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# Policies and initiatives supporting young mobile people in Europe

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## Abstract

This paper addresses questions concerning the usefulness of migration and flanking policies and initiatives to support young mobile people in Europe at different levels of governance, including the European, as well as national and regional and/or local levels. The paper analyses the commonalities and particularities of existing support policies and initiatives in different geographical contexts. Diverse beneficial and potentially also adverse outcomes for regions of origin and destination, as well as for young mobile people with heterogeneous characteristics are critically examined. The paper demonstrates that some young migrants were not aware of policies and initiatives which were designed to support them during their stay in another European country or after their return. Other young European migrants did not want to make use of any support measures. Some of them argued that they did not need any form of support because they were able to make all arrangements themselves or with the help of relatives and/or friends and because they could rely on personal contacts or their own savings to finance their stays abroad. Many of the interviewees, however, also said that they did not desire to receive any financial support to avoid being framed as a petitioner, when their main goal was to work or study in another country. This finding is particularly relevant in times of increasingly widespread and openly addressed public discourses on "welfare tourism" from poor to more affluent European countries. Nevertheless, support for the European mobile youths in some cases can be highly relevant for those who do not possess sufficient financial resources and/or access to support networks. This is important, on the one hand in order to increase the benefits of the education or work experiences abroad. On the other hand, it can help overcoming barriers to mobility for some young Europeans who would otherwise not be able to live and pursue tertiary education or work in another country because of financial constraints or because of a lack of access to relevant sources of information about stays abroad. In this vein, for instance the ERASMUS programme has largely increased the participation of young people in European and also more and more in global student mobility. Likewise volunteer programmes and initiatives to support vocational training have enabled temporary but sometimes also more extended stays for young people in other European countries. The results presented in this paper are based on research findings from the YMOBILITY project, particularly on qualitative interviews with migrants and returnees. Additional information was retrieved from a literature review of earlier academic and policy-making research into support mechanisms for European youth mobility. Furthermore, some examples of policies and initiatives at the national and regional levels were analysed. The presentation of the most relevant findings is followed by a discussion of cases of interest for further analysis. Policies and initiatives might be of interest because they have generated some sort of outcome that was perceived as being favourable to

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either the migrants or returnees or to the destination region. In addition to the discussion of some relevant research findings, the paper also makes some recommendations on how existing policies can be improved to more efficiently support young European mobile people. Based on the example of the YMOBILITY project, the paper furthermore shows how collaborations between researchers engaged in the project and national and local initiatives to support young European migrants can successfully be developed. In this context also some potential avenues for mutually beneficial ways of exchanging and using existing academic and practical knowledge will be explored.

**Keywords:** YMOBILITY, youth, mobility, migration, policies, initiatives