

'Learning Mobility in the Youth Field: Towards Opportunities for all - Evidence, experience, discourse'

2nd Conference of the European Platform for Learning Mobility in the youth field,
Istanbul, 7-9 October 2015

General conclusions of the Steering Group¹

The EPLM is an open and collective space, a dynamic and evolving environment, to exchange, reflect, analyse and work on issues related to learning mobility in the European youth field. These aims are reached by activities supporting constant thinking and dialoguing such as EPLM Conferences, researchers' seminars, newsletters, knowledge books. The outcomes of the Istanbul Conference *Mobility in the Youth Field: Towards Opportunities for all - Evidence, experience, discourse*, that took place in October 2015, deepened a strategic reflection on streamlining the work of the EPLM by coherently integrating its regular events into a structured whole. Some of the points highlighted in part I of this document aim at supporting such process.

The 2nd EPLM Conference explored the role of learning mobility in the field of youth; the focus was on inclusion; thus the reflection work went a step further. The conference was structured around a series of ideas and proposals for the EPLM. These suggestions are reported in detail in the final narrative documentation of the Conference. Part II of this document will therefore only tackle some of them, selected by the Steering Group's with regard to their feasibility.

I. GENERAL REMARKS & POSSIBLE STRATEGIC WAYS FORWARD

The Istanbul Conference looked back on the past two years and that the **co-ordination of the EPLM** passed to the EU-CoE youth partnership. Although much

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work remains to be done on the level of European visibility and communication, this change definitely increased the international vision. Thus, the work of the platform became more sustainable and more relevant. The participation of the Steering Group remains crucial. Its main work consists of content-related debates between different communities, giving the platform its semantic foundation. The new organisational structure aims at optimising the potential of the EPLM.

Regarding the pillars of EPLM, given by the image of the triangle between practice, research and policy, one point ought to be considered when preparing the next Conference and for the work of the Steering group: involving more and better **the policy sector**. We indeed have to find ways to convey messages towards the political level in general, and to transfer the results of the Istanbul conference in particular. This means adapting the EPLM's approach in order to convince underrepresented stakeholders of the added value of their involvement.

On a mid-term process, the very structure of the EPLM will be reviewed. **Subgroups on specific topics** will be created; they will form the founding pillars of the platform. Two concrete instances of subgroup topics can be mentioned. The first one refers to *accessibility in learning mobility projects*. Such group should go beyond 'the provision of accessibility guidelines for international youth projects', and develop new prospects with regard to social equity in participation. A second one could be around the definition of *quality in learning mobility*, elaborating on a framework for assessing and guiding mobility programmes, also in light of an interaction between formal and non-formal learning, which will be the transversal theme of the 3rd Conference in 2017. A smaller group could work on the preparation of the conference, and also plan EPLM contributions before and after the conference. Such a longer-term view of EPLM's work allows links with parallel existing or planned processes as stated during the Istanbul conference, such as (non-exhaustive list):

- Quality framework for youth mobility (EU-CoE youth partnership);
- Quality Youth Work - A common framework for the further development of youth work (European Commission);
- Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe);

- Projects on systems of validation/recognition by strategic partnerships in Key Action 2 of the Erasmus + Programme;
- Developments of validation according to the Council of the European Union's Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- Desk research on quality in learning mobility (e.g. tools) and expert seminars.

The concluding point of these more general remarks is most relevant. For the Istanbul Conference stronger inclusion 'requires extra efforts and extra resources: time, money, and people'. European programmes supporting learning mobility should seriously take this into consideration by easing access to funding for young people with fewer opportunities. Moreover, we ought to **make a step further in making inclusion a reality**. We aim at creating innovative political and/or administrative frameworks, notably reinforcing the co-operation between the three sides of the triangle and enlarge interaction, communication and dialogue in the European youth field.

II. CONCRETE IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION (based on the suggestions of the participants of the Istanbul Conference)

a) Cross-sectoral co-operation

It is important to strengthen or further develop a series of links and connections. Reinforcing the political side of the triangle is crucial. Moreover, the **connection between educational stakeholders, the youth field and the business world has to be improved**. Beyond the issue of a common language to be developed, there seems to be a high need and potential for co-operation with regard to policies and strategies of and for learning mobility. EPLM should favour such connections and co-operation particularly in the frame of its conferences. Rethinking the composition of the Steering Group should be considered under the regard of such strategic developments. Cross-sectoral co-operation tackles all the pillars of the work of EPLM, even though priorities might be given to some of them in terms of forthcoming initiatives.

Linked to the above and as suggested in the conclusions of the facilitator of the workshop on **recognition** during the Istanbul Conference, the EPLM ought to support the continued raising of awareness of youth work in the context of learning mobility by focusing more on **social and political recognition**. This would allow space to explore recognition from an 'inclusive' perspective as well as from an 'outside' angle. Recognition in this regard also means – as said earlier – a stronger co-operation and networking within the practice-policy-research triangle.

With regard to existing processes going on at European level, some suggestions underline the possibility to **strengthen or create the link of the work of the EPLM with the *History of Youth Work* and research on youth work theories**, or to the thematic projects in the frame of the **European Training Strategy** (e.g. with regard to youth workers and trainers' competences development). EPLM has already started giving more space and importance to youth research, but it might play a more prominent role in linking processes that are of common interest for both the platform and those initiating them.

b) Research

The EPLM should support – through conferences, researchers' seminars or other means – elaborating a research agenda on learning mobility to map existing research on learning mobility; to implement a small meta-study on existing research; to provide an annotated bibliography; to compile an online library; and to carry out a study to develop a conceptual, theoretical framework for learning mobility. These are mere examples that have been mentioned during the EPLM researchers' seminar and that are worth exploring further when setting up research-related initiatives supported by the EPLM. Such process could also include a critical reflection on current research methodology and further development of research methods and instruments.

c) Tools and communication

Numerous tools have been developed throughout the past decades on learning mobility taking place in various schemes, such as volunteering or student exchanges. Such tools could be gathered. New ones could be developed or adjusted. The EPLM could **serve as a platform to share information about such tools and support disseminating them to a larger public**. A holistic and transversal look could be helpful: it means not only having in mind tools that tackle learning mobility directly, but also those related to recognition, youth work, and existing support structures. On a large scale, an online communication space could also be developed. Its main aim is to support dialogue in-between EPLM conferences. Its distinctive feature is that it matches with the needs of the three corners of the triangle. Thus it could provide resources, share practices and work as a reflection ground between professional communities.