

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (96) 7

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON REGIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 September 1996
at the 572nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members, and that this aim can be pursued notably by common action in cultural matters;

Having regard to the European Cultural Convention;

Having regard to the European Conventions on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (European Treaty Series No. 15), on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (ETS No. 21), on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (ETS No. 32), the Protocol to the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (ETS No. 49) and on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (ETS No. 138), as well as the European Agreement on the Continued Payment of Scholarships to students studying abroad (ETS No. 69);

Having regard to the two declarations on the application of convention No. 15 and to the general declaration on the European equivalence conventions;

Having regard to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106);

Having regard to the political declaration and the resolution on the mobility of researchers in Europe adopted by the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Research (Paris, 17 September 1984);

Having regard to Recommendations No. R (84) 13 concerning the situation of foreign students, No. R (85) 21 on mobility of academic staff, No. R (90) 15 with a view to fostering the mobility of researchers and No. R (95) 8 on academic mobility;

Considering that the Council of Europe has always encouraged academic mobility as a means towards the better understanding of the various cultures and languages, and without any form of racial, religious, political or sexual discrimination;

Considering that study, teaching and research, under conditions of academic mobility, in a country other than a student's or staff member's home country are likely to contribute to an individual's cultural and academic enrichment, as well as to improve the individual's career prospects;

Considering that regional co-operation in Europe is becoming increasingly important as a confidence-building measure among neighbouring states, and that it may promote a sense of regional identity and facilitate dialogue between states in conflict;

Considering that regional academic mobility is an important part of and contribution to regional co-operation;

Considering that, in view of the important political developments in Europe since 1989, regional academic mobility can contribute to establishing contacts across borders which were previously closed and thus help to establish new patterns of regional co-operation, or re-establish old ones;

Considering that regional academic mobility can help promote concrete (namely economic) contacts between states in the same geographical area and may be well adapted to meet common objectives, such as stimulating a regional labour market and improving the qualifications of the workforce in the region;

Considering that regional academic co-operation can help build a sense of regional identity through the important role of students and academic staff as communicators and multipliers;

Considering that, while a variety of regional academic mobility schemes have already been established, much can still be done by member states, local and regional authorities, higher education institutions and international organisations to promote and encourage regional mobility;

Considering that regional academic mobility has the potential to reduce the costs of academic exchanges allowing increased participation by students and staff;

Considering that regional academic mobility can make an important contribution to regional co-operation in higher education and facilitate a more efficient use of scarce resources;

Considering that regional academic mobility can produce synergy effects extending to other forms of academic co-operation, such as joint research projects and curriculum development;

Considering that regional academic mobility is an addition to, and not a substitute for, pan-European or global mobility;

Considering that for the purpose of this recommendation the term "higher education institution" shall denote:

- i. universities; and
- ii. other institutions of higher education and research not having the title of university, but regarded by the competent authorities of the state in whose territory they are situated as undertaking work of a generally equal nature,

Recommends the governments of member states:

- i. to take into account, in the establishment of their policies promoting regional academic mobility, the principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation,
- ii. to draw these principles to the attention of the competent bodies concerned, so that they can be considered and taken into account;
- iii. to promote implementation of these principles by government agencies and local and regional authorities as well as by higher education institutions within the limits imposed by their institutional autonomy;
- iv. to ensure that this recommendation is distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with matters of academic mobility, and especially regional mobility;
- v. to ratify, if they have not already done so, the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to students studying abroad (ETS No. 69);

Instructs the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to transmit this recommendation to the governments of those States Parties to the European Cultural Convention which are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (96) 7

*Principles for the formulation of policies regarding
regional academic mobility in Europe*

I. Definitions

1. The term “academic mobility” implies a period of study, teaching and/or research in a country other than a student’s or academic staff member’s country of residence (the “home country”). This period is of limited duration, and it is envisaged that the student or staff member return to his or her home country upon completion of the designated period. The term “academic mobility” is not intended to cover migration from one country to another.
2. Academic mobility may be achieved through programmes set up for this purpose, through exchange agreements between governments, higher education institutions or their associations, or on the initiative of individual students and staff (“free movers”).
3. In the context of this recommendation, the term “region” shall mean a grouping of two or more countries, or parts thereof, which are geographically close, and which are linked by historical, cultural or economic ties. The term shall not have any political or administrative connotation.
4. The recommendation specifically concerns cross-border academic mobility within regions located entirely or partly within the territories of States Parties to the European Cultural Convention.

II. General principles

5. The principles enumerated in Recommendation No. R (95) 8 on academic mobility fully apply also to regional mobility, as do, *mutatis mutandis*, the policy measures enumerated therein. The present recommendation concerns specific measures to promote regional mobility.

III. Financial conditions

6. In promoting regional academic mobility, flexible models of financial assistance adapted to the particular needs of the region should be developed, taking into account all relevant factors, such as the geographical extension of the region, the relative wealth of the countries and higher education institutions of the region and assuring, as far as possible, the portability of student grants within the region.
7. While regional mobility has the potential for reducing costs, a measure of financial support will generally be required in order to promote regional mobility if this mobility is to have a significant impact on regional co-operation. According to the specificities of the region, financial support may range from full scale scholarships schemes to schemes of mixed financing to full financing by the sender institution or country.
8. In cases where the portability of student grants does not provide an appropriate solution, such as between countries or higher education institutions with substantially different levels of income and/or costs, or where one or more of the partners have currency problems, an attractive model of financing may be for each party to the scheme to contribute to local expenses for visiting students or staff, in local currency.
9. In such cases, top-up scholarships to supplement other scholarships and grants may be envisaged as:
 - i. awards by the host country to students or academic staff from low income countries who receive financial aid from their home country;
 - ii. awards by the home country to students and academic staff going to low income countries where the financial aid offered by the host country and/or institution is perceived as inadequate.

IV. Recognition of qualifications

10. Any regional mobility scheme for students should make provisions for the recognition by the home country and/or institution of the qualifications earned and/or the study periods undertaken abroad by students participating in the scheme.

11. Agreements on the recognition of qualifications earned by participants in the scheme should be established. Such agreements should be binding on institutions provided the students fulfil the stipulations of the agreements. Use of the diploma supplement and credit transfer systems as a means of providing standard, easily comprehensible information on students' academic achievements, as well as full use of the expertise of the Council of Europe/Unesco ENIC network of national information centres on academic recognition and mobility, should be encouraged.

V. Language policies

12. In the development of regional mobility schemes, the cultural and human enrichment of language learning should be recognised, and flexible language policies developed, encouraging the study of the languages of the region by higher education students and staff, allowing the use of a variety of the languages of the region as well as any other language as a *lingua franca*, or a combination thereof. All partners of a regional mobility scheme should participate in the decision on language policy.

13. Any laws preventing the use of non-national languages in their higher education institutions should be reconsidered.

VI. Mobility services

14. Agreements should be sought with transportation companies in order to obtain preferential rates for students and academic staff participating in the scheme. Where the state plays a role as owner, co-owner or operator, authorities are encouraged to induce the transportation companies to grant such preferential fares.

15. Regional mobility schemes should be encouraged to develop specific certificates for students who have taken a specified minimum of courses within the scheme. Such certificates, which could be issued in the languages of the region and/or the scheme, could be a supplement to the certificates delivered by the individual institutions, and could be identified by the logo of the scheme, as appropriate. In order to identify and promote regional mobility schemes, a specific logo and student cards could be developed, and the networking of alumni of the schemes should be encouraged.

16. Regional mobility schemes should also be encouraged to develop an appropriate infrastructure for a flexible and user-friendly exchange of information between the partner institutions, notably through electronic communication.

VII. Development of further regional mobility schemes

17. In view of the important contribution which regional academic mobility may make to regional co-operation, measures should be taken to strengthen existing regional mobility and to develop such mobility where it does not already exist, especially through the establishment of further regional mobility schemes.

18. In promoting regional academic mobility, consideration should be given to promoting the efficient use of scarce resources within the region, for example in creating regional centres for certain academic disciplines or to establish study courses open to students from all participating countries and/or institutions.

19. Regional academic mobility should aim to encourage closer co-operation in the region among academic staff and students working in the same fields. Within the framework of established priorities, a "bottom-up" approach to regional academic mobility is encouraged, whereby target groups may be invited to identify subject priorities and forms of co-operation activities of specific relevance to the needs of their region.

20. Regional academic mobility should aim to promote co-operation in fields of special relevance to the region, or in fields that are particularly important for historical, political, economic or other reasons.

21. Managers and funders of regional mobility schemes should be encouraged to monitor the development and implementation of the schemes. In so doing, they should be encouraged to take into account that, as regional schemes tend to reflect long-standing relationships and to complement existing mobility, it may be difficult to quantify the mobility taking place as a direct result of the schemes, and that the outputs of the schemes may only be evident in the medium term.

22. Regional mobility schemes should especially be encouraged in areas where there is a need for confidence-building measures and/or for the development of new regional links. In view of the existing regional mobility schemes, there seems to be a particular need for the development of new schemes involving regions in central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.