# Education, training, research: the obstacles to transnational mobility. Green Paper

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OBJECTIVE: This Green Paper relates to the obstacles to transnational mobility in education, training and research in the Community. After considering these obstacles, the Commission proposes several lines of action for eliminating them, on which it is to consult all the players concerned over a six-month period. SUBSTANCE: The abolition of obstacles to the free movement of people is one of the basic objectives of the Community. Without it, it is not possible to speak of a European social area. Mobility is also one of the responses to current economic change and its consequences in relation to employment. In its Green Paper, the Commission is committed to demonstrating that, although demand for mobility continues to grow (the number of students benefiting from the Erasmus programme has risen from 3000 in 1987/88 to 170 000 in 1995/96), it has to be acknowledged that there are still too many obstacles to mobility. Five major obstacles have been identified: - an obstacle to transnational training of the unemployed: e.g. an unemployed person undergoing training in another Member State loses his rights to unemployment benefit if the training lasts longer than three months. The line of action proposed by the Commission consists in extending so as to cover unemployed persons in training Community legislation that allows job searching in another Member State for six months at least without a loss of rights and ensuring the continued right to unemployment benefits for the unemployed undergoing training in another Member State; - Statutory problems for trainees and young people doing voluntary work: e.g. a student wishing to take up a traineeship in a company in another Member State cannot find a host company, as legislation in that Member State considers him as an employee, and the company would be responsible for the social charges accordingly; a graduate undergoing unpaid traineeship in another Member State is not covered by Community-level coordination of social security systems because he is classed neither as a worker nor as a member of a worker's family. This lack of specific legal category means that he has no rights as regards social security and can sometimes lead to problems with rights of residence if the training takes more than three months. Volunteers find themselves in a similar situation if they do voluntary work for more than three months in another Member State, as their position is not recognized. The line of action proposed is to establish a legal framework for the situation of trainees and volunteers within the EU; - territorial restriction of student grants: students entitled to grants lose them if they pursue their studies in another Member State. Line of action proposed: Remove the territoriality of grants; - the fiscal arrangements for research grants: Community research grants are implemented differently across the Community, depending on the status given to the researchers by the host country (student, employee or self-employed). This leads to divergent fiscal arrangements and affects researcher mobility (certain Member States deduct up to 50% of the value of the grant). Line of action proposed: apply the same rules to Community funded researchers in all Member States, either by exempting grants or by coordinating the rules applied in the Member States); - problems of mutual recognition of academic and vocational training: grant holders wishing to undergo training in a Member State other than their own find that the qualifications they acquire are not recognized in their countries of origin. Line of action proposed: move towards mutual recognition of placements and vocational training courses and extend the European credit transfer system (ECTS) already established in higher education to cover the vocational training sector. There are other obstacles, such as: - weaknesses in foreign language skills; - the financial position of the less well-off, for whom access to mobility is less easy; - access of legally resident third-country nationals to education and training activities in a Member State other than their host country. Lastly, the Green Paper emphasizes the urgent need for a large-scale information campaign on the issue of mobility: information for citizens and for public authorities, who are not always aware of the rules that apply to transnational mobility.