

MINUTES OF MEETING: IGLO Higher Education working group – Council Recommendation Europe on the move

Date:	26 June 2024
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On 26 June the CZELO office participated in the meeting of the **IGLO Higher Education working group**. At this meeting representatives of the European Commission, Permanent representation of Austria to the EU and South Sweden universities presented and shared their views on the [Council Recommendation Europe on the move](#). This Recommendation was adopted in May 2024 and its main aims is to support mobilities across all education sectors and thus support the implementation of the European Education Area (EEA) objectives, deeper cooperation and the development of skills. The working group meeting was focused mainly on its implications and impacts on the higher education sector.

European Commission (EC):

- the Council Recommendation (CRec) was approved in May – now we are putting it into practice together with the Member States (MS)
- its main objective is deeper integration of the EEA by:
 - making mobilities a norm/reality for everyone and integral part of education pathways (this also includes supporting variety of mobility formats)
 - making transition between education systems as smooth as possible
 - contributing to high quality and inclusive education
- new **targets** for number of mobile students were set up:
 - 23 % in higher education sector (HE)
 - 12 % in vocational education and training sector (VET)
 - there is also an **aspiration** to have at least 20 % of mobile students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- the CRec includes 17 recommendations, 2 policy frameworks (on Teacher mobility and on Apprenticeship mobility) and 17 specific invitations from the Council to the EC
- main highlights and objectives specifically for HE sector include:
 - making mobility integral part of HE system (e.g. via more support to mobility windows)
 - supporting alignment with goals of the European Degree (because mobilities can lead to closer cooperation and joint programmes)
 - supporting variety of mobility formats
 - diversifying offers for students – e.g. blended, shorter-mobilities, different kinds of traineeships, etc.
 - reaching out to wider target groups and supporting inclusion
 - helping students (e.g. through provision of information on funding and timing of payments, addressing housing situation, creating welcoming environment and supporting participation in local life)
 - supporting the achievement of automatic mutual recognition of HE qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad
 - the CRec is linked to the Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition



- it focuses on guidance and training for providers
 - it calls for consistency in decision making
 - it supports record keeping for recognition of learning outcomes
- valuing the work of educators and staff and incorporating the work they do (also via links to the proposal for Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in HE, which is part of the HE package published this spring)
- steps to be taken by the Member States:
 - putting into practice the 17 recommendations and policy frameworks
 - contributing to the targets
 - ensuring cooperation with all relevant stakeholders
 - informing the EC by end of 2026 of existing or planned internationalisation / mobility strategies
- steps to be taken by the EC:
 - developing quantitative monitoring by 2026 (including inclusion indicator)
 - developing qualitative monitoring (renewing and expanding the Mobility Scoreboard - including expanding to other sectors, e.g. VET)
 - supporting youth participation (via the “Youth Check”)
 - realizing and publishing study on balanced mobility by 2025
 - analysing strategies/approaches that Member States will submit by end 2026

Q&A with the EC:

Q: What is the difference between a **target** and an **aspiration**?

A: An aspiration is a little bit “lower on the scale” than a specific target, but it is showing in which way we want to move on the EU level.

Q: How will the indicators for inclusion be developed?

A: The Commission asked Eurostat and they will make a proposal after discussion with the Member States.

Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU

- there was much discussion between the EC and the Council on the targets, because the MS have to explain them to their stakeholders, especially taking into account that the previous targets were not met yet and the current CRec is further increasing them
- some issues are more difficult to solve and take more time and there is need for political will and for national funding – for example providing more housing for students might not be quick, unless there is already a programme running in the given MS
- it is important to realize that the targets are set as an average on the EU level, which means that not each MS has to reach them on its own, but everyone needs to contribute to the overall numbers
 - some MS have even higher targets on their national level (e.g. in Austria it is 26 %)
- there is a need to deal with the issues of data and comparability, because national and EU level data for a given country is not always in line (because of the use of different methodologies)
- Concerning inclusion: there is a need to define what is a social inclusion, who to include in these numbers and how to calculate the percentage
 - in Austria for example a report is published every year combining different data sources, such as statistical agencies, surveys, conferences, etc. both from public and private universities (data for 2022 were published this year)
 - for some MS this might be more problematic, because there is less or no collection of data so far (and in some cases, even if there is data collection, some MS reported that people don’t want to declare themselves as belonging to a group which needs extra support)



- therefore, there was a lot of discussion concerning methodology and an agreement was reached between the Council and the EC, that EC will first develop the methodology and then the targets will potentially be set up
- Concerning the target of 23 % of mobile students and the need to submit national strategies:
 - some MS already have some strategies concerning mobilities, but they might not be fully in line with the CRec, some MS have no strategies so far
 - in Austria a strategy exists, and it also includes co-financing and support from the ministry
 - this topic also opens a question, if the development of mobility strategies is the role of the state or of the higher education institutions themselves
 - Austria is encouraging the EC to put more money to mobilities - it is one of the states which believes that physical mobility should be at the core (there is very little support for virtual and blended mobilities, because important aspects of impact are missing, such as the cultural experience of travelling abroad etc.). But at the same time, Austria agrees that in case of students who wouldn't go anywhere at all, it is beneficial to offer them the online experience, which might then motivate them to go for a longer physical mobility later in their studies.
- the Council agrees with the EC that now there is a certain momentum to focus on mobilities, which needs to be taken into account – in this context the CRec is a new political push which is in general welcomed by the MS
 - even if the new targets are not fully achieved in the end, it is important that the EU and MS will focus on removing barriers and making steps to solve the issues connected with mobilities (such as providing more housing, better embedding mobilities in education pathways, increasing the quality, etc.), because if we manage to do this, the number of mobilities will increase naturally
- Concerning funding: if we work on removing the barriers and we will be able to show that the trend is upward, this might also help in getting more support and more funding.

South Sweden universities

- universities completely agree that it is also their role to reach the targets and to support mobilities, but at the same time they need sufficient means and support to achieve this
- to move forward the universities would call for:
 - more flexibility in the Erasmus+ programme (such as more guidance, sharing of best practices, more support for blended mobilities within Alliances, etc.)
 - holistic approach between the EU and the national levels to avoid inconsistencies and additional burden (for example, there are a lot of common points between this CRec and the recently adopted Tirana communiqué, such as support for seamless mobility, removing barriers, preparing action plans and supporting more inclusive, more balanced, more green mobility)
- concerning inclusion: in general universities are facing decrease of disadvantaged students – the inclusion aspiration cannot be matched, if there are not enough students from disadvantaged backgrounds enrolling in HE (in this regards there is need for more national support for these students)

