Free movement of persons: mobility for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers, trainers

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The committee adopted the report (codecision procedure, first reading) by Robert EVANS (PES, UK) amending the proposal for a recommendation on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers. While considering the proposal a step in the right direction, the committee regretted a number of deficiencies and omissions. It did not understand, for example, why researchers (a category covered in the 1996 Green Paper) were not included in the recommendation. It also stressed the need to remove legal, administrative, language, cultural and financial barriers to mobility and suggested specific measures to achieve this, e.g. promoting the learning of at least two Community languages, encouraging linguistic and cultural preparation prior to any mobility scheme, promoting wider use of various means of financial assistance and fostering a European qualifications area, including a common European format for Cvs. The committee believed that participants in such schemes must be made more aware of their social security and health cover entitlements when temporarily residing in another Member State and that fees currently charged for the renewal of residence permits should be regarded as a tax on mobility and hence an obstacle to it. Voluntary work should be considered as an activity in its own right, distinct from waged labour, and due account should be taken of this distinction. In addition, experience gained by teachers and trainers in another Member State should be taken into account for promotion purposes. Against the background of enlargement the candidate countries should be involved as early as possible in order to encourage their nationals to take part in mobility schemes. Efforts should therefore be made by Member States to remove obstacles to the mobility of third country nationals under Community programmes. Finally, the report called on the Commission to play an active role in promoting mutual recognition of qualifications and in disseminating information about mobility. More should be done, it said, to improve awareness and understanding of cultural concepts and differences.