

Brussels, 24 January 2008

High level experts discuss future of mobility in EU

The European Commission has set up a new High Level Expert Forum on Mobility, and its inaugural meeting took place on 24 January 2008. The Forum will discuss extending the reach of the Erasmus exchange programme, increasing exchanges of young people, improving support for mobility in vocational training or adult learning, and raising the degree of movement by young artists, entrepreneurs, and volunteers.

In his opening statement, the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Mr Ján Figel', explained the context of the Forum: "*As the European Union progresses as a knowledge-based society in a globalising world economy, we must work to boost further the mobility of workers and citizens. This is not only good for the economy, but also for society. Europe needs a mobile and flexible workforce for its future economic prosperity, but mobility also breaks down barriers between Europeans, thereby helping to build a more cohesive European society*". He stated that his decision to convene the group was inspired by the success of the Erasmus university exchange programme, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007, but it also reflects his aim of widening the access to this successful programme.

The Commission operates a number of programmes in support of mobility, of which *Erasmus* is the best known. In its December 2007 paper on the strategic orientation for the EU's Lisbon Strategy 2008-2010, the Commission wrote that "Learning abroad can be an important stimulus for personal development and language skills. The *Erasmus* programme has enabled almost two million young Europeans to study abroad. More young people should be able to benefit from it so that, in time, it becomes a standard part of university education". Member States were invited to "link up national and regional programmes to the *Erasmus* programme to increase the number of students participating in international exchanges".

In November 2007, the Member States' education Ministers had discussed how to ensure that more of the student population could go on an *Erasmus* exchange. The aim is also to build mobility supports in other areas, among young people more generally. Programmes like *Leonardo da Vinci* (for vocational training), *Comenius* (for schools), and *Grundtvig* (for adults) are already partially dedicated to that.

The new High Level Expert Forum will take these issues further. The Forum has 11 members with expertise in relevant fields (the members are listed below). The Forum will be chaired by Professor Maria João Rodrigues of Portugal, who has been involved in the Lisbon strategy from its creation, and who has advised the Commission on a wide range of policy issues. Commissioner Figel' has asked the Forum to explore options and deliver a short strategic report in mid-2008.

Members of the Forum

Maria João Rodrigues (PT), <i>Chairperson of the Forum</i>	Special Advisor to the Portuguese Prime Minister for the EU Presidency; Involved in the Lisbon strategy from the very beginning; Member of several different advisory groups to the European Commission.
Jean-Francois Michel (FR)	Secretary-General of the European Music Office, active in promoting mobility among musicians.
Alan Larsson (SW)	Former Swedish Finance Minister, later Director-General of the Directorate-General for Employment. Currently Chairman of the University of Lund.
Peter Clever (DE)	Member of the governing board of the Confederation of German Employers' Association, BDA; active in relation to vocational training issues at the EU level.
John Reilly (UK)	Former Director of the UK Socrates-Erasmus Council, and responsible for the UK Tempus Information Office, active in promoting ECTS and student mobility. Active in the EU project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" and the stakeholder group preparing Erasmus for the current Lifelong Learning Programme.
Mme Annick Weiner (FR)	Vice-President in charge of international relations of the University of Paris Sud XI (Orsay)
Julia Gonzalez (ES)	Vice-Rector University of Bilbao in charge of International Relations, active in the EU project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe".
Ewa Krzaklewska (PL)	ex-Vice-President of Erasmus Student Network, now academic in University of Jagiellonian University of Krakow
Frans Van Vucht (NL)	Member of the Commission's network of the Group of Societal Policy Analysis, the European University Association and former Rector of the University of Twente, expert on university management.
Mary Ann de Vlieg (BE)	Vice-President of EFAH (European Forum of the Arts and Heritage); co-founder and Treasurer of the Roberto Cimetta Fund for Mobility of Mediterranean Artists and Arts Organisers, and founder of www.on-the-move.org , a portal for professional mobility in the culture sector.
Jillian Van Turnhout (IRL)	Member of the European Economic and Social Committee; Chief Executive of the Irish Children's Rights Alliance; active in relation to youth issues at the EU level.