

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (95) 8

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON ACADEMIC MOBILITY

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 1995
at the 531st 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 European Conventions Nos. 15, 21, 32, 49 and 138 on the equivalence of diplomas and qualifications as well as European Agreement No. 69 on the portability of students grants;

Having regard to the two declarations on the application of European Convention No. 15 and to the General Declaration on the European Equivalence Conventions;

Having regard to the political declaration and the resolution on 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 and No. R (90) 15 with a view to fostering the mobility of researchers;

Considering that the Council of Europe has always encouraged academic mobility without any form of racial, religious, political or sexual discrimination;

Considering that the political, economic, social, cultural, educational and scientific interdependence between the States Party to the European Cultural Convention, and between those states and others, is getting closer and more intensive;

Considering the important political developments in Europe since 1989, which have led to a substantial increase in the number of States Party to the European Cultural Convention;

Considering that this development has made desirable the adoption of a single recommendation covering all aspects of academic mobility;

Considering that mobility of academic staff and students from and between all parts of Europe should contribute to the quality of scientific research, the renewal of its teaching and its contribution to European integration as well as to mutual respect and understanding, in higher education, in the educational system as a whole, and lastly in all regional and national cultural activities;

Considering that the study and work, under the 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;

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 account, in the establishment of their policies affecting higher education institutions, of the principles set out in the appendix hereto or to draw them to the attention of the competent bodies concerned, so that they can be considered and, where practicable and appropriate, taken into account ;
- ii. to promote implementation of these principles by government agencies and by higher education institutions within the limits imposed by their institutional autonomy ;
- iii. to ensure that this recommendation is distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with matters of academic mobility ;
- iv. in the case of states which have not yet acceded to European Agreement No. 69 on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students studying Abroad, to accede to and implement this agreement as soon as possible ;

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

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (95) 8

Principles for the formulation of policies regarding academic mobility throughout Europe

I. Definition

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 (henceforth referred to as 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. The present recommendation specifically concerns academic mobility between member states of the Council of Europe and other States Party to the European Cultural Convention.

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).

II. Basic principles

3. The mobility of students and academic staff throughout Europe is of great importance and should be encouraged. A period of study, teaching and/or research abroad is an enriching experience for the individual concerned. Academic mobility constitutes an important way of increasing the competence of students and academic staff in their field of activity, of providing vital scientific competence to countries and institutions where such knowledge is less well developed in a given field of study, of promoting valuable contacts between students and academic staff throughout Europe and of promoting mutual understanding.

4. As far as possible, all European countries should both send and receive students and academic staff. It is therefore necessary to encourage academic mobility, especially to and from countries which have so far been involved in academic mobility to a relatively modest degree. In this context, it is particularly important to encourage academic mobility between western Europe and central and eastern Europe, between central and eastern European countries, and

to countries with less widely spoken languages or geographically peripheral countries. Western European countries should encourage student mobility towards these countries and, in co-operation with central and eastern European countries and higher education institutions, disseminate information about possibilities for study in central and eastern Europe.

5. All European countries are encouraged to further improve their provisions for sabbatical leave for academic staff, or to introduce such provisions where they do not already exist. Sabbatical leaves should be given for both teaching and research activities. Academic staff on sabbatical leave and holders of post doctoral scholarships should be encouraged to undertake at least part of their research and teaching activities abroad.

III. *Access to foreign higher education institutions*

6. The access of students to foreign higher education institutions should be based on the European equivalence conventions, taking account of the declarations on the application of the conventions. In principle, the host state and/or its academic institutions should give due consideration to the candidacies of students who would be entitled to be admitted to higher education institutions in their own country.

7. Academic staff members should be entitled to take up positions in a foreign higher education institution, on a temporary basis or as part of an exchange programme, without regard to citizenship or national origin. In such cases, formal controls and measures under the laws governing aliens should be eased.

IV. *Financial conditions*

8. In accordance with European Agreement No. 69 on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students studying Abroad, a student studying abroad within a recognised programme or bilateral agreement or as part of their home-based university course should be entitled to the same financial support from the home country as he would have received had he been studying at home.

9. To promote academic mobility between low income and high cost countries, including countries with weak or non-convertible currencies, host countries should in the framework of their possibilities, where practicable and within organised exchange programmes, bear the local expenses of foreign students and academic staff, including lodging, subsistence expenses and a reasonable amount of spending money.

10. Economically more advantaged countries should consider establishing top-up scholarships to supplement other scholarships and grants for:

- a. students or academic staff from low income countries who receive financial aid from their home country;
- b. their own 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.

11. Each state, or higher education institution as such or non-profit institutions and foundations, should endeavour to set up, if such services are not provided for by other institutions, a solidarity fund to assist foreign students and academic staff in temporary financial difficulties for which they are not responsible (such as late payment of grants, scholarships or salaries).

12. Each higher education institution should earmark funds for promoting international co-operation and academic mobility.

13. To help reduce the travel costs of academic mobility, transport companies should be encouraged, especially where the state plays a role as owner, co-owner or operator, to give preferential rates to students and academic staff beginning or ending a period of study, teaching and/or research abroad.

V. *Visa, employment and social security policies*

14. While respecting the responsibility of individual states to determine their own visa, employment and social security policies, states are encouraged to make their regulations concerning visas and work permits sufficiently flexible to promote academic mobility. The regulations should make it possible for foreign academic staff and students to work at the host country's higher education institutions for a limited period of time and to allow foreign students to participate in practical training programmes and projects, including industrial placements where these are recommended as a part of the normal course of study.

15. States are encouraged to apply liberally the visa and other administrative controls they exercise on the entry into their territory of students and academic staff. This applies especially to those involved in organised co-operation programmes. In the latter case, governments should consider ways of accelerating visa procedures, taking account of the sponsorship by the sending and receiving institution, of awarding visas for multiple entries and for appropriately extended periods and of waiving, reducing or refunding visa fees.

16. States are invited to consider the possibility of granting visas at reduced rates for students, teachers and researchers participating in exchanges under bilateral and multilateral academic mobility agreements.

17. Higher education institutions should establish an agreed framework for granting their academic staff leave of absence to pursue academic activities for a limited period of time at foreign institutions. Such leave of absence should not entail the loss of pension rights or other social rights for the staff members concerned.

18. Where there is no bilateral agreement between the home and the host country covering accident and health insurance, it is suggested that, as a general principle, the host country should make insurance schemes available to foreign students and academic staff.

VI. Language policies

19. As a general principle, the study of foreign languages, and particularly European languages, by students and academic staff should be encouraged. States and institutions should consider measures whereby the teaching of a wide range of European languages, including less widely spoken ones, may be offered.

20. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to offer some courses, especially advanced courses, in a wide range of subjects in languages other than the institution's regular language(s) of instruction. Courses taught in the more widely spoken languages and offered to both foreign and home students constitute an important means of encouraging academic mobility. Visiting staff should be able to teach in a language other than the host institution's regular language(s) of instruction where the foreign language is readily understood by that institution's students.

21. States are encouraged to reconsider any laws preventing the use of non-national languages in its higher education institutions.

VII. Recognition of qualifications earned abroad

22. The recognition by the home country of qualifications earned abroad is of considerable importance. Home and host institutions should be encouraged to establish agreements on recognition when academic exchanges are undertaken, and to use the diploma supplement and credit transfer systems as means of providing standard, easily comprehensible information on students' academic achievement. Free movers should be encouraged to arrange for an evaluation in view of the recognition of the qualifications they plan to earn abroad before leaving their home institutions.

VIII. Information policy

23. Wide dissemination of information on opportunities for study, teaching and research abroad is a precondition for greater participation in academic mobility, particularly as concerns a fair and open selection process in mobility programmes. Secondary school students should be included among the target groups for information about opportunities for academic mobility.

24. Updated information on studies abroad should be furnished by the competent authorities of each state; it should be distributed and if possible supplemented by specialised departments in each higher education institution. The members of the Council of Europe network of national information centres on academic mobility and recognition, in co-operation with the corresponding networks of the Commission of the European Communities and Unesco (Europe Region), should be put in a position to play an important role and exploited accordingly. The national centres should have close contacts with scholarship organisations and other bodies active in academic mobility.

IX. Mobility services

25. Mobility services (public or private, run by or attached to the higher education institution) should be set up for effective information, guidance, assistance, reception and accommodation. Such mobility services should be offered to students and academic staff planning periods of study, teaching and/or research abroad as well as to foreign students and academic staff coming to the institution. Specialist staff should be trained for this type of work.

26. State authorities, higher education institutions and other responsible bodies should simplify the various formalities that govern the personal situation of foreign students, notably the obtaining of residence permits and accommodation.

27. States and institutions should consider whether a number of places in student accommodation should be reserved for foreign students.

28. Host countries should consider setting up facilities for the teaching of their language(s) to incoming exchange students and staff.

X. Refugee and displaced students and academic staff

29. In the case of refugee and displaced students, every effort should be made to evaluate students' real qualifications, even where these cannot be documented. Higher education institutions are encouraged to consider admitting students on the basis of the qualifications these students claim to have, subject to possible sanctions on the part of host countries if the claims turn out to be false, or to give refugee and displaced students an opportunity to prove their qualifications through special examinations.

30. States and higher education institutions are encouraged to consider special measures for refugee and displaced students, such as financial assistance (including in particular special scholarships and exemption from tuition fees) and the establishment of generous quotas of study places specially intended for this category of students.

31. States and higher education institutions are encouraged to show flexibility in defining the criteria by which a student may benefit from special measures intended to assist refugee and displaced students. These measures should be directed not only at persons having obtained a recognised refugee status, but also other persons whose life, liberty or safety may be at risk if they return to their home region. Any provisions in favour of refugee and displaced students should also be applicable to persons having come to the host country as ordinary students, but whose situation has since changed because of the eruption of civil strife or war in their home region or country.

32. States and higher education institutions are encouraged to apply the provisions contained in paragraphs 29-31, *mutatis mutandis*, to refugee and displaced academic staff.

33. States and higher education institutions should apply all other provisions of the present recommendation, as far as possible, to refugee and displaced students and academic staff.