Hosts: DG EMPL B.3 represented by Andrea LERUSTE and Vera LEUNER

Summary: The representatives of border regions seemed very interested and had a lot to share on this topic. The main points raised were the need for **speeding up the recognition process** and make it **more transparent**, as well as the need for **automated recognition** (even if it is just temporary), while waiting for the official recognition. Another point raised, was thatprocedures are **made for transnational mobility and not cross-border mobility** and that an important information for employers is the **content of the training,** not only the diploma**.** Moreover, the call for proposals is open until the 27th of February.

Main questions addressed to the representatives of border regions during this meeting:

* ***What would you want EU policymakers working on the Skills Portability Initiative to take into account from the perspective of cross-border regions?***
* ***How do you think the SPI could help workers and self-employed in cross-border regions, and how big would the impact be?***
* **Leyre AZCONA** (Eurorégion Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre): The **recognition of diplomas takes too much time and is not transparent enough for citizens**, above all for regulated professions. She named the example of the health sector: A lot of people from the Basque country are interested in accessing the French labour market but don’t get access because their diploma is not recognised. **For the diplomas recognised by the directive, the situation is often very unclear** because they often ask for additional trainings and internships. This concerns **mainly vocational training**.
* **Lavinia KORETESE** (Utrecht University): Pointed out that **procedures are made for transnational mobility and not cross-border mobility**. It often leads to the fact that **when the recognition procedure is done, the job is gone**.
* **Gabriele BOBERMIEN** (German Federal Employment Agency): She stressed that employers need **more information on the content, not only an official diploma**. Europass is already a good instrument, but it would be good to have an online instrument where an employer could find out more on the content of the qualification. After a question from EMPL asking if the learning outcomes as information would be enough, she answered by saying yes and adding **practical experience as an important information for employers**.
* **Charlotte VENEMA** (General Secretariate of Benelux Union): Mentioned that within the health or education sector, employers prefer to employ national workers, to avoid complications. She also mentioned that the **common training frameworks are useless on the cross-border-level**, because of the 1/3 threshold of the MS.
* **Stephanie CLÜSSERATH** (German Federal Employment Agency): Raised the issue of German employers often just paying the amount for a skilled worker when there is a certificate. She said that at the end of the day, we would need a **European certificate**.
* **Ricardo FERREIRA** (DG REGIO): Emphasised that when considering border regions we need to change the mindset. The existing tools were designed for elites. Therefore, we do not need to go for the most perfect tool, but the most accessible tool for citizens. Another aspect to consider is thinking beyond current tools and exploring **automated solutions**. He named the example of a doctor, crossing a border on an ambulance. As the doctor crosses the border, the medical professional is not registered in a professional association anymore. This could be prevented if legislation would **foresee the automatic recognition (even temporary)** on the other side of the border. The same applies to non-regulated professions (for example the gardener). The long process of making it equivalent may make sense if we think about long distance mobility, but in a cross-border context, where we should have **automatic recognition on both sides** (or within a timeframe until you get the full recognition).
* **Jean RUBIO** (MOT): Promoted the **working group** on shortages in cross-border territories and a position paper that is going to be published soon.
* **Céline LAFORSCH** (Task Force Greater Region “Grenzgänger”): She mentioned the **assurance problem cross-border workers face**. Private assurance companies do not want to assure people on both sides of the border which constitutes a hurdle.

POLICY OPTIONS

* **Leyre AZCONA** (Eurorégion Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre): In general, the tools should be modernised in order to facilitate the **portability through digital credentials**. In other cases, it might be easier to choose the pragmatic solution and show that you have working experience. It is very important to **reinforce national systems for recognition**. Another problem she addressed is the fact that **Spanish workers are sometimes paid a lower salary because there is no proof such as a certificate**. She explained that a system with some kind of transition period would be helpful, e.g. in case if a few hours are missing on the diploma.
* **Stefanie CLÜSSERATH** (German Federal Employment Agency): Said that we need a **centralised system in a country and not allow companies to go for their own way**. She also shared the opinion that for non-regulated professionals, **especially manual** professions this step should not be so complicated.
* **Alessia VETERE** (Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia): According to her, it would be necessary to make a step back. **Before thinking about concrete procedures, we should start to think about the assessment phase**. A **digital unique system** could help to **let all the organisations involved access and evaluate** in a common way.

ON THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS:

* **Annmarie O’KANE** (Centre for Cross Border Cooperation, Ireland): On the IR-UK border, there is a real concern that Northern Ireland will diverge even more. It is crucial for them that **external borders**, such as the IR-UK border, are considered during the process
* **Ricardo FERREIRA** (DG REGIO): Commented on the biggest concern of third country nationals in border regions, which is that their **permit of resident** is not valid on the other side of the border. This can be raised by DG EMPL but has to be solved by DG HOME.