

CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPEAN GREEN PAPER "PROMOTING THE LEARNING MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE"

RESPONSE FROM THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARING (EARLALL)

EARLALL

The Association was established in 2001 under Belgian law, and includes the cooperation of 23 European regional and local authorities with competencies in the field of lifelong learning as members, plus some 10 observer organisations, representing over 61 million people from across the north, south, east and west of Europe. It is a non-profit Association managed by a General Assembly and steered by a Board of Ministers from member regions. Its role is to promote trans-regional cooperation, educational mobility, the transfer of good practise, innovation and research for regional development and to support e-learning as a tool for lifelong learning. It does this through a high degree of collaboration among members and through close cooperation with the European Union and other public institutions throughout Europe.

OPINION

The Association fully supports the goal set out in the Green Paper of improving the mobility of learners for the purpose of skills acquisition and development; and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on how strategies in support of learner mobility can be developed and taken forward by relevant governments in the European context. The Association understands the importance attached to promoting youth mobility in Europe and elsewhere, and to the achievement of the Lisbon goals.

It recognises the broad consensus that now exists on the value of such actions, which has led to the promotion of mobility becoming one of the key priorities across

Europe to overcome the current economic situation and develop employment opportunities, as noted by the Commission' Communication of June 2009. The Association also concurs with the view that learner mobility is an important action in tacking the development of protectionism or xenophobia, particularly during times of economic difficulty.

The Association generally recognises the value of developing a high level strategy for mobility at the European level, but notes that such a coherent strategy needs to pay close regard to the development of mobility policies of relevant governments with responsibility for education and training – while also being consistent with the development of European funding resources. Given the importance of mobility actions in the development of workforce skills (particularly in the current economic climate), any strategy should also pay due regard to the results of CEDEFOP's work on Future Skills Supply in Europe.

EARLALL sees the opportunity for an EU strategy to play a significant role in the promotion of learner mobility, and in supporting the work of national and regional governments in terms of delivery. For example, EARLALL members are supportive of the work currently underway through the European Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and European Social Fund (ESF), though in general we consider the references to ESF as a mechanism to support such actions could have been more widely recognised in the Green Paper. Overall the Association does not consider it necessary that new European Union (EU) funding programmes be introduced, but would support the further development of existing LLP and ESF programmes in terms of learner mobility actions. We urge the Commission to consider means by which resources through these existing programmes can be enhanced, while looking to simplify application and audit requirements.

As an association of regional and local authorities with competencies in the field of lifelong learning, EARLALL also welcomes the broad recognition within the Green Paper of the essential role to be played below Member State level in bringing about learner mobility actions. Indeed, the Green Paper specifically notes the role of Associations, such as EARLALL, in the promotion of learner mobility and cites actions undertaken by EARLALL member regions by way of examples. This is warmly welcomed. However, the Association stresses the need for the views, opinions and role of European regional and local governments to continue to be taken into account in the development of this policy agenda, through any future strategies and programme development.

It is noted that the scope of the Green Paper seeks to embrace all forms of learner mobility, irrespective of the level of study. EARLALL considers that the importance and impact of mobility actions is fully and equally recognised in the development of strategies, to ensure that learners following the vocational route are given the same

level of opportunity to benefit from these learning opportunities as those undertaking more academic studies.

Equally it is noted that the Green Paper, while not excluding other age groups, focuses on mobility in the 16-35 year old range. The Association feels that any resulting EU strategies for developments in this area should strongly signal the importance of learning mobility for all ages, even if there is greater emphasis on the 16-35 age group in terms of programme support. Within this, and while recognising where competencies rest in the field of education and training, at the strategic level the Association recognises the need for resulting strategies for the promotion, development and funding of EU mobility to pay proper regard to learning transitions.

The promotion by European governments on the development of an international dimension to the delivery of the curriculum during compulsory education (including the provision of physical mobility actions) for cultural and linguistic purposes (either funded through the LLP or via other sources) would help considerably in preparing learners for the more skills orientated development opportunities available through mobility actions post-16. Indeed, exposure to the international dimension in education at each of the key learning phases, for example class-based project work, virtual mobility, physical mobility, work-experience placements, through to extended period of higher education study or adult learning, would create a ready acceptance and understanding with learners of the value of such opportunities.

Flexibility in how these proposals are implemented is also important and we must ensure that greater mobility does not come at the expense of existing and planned commitments across Europe at this time of economic restraint. The Association is in favour of mobility but not simply as a numerical target or an end in itself; we must ensure that it is achieving quality outcomes for the individual and the regions and Member States of the EU.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

SECTION 1: PREPARING FOR A PERIOD OF LEARNING MOBILITY

Q1.1 How can the availability of information and guidance be improved?

We agree with the view in the Green Paper that while a wide range of information and initiatives exist in support of learner mobility, the organisation and access of this information needs to be improved. The Green Paper usefully pulls together a list of tools and associated websites for information and support on various types of learner mobility. Could this suite of web-based resources be developed for access through a single, widely promoted, portal webpage – a single EU information platform facilitating an active network of information systems and sources? If so, the

Association would welcome consideration of web-based tools such as www.mob-reg.eu (developed with EU support through the MOBIREG project) being included.

In considering this area, thought should also be given to the role of the EU programme National Agencies, and how the information, advice, guidance and promotional activity they manage fits with an EU strategy and the work of relevant governments. Encouragement should be given to National Agencies to ensure their work is integrated with that of all stakeholders within Member States to ensure a clear, coherent and simple flow of information.

EU institutions, Governments, EU funding programme National Agencies and practitioners should be able to access a network of information through a single pan-European 'library'. Regional and Member State learner and careers guidance systems could also link directly into this single source, to ensure that students are also advised on the sort of opportunities that may be available.

Mobility opportunities need to be promoted to potential applicants in an informative yet clear and succinct way, with particular focus on the benefits. Educational mobility should be part of the core training for practitioners and careers advisors.

Examples of Good Practice:

The Centre Regional Information Jeunesse de Bretagne (Brittany Regional Young People's Information centre) website provides details of all the mobility and assistance mechanisms available (European, international, regional and local)

www.iji-bretagne.com/international

In Andalucía units of the virtual learning platform 'Moodle' are regularly being used to recover information and undertake follow-up of work placement, providing timely feedback for self-assessment.

www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/adistancia/cursos

Both the Catalan and Basque Country Governments organise important conferences to help share information on vocational student mobility, improve the level of quality of international placement activity, promote partnership working, and to demonstrate the value to young people from participation.

 $\underline{www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Educacio/menuitem.e70ac6fbf752abb1c65d3082b0c0e1a0/?vgnextoid=a7be1a217c094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextchannel=a7be1a217c094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210VgnVCM1000008d0c1e0aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextfmt=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&contentid=43afe3b12e094210Vgnextff=default&$

Q1.2 What can be done to better promote and motivate young people to be mobile?

How should this be done to ensure maximum effect?

What are the main barriers to the motivation of young people to become mobile?

On the issue of promotion and motivation towards mobility actions, the Green Paper pre-supposes that opportunities already widely exist for learners to participate in such actions. In reality, the provision of mobility opportunities varies considerably across Europe – and across local areas. It is right that practitioners have a role to play in promotional work, but their pivotal role in the provision of such opportunities is not sufficiently recognised. Increased opportunities available and promoted locally through learning institutions (schools, colleges, universities and community learning centres) will lead directly to increased participation. In Andalucía, for example, the regional government adopted a positive VET mobility policy in 2003, which saw the promotion of opportunities taking place in some 3,000 vocational schools across the area. This resulted in the number of applicants tripling during this period, rising to some 700 participants in each call for proposals.

The experience of EARLALL members already engaged in managing or supporting learner mobility also highlights that students are greatly affected by peer information, or tutor recommendation. The experience of learners who have already participated in a placement elsewhere in Europe is a powerful promotional tool in generating student interest. Participants are the best ambassadors of such programmes. For example, the use of 'Ambassadors' for Erasmus and Comenius to promote mobility experiences to their peers. We would recommend that the Commission collate and build on the beneficiaries and participants feedback and disseminate this further. However, more also needs to be done to improve the understanding of practitioners to the benefits of working with international partners, and consequently the provision of mobility opportunities for their students. The key benefits gained through European and international mobility must be better promoted, especially in relation to educations, training or employment prospects gained as a result of mobility. The recognition of any mobility experience therefore needs to be established so that individuals and organisations understand the key skills and knowledge they might gain. Recognition of the experience by universities and colleges is key; agreement should be sought with the home institutions on how the achievements abroad will be recognised (e.g. through credits, different title of degree) before the mobility experience is undertaken

Aside from the provision of placement opportunities, other barriers to student participation cited by EARLALL member governments include the lack of modern foreign language skills, payments being made towards the end of placement activity,

and (in some instances) over protective family backgrounds. However, it has also been noted that the employment pressures created by the current economic situation is driving greater learner and employer interest in the development of a broader skills base, with adaptability being a key factor.

The planning of mobility actions dependant on access to EU funding programmes would have greater impact of the application process and the availability of funding was more in tune with the academic calendar.

It is also important to promote mobility and an international dimension in education to young people from an early age so that they view it as part of their standard learning pathway and not an additional action. This could be achieved by including training on youth mobility as an element of initial teacher training.

Examples of Good Practice:

The go.for.europe initiative operating in the EARLALL Member region, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, is noted in the Green Paper as an example of increasing active involvement from the business world. Actions under this initiative are, however, also relevant in respect of to promotion of learner mobility.

The <u>www.mob-reg.eu</u> website provides a peer-learning platform for VET students to review student web blogs on placements undertaken throughout Europe. As the site becomes increasingly populated, they have the opportunity to learn from others first hand experiences.

In Brittany, the region is speeding up payment of its own grants for students participating on mobility actions, as well as facilitating payments in advance of travel. Provision of its own grant support (such as that also being made available in Catalonia) helps to ensure significant levels of participation.

1.3 How can the linguistic and cultural obstacles to mobility be best addressed?

EARLALL endorses the assertion in the Green Paper that language and cultural skills are both important and valued by employers, but it is also true that in some areas this is not always recognised by young people. The value of language skills to business was underlined by the Confederation of British Industry's (UK) Survey of Education and Skills last year. It reported:

"Languages are growing in importance for business as UK firms operate in an increasingly global marketplace. The UK has a high volume of trade

with countries where English is not spoken - over 75% of our export trade in 2006."

We recognise that European placements provide students with a useful opportunity to develop modern foreign language skills, but there remain significant barriers. Basic language skills often deter young people from pursing placements, and there is a need to better develop short languages modules for students as part of preplacement preparation. Vocational training, for example, can be enhanced by offering European placements that combine language skills, but such provision adds significantly to costs and should be properly recognised in the funding programme. Indeed, the Commission may wish to consider providing direct programme support to the development of pan-European coordinated on-line language learning modules at various ability levels which can be created by each 'mother tongue' Member State (plus regional languages where there is sufficient interest) in a common format, and then made available to learners across the EU through a single platform.

Good examples:

The Welsh Assembly Government (UK) is currently revising its strategy for the development of modern foreign languages across the key learning phases. This strategy includes proposals for the development of a module approach to linguistic development in tertiary education and, over time, specific materials for preplacement linguistic preparation. The strategy encompasses the development of world languages, not only European languages, as this is important for general development as well as an aid to learner mobility. Schools in Wales, for example, are able to teach additional world languages such as Mandarin and Arabic.

Many governments across the EU are already developing work in this area. Such as the useful on-line language courses in Andalucía. A similar suite of language resources is also being developed by the Balearic Islands government.

1.4 What are the main legal obstacles to mobility that you have encountered?

Differences in employment law throughout the EU can affect administrative requirements when planning European placement actions. For example, in Spain documentation needs to state that the placement being undertaken is for training purposes only (not work experience), and can usefully be accompanied by a training plan to reinforce the point.

In addition, learners studying in EU institutions but without citizenship from a EU Member State, can often experience barriers in terms of the visa processes for placement elsewhere in the EU; and some EARLALL Members have experienced difficulties over differences across the EU concerning the legal status of apprentices.

1.5 What kind of obstacles have you encountered regarding the portability of grants and loan and access to benefits?

Access to unemployment benefits in some EU Member States (e.g. UK, SE) can be dependent on availability for work. Extended periods of training overseas can, therefore, affect access to such benefits. While EU funding such as that available through the Lifelong Learning Programme can support actual costs while on the placement, they do not compensate students for lost benefits. Access to benefits can, therefore, form a barrier to participation, particularly for longer periods of stay.

1.6 What more should be done to promote mobility to and from the EU, and how should this be done?

The Association recognises that the while the focus should rest on European mobility actions, thought should be given to the development of opportunities more globally. To ensure that young people gain the best from learner mobility and are best placed to take up employment opportunities, they need to have experiences in those wider areas that attract business – particularly at the higher education level. Furthermore, mobility actions should be mainstreamed into young people's core learning, rather than treated as a novel or additional element.

1.7 What measures can be taken to ensure that the mobility period is of high quality?

The Green Paper sets out in clear terms the measures that should be applied in ensuring the quality of placements. It is for that reason that EARLALL has developed and promoted the use of criteria for the quality of placements for use between partner regions. We recognise that there is a degree of trust between partners involved in mobility actions, particularly around the selection and monitoring of placement companies. There also needs to be clear communication over the focus of the mobility placement, the skills that need to be practiced and who to turn to when problems arise. For that reason, EARLALL partner governments believe that the criteria for the quality of placements, coupled with the bilateral intergovernmental agreements signed at the political level, provide the necessary focus and resolution mechanisms to ensure the quality of delivery. In addition, the Association acknowledges that the mobility programmes should meet the European Charter of Mobility and that the programmes guarantee mutual recognition of achievements abroad.

It is worth highlighting that the managing organisations must ensure a suitable level of pre-placement student preparation is delivered to each participant, not only in linguistic and skills development terms, but also with regard to issues they may encounter whilst abroad. Individual students should be prepared so that they are able to anticipate a certain level of legal issues, social situations, and health problems. Practical preparation is important and our member governments encourage beneficiaries to provide participants with individual packs with contact maps, emergency numbers and general information about the host country. If the project involves young people, we encourage beneficiaries to arrange log books, or video diaries and learning development plans.

Examples of good practice:

EARLALL has developed a set of criteria for application bilaterally between partner regional governments, to oversee the quality of VET student placement activity taking place within that framework. The criteria also work alongside formal bilateral Memoranda of Understanding signed by responsible Ministers in both regions.

Relevant government support, linked to legislative provision, for placement activity abroad providing such placements fit within agreed curriculum - such as in the case of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) in the EARLALL member region, Baden-Württemberg.

1.8 Which are the most important difficulties encountered by disadvantaged groups with regard to learning mobility?

The additional costs post a key barrier to disadvantaged groups. The length of the stay abroad can be problematic hence options for shorter periods away may be more realistic.

Cultural and religious difficulties can also act as barriers and need to be understood and sensitively responded to. Organisations promoting mobility must be aware of these factors and have active plans in place to address them. Ensuring accessibility, participation and relevance of provision must be principles that drive the actions of any organisation engaged in mobility. A lack of aspiration from peers or family may also discourage a young person, and these need to be addressed. The use of local or regional support networks, supportive practitioners or careers advisors or peer support should help over come this.

Often, disadvantaged groups are less likely to choose to study languages at secondary schools hence this can act as a disincentive but perhaps the most significant factors relate to a lack of confidence, a lack of available emotional and practical support and a failure to appreciate the benefits.

SECTION 2: THE STAY ABROAD AND FOLLOW UP

2.1 Can you give some good examples of mentoring and integration?

The Association feels that while the preparation and monitoring the quality of placements is essential, more should be done in managing the post-placement actions when students return to their school, college, university or employer. A managed period of reflection or counselling would help participants better understand what they have experienced, how that is relevant to their existing learning, and how that can help shape their future development. The production of a 'tool kit' of materials for use by practitioners, for example, could be beneficial in helping learners gain the most from their experiences.

Under provisions in the Vocational Training Act (BBiG – Baden-Württemberg, Germany) apprentices return to their 'training job' in advance of undertaking any mobility activity for the purposes of pre-placement preparation.

2.2 In your experience is the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning still a significant obstacle to mobility?

In the experience of Members, the issue of validation varies considerably between education systems and, within those, curriculum areas. For example, subject areas which naturally lend themselves to periods of employer-based activity are generally readily available for placement actions abroad. However, where an agreed curriculum in a particular country does not already have the flexibility for external placement activity, the measures necessary to develop mobility opportunities can limit opportunities. In some EARLALL regions, provision does exist for VET placements abroad to be undertaken at up to 25% of the total training time – in the case of apprentices on a three year course of study, this can be as much as 9 months. However, it does appear that shorter term mobility placements are more common.

It is EARLALL's view, however, that the issue of validation and recognition should not constitute a barrier to the development of partnerships leading to mobility actions. Recognition can be provided in some form from within each participating government's educational system and, if necessary, that can be evidenced by means of supplements to the students' main qualification – EUROPRO and EUROPASS are useful tools in this regard. In general, clear and transparent certification tools should be common, but flexible.

SECTION 3: A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR MOBILITY

3.1 How can all actors and resources at national, regional and local levels be better mobilized in the interest of youth mobility?

The Association notes the use of EARLALL inspired bilateral agreements as an example of good practice in the Green Paper, and welcomes its general thrust towards the need for greater partnership working. Indeed, the Association has now promoted the development of many formal bi-lateral agreements in the field of mobility between its partner governments and outside the Association to oversee the delivery of mobility opportunities – a summary of which is Annexed to this paper.

A number of EARLALL members have initiated discussion on the development of sector-based mobility initiatives, which go beyond student exchange to the exchange of learners, practitioners, employers and the wider social partners noted in the Green Paper, all from specific target sectors. EARLALL is currently establishing a working group to develop this work further. In addition, the Association's members actively promote direct meetings between educational and Governmental establishments to facilitate dialogue on delivery.

Examples of successful territorial partnerships, and innovative ideas on funding youth mobility:

The Spanish educational system has developed Integrated Vocational Schools where both Education and Employment Ministries work together with stakeholders, Chambers of Commerce, business groups, trades unions etc to provide collaborative policies aimed at enhancing learner skills, including the promotion of mobility action within the learners field of study. Funding and support is provided equally for such organisations to encourage mobility in young people. The Government of Aragon, for example, is promoting the SUDOEFOP project, one of the aims of which is to create pathways for knowledge transfer between business and VET centres.

3.2 How can businesses be motivated to become more strongly involved in youth mobility?

Any resulting EU strategy that wishes to engage businesses in the youth mobility field, should clearly evidence the value to businesses that such actions provide. Clear benefits need to be outlined to employers for them to strengthen their future engagement. EARLALL members are not, for example, aware of any studies that may have been undertaken at the EU level linking learner mobility to economic development – despite EU funding for such having now been in place for some time. Again, links with CEDEFOP's work on skills needs analysis would also be of value. In developing its strategy, the EU should encourage business to make young people available to undertake training programmes abroad. In Brittany, for example,

apprentices undertake 3 week placements, which incorporate a balance of incompany, study and social time.

3.3 How can we best make use of ICTs to provide valuable virtual mobility opportunities to enrich the physical mobility?

This question seems to suggest that virtual mobility only happens or should only happen either before or after a period of physical mobility. It is the experience of some of the Association's members that young peoples' use of the internet and technology in general means that many learners' experience of virtual networking will happen alongside physical mobility. When online they won't necessarily differentiate between contacts in, for example, Greece and those they see everyday in their learning institution. Therefore, the potential for virtual mobility to plays a significant role is much greater that the Green Paper suggests. A combination of virtual and physical mobility can greatly enhance individual learning.

Equally the general acceptance or take up by learning institutions of widely available e-platforms, such as eTwinning (in schools) or MOODLE (in VET and adult learning centres and universities) provides the vehicle for greater collaboration either in conjunction with physical mobility, or apart.

The Mobireg project undertaken by some of the Association's Members developed a website to, among other things, facilitate blogging by participating students. Such tools when made easily accessible can be used effectively to aid pre-placement preparation, monitor actual activity and any problems that may arise, and also to help learners reflect on their experiences.

Meaningful mobility opportunities - whether physical or virtual - need to be structured and supported by skilled and confident practitioners. If educators lack confidence in using ICT they are unlikely to explore its potential with learners. Therefore a crucial component of any e-twinning programme is the range of professional support and development offered to participating practitioners through, for example, face to face workshops at local, regional or European levels; on-line and face to face communities of practitioners sharing support and experiences with one another, on-line resources and community based learning opportunities.

3.4 Should mobility opportunities for multipliers (teachers, trainers, youth workers etc) be given additional support and prominence in EU programmes?

What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of teachers and trainers in promoting mobility?

We consider the full understanding and training of these 'multipliers' is an essential element in ensuring the correct development, administration, quality assessment and promotion of mobility opportunities for learners. Without a large experienced practitioner base it is difficult to see how learner mobility could be efficiently expanded. Equally, wider participation by practitioners would help enhance understanding on the relevance of such actions, both in terms of cultural and linguistic awareness, and in terms of preparation for the world of work. At present available funding for this important element of mobility is considered limited, though some examples of successful project activity does exist. The Eurotutor Leonardo supported project, for example, has improved and increased interest in mobility in participating schools in Andalucía. Likewise, the Brittany government encourages peer learning actions between practitioners involved in this area of education provision.

Interestingly, obstacles to practitioner mobility cited from the experience of some EARLALL member governments are remarkably similar to those cited against student participation. Funding issues is the primary factor, but so are family commitments, time away from existing work or immediate job security, and the possible language barrier. Some member Governments felt that the issue of educational mobility didn't receive suitable recognition by the senior management teams within educational institutions, and consequently staff were not afforded the time during normal working hours to manage effectively mobility actions for their students.

It has also been suggested that a more developmental approach to funding programmes could be useful in engaging practitioners and policy makers in the delivery of wider provision for educational mobility. A funding programme that was not governed by levels of learning (like Erasmus / Leonardo etc) would enable the decompartmentalisation of teaching and open up new mobility opportunities based on a thematic or sectoral approach.

3.5 Do you consider targets a useful tool in defining a mobility strategy and if so at what level?

EARLALL has been following the European debate about the development of targets for mobility and, indeed, education and training more widely. We appreciate that the use of benchmarks are important in the Lisbon reform process if we are to succeed in focusing on key policy areas and achieving agreed goals. We consider, therefore, that mobility targets at the European level can be useful in focusing efforts in this

field. However, any targets need to be in line with an agreed coherent European level strategy and associated levels of funding. They also need to have regard to the education and training competencies of national and regional governments, be consistent and measurable in terms of source data, and be stretching but achievable. In addition, mobility benchmarks cannot be considered as a mere quantitative reference, as the quality and impact of placements on participating students should remain the primary goal.

In terms of widening participation, it should be noted that engaging a disadvantaged learner is more difficult than one already engaged in mainstream education. We would not wish any agreed quantitative targets to inadvertently negatively impact on 'harder to reach' people. It would be necessary therefore for discussions on mobility indicators to take into account inclusion of disadvantaged and under represented mobility participants.

EARLALL members recognise that while there are a great number of similarities between the lifelong learning policies of its member regional governments and local authorities, there often remain significant differences between vocational and general educative systems across Europe. The development of consistent and measurable indicators, without imposing separate data collection systems, could be problematical.

ANNEX A: Examples of Bilateral Agreements / Memoranda of Understanding : between EARLALL regions

Baden-Württemberg, Germany
Wales, Catalonia, Tuscany
Bretagne, France
Saxony, Wales, Tuscany
Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain
Wales, Tuscany, Piemonte, Baden-Württemberg
Gobierno de las Islas Baleares, Spain
Wales
Gobierno Vasco, Spain
Wales, Tuscany
Pest County, Hungary Tuscany
Regione Piemonte, Italy
Catalonia
Regione Toscana, Italy
Wales, Brittany, Bretagne, Baden-Württemberg, Pest

Tuscany, Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Brittany, Latvia, Baden-Württemberg.

Welsh Assembly Government, UK