

## ***Reaction to the “Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Diplomas and learning periods abroad”.***

On 22nd May 2018, the European Commission released the new package of initiatives as part of the ambitious work towards a European Education Area, which includes the [“Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Diplomas and learning periods abroad”](#).

Our organisations, which have carried out the campaign [#RecogniseStudyAbroad](#) over the past two years, welcome this initiative as an **important step towards removal of barriers to learning mobility**, also for school students. Therefore, we are very glad to see that the calls and stands from the campaign are well-reflected in the Commission’s Proposal.

We appreciate that the Commission recognises that **in general secondary education, mutual recognition processes are underdeveloped**. We are also glad that the Commission’s proposal underlines the urgent need for measures in this field ‘in view of an expansion of pupil mobility at secondary level in the future generation of the Erasmus+ programme’.

As highlighted in [EFIL’s study](#) (which is also mentioned in the text of the Proposal) the school period spent abroad is not recognised in many Member States, and in those countries where recognition is regulated, the application is often not effective, highly bureaucratic, and complex to the point that students opt for a “gap year” instead. For this reason, we welcome the Commission’s proposal of **mutual and automatic recognition**, ensuring that *“the outcomes from a learning period of up to one year abroad during secondary education and training in one Member State are fully recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year in the country of origin, provided that the competences acquired are broadly in line with the competences defined in the national curricula”*.

We are pleased to see that the Proposal refers to existing best practices, such as in Austria and Italy where automatic recognition of learning periods spent in any country is already a reality, and suggests **building on positive examples** to spread automatic recognition to all Member States.

In implementing mutual and automatic recognition processes, Member States’ education systems should shift from “traditional” content-based curricula to a competence-based approach, which recognises the development of attitudes and skills, beyond subject knowledge. Therefore, we strongly appreciate and support the Commission’s recommendation of ‘further developing the assessment and validation of key competences’, and promoting the use of tools, such as **competence-based learning agreements** between the sending and hosting institutions. When learning mobilities are organised by **expert mobility providers (like non-profit pupil exchange organisations)** it would be advisable to involve them in the preparation of learning agreements and in the assessment of competences, in order to take into account both the competences gained through formal education and the transversal competences developed through non-formal and informal learning.

For what concerns **implementation of the Council recommendation**, we welcome the proposal to *“launch an EU cooperation process and implement a technical step-by-step approach to build trust in each other’s education and training systems”* and the invitation to Member states to produce national guidance,

promote the use of transparency criteria and tools, exchange information on quality assurance systems, and ‘improve the evidence base’. We call on the involvement of non-profit pupil mobility organisations in the whole implementation process, since they have developed knowledge of and expertise in dealing with recognition systems, and of school students, since they are those directly impacted.

While we see a potential benefit in **exploring an extension of the scope of National Academic Recognition Information Centres** to recognition of learning periods abroad during secondary education, we call on taking into consideration the main differences between higher education and secondary school. Non-profit exchange organisations can provide support in these regards and contribute to ensuring that implementation, support and information systems are youth-friendly and close to the learner.

**We now call on the Council to maintain all the good provisions** contained in this document and ensure, at a later stage, that Member States implement these recommendations consistently. The Preparatory Action “Recognise Study Abroad”, presented by MEP Emilian Pavel and MEP Julie Ward, would contribute to supporting Member States in moving forward in the direction recommended by the EU.

We are convinced that this Proposal represents a cornerstone towards the creation of a European Education Area, where all learners can benefit from the great opportunities offered by learning mobility. Therefore recognition is an initial step in the right direction, but consequently other types of support are expected (such as financial or language support) to make study periods abroad more accessible for all learners.

## Who we are



EFIL is the umbrella of 30 national organisations running AFS Intercultural programmes in Europe, providing intercultural learning opportunities for school pupils, schools and volunteers. With its experience of over one century in pupil exchanges, reaching 12.000 pupils and 40.000 volunteers worldwide, AFS is a non-profit world-class intercultural education organisation which has given a significant contribution to help the world learn to live together.



EEE-YFU is the umbrella organisation for national YFU organisations in Europe and currently has 28 member organisations. Youth For Understanding is a non-profit youth exchange organisation, providing exchange programmes for 15 to 18 year old students in more than 50 countries worldwide. EEE-YFU works to support its member organisations to grow as quality and sustainable organisations.



The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.