Culture and education

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ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

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The European Union’s action in the field of culture supplements Member States’ cultural policy in various areas: for example, the preservation of the European cultural heritage, cooperation between various countries’ cultural institutions, and the promotion of mobility among those working creatively. The cultural sector is also affected by provisions of the Treaties which do not explicitly pertain to culture.

LEGAL BASIS

The Treaty of Lisbon places great importance on culture: the preamble to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) explicitly refers to ‘drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe’. One of the EU’s key aims, as specified in the Treaty, is to ‘respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and […] ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced’ (Article 3 TEU). Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that the EU’s competences in the field of culture are to ‘carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States’.

Article 167 TFEU provides further details on EU action in the field of culture: the EU must contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Action by the Union should encourage cooperation between Member States and support and supplement their action in improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, conserving and safeguarding cultural heritage of European significance, and fostering non-commercial cultural exchanges and artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector. The Union and Member States may also foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations. Respect for, and the promotion of the diversity of, European cultures need to be taken into account when taking action under other provisions of the Treaty.

Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that ‘the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint’. Article 22 of the same charter lays down the requirement that ‘the EU shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Policy developments

1. European Agenda for Culture

Since 2007 the European Agenda for Culture has been the strategic framework for EU action in the cultural sector. It is based on the promotion of three strategic objectives: (1) cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; (2) culture as a catalyst for creativity; and (3) culture as a key component of international relations. The Agenda’s core methods are dialogue with cultural stakeholders and the open method of coordination. The 2015-2018 Work Plan for Culture further concretises the agenda and sets out four priorities: (1) accessible and inclusive culture; (2) cultural heritage; (3) cultural and
creative sectors: the creative economy and innovation; and (4) promotion of cultural diversity. The priorities are put into practice in 20 concrete actions.

The Joint Communication ‘Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations’ presented by the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in mid-2016 is aimed at encouraging cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries and promoting a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values.

Intercultural dialogue is an ongoing priority of the EU. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, this dimension has become even more significant. In the specific area of culture policy, initiatives such as those on Roma culture, intercultural cities, and dialogue with the Platform on Intercultural Europe are in the spotlight. Other EU policies promoting intercultural dialogue include, to name but a few, those relating to the audiovisual sector, multilingualism, youth, research, integration and external relations.

B. Action programmes and secondary legislation

1. Creative Europe — the EU’s culture programme for 2014-2020

The Creative Europe programme (2014-2020) has a budget of EUR 1.46 billion for the programming period (9% higher than the previous level). Under its umbrella it brings together earlier Union programmes: the MEDIA programmes (1991-2013), the MEDIA Mundus programme (2011-2013), and the Culture programmes (2000-2013). It also includes a cross-sectoral sub-programme consisting of (1) a financial guarantee, managed by the European Investment Fund, to make it easier for small operators to access bank loans, and (2) funding to support studies, analysis and better data collection with a view to improving the evidence base for policymaking.

Under its CULTURE sub-programme (for the MEDIA sub-programme, please see the fact sheet on audiovisual and media policy (3.6.2)), there is funding available for (1) transnational cooperation projects between organisations active in the cultural and creative sectors; (2) European networks that aim to enable the workforce in the culture and creative sectors with specific skills and experience, international cooperation and new professional opportunities; (3) European platforms facilitating the mobility and visibility of creators and artists, Europe-wide programming of cultural and artistic activities and audience development and visibility; and (4) literary translation of (packages of) works and their promotion.

2. European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs)

The European Capitals of Culture is one of the EU’s most successful and best-known cultural initiatives. Two cities — in two different EU countries — are given ECoC status each year. The cities are selected by an independent panel of experts on the basis of a cultural programme that must have a strong European dimension, involve local people of all ages and contribute to the long-term development of the city. Over the years, the ECoCs have also become a unique opportunity to regenerate cities, boost their creativity and improve their image. More than 40 cities have been designated as ECoCs so far. The procedure for choosing a city starts some six years in advance, although the order of the Member States entitled to host the event is established before then, and is organised in two stages.

The rules and conditions for holding the title, up to and including 2019, are set out in Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.
Decision 445/2014/EU extended the chance to participate in ECoC to candidate and potential candidate countries, provided that they are already participating in the Creative Europe Programme by the date of publication of the call for applications.

For the period between 2020 and 2033, rules have recently been revised. In 2016, the Commission proposed to open up the action to EFTA/EEA countries. Parliament and the Council adopted the decision in 2017.

3. **European Heritage Label**

The European Heritage Label was initially brought into being as an intergovernmental initiative between several Member States in 2005. At the request of the Member States, the Commission proposed in 2010 to formally make the European Heritage Label an EU initiative. The label was established by Decision 1194/2011/EU. Its overarching objective is to strengthen intercultural dialogue and European citizens’ sense of belonging to the Union. In order to achieve these aims, sites are selected for their high symbolic value, the role they have played in the history and culture of Europe and the European Union, and their relation to democratic principles and human rights. So far 29 sites have been designated.

4. **European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018**

On 30 August 2016, the Commission put forward a proposal to Parliament and the Council calling for 2018 to be designated the European Year of Cultural Heritage, in response to requests from both the Council and Parliament. The Year would seek to highlight the role of Europe’s cultural heritage in fostering a shared sense of history and identity. The proposal was adopted by Parliament and the Council in the first half of 2017. The European Year will have a specific financial envelope of EUR 8 million for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018.

5. **Unlawful removal of cultural objects**

With Directive 2014/60/EU, a recast of Directive 93/7/EEC, the EU aims to protect national treasures and reconcile their protection with the principle of free movement of goods. It provides for the physical return of cultural objects that have been unlawfully removed from the territories of EU countries.

It sets out cooperation mechanisms and return proceedings against the possessor to secure the return of a cultural object unlawfully removed from the territory of one EU country to the territory of another EU country on or after 1 January 1993. It covers all cultural objects identified as ‘national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value’ under national legislation.

6. **Prizes**

The EU’s cultural policy supports the awarding of prizes in the fields of cultural heritage, architecture, literature and music. The objective of these EU prizes is to highlight the excellent quality and success of European activities in these sectors. The prizes put the spotlight on artists, musicians, architects, writers and those working in the field of cultural heritage, and on their work. In doing so, they showcase Europe’s rich cultural diversity and the importance of intercultural dialogue and cross-border cultural activities in Europe and beyond.
ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In its role as co-legislator, the European Parliament has recently adopted the Commission proposals to open the European Capitals of Culture initiative to EFTA and EEA countries, and to make 2018 a European Year of Cultural Heritage. In the previous legislature it shaped, together with the Council, the European Heritage Label and the Directive on the return of cultural objects removed from the territory of a Member State. Parliament took up the subject of cultural heritage in its resolution of 8 September 2015 towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe[1], and stressed that while the main value of cultural heritage remains its cultural significance, it also has a role to play in growth and jobs.

In 2012 and 2013 Parliament negotiated with the Council on the main financial support for the cultural and creative sector, the Creative Europe programme. In negotiations on the MFF, as well as throughout the annual budgetary procedures, Parliament fights consistently for increased budgetary allocations for the programme. An implementation report on the Creative Europe programme was voted in the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) in January 2017 and the corresponding resolution was adopted in plenary on 2 March 2017[2]. This resolution underlined the need for an appropriate budget and simplified administrative procedures in order to achieve greater impact. Members also underlined the importance of easing access to funding for small-scale projects. The conclusions of this resolution on Creative Europe will feed into the mid-term review report to be tabled by the Commission by the end of 2017.

Parliament has, in various resolutions[3], expressed its long-standing interest in the potential and development of cultural and creative industries (CCIs). Not only are CCIs the expression of cultural diversity, but they also employ 7.5% of the EU workforce, creating approximately EUR 509 billion in value added to GDP. In its resolution of 13 December 2016 on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries, Parliament called for a strategic approach to unleash the potential of CCIs[4]. It asked the Commission to adopt measures on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries, developing a comprehensive, coherent and long-term industrial policy framework for the cultural and creative sector. It called for the adoption of several measures to improve the working conditions in the cultural and creative sector, i.a. by including CCIs in the Youth Employment Initiative and by providing funds to facilitate careers, entrepreneurship and training in this sector.

Parliament has also pushed for a strategic approach to the role of culture in external relations. In its Preparatory Action in the 2013 and 2014 budgets, entitled ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, it highlighted the considerable potential for culture in Europe’s external relations, and underlined that the European Union and its Member States stand to gain a great deal by better streamlining their cultural diplomacy. Its resolution of 12 May 2011 on the cultural dimensions of the EU’s external actions[5] pointed in the same direction. In 2016 it issued a resolution on intercultural dialogue[6]. In response to the Commission and EEAS Joint Communication ‘Towards an EU strategy for
international cultural relations’, Parliament adopted in July 2017 a resolution[7] drafted jointly by the AFET (Foreign Affairs) and CULT Committees. The resolution proposes several concrete initiatives, grouped under four strands: objectives; governance and tools; a people-to-people approach; and the EU global strategy. Recognising that culture is a powerful bridge between peoples, Parliament believes that culture should become an essential part of the EU’s political dialogue with non-EU countries, as it can help strengthen civil society, prevent radicalisation and conflicts, and disseminate EU values. MEPs recommend developing an effective EU strategy for international cultural relations, providing a separate EU budget line for this, launching an EU programme on international mobility and creating a Cultural Visa Programme.

Katarzyna Anna Iskra
10/2017

2 - EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING - [3.6.3.]

In education and vocational training policies, decision-making takes place under the ordinary legislative procedure. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, education and training policies are as such decided by each European Union (EU) Member State. The role of the EU is therefore a supporting one. However, some challenges are common to all Member States — ageing societies, skills deficits in the workforce, and global competition — and thus need joint responses with countries working together and learning from each other[1].

LEGAL BASIS

While vocational training was identified as an area of Community action in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, education was formally recognised as an area of EU competency in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The treaty states that the Community ‘shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity’.

The Treaty of Lisbon did not change the provisions on the role of the EU in education and training (Title XII, Articles 165 and 166). In addition, it contains a provision that can be described as a horizontal ‘social clause’. Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states: ‘In defining and implementing its policies and actions, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of … a high level of education [and] training’.

Moreover, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal value as the Treaties (Article 6 of the TEU), states: ‘Everyone has the right to education and to have access to continuing and vocational training’ (Article 14), as well as ‘the right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation’ (Article 15).

OBJECTIVES

A. Objectives pursuant to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

In its policies and actions, the Union must take account of requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of education and training. Thus, the EU’s long-term strategic objectives on education and training as set by the Council in 2009 are: (1) making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; (2) improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; (3) promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; (4) enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

[1]See also 3.6.4 on Higher Education.
B. Priorities on education and training

1. Europe 2020 and Education and Training 2020

Education and training policy has gained particular momentum with the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy. While the Member States have primary responsibility for education and training systems, the EU plays a key role in supporting and supplementing efforts to improve and modernise their education systems.

Under Europe 2020, Member States are given specific guidance on priority reforms each year in the form of country-specific recommendations. The strategic framework Education and Training (ET) 2020 outlines the objectives, instruments and arrangements for joint work at EU level. It is valid until 2020.

The mid-term review of the ET 2020 framework in 2015 confirmed the four strategic objectives and set the work cycle to five years (up from three in the 2010-2015 period). Its focus has been readjusted to reflect the importance of education and training for both employment and the promotion of fundamental values and active citizenship. Its six priority areas are: (1) relevant and high-quality skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes, for employability, innovation and active citizenship; (2) inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences; (3) open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era; (4) strong support for educators; (5) transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility; (6) sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems.

Progress is monitored with the help of indicators and against a set of benchmarks. Core indicators are also used to monitor progress in a number of additional priority areas currently not covered by benchmarks, such as languages, adult skills, investment in education and training, ICT in education, entrepreneurship in education, and vocational education and training (VET).

As part of ET 2020, the following EU benchmarks for 2020 have been set: (1) at least 95% of children between age 4 and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education; (2) the number of 15-year-olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%; (3) the number of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%; (4) the number of 30 to 34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%; (5) an average of at least 15% of adults (aged between 25 and 64) should participate in lifelong learning; (6) at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18 to 34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad; (7) the share of employed graduates (20 to 34-year-olds having successfully completed upper secondary or tertiary education) having left education 1 to 3 years ago should be at least 82%.[2]

2. VET for employment

In 2016, the Commission released its communication on a new skills agenda for Europe (COM(2016) 0381), in which it proposes actions to equip people with the skills needed

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in the job market and to make better use of the skills they already have, in order to help them find quality jobs and to improve their life chances.

One of the initiatives proposed under the ‘New Skills Agenda’ is an update of the Europass framework, which is the responsibility of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), one of the EU’s decentralised agencies.

Launched in 2005, Europass is a set of documents and tools, available in 28 languages, to help citizens of the EEA area to develop their own CV and portfolio of competences. In October 2016, the Commission proposed a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) — an update of the 2004 decision. Parliament and the Council are currently working on this proposal and will come to a decision under the ordinary legislative procedure in the second half of 2017 or in 2018.

The Copenhagen-Bruges Process is intended to enhance EU cooperation in the area of vocational education and training, and the priorities of the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning are concerned with promoting adult learning. Both these sectors have specific priorities for the period up to 2020.

Finally, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is the first EU initiative to fully integrate the three sides of the ‘knowledge triangle’ (education, research and innovation), and will seek to stand out as a world-class reference model, inspiring and driving change in existing education and research institutions (for detailed information on higher education, please refer to 3.6.4).

C. The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)

The fields of education, training and sport have been recognised as key drivers within the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade to overcome the socio-economic crisis affecting European countries, to boost growth and jobs and to foster social equity and inclusion.

Against this background, Erasmus+ is the EU programme for the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020. It builds upon earlier Union initiatives promoting exchanges and the development of education and training systems and youth work.

Erasmus+ is designed to support countries’ efforts to efficiently use the potential of Europe’s human and social capital, while affirming the principle of lifelong learning by linking support to formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout the fields of education, training and youth.

The specific objectives pursued by the Erasmus+ programme in the field of education and training are to: (1) improve the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society; (2) foster quality improvements, excellence in innovation, and internationalisation at the level of education and training institutions; (3) promote the emergence of and raise awareness on a European lifelong learning area designed to complement policy reforms at national level, and to support the modernisation of education and training systems; (4) enhance the international dimension of education.

[3]According to business people, European education and training systems continue to fall short in providing the right skills for employability, and are not working adequately with business or employers to bring the learning experience closer to the reality of the working environment.
and training; (5) improve the teaching and learning of languages and promote the EU’s broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness.

The ambitious goal of the new Erasmus+ is to promote synergies and cross-fertilisation throughout the different fields of education, training and youth, removing artificial boundaries between the various actions and project formats, fostering new ideas, attracting new actors from the world of work and civil society, and stimulating new forms of cooperation. For the education sector, it is delivering on these goals within a framework of key actions. Key Action 1 is centred on the mobility of students in higher education and VET and staff across all educational sectors, Key Action 2 revolves around partnerships, and Key Action 3 supports policy reform.

**ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Parliament has always supported close cooperation between Member States in the fields of education and training and enhancing the European dimension in Member States’ education policies. It has, therefore, been an advocate for the establishment of a solid legal basis for education and training and has worked successfully to secure an increase in the budget resources available for Erasmus+, as well as supporting a shift in the priorities of EU funding in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) towards what is regarded as more future-oriented expenditure.

Parliament also actively participates in the policy cycle linked to ET 2020 and responds to the reports prepared in that framework (examples being its resolution on education, training and Europe 2020 adopted on 11 September 2012 and that of 23 June 2016 on the follow-up of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)).

Parliament also takes a strong interest in Commission communications targeting specific areas of education and training. Examples include Parliament's resolutions of 12 May 2011 on early years learning in the European Union, of 1 December 2011 on tackling early school leaving, of 20 April 2012 on modernising Europe’s higher education systems, of 22 October 2013 on rethinking education, of 15 April 2014 on new technologies and open educational resources, of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training and of 12 April 2016 on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in vocational and education and training. An own-initiative report by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) on academic further and distance education as part of the European lifelong learning strategy is to be adopted in plenary in the second half of 2017.

In response to two recent Commission communications – one on a renewed EU agenda for higher education (COM(2017) 0247) and one on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life (COM(2017) 0248) – CULT will draw up an own-initiative report on modernisation of education in the EU, expected to be voted on in plenary in the first half of 2018.

Parliament’s resolution on the implementation of Erasmus+ was adopted in early 2017. CULT and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) have drawn up a joint own-initiative report on a new skills agenda for Europe, expected to be voted on in plenary in the second half of 2017. These committees have jointly drawn up a legislative report on the Commission’s proposal on a new Europass decision (2016/0304 (COD))
and were given a mandate to enter into negotiations with the Council in plenary in June 2017. The negotiations are expected to be concluded in the second half of 2017. Throughout its work in the domain of education and training, Parliament consistently advocates that education is crucial not only for creating opportunities for young people, but also for preparing individuals to become active citizens in complex societies.

Michaela Franke
09/2017
In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, higher education policies are decided at the level of the individual Member States. The role of the EU is therefore mainly a supporting and coordinating one. The main objectives of Union action in the field of higher education include: supporting mobility of students and staff; fostering mutual recognition of diplomas and periods of study; promoting cooperation between higher education institutions and developing distance (university) education.

**LEGAL BASIS**

Education — and in this context also higher education — was formally recognised as an area of EU competency in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

The Treaty of Lisbon did not change the provisions on the role of the EU in education and training (Title XII, Articles 165 and 166). Article 165(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that ‘the Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity’. In Article 165(2) of the TFEU it is stated that Union action is to be aimed at ‘encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study; promoting cooperation between educational establishments; and developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States’.

In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon contains a provision that can be described as a horizontal ‘social clause’. Article 9 of the TFEU states: ‘In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of […] a high level of education [and] training’.

Moreover, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal value as the Treaties (Article 6 of the TEU), states: ‘Everyone has the right to education’ (Article 14).

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Objectives pursuant to the Treaties of the European Union

On the basis of the EU’s long-term commitment to making lifelong learning and mobility a reality, improving both the quality and the efficiency of education and training, and enhancing creativity and innovation, Article 165(2) of the TFEU specifically enumerates the objectives of Union action in the fields of education, vocational training, youth and sport. The following aims are of particular relevance to the field of higher education:

— Developing a European dimension in education;
— Encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging, inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;
— Promoting cooperation between educational establishments;
— Developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of Member States; and
— Encouraging the development of distance education.

B. Current priorities in education and training

The Europe 2020 strategy has raised European political interest in higher education[1]. Focused on ‘smart’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘inclusive’ growth, the goals of Europe 2020 are to be achieved through more effective investment in education, research and innovation. Among the key targets is a considerable increase in the number of young people completing third-level education (at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds by 2020)[2]. This ambitious goal was pre-formulated in the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) strategic framework, adopted by the European Council in May 2009, which builds on its predecessor, the Education and Training 2010 (ET 2010) work programme, and provides common strategic objectives for the Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives[3]. In addition to the Member States’ own political initiatives, the EU actively supports the priorities of the Bologna Process, which, since its inception in 1999, has worked towards more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe, culminating in the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) with the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference Declaration of March 2010.

After the acceptance of the Europe 2020 strategy, in 2011 the Commission focused on the potential of European higher education systems in its communication ‘Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe’s higher education systems’[4].

In 2017, the Commission published the ‘Renewed EU agenda for higher education’ (COM(2017) 0247). It focuses on four priority areas, some of which already played a role in the 2011 agenda:

1. aligning skills development in higher education with the needs of the labour market;
2. making higher education widely accessible, more inclusive and increasing its societal outreach;
3. boosting the innovation capacity of higher education;
4. increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education.

New EU-level initiatives to reach those objectives include, but are not limited to, graduate tracking (described in a separate Commission communication); using EU funding, e.g. through Erasmus+, to help higher education institutions develop strategies to become more inclusive; expanding the European Institute of Innovation and Technology regional innovation scheme model to more universities and regions; providing a review of funding, incentive and reward structures for higher education

[2]The second key target in the field of higher education is reducing the rates of early school leavers to below 10%.
systems as a basis for the exchange of best practices; generating a Knowledge Hub on higher education; and simplifying mobility by facilitating the electronic exchange of student data.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. The Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020)

Formally adopted in December 2013\[5\] and in application since 1 January 2014, the central aim of Erasmus+ is to invest in Europe’s education, training, youth and sport through a single integrated programme. Erasmus+ combines previously separate sectorial and transversal policies in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP, 2007-2013) in the fields of higher education (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, bilateral programmes with other countries or continents), school education (Comenius), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci), adult education (Grundtvig), youth (Youth in Action), and European integration studies (Jean Monnet). In addition, sport is included for the first time. LLP had a total budget of EUR 7 billion, and the Erasmus programme involved an annual basis of 300 000 teachers and 230 000 HEI students. Erasmus+ now has a budget of EUR 14 billion, and cooperation is possible both among Member States and between Member States and third countries.

Erasmus+ aims to restructure and streamline activity around three key actions across the targeted sectors:

1. learning mobility of individuals;
2. cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;
3. support for policy reform.

Within the overarching architecture of Erasmus+, higher education assumes a central role. A minimum of 33.3% of the total budget for Erasmus+ is earmarked for higher education. Two million higher education students are expected to participate in mobility programmes during the period from 2014 to 2020. Erasmus+ not only supports the mobility of students and staff in higher education, but also funds Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees and Erasmus+ Master Loans.

B. Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA)

Part of Horizon 2020 — the EU framework programme for research and innovation —, the MSCA supports research training and career development focused on innovation skills. The programme funds worldwide and cross-sector mobility that implements excellent research in any field. As regards higher education, MSCA grants encourage transnational, inter-sector and interdisciplinary mobility. The MSCA will become the main EU programme for doctoral training, financing 25 000 PhDs and post-doctoral research projects. In addition to fostering mobility between countries, the MSCA also seeks to break the real and perceived barriers between academic and other sectors, especially business. The MSCA also funds the European Researchers’ Night, a series of public events that take place across Europe each year on the fourth Friday in September to promote the work of researchers.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Given the limited competences of the EU in the field of higher education, Parliament’s role has mainly been to foster close cooperation between Member States and strengthen European dimensions wherever possible. Thanks to its increasing political importance over recent decades and facilitated not least by the general trend towards Europeanisation following on from the Bologna Process, Parliament has managed to exert a growing influence on the shaping of higher education policies in Europe.

Parliament has successfully and consistently worked for an increase in the budget available for existing programmes in the field of higher education, including Erasmus+, and has been instrumental in shifting the priorities of EU funding in the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2014-2020 to what it considers to be more future-oriented expenditure, such as that in the field of higher education.

Throughout the years Parliament has always been interested in higher education and its link with employment. In 2010, Parliament adopted the resolution ‘University Business Dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe’s universities’,[6] calling for dialogue between higher education institutions (HEIs) and businesses in all fields of study and recalling the importance of lifelong learning and mobility, fostering research and sharing best practices.

Following the aforementioned Commission communication of 2011, in 2012 Parliament adopted a resolution on ‘modernising Europe’s higher education systems’,[7], calling on HEIs to integrate lifelong learning into their curricula once again, to adapt to new challenges by creating new fields of study reflecting the needs of the labour market and to promote gender equality in higher education. In this resolution Parliament also insisted that Member States should reach the target of investing 2% of GDP in higher education.

For the 2017 follow-up communication (COM(2017) 0247) mentioned above, Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) will draw up an own-initiative report entitled ‘Modernisation of Education in the EU’ (also touching upon school education), expected to be voted in plenary in the first half of 2018.


In 2015, Parliament discussed the implementation of the Bologna Process[9]. Members considered that the Bologna reforms contributed to the improvement of the quality of educational systems and to the attractiveness of higher education in Europe. The Bologna Process also made higher education structures more comparable, providing quality assurance systems in the recognition of diplomas. The Members of the European Parliament also called on HEIs, public administrations, the social partners and businesses to hold an ongoing dialogue on facilitating and enhancing the

employability of graduates. They also called for further development of a wide range of skills and new models for learning, teaching and assessment.

On 12 September 2017, Parliament adopted a resolution on academic further and distance education as part of the European lifelong learning strategy\[10\], and on 2 February 2017, it adopted a resolution on Erasmus+\[11\], which analyses the first years of implementation of the programme, underlines its successes and suggests changes to improve the second part of the multiannual framework programme.

Michaela Franke
09/2017

As part of its efforts to promote mobility and intercultural understanding, the EU has designated language learning as an important priority, and funds numerous programmes and projects in this area. Multilingualism, in the EU’s view, is an important element in Europe’s competitiveness. One of the objectives of the EU’s language policy is therefore that every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.

LEGAL BASIS

In Europe, linguistic diversity is a fact of life. Languages are an integral part of the European identity and the most direct expression of culture. In an EU founded on the motto ‘United in diversity’, the ability to communicate in several languages is an important asset for individuals, organisations and companies. Languages not only play a key role in the everyday life of the European Union, but are also fundamental for respecting cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU.

Respect for linguistic diversity is a fundamental value of the EU, as are respect for the person and openness towards other cultures. This is incorporated into the preamble to the Treaty on European Union, which refers to ‘drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe’ and ‘confirming [the] attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights’. In Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) great importance is given to respect for human rights and non-discrimination, while Article 3 states that the EU ‘shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity’. Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) emphasises that ‘Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States’, while fully respecting cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 165(1) TFEU).

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, adopted in 2000 and made legally binding by the Treaty of Lisbon, prohibits discrimination on grounds of language (Article 21) and places an obligation on the Union to respect linguistic diversity (Article 22).

The first regulation, dating from 1958, determining the languages to be used by the former European Economic Community[1] has been amended following subsequent accessions to the EU, and defines the Union’s official languages[2], together with Article 55(1) TEU. Every citizen of the EU has the right to write to any of the institutions or bodies of the EU in one of those languages and to receive an answer in the same language, pursuant to Article 24 TFEU.

[2]The 24 official languages of the EU are: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.
OBJECTIVES

EU language policy is based on respect for linguistic diversity in all Member States and on the creation of an intercultural dialogue throughout the EU. In order to put mutual respect into practice, the EU promotes the teaching and learning of foreign languages and the mobility of every citizen through dedicated programmes for education and vocational training. Foreign language competence is regarded as one of the basic skills that all EU citizens need to acquire in order to improve their educational and employment opportunities. The EU therefore supports the idea that every citizen should master two foreign languages in addition to his or her mother tongue (COM(2008) 0566). The EU also works with Member States to protect minorities, on the basis of the Council of Europe’s European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The ‘Education and Training 2020’ strategic framework considers languages as one of the basic skills in education, following the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on multilingualism and the development of language competences[3].

Moreover, 26 September has been celebrated as the European Day of Languages since 2001, to raise awareness of the wide variety of languages in Europe.

The European Parliament has adopted a full multilingual language policy, meaning that all EU languages are equally important. All parliamentary documents are translated into all the official languages and every Member of the European Parliament has the right to speak in the language of his or her choice.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Policy developments and support for research on languages

1. Protection of minority languages

In 2013 Parliament adopted a resolution on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union[4], calling on the Member States to be more attentive to endangered European languages and to commit to the protection and promotion of the diversity of the Union’s linguistic and cultural heritage. This resolution was a follow-up to a resolution of Parliament on regional and lesser-used European languages[5] and to a relevant Council resolution on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning[6], followed by several action plans and framework strategies established by the Commission for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity (COM(2003) 0449; COM(2005) 0596).

2. Comparability of data on language competence

In 2005, the Commission published a communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the European Indicator of Language Competence (COM(2005) 0356), an instrument to measure overall language competence in all Member States. The framework for this was set out in a Commission communication adopted on 13 April 2007 (COM(2007) 0184). As the Commission communication of 2005 says, ‘the purpose of the indicator is to measure overall foreign language competence in

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This indicator will also help establish whether the measures taken to achieve the ‘mother tongue + two’ formula work, thanks to comparable data on language competence in all Member States. An advisory board was constituted and delivered the results of a first survey in 2011, showing the need for a better-implemented strategy for language learning in schools.

3. ECML and Mercator

The EU supports two centres for research on languages, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) and the European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator). The ECML encourages excellence and innovation in language teaching and helps Europeans learn languages more efficiently. The ECML’s main aims are to help Member States implement effective language teaching policies by focusing on the learning and teaching of languages, promoting dialogue and exchange of best practices, and supporting programme-related networks and research projects. Mercator is part of a network of five research and documentation centres and is specialised in regional and minority languages within the European Union.

4. European Master’s in Translation

The European Master’s in Translation (EMT) is a quality label for university translation programmes that meet agreed professional standards and market demands. The main goal of EMT is to improve the quality of translator training and to get highly skilled people to work as translators in the EU. The EMT seeks to enhance the status of the translation profession in the EU.

5. MT@EC, the machine translation service

The Commission’s machine translation service enables rapid checking of the general meaning of the text inserted. MT@EC can handle and translate texts and documents related to EU policy in the 24 official EU languages. The service is available free of charge to public administration officials in the EU Member States and the EEA countries.

B. Action programmes

1. Erasmus+ Programme

Erasmus+, which started in January 2014, is the EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020. The promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity is one of the programme’s specific objectives. The Erasmus + Programme Guide states that ‘the opportunities put in place to offer linguistic support are aimed to make mobility more efficient and effective, to improve learning performance and therefore contribute to the specific objective of the Programme’ (p. 11). Linguistic support is offered via Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support for participants in mobility actions in order to learn the language of the host country. Erasmus+ also encourages cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices through strategic partnerships in the area of language teaching and learning. Furthermore, funding for linguistic support can be provided where necessary to beneficiaries of strategic partnerships who organise long-term training and teaching activities for staff, youth workers and learners. The Erasmus+ programme also funds numerous projects every year to support the teaching and learning of sign languages, and to promote linguistic diversity awareness and the protection of minority languages.
2. Creative Europe Programme

In the framework of the Creative Europe Programme, support is provided for the translation of books and manuscripts under the Culture sub-programme.

3. European Day of Languages

Encouraged by the huge success of the European Year of Languages in 2001, the EU and the Council of Europe decided to celebrate the European Day of Languages every year on 26 September, with all sorts of events to promote language learning throughout the EU. This action is designed to raise awareness among citizens of the many languages spoken in Europe and to encourage them to learn languages.

C. Prizes

1. European Language Label

The European Language Label is an award by the Commission designed to encourage new initiatives in language teaching and learning, to reward new language teaching methods, and to raise awareness of regional and minority languages. The award is presented to projects from participating countries for the most innovative language learning project, the person who has made the most progress in learning foreign languages, and the best language teacher.

2. Juvenes Translatores

Every year, the Commission awards a prize to the best translation done by a 17-year-old student in the Member States. Students can choose to translate from and into any official language of the European Union.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 19 November 2013 Parliament adopted the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes. Parliament added a specific provision on funding for the subtitling, dubbing and audio description of European films, which should facilitate access to, and the circulation of, European works across borders. As co-legislator, Parliament can draw up own-initiative reports to give fresh impetus to the development of language policy in Europe. In its resolution of 24 March 2009 on ‘Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment’[7], Parliament reiterated its support for EU policies in the field of multilingualism and called on the Commission to draw up measures aimed at recognising the importance of and promoting linguistic diversity. Its resolution on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity[8] appealed to the Commission and the Member States to support endangered languages.

On 23 November 2016 Parliament adopted a resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters[9] in order to stress that deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing citizens must have access to the same information and communication as their peers in the form of sign language interpretation, subtitling, speech-to-text and/or alternative forms of communication, including oral interpreters. The resolution also recognised that EU institutions are already providing for the accessibility of public events and committee meetings.

A study on ‘Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls’, commissioned on behalf of Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education and published in early 2017, investigates the situation of minority languages in education in 13 case studies.

In the second half of 2017 and early 2018, the EP’s Committee on Culture and Education will work on an own-initiative report on ‘Language equality in the digital age – towards a Human Language project’, based on a study with the same title drawn up at the request of Parliament’s Science and Technology Options Assessment Panel.

Michaela Franke
09/2017
5 - THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF DIPLOMAS - [2.1.6.]

The freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services are cornerstones of the single market, enabling the mobility of businesses and professionals throughout the EU. Implementing these freedoms supposes the overall recognition of nationally delivered diplomas and qualifications. Different measures for their harmonisation and mutual recognition have been adopted, and further legislation on the subject is under way.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 26 and 53 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

OBJECTIVES

For self-employed persons and professionals to establish themselves in another Member State or offer their services there on a temporary basis, diplomas, certificates and other proof of professional qualification as issued in the different Member States need to be mutually recognised, and any national provisions governing access to different professions need to be coordinated and harmonised.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Article 53(1) TFEU provides that the mutual recognition of the diplomas and other qualifications required in each Member State for access to the regulated professions can be used to facilitate freedom of establishment and provision of services. It also addresses the need to coordinate national rules on the taking-up and pursuit of activities as self-employed persons. Paragraph 2 of the same article subordinates the mutual recognition, 'in cases where such harmonisation is a difficult process', to the coordination of the conditions governing exercise in the various Member States. The harmonisation process evolved through a number of directives from the mid-1970s. On these bases, legislation on mutual recognition is adjusted to the needs of different situations. It varies in completeness according to the profession concerned, and in recent cases has been adopted using a more general approach.

A. The sector-specific approach (by profession)

1. Mutual recognition after harmonisation

Harmonisation progressed faster in the health sector, for the obvious reason that professional requirements, and especially training courses, did not vary much from one country to another (unlike in other professions), meaning that it was not difficult to harmonise them. This harmonisation developed through a number of directives from the mid-1970s through to the mid-1980s, which regulated, with regard to freedom of establishment and provision of services, a substantial number of professions (e.g. doctors, nurses, veterinary surgeons, midwives and self-employed commercial agents). The Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC) aimed to clarify, simplify and modernise the existing directives, and to bring together the regulated professions of doctors, dentists, nurses, veterinary surgeons, midwives, pharmacists and architects in one legislative text. This directive specifies, among many other things,
how the ‘host’ Member States should recognise professional qualifications obtained in another (‘home’) Member State. The recognition of professionals includes both a general system for recognition and specific systems for each of the abovementioned professions. It focuses, among many other aspects, on the level of qualification, training and professional experience (of both a general and a specialist nature). The directive also applies to professional qualifications within the transport sector, and to insurance intermediaries and statutory auditors. These professions were previously regulated under separate directives. On 22 June 2011, the Commission adopted a Green Paper on Modernising the Professional Qualifications Directive (COM(2011) 0367), proposing a legislative initiative to reform the systems for the recognition of professional qualifications, with a view to facilitating the mobility of workers and adapting training and current labour market requirements. On 19 December 2011 the Commission published a proposal for a revision of the Professional Qualifications Directive (COM(2011) 0883) based on the outcome of the various consultation processes. The most important key proposals included: the introduction of the European professional card; harmonisation of the minimum training requirements; automatic recognition for seven professions, namely architects, dentists, doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and veterinary surgeons, as well as the introduction of the Internal Market Information System allowing for enhanced cooperation in diploma recognition. The proposal’s main objectives were to facilitate and enhance the mobility of professionals across the EU and to help alleviate personnel shortages in some Member States. The directive (2013/55/EU) was adopted on 20 November 2013[1].

2. Mutual recognition without harmonisation

For other professions for which differences between national rules have prevented harmonisation, mutual recognition has made less progress. The diversity of legal systems has prevented the full mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications that would have secured immediate freedom of establishment on the basis of a diploma obtained in the country of origin. Council Directive 77/249/EEC of 22 March 1977 granted lawyers the freedom to provide occasional services; free establishment otherwise requires a diploma from the host country. Directive 98/5/EC of 16 February 1998 was a significant step forward, stating that lawyers holding a diploma from any Member State may establish themselves in another Member State to pursue their profession, with the proviso that the host country can require them to be assisted by a local lawyer when representing and defending their clients in court. After three years operating on this basis, lawyers acquire the right (if they so wish) to full exercise of their profession, after passing an aptitude test set by the host country and without having to take a qualifying examination. Other directives have applied the same principle to other professions, such as road haulage operators, insurance agents and brokers, hairdressers and architects.

B. The general approach

The drafting of legislation for mutual recognition sector by sector (sometimes with more extensive harmonisation of national rules) has always been a long and tedious procedure. For that reason, the need for a general system of recognition of equivalence of diplomas, valid for all regulated professions that have not been the subject of specific Union legislation, became apparent. This new general approach changed the

Before, ‘recognition’ was subordinated to the existence of European rules concerning ‘harmonisation’ in the specific regulated profession or activity. Afterwards, ‘mutual recognition’ became almost automatic, under the established rules, for all the regulated professions concerned, without any need for sector-specific secondary legislation. From that moment, both the ‘harmonisation’ and the ‘mutual recognition’ methods continued to be used under a parallel system, with, in some cases, situations where both have been used under a complementary system taking the form of both a regulation and a directive (see the Council resolutions of 3 December 1992 and 15 July 1996 on transparency of qualifications and vocational training certificates). The host Member State may not refuse applicants access to the occupation in question if they possess the qualifications required in their country of origin. However, if the training they received was of a shorter duration than in the host country, it may demand a certain length of professional experience, and if the training differs substantially, it may require an adaptation period or aptitude test at the discretion of the applicant, unless the occupation requires knowledge of national law.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 15 November 2011, Parliament adopted a resolution on the implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC) calling for the modernisation and improvement of that directive and encouraging the use of the most efficient and appropriate technologies, such as the introduction of a European professional card, which should be an official document recognised by all competent authorities, in order to facilitate the recognition process.

In response to Parliament’s resolution, on 19 December 2011 the Commission presented a proposal for a revision of the Professional Qualifications Directive. After successful trilogue negotiations, Parliament secured the changes it had called for, including the introduction of a voluntary professional card, the creation of an alert mechanism, clarification of the rules regarding partial access to a regulated profession, rules regarding language skills, and the creation of a mechanism for mutual evaluation of regulated professions to ensure greater transparency. This led to the adoption on 20 November 2013 of Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

For more detailed information, please consult the study prepared for the IMCO Committee entitled ‘EU Mapping: Overview of IMCO related legislation’.

Mariusz Maciejewski
11/2017

Youth is a national policy area. Harmonisation of Member States’ legislation is therefore excluded. At European level, youth policy is decided under the ordinary legislative procedure. The youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme encourages exchanges of young people within the EU and with third countries.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) are the basis for EU action in the youth field. The inclusion of ‘youth’ as a concept in EU policy dates back to the Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in 1993. Action falling within the scope of Articles 165 and 166 is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure. As regards youth policy, any harmonisation of Member States’ legislation is expressly excluded. The Council may adopt recommendations based on Commission proposals.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal value as the treaties (Article 6 TEU), includes an article on children’s rights (Article 24) and an article forbidding child labour and providing for protection of young people in the workplace (Article 32).

OBJECTIVES

Article 165 TFEU provides for Union action in order to encourage the development of youth exchanges and exchanges between socio-educational instructors, i.e. youth workers, and — with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty — to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Article 166 enables the EU to implement a vocational training policy to support and supplement the action of the Member States. It tasks the Union with facilitating access to vocational training and encouraging mobility of instructors and trainees, particularly young people.

In addition to these articles, children and young people benefit from EU policies in other fields, such as education and training and health, or in relation to the rights and protection of children and young people.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Strategic Framework
   1. EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018

On the basis of a Commission communication of April 2009, in November 2009 the Council adopted a resolution on the framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). Its two overarching objectives are to create more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of young people. Initiatives are to be taken in eight fields of action: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and wellbeing, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture.
Policy measures include both specific initiatives in the youth field (e.g. voluntary activities and mobility) and mainstreaming initiatives (meaning that youth issues are taken into account when policies in fields with an impact on young people’s lives are drawn up).

Work proceeds in work cycles of three years, and priorities for the fields of action are chosen for each cycle. For the current (and last) cycle from 2016 to 2018, the Council has identified six key goals: (1) increased social inclusion of all young people; (2) stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civil life in Europe; (3) easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular as regards integration into the labour market; (4) support for young people’s health and well-being, including mental health, (5) contributions to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era for youth policy, youth work and young people; (6) contributions to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing number of young migrants and refugees in the EU.

The Commission draws up an EU Youth Report at the end of each work cycle, which maps progress towards the goals. Member States cooperate by means of high-level expert groups and other networks. The structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations gives young people a say when youth policy is shaped. Finally, the funds provided by relevant EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Social Fund, need to be mobilised in order to achieve the goals of European cooperation in the youth field.

2. Europe 2020 strategy

Launched in 2010, the Europe 2020 strategy focuses on young people and tackles different objectives for young people, such as reducing early school leaving, increasing the proportion of young graduates, and developing a comprehensive package of policy initiatives for education and employment. This includes ‘Your first EURES job’, a job mobility scheme to facilitate job placement all over Europe.

B. Relevant EU spending programmes

1. Erasmus+

Erasmus+ contains a specific chapter on youth, for which 10% of its annual budget of approximately EUR 2.1 billion is set aside. Its specific objectives are to: (1) improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, and promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity; (2) foster quality improvements in youth work; (3) complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy; (4) enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people. Three key actions are set up to support these objectives: (1) Learning mobility of individuals; (2) Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; (3) Support for policy reform.

Erasmus+ directly supports the European Voluntary Service (EVS) under Key Action 1 of the Youth chapter. The EVS is designed to help young people spend time abroad while participating in volunteering projects. This non-formal learning scheme is certified Europe-wide via the Youthpass recognition tool.
A spin-off from the Erasmus+ programme, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs gives aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced counterparts running small businesses in other participating countries.

C. Other EU initiatives

1. The Youth Guarantee

In April 2013, the Council adopted a recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee to ensure that young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, further education or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. This good-quality offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education and should be adapted to each individual and situation. Although Member States still need to implement and finance this policy, EU co-financing is already available for regions with youth unemployment above 25%, through a dedicated budget line, the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund. For details, see Fact Sheet 2.3.2 on the European Social Fund, section B.2.

2. European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is an initiative that was launched by the European Commission in December 2016, and further substantiated in a proposal for a regulation currently under consideration in Parliament and Council. It gives young people between 18 and 30 years old the possibility to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad. The volunteering strand of the ESC offers young people the opportunity to carry out full-time voluntary service of between two and twelve months in another country. The occupational strand will provide young people with the opportunity of a job or traineeship in sectors engaged in solidarity-related activities. It will be set up gradually through partnerships with public bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations active in these fields. It is expected that organisations will begin recruiting participants from late spring 2017 onwards, and that participants will start to join projects from June 2017 onwards.

3. Child protection policies

As laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is any human being below the age of 18. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced an objective for the EU to promote children’s rights, while the Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the protection of children’s rights by EU institutions, as well as by Member States.

On 15 February 2011, the Commission adopted a communication entitled ‘An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child’ (COM(2011) 0060). Its purpose is to reaffirm the strong commitment of all EU institutions and of all Member States to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies, and to turn this into concrete results. The rights of the child and the prevention of violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk are also protected and promoted under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The Commission has prepared an overview of the EU acquis and policy documents on the rights of the child.
In 2016, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a directive on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings\[1\], in order to ensure that children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings are able to understand and follow those proceedings and to exercise their right to a fair trial, and to prevent children from reoffending and foster their social integration.

4. Youth and media

Online technologies bring unique opportunities to children and young people by providing access to knowledge and allowing them to benefit from digital learning and to participate in public debate. However, children can also be especially vulnerable to modern technology. For this reason, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) prohibits the inclusion in linear TV services of any content which might be seriously harmful to minors. For non-linear on-demand audiovisual media services, the respective content may only be made available in such a way that minors would not normally come into contact with it. Content that is likely to be harmful to minors must either be broadcast at a time when minors will not watch it or blocked using technological means so that they cannot access it. The Commission adopted a new legislative proposal for the AVMSD on 25 May 2016, and negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council will in all likelihood be concluded during 2017. In 2015, Parliament adopted a resolution on fighting child sexual abuse on the internet (P8_TA(2015)0070)\[2\].

5. European Youth Portal

The European Youth Portal is a web page addressed to young people all over Europe in order to help orient them among the many opportunities the EU offers in different areas of interest, such as volunteering, working, learning, culture and creativity, and many others.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has always supported close cooperation between Member States in the youth field. It has accompanied and taken an active role in the formulation of youth policy, for example in its resolutions on ‘An EU Strategy for Youth — Investing and Empowering’ (P7_TA(2010)0166), on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012 (P7_TA(2013)0364), on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 (P8_TA(2016)0426) and on a Youth Guarantee (P7_TA(2013)0016). Numerous other resolutions on youth employment (for example P8_TA(2014)0010), entrepreneurship (P8_TA(2015)0292) and for fighting youth unemployment (P8_TA(2016)0008) have been adopted in recent years. Parliament also safeguards the best interests of children on the basis of petitions addressed to it (B8-0487/2016), and has adopted a resolution on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty (P8_TA(2015)0401). Parliament has also focused on children’s rights outside the EU’s borders, promoting resolutions on the situation of children all over the world, such as on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises (T8-0418/2015) or on child malnutrition in developing countries (P8_TA(2014)0072).

\[2\]For further information see Fact Sheet 3.6.2 on Audiovisual and media policy.
In the negotiations on the Erasmus+ programme in 2012-2013, Parliament strongly advocated a separate youth chapter and a designated budget for its key actions. It also stressed that possibilities for the participation of disadvantaged young people should be enhanced. The Committee on Culture and Education drew up an implementation report on the programme in 2016 that is expected to be voted in plenary in 2017, taking note of the functioning of the Youth strand of the programme.

To encourage young people to pursue European projects of their own, in 2008 Parliament, together with the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, launched the European Charlemagne Youth Prize, awarded every year to projects promoting European and international understanding.

Michaela Franke
09/2017
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT A GLANCE

The aim of the Fact Sheets is to provide an overview of European integration and of the European Parliament’s contribution to that process.

Created in 1979 for Parliament’s first direct elections, the Fact Sheets are intended to provide non-specialists with a straightforward and concise – but also accurate – overview of the European Union’s institutions and policies, and of the role that Parliament plays in their development.

The Fact Sheets are grouped into six chapters:

• **How the European Union works**, which addresses the EU’s historical development, legal system, institutions and bodies, decision-making procedures and financing;

• **Citizens’ Europe**, which describes individual and collective rights;

• **The internal market**, which explains the principles and implementation of the internal market;

• **Economic and Monetary Union**, which outlines the context of EMU and explains the coordination and surveillance of economic policies;

• **Sectoral policies**, which describes how the EU addresses its various internal policies;

• **The EU’s external relations**, which covers foreign policy, security and defence, trade, development, human rights and democracy, enlargement and relations beyond the EU’s neighbourhood.

Drafted by the Policy Departments and the Economic Governance Support Unit, the Fact Sheets are reviewed and updated at regular intervals throughout the year, as soon as Parliament adopts any important positions or policies.


The Fact Sheets are updated regularly and published on the website of the European Parliament in 23 languages.