Response to the Green Paper on behalf of the Rotterdam Law Network (RLN):

The Rotterdam Law Network established by Erasmus University Rotterdam in 1995, started as a small network and grew into a network of 30 universities over the years.

Law schools from almost all EU member states, candidate member states, EEA countries are represented in this unique, multidisciplinary network: deans, professors, staff from international offices attend the annual meeting.

Erasmus School of Law (Erasmus University Rotterdam) is coordinator of this network. Activities of the network include: student exchange, teaching staff exchange, (Administrative) staff mobility, and annual meeting/seminar.

In general:

General tendency within the Rotterdam Law Network is that many (especially Western European) universities have observed a decrease in student exchange numbers to other European partners. For some Eastern European universities the numbers are still growing.

- Many student exchanges happen outside Europe. Students pay more attention nowadays to rankings of foreign universities and many high ranked universities are situated outside Europe. Plus, many students are unfamiliar with/have prejudices about (Eastern) European countries/educational systems.

- There are still many differences among the legal educational systems in European countries. The systems vary from combined/interdisciplinary Bachelor law programmes to specialised Bachelor legal education or general programme. In some countries a Bachelor Degree is sufficient to get access to the judicial profession; in other countries an additional Master’s programme is required. Student exchange possibilities may be limited because of the organisation of the curriculum (and many national bar associations require a large number of compulsory national law subjects which makes it more difficult for students to go abroad without losing too much time). Especially student mobility after the first degree is limited because of the conditions set by bar associations.

- Another reason why students may choose destinations outside Europe is that many universities do not provide enough courses in English. Due to time/financial constraints students cannot always study a new language.
Part 1 preparation of the mobility period

P7 How can the availability of information and guidance related to mobility be improved?
Please provide examples of good practice, including appropriate tools and ways to make such information available.

Please make sure that staff is available for promoting and guiding/supervising student exchange. In many universities attention has shifted from international student exchange to international student recruitment of fee paying (degree) students. Universities should be aware of the fact that student exchange is, although not “new” anymore, important in many ways.

It is also important to have office hours for exchange students, as many students have questions. It is also important to have academic staff actively involved in promoting exchange.

1. Good practice: the website www.studyin.nl with information (in English) about studying and living in the Netherlands

2. Erasmus University Rotterdam has a website for exchange students with extensive information on exchange programmes.

3. Erasmus School of Law has its own website for Dutch students about exchange. The website contains information on:
   - why it is a good idea to spend time at a university abroad
   - list of partner universities + direct links to their websites
   - clear information on transferring of grades
   - student essays (so students can read about the experiences of other students)
   - information on requirements + application forms
   - contact information

Once a year, Erasmus School of Law organizes an information session. Next to Erasmus School of Law staff giving information to interested students, former exchange students tell about their experiences (and can answer questions from students who would like to go on an exchange).

Innsbruck: Due to my experience students do not visit the several information-web sites offered by the university and the faculty, because they don’t know of them. Maybe it would help to increase the visits if eg at semester start the teachers would inform shortly about the information-websites within their courses.

Stockholm: Relevant links to the partner universities on the domestic
website would be of great help to the students who are looking for information. Maybe a format of some kind would be good to have access to in order to mainstream the load of information.

**P 8** What can be done to better promote and motivate young people to be mobile? How should this be done to ensure maximum effect? Please provide concrete examples of good practice in this area.

- Promote exchange where possible. Students should be aware of all the possibilities, so it should already be mentioned during their first year of studies.
- Emphasize the importance of going abroad; remove all (administrative) obstacles and doubts where possible.
- Have employers “advertise” going abroad as a plus for your future career.
- Make use of tools such as Youtube: promotional videos etc. Or advertise on television (other commercial are also funded by the EU), have a popular/well-known person tell about her/his exchange experience.

**Innsbruck**: Students who have been mobile themselves should talk about their (good) experiences and motivate their colleagues to be mobile, eg within the frame of an information evening/hour etc. Personal contacts are more effective than reading the reports of former outgoings.

**Stockholm**: Introductory meetings with the students are gainful in order to show the supply of courses of the partner universities. The variety of the supply of courses is rampant. Some offer special programmes which must be highlighted. Interviews with the prospective students will also be very helpful to avoid information fallacies (asymmetric information). We have not experienced any “main barriers” to motivate the students to be mobile.

**P 8** What do you see as the main barriers to the motivation of young people to become mobile?

Lack of time (government grant is for 4 years only), i.e. resulting in study delay, money, part-time jobs, boyfriend/girlfriend, and unfamiliarity/ignorance with some countries/languages.

**Innsbruck**: Time pressure to finish their studies and financial reasons.

**P 9** How can the linguistic and cultural obstacles to mobility be best addressed?

Please provide examples of good practice.

Although Europe has a rich diversity of languages, of which some are less spoken, all countries/universities should try to offer English taught courses to facilitate exchange. For many students it is important to avoid study delay. Taking up a new language before going on an exchange will cost too
much time. Further, language tests should be mandatory for all exchange students as part of their selection. Often we receive students from Spain, Italy etc who do not possess the right language qualifications in order to be able to understand the lectures.

**Innsbruck:** The students have to bring enough linguistic skills before they go out. Our school education provides all students with at least 1 foreign language (English), many of them have learned French too, also Italian and Spanish is offered during school education. Several (preparing) language courses at university are available.

**Stockholm** We see few obstacles with respect to language and culture. The students must be encouraged to experience something different. Doctoral students may encounter obstacles with respect to the different national regulations in force in various countries.

**P 9** What are the main legal obstacles to mobility that you have encountered? Please give concrete examples.

Not all law courses can be transferred. In order to get access to the bar in the Netherlands, a student will need to have completed certain Dutch Law courses which are taught during all 4 years. Going on an exchange means a study delay as they will have to catch up with some typical Dutch law courses when students return to the Netherlands.

**P 9** Can you provide examples of good practice in overcoming legal obstacles to mobility?

Creating a so-called “minor” in the 3rd Bachelor year. Students can choose any subject they want (however, this minor is only worth 15 ects).

**P10** What kind of obstacles have you encountered regarding the portability of grants and loans and access to benefits? Please give concrete examples?

None, students can still make use of their government grant and they will be reimbursed for the months that they do not use their public transportation card (also offered by the Dutch Government)

**Stockholm:** The Swedish students encounter no obstacles with respect to the portability of study grants or loans.

**P 11** What more should be done to promote mobility to and from the European Union? How should this be done? Please provide examples of good practice.

Provide more information on the various educational systems (the Bachelor/Master structure is not the same for each country) and on the
countries, sometimes it is because of ignorance that students do not want to travel to certain countries.

**Stockholm:** Incentives may be promoted. There are such programmes in Sweden, encouraging student exchange both to and from the European Union.

**P 13** What measures can be taken to ensure that the mobility period is of high quality? Please provide examples of good practice.

Make sure that your students have a good basic knowledge of their field of studies (so have them complete at least two years of studies before they go on an exchange), check their language skills (we have a mandatory institutional TOEFL test or students should follow a language course) and they should write a motivational essay and hand in a learning agreement.

Good practice: Erasmus University Rotterdam also participates in the International Student Barometer (an independent and confidential feedback process for education providers, tracking the decision-making, perceptions, expectations and experiences of students studying outside their home country). A special commission was set up to work on items that students were less satisfied with.

**Innsbruck:** We are not touched by this as we do have the Erasmus student Charter and follow the rules.

**P 13** Which are the most important difficulties encountered by disadvantaged groups with regard to learning mobility? Please provide examples of good practice of how such difficulties can be overcome.

We have not received nor sent out any students from disadvantaged groups.

**Innsbruck:** No observations; special grants are provided for outgoings with special needs in order to cover higher costs.

**Stockholm:** A dialogue must be kept with partner universities and the outgoing students in order to achieve quality. Words are easily spread among the students of what is good or less good. We run courses in English open to both domestic and foreign students. The Swedish students are able to benchmark those courses since they have past experience from other courses they already have attended at the domestic institution. This is also an aspect relating to quality. So far, we do not have much experience of “disadvantaged groups” of students. In the few cases we have met, the difficulties have been accommodated.
Part 2 Actual Period Spent abroad

P 14 Can you give some concrete examples of good practice in this area (mentoring and integration)?

Erasmus School of Law has its own “international office” for international students. During special office hours, students can drop by and if they need more time they can make an appointment. An introduction week is organized at the beginning if the year and at the beginning of the second semester.

ELSA (European Law Students Association) set up a buddy system for international students. These buddies may provide a pickup at the airport and will show around the new international students. ESN (Erasmus Student Network) provides a similar buddy system and an introduction weekend and various activities throughout the year.

Innsbruck: Incomings are provided with information guide, welcome evening, students organizations help etc.

Stockholm: Mentoring and integration is already done, such as introductory programmes and staff that is available.

P 15 In your experience, is the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning still a significant obstacle to mobility?

It is not a significant obstacle, but it does set some limitations. Even though ECTS credits are recognized and validated (they will appear on the transcript), they cannot always be exchanged for Dutch (law) courses.

Please give concrete examples and your views on what can be done to improve the situation.

Stockholm: A few of our partner universities do not recognize the supply of English taught courses. This entails that the student will have to catch up with other courses in order to meet the requirements. Swedish students are treated generously with respect to recognition of courses attended at the host university.

Part 3 Proposals for a new partnership on youth mobility

P 17 How can all actors and resources at national, regional and local levels be better mobilized in the interest of youth mobility?

P 17 Can you provide examples of successful territorial partnerships?

P 17 Can you provide good examples and innovative ideas on the funding of youth mobility?
P 18  How can businesses be motivated to become more strongly involved in youth mobility? Please provide examples of good practice.

By explaining that for businesses it might also be interesting to host students from different cultures (they may make use of the knowledge from other cultures.). Plus, they can easily recruit well-qualified EU nationals in this way.

Business should offer trainee positions to encourage mobility. ICT could be used of to, e.g. enrich the knowledge and experience of the prospective students being selected to participate in a master programme before the start.

P 18  How can we best make use of ICTs to provide valuable virtual mobility opportunities to enrich the physical mobility?

Video conferencing. But also make use of Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Linkedin.

P 18  Can the eTwinning approach be used in other learning sectors e.g. voluntary service, vocational sector?

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P 20  Should mobility opportunities for "multipliers" (teachers, trainers, youth workers, etc.) be given additional support and prominence in European programmes?

Yes, however, some practicalities cannot be taken away (such as who will replace a lecturer when he is abroad etc). ESN (Rotterdam) should be given additional support.

Innsbruck: In principle: yes. Installing special bureaus and staff (like at universities) could be helpful.

P 20  What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of teachers and trainers in promoting mobility?

Some believe that typical Dutch law courses should be followed in the Netherlands and not in another country. And, even though lecturers may have good knowledge about the partner universities, they have usually not experienced what it is like to live there as a student. In this respect, students are much better ambassadors.

Innsbruck: Presumably lack of time

Stockholm: teachers may very well be the “ambassadors”, but it is our
view that the students are better “ambassadors” to encourage a good mobility among students. Teachers may provide know-how or tacit knowledge that is not attainable via websites. Incentives are needed, such as reduction of teaching load at the home university, if mobility takes place. The teacher mobility would score far higher figures if research also was encouraged and the stay at the host university was longer than a week. What’s in it for me - is a target question.

P 21 Do you consider targets a useful tool in defining a mobility strategy and if so, at what level (European, national, institutional, sectoral, etc.)? Please provide examples of good practice.

Yes, particularly on national level.

Innsbruck: Only if they are reachable (50 % seems absurd)

Stockholm: Targets do work.