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Mobility - a European perspective

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Action Plan for Skills and Mobility

- In 2002, the European Commission published an **Action Plan for Skills and Mobility**. This aimed to increase the low levels of worker mobility within the European Union and so help to provide Europe with a skilled and adaptable labour force.
- It proposed the following actions, to be implemented by 2005:
 - expanding worker (occupational) mobility and skills development;
 - improving information and transparency of job opportunities; and
 - facilitating geographical mobility.
- The needs of students were addressed at several levels, beginning with the development of basic skills, notably in mathematics, science, technology and the acquisition of foreign languages.
- At university level, the Action Plan encouraged students to undertake a significant proportion of their higher education in another EU Member State.
- In addition, graduates would be able to take advantage of measures designed to improve general worker mobility. These included:
 - measures to improve cross-border recognition of qualifications;
 - the setting up of an EU portal on learning opportunities; and
 - further development of EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal.

- The Commission reported on the **implementation of the Action Plan** at the beginning of 2007, and noted the following among a number of achievements since 2002:
 - the development of instruments to increase recognition and transparency of qualifications and to improve career mobility, such as **Europass** and the **European CV**;
 - progress towards the compilation of a **European Qualifications Framework** for non-regulated professions;
 - the **improvement of geographical mobility** through the adoption of the European Health Insurance Card, the co-ordination of social security schemes, the recognition of qualifications for regulated professions and the reduction of pension and residency barriers for researchers from outside the European Union;
 - the adoption of **immigration policy measures** in order to simplify the movement and residence of European citizens and their families within the EU;
 - the improvement of information on job opportunities through the **“Your Europe”** portal, and through **EURES**, which now gives direct access to all job vacancies published by the public employment services in Europe;
 - the **PLOTEUS** portal, which provides information on learning and training opportunities across Europe, along with practical information on living and studying in another country; and
 - the development of the **European Researcher Mobility Portal**, which offers researchers a personalised assistance service through 200 mobility centres in more than 30 countries.
- At the same time, the Commission urged further progress in the following areas:
 - the development of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, as well as incentives to enhance the adaptability and flexibility of the workforce;
 - greater investment in ICT skills;

- the removal of legal, administrative and cultural obstacles to mobility; and
- a framework for economic migration, to assist in the economic and social development of Europe and the competitiveness of EU enterprises.

European Quality Charter for Mobility

- A related initiative is the **European Quality Charter for Mobility**, which was published at the end of 2006. The Charter essentially offers guidance for periods of mobility in another country for the purposes of formal and non-formal learning. It is aimed at students, trainees, volunteers, teachers and trainers, with a view to enhancing their personal and professional development.
- It aims to ensure that mobility participants enjoy a positive experience both in the host country and in their country of origin on their return. As such, it offers guidance designed to respond to:
 - participants' expectations with regard to pre-departure information, suitable infrastructure in the host country and the exploitation of the knowledge they have acquired following their return to their country of origin; as well as
 - the requirements of their hosts, who have a right to expect that mobility participants will be properly prepared and that their mobility period will be positive for both parties.
- The guidance under the Quality Charter consists of **ten principles** implemented on a voluntary and flexible basis. These include:
 - **information and guidance** - every candidate should have access to clear and reliable sources of information and guidance on mobility and the conditions in which it can be taken up;
 - **a learning plan** - a plan should be drawn up and signed by the sending and hosting organisations and participants before every period of mobility. It should describe the objectives and expected outcomes, the means of achieving them and how they will be evaluated, and must also take account of reintegration issues;

- **personalisation** - mobility should fit in with personal learning pathways, and the skills and motivation of participants;
- **general preparation** - before departure, participants should receive general preparation tailored to their specific needs, covering linguistic, pedagogical, legal, cultural and financial aspects;
- **linguistic aspects** - language skills make for more effective learning, intercultural communication and a better understanding of the host country's culture. Arrangements should therefore include a pre-departure assessment of language skills, the possibility of attending courses in the language of the host country and/or language learning and linguistic support and advice in the host country;
- **logistical support** - this could include providing participants with information and assistance concerning travel arrangements, insurance, the portability of government grants and loans, residence or work permits, social security and any other practical aspects;
- **mentoring** - the host organisation should provide mentoring to advise and help participants throughout their stay, and also to ensure their integration;
- **recognition** - if periods of study or training abroad are an integral part of a formal study or training programme, the learning plan must mention this, and participants should be provided with assistance regarding recognition and certification;
- **reintegration and evaluation** - on returning to their country of origin, participants should receive guidance on how to make use of the competences acquired during their stay and, following a long stay, any necessary help with reintegration. Evaluation of the experience acquired should make it possible to assess whether the aims of the learning plan have been achieved;
- **commitments and responsibilities** - the responsibilities arising from these quality criteria should be agreed and confirmed in writing by all sides (sending and hosting organisations and participants).

- The Commission will encourage the application of the Charter in the Member States and will co-operate with them in the exchange of information and experience relating to the implementation of these measures.

Programmes under the responsibility of DG Education & Culture

- Within the Commission, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture funds intra-European mobility through the **Lifelong Learning Programme**. This covers all levels of education and training, from secondary school students to undergraduates, vocational trainees, teachers, trainers and adults.
- Through the **Erasmus** sub-programme, the Commission aims to reach an overall total of three million individual participants in student mobility by 2013.
- Besides individual periods of mobility abroad, the programme also supports activities aimed at mapping student and teacher mobility and eliminating obstacles to mobility.
- Mobility of university students and academics between Europe and the outside world is funded through the **Erasmus Mundus** and **Tempus** programmes, as well as the **EU's bilateral co-operation programmes with the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and New Zealand**.

Opportunities under Erasmus Mundus

- The Erasmus Mundus programme comprises four Actions, the first three of which are of direct relevance for Malaysian students, academics or higher education institutions:
 - **Action 1** supports the development of **Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses**, comprising integrated courses at masters level offered by at least three universities in three different European countries;
 - **Action 2** offers **scholarships** for students and scholars from the rest of the world to participate in Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses;

- **Action 3** supports **partnerships** between higher education institutions in Europe and the rest of the world, comprising scholarships for students and scholars from EU countries for mobility towards non-European partner countries.
- Nearly 100 students and academics from Malaysia have already received scholarships to participate in more than 40 different Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses at European universities, funded either through Erasmus Mundus or through the “**Asian Windows**”.
- The “Asian Windows” are financial envelopes from the EU’s external relations budget, which provide additional financing for students and academics from Asian countries to study on an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course.
- To date, no Malaysian higher education institutions have been involved in selected Action 3 partnerships, but hopefully this symposium will help to reverse that trend.
- Lastly, **Action 4** aims to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education. Implicit in this objective is the desire to increase mobility towards Europe by students from the rest of the world.
- One current initiative being funded under Action 4 is the **Erasmus Mundus Global Promotion Project**. This is a three-year project, launched at the beginning of 2007 with a view to promoting Europe as an attractive study destination for international students.
- To this end, the Global Promotion Project pursues two aims: to improve the availability and accessibility of information on European study opportunities, and to enhance the professional capacity of European higher education to promote Europe as an attractive and high quality study destination.
- The new “**Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window**” provides funding from the external relations budget for mobility schemes developed by consortia of European and third-country universities. These schemes can involve up to 20 universities and provide mobility for current and former students at undergraduate, masters, postgraduate and doctorate level. The schemes can also provide grants for post-doctoral research and for academic mobility.

- From the academic year 2008/2009 onwards, this initiative will be further expanded to include Asia, Latin America and Africa. A Call for Proposals for Asia will be published shortly, and consortia may involve institutions from Malaysia and other Asian countries eligible under the Development Co-operation Instrument - the same countries as were eligible under the Asia-Link Programme. Students, researchers and academic staff can then apply to the selected partnerships.

The future of the Erasmus Mundus programme

- The current Erasmus Mundus programme expires at the end of 2008, and the Commission presented its proposal for a new programme in July this year.
- The proposed programme consolidates the current activities of Erasmus Mundus, while also extending them and adding a new dimension to the programme. These activities will include:
 - the continuation of support for **joint programmes at Master's level**, including scholarships for EU and non-European students and academics. This will also be extended to Doctoral level;
 - the **promotion of partnerships between European universities and universities in specific world regions** as a basis for structured co-operation, transfer of know-how, exchange and mobility at all levels of higher education; and
 - the support of measures which will help to **enhance the world-wide appeal of Europe** as an educational destination.

The proposed budget envisages a significant increase in the funds available for partnerships between European and non-European universities and for individual mobility. This, we hope, will lead to increased opportunities and greater variety in institutional co-operation and to an increased two-way flow of students and academics.

Links:

Action Plan for Skills and Mobility

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2002/com2002_0072en01.pdf

Final Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Skills and Mobility

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0024en01.pdf

European Quality Charter for Mobility

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00050009.pdf

Europass

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/europass/index_en.html

European Qualifications Framework

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/com_2006_0479_en.pdf

Your Europe

<http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/nav/en/citizens/index.html>

EURES (European Job Mobility Portal)

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures>

PLOTEUS

<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus/portal>

European Researcher Mobility Portal

<http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers>

Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/index_en.html

Erasmus Mundus Programme 2004-2008

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/extcoop/call/index.htm>

Commission proposal for Erasmus Mundus Programme 2009-2013

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com395_en.pdf