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

1996/2198(COS) - 14/05/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Luisa TODINI (UPE, I), Parliament welcomed the Commission Green Paper on the obstacles to transnational mobility. It strongly supports the creation of a European area of qualifications and endorses the Commission proposal for a procedure for recognition of diplomas for the occupational activities, supplementing the general rules on the recognition of diplomas (Directive 92/51 /EEC). Parliament regrets the general lack of progress made with regard to the comparability of professional qualifications and considers it vital to ensure validation and certification of qualifications and skills acquired during initial vocational training or company in-house training. It calls in particular on the Member States to move towards the mutual recognition of training courses and training periods and, in view of the need for life-long learning, for the concept of trainee not to be interpreted in a narrow sense. All occupational experience acquired subsequent to a qualification should be taken into account. Parliament therefore calls for a provision to that effect to be included in Directive 89/48/EEC. Parliament calls on the Council to ensure that volunteers and trainees on placements are granted a specific legal status, for measures to be drawn up to provide volunteers taking part in the European voluntary service project and trainees with legal security as regards right of residence, social security and tax arrangements and, pending the adoption of such guarantees, for steps to be taken to make it easier for trainees to pursue their activities and remove some of the administrative constraints they face. Parliament also calls for a Community definition of apprentice, whereby the status of apprentices should be defined at a high level in such a way as to ensure that an apprenticeship is an attractive alternative to higher education, and expects that a mobility programme will be earmarked for them along the lines of Erasmus. As regards budget allocations, Parliament calls for an increase in appropriations for the Socrates programme and for a special allocation to be set aside in future for apprentice mobility. Parliament calls for the simplification of the application procedure in the context of Socrates and Leonardo and a speedier disbursement of funds for approved training projects. It recommends in particular that the Member States add funding from Socrates to that from national grants so as give students with low incomes easier access to the programmes. It also calls for efforts to be made as regards the administrative treatment of Community research grants. More specifically, Parliament calls for action to be taken to facilitate the free movement of students, in particular by: - removing obstacles to persons undergoing training in a Member State other than their own and having responsibility for children; - extending the entitlement to unemployment benefit beyond the current period of three months for unemployed persons undergoing training in another Member State; - making study grants transferrable; - defining the fiscal status of researchers moving between countries; - improving reintegration of students and grant-holders into their country of origin following their stay outside that country; - guaranteeing social security cover in host countries for students undergoing training in a Member State other than their own; - lifting the 'immediate need' condition in respect of health care for persons undergoing training in a Member State other than their own (adoption of proposal CNS96227). Parliament also calls on the Member States to introduce a more European dimension in higher education and to ensure that language teaching at an early stage becomes standard practice in all types of school, with the learning of two languages in addition to mother tongue becoming an objective in itself for Member States, and larger-scale Community support measures being developed. Efforts are also called for to improve information. In this connection, Parliament calls for the setting-up of local and regional points of contact for young people, parents, trainers and teachers, etc. so as to better provide them with information. Lastly, Parliament asks that, after it has debated the Commission recommendations to which the Green Paper will give rise, - the Council should adopt a binding timetable for implementing those recommendations, and - a coordinating committee should be set up at the Council, consisting of senior representatives from the Member States and, as observers, representatives from the Commission and the European Parliament, with the aim of facilitating transnational mobility and with the task of finding solutions to disputes concerning the recognition of qualifications and training periods.