and eases the application.

116. Administrative procedures for obtaining student visa and visa for study stay for the academic staff should be guaranteed and provided with less administrative requests and with reduced requests of finances. Legal difficulties related with different social security systems and double taxation should be eliminated from the procedure. Reasonable policies for obtaining visa that, on the one hand, will enable security for the host country and, on the other hand, will enable academic mobility, should be considered.

117. Full advantage should be taken by the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ Programme. Erasmus+ National Agencies and the Executive Agency are invited to give advice and support concerning visas, residence permits, social security, etc.⁷³

5.7. Enabling participation in Erasmus+ for students from non-EU Council of Europe member States

118. Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union became a major instrument for the promotion of international student mobility. The entire student mobility system in Europe depends on Erasmus+ conditions and facilities. Enabling participation in Erasmus+ becomes, therefore, an imperative, if we are to reach our goals in terms of international student mobility in the Council of Europe member States.

119. The new Erasmus+ Programme enables participation of a number of non-EU Council of Europe member States, but not of all of them. There are, still, some European countries – like my own, for instance – which cannot participate in the Erasmus+ Programme simply because their countries appear in the “Other Partner Countries” Group in the Erasmus system. I believe that, students from smaller countries such as Monaco, Andorra and San Marino should also benefit from Erasmus+ programme.⁷⁴ Students from these countries – and, generally speaking, all students from the Council of Europe member States – should be eligible for scholarships and other student support programmes in the same way as students from the Erasmus+ Programme and Partner Countries.

120. I should like to stress that small countries cannot be bound by reciprocity requirements with regards to receiving students from bigger countries, simply because there is no comparable capacity in terms of number of universities. Other forms of cooperation and participation in Erasmus+ should be envisaged with regard to these countries – like, for instance, contribution to European bursary schemes – thus strengthening partnerships between universities all over Europe.

⁷³ See the Erasmus+ Programme Guide:

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.

⁷⁴ At the moment, in the Erasmus+ Programme these countries are referred to as “Other Partner Countries, Region 5”, together with Vatican City State and Switzerland, and do not benefit from all the facilities offered by the Erasmus+.

5.8. Encouraging private business support to student mobility

121. Public authorities should take specific measures to encourage private sector's support to student mobility. Public awareness campaigns should be designed to inform of the impact of student mobility in terms of high quality qualifications of graduates that took part in mobility programmes and capacity to adapt in new work environments, which is good news for the private sector. In this sense, the recommendations of the Erasmus Impact Study, should be made known amongst employers' organisations.

5.9. Balancing mobility flows

122. Countries should implement policies that will prevent brain drain, and such policies should be coordinated at European level. Migration policies should respond to the demands of a modern economy and should be beneficial for both receiving and sending countries by managing the process to protect domestic labour markets and the economic interests of developing countries. Enabling studying abroad would increase the number of people from developing countries who could gain knowledge and experience abroad and transfer the knowledge gained to their home countries. However, residence permits should be issued with a clear message that return is obligatory after the defined period of stay.

Appendix

SUMMARY OF SCOREBOARD INDICATORS⁷⁵

| EU Member States | Scoreboard indicator 1 Information and guidance on learning mobility | Scoreboard indicator 2 Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility – foreign language skills | Scoreboard indicator 3 Portability of public grants and publicly – subsidised loans | Scoreboard indicator 4 Recognition of learning outcomes | Scoreboard indicator 5 Mobility support provided to students with low socio-economic background |
|----------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| BE (fr) | | | | | |
| BE (de) | | | | | |
| BE (nl) | | | | | |
| BG | | | | | |
| CZ | | | | | |
| DK | | | | | |
| DE | | | | | |
| EE | | | | | |
| IE | | | | | |
| EL | | | | | |
| ES | | | | | |
| FR | | | | | |
| HR | | | | | |
| IT | | | | | |
| CY | | | | | |
| LT | | | | | |
| LV | | | | | |
| LU | | | | | |
| HU | | | | | |
| MT | | | | | |
| NL | | | | | |
| AT | | | | | |
| PL | | | | | |
| PT | | | | | |
| RO | | | | | |
| SI | | | | | |
| SK | | | | | |
| FI | | | | | |
| SE | | | | | |
| UK – ENG | | | | | |
| UK – WLS | | | | | |
| UK – NIR | | | | | |
| UK - SCT | | | | | |
| Non EU Member States | | | | | |
| CH | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| IS | | | | | |
| LI | | | | | |
| NO | | | | | |
| TR | | | N/A | | |

⁷⁵ The colour system is based on “Traffic light” indicator system. The green category features all elements considered for that particular indicator, while red applies when none of the elements considered were present. See Eurydice Report “Towards a Mobility Scoreboard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe”, 2013 (available in English only).