

## ENGLISH SUMMARY

The Upper Rhine region is a cross-border area at the heart of Europe between France, Germany and Switzerland, including Alsace, the Western part of Baden-Wurttemberg, the South of Rhineland-Palatinate and the North of Switzerland. This area has a size of 21,000 km<sup>2</sup> and counts 5.9 million inhabitants. With a GDP of 165 billion Euros annually, the region enjoys strong economic growth. The cross-border labour market, with more than 90,000 commuters crossing the borders, is an important socio-economic reality.

More than fifty years of cross-border cooperation on the Upper Rhine have left this border region to play an important role as testing laboratory for European integration in many fields. The Franco-German-Swiss Conference of the Upper Rhine, in which the cooperation of 600 experts in 13 theme-based working groups and 40 specialised committees is coordinated, provides the institutional framework for this cooperation which has resulted in a great number of projects and initiatives. Within the Upper Rhine Conference, the working group on education and the expert group on vocational training bring together a great diversity of actors from the different national and local administrations.

The region has an obvious interest in promoting the learning mobility of young people on all levels and in the different fields of education and training and has been successful in making progress on these issues. One of its flagship projects is the European Confederation of Upper Rhine Universities (EUCOR) which allows each student from the universities in the region to participate in courses offered by one of the partner institutions in Switzerland, Germany and France and actively promotes exchanges between students and teachers by tri-national co-operations in research and education. A particular emphasis is placed on joined bilingual courses with dual degrees. A more recent project concerns the implantation of cross-border vocational courses in the craft trades provided in the Strasbourg/Ortenau Eurodistrict, a project which is currently in an experimental phase.

The different views, observations and assessments assembled in the contribution of the Upper Rhine region to the Green Paper on learning mobility of young people are thus based on an extensive and long experience from a wide background.

The different partners and actors who have shared their expertise agree that there is indeed wealth of information and guidance available on mobility-related issues, in particular for higher education students and researchers.

However, the situation is much less advantageous for young people in schools, vocational education and apprenticeship training. With regard to the intention to promote the increased participation of these target groups in mobility measures, their specific conditions, needs and interests have to be addressed individually. For each age group and at each step of the educational career, the question is what kind of actions and measures can most effectively contribute to the overall objective to promote mobility.

As for young people in schools, mobility, along with language skills, need to be addressed as early as possible as a natural component of their educational career as well as a fulfilling experience for their personal development. At an earlier stage, these issues should be communicated in a playful manner and accompanied by mobility measures, in order to help overcome the apprehensions that are quite often associated with leaving abroad. Later on, when career orientation becomes an issue, effective guidance must be available and take place proactively to help understand the

importance of mobility for future employability and to take the first practical steps to plan and prepare a mobility period. This requires heightened awareness among teachers, and also parents, and adequate resources as far as time and qualified personnel is concerned in the immediate school environment which is currently not sufficiently available and needs to be supported.

Concerning the mobility of young people in vocational education and apprenticeship training, they encounter a number of difficulties which make it difficult to conceive and implement measures and schemes that go beyond limited and short-time mobility periods. The current experience in the Upper Rhine region based on the efforts to implement a pilot program on cross-border vocational courses in the craft trades shows that it takes an enormous effort to make possible the mutual recognition and validation of mobility periods in view of the complexity of the national systems. More importantly, especially in the area of vocational education and training, regulations still inhibit mobility, in particular their implications for the status of mobile young people in their host country as far as social security and health insurance are concerned.

With regards to the language skills of young people in vocational education and apprenticeship training, teaching methods must be better adapted to the specific prerequisite and needs of this target group and be inherently linked to the career objectives.

On a more general level, the different partners who are represented in this contribution are in agreement that the rigidities and administrative obligations of the rules and regulations of European programmes and financing as well as the great number and complexity of existing opportunities have a limiting impact on their availability. They therefore welcome the process initiated by the Green Paper and express their hope that it will also result in the creation of tools and means for better accessibility.