

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA  
STANDING COMMITTEE  
OF THE EFTA STATES

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Brussels

WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

**Comments by the EFTA Working Group<sup>1</sup> on the Commission's  
Green Paper on the Obstacles to Transnational Mobility**

1. The Green Paper on "Education - Training - Youth: The obstacles to transnational mobility"<sup>2</sup>, analyzes the situation with regard to the mobility within the areas of education, training, youth and research, and proposes various lines of action to be taken in order to reduce the obstacles encountered.
2. The issues dealt with in the Green Paper are of **high relevance to the EFTA EEA countries**. The free movement of persons is one of the basic principles of the EEA Agreement, and Community legislation in the areas of free movement of workers, social security and mutual recognition of diplomas is continuously being incorporated into the Agreement. Furthermore, the EFTA EEA countries participate in practically all Community activities in the areas of education, training and youth as well as research and development.
3. The EFTA Working Group on Education, Training and Youth considers the Green Paper to give a **good analysis** of the different obstacles to mobility. In the fields of education and youth exchange, mobility has proven to be of great value, and transnational mobility should be facilitated as much as possible.
4. In the Green Paper, it is stated that it takes into consideration nationals of a Member State of the EC or the European Economic Area, as well as non-nationals who are legally resident in the European Community on a permanent basis. The EFTA Working Group is pleased to see that the EEA is mentioned. However, throughout the paper, there are very few references to the EFTA EEA countries. We would therefore like to stress that **whenever reference is made to the Member States in connection with Community legislation or programme participation in these areas, this also includes the EFTA EEA countries**.
5. The Green Paper shows that the issue of obstacles to mobility is a **complex** one. It is not only a question of practical arrangements within the Community programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprising the Delegations of the three EFTA EEA States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

<sup>2</sup> COM(96) 462 final

(continued)

To a very large extent, transnational mobility is hindered by legislative and administrative rules in areas such as the right of residence, social security, fiscal legislation and mutual recognition of diplomas. As these issues are outside the domain of this Working Group, we will refrain from commenting on details in these areas, but only give some general remarks.

6. The Working Group **agrees to the basic principle** that an effort should be made both at Community level and in each country in order to remove obstacles to mobility in the domain of education, training and youth. When considering concrete measures to be taken, the principle of subsidiarity must be safeguarded. However, it is of course desirable that each and every country does its utmost to facilitate mobility for students and young people, and that efforts are made at a national level in order to identify and find solutions to concrete obstacles to mobility. In this respect, Member States might be encouraged to carry out national studies on the situation with regard to mobility<sup>3</sup>.

7. Within the **Community programmes** in the field of education, training and youth, a special effort should be made in order to remove any remaining obstacles for students and young people participating in the programme activities. This will be of particular importance for the functioning of the new programme "European Voluntary Service for young people". As pointed out in the Green Paper, volunteers often encounter various administrative and legal obstacles when undertaking a stay for a longer period in another country.

8. As to the concrete proposals for lines of action presented in the Green Paper, we find that several of them are interesting and merit further consideration. However, the complexity of the issue requires good co-ordination between different authorities, educational institutions and private industry.

9. The Working Group on Education, Training and Youth looks forward to participating in the upcoming debate on the questions raised in the Green Paper, assuming that the EFTA EEA countries will be involved in all activities or initiatives that will follow from the Paper, given its high relevance to the EEA Agreement.

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<sup>3</sup> One EFTA EEA country, Norway, has undertaken a study in order to assess the functioning of Norway's participation in the Community programmes in the field of education. Mobility is one important aspect of this study.