

PODCAST students EU

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Voice 2: Brian

JINGLE to open intro to podcast

VOICE 1

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on creating opportunities for EU students.

VOICE 2

EU countries are responsible for their own education and training systems.

VOICE 1

But faced with common challenges, such as ageing societies, unemployment, skills deficits and technological developments... some help from the European Union may prove very helpful!

END OF INTRO JINGLE

VOICE 2

Over one third of the EU's population — some 170 million people — are under the age of 30, with half of those under the age of 15. So, our classrooms are pretty full...!

VOICE 1

At a time when nearly 1 in 10 young Europeans are unemployed and pressure on public finances is growing, finding ways to get young people into the labour market is a top EU priority.

VOICE 2

Because education makes people better equipped to play an active role in society, it can also be helpful in tackling issues such as populism, migration and poverty.

VOICE 1

So, where's the catch?

VOICE 2

Well, the thing is that decisions on matters of education and training remain firmly in the hands of Member States... so there's only so much the EU can do...

VOICE 1

Having said that, sound evidence and analysis from the EU can help national authorities make the right decisions to improve educational outcomes and thus the employability of young people.

VOICE 2

That is why, in 2009, the EU set a series of common objectives to address the most pressing concerns in the EU education systems by 2020. Let's have a look!

JINGLE

VOICE 1

The objectives were to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality; to improve the quality of education; to promote equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship; and to enhance creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at all stages of education and training!

VOICE 2

These objectives were accompanied by a set of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020, such as reducing the rate of early leavers aged 18-24 to less than 10%, and increasing the share of adults engaged in lifelong learning!

VOICE 1

So, how do we score??

VOICE 2

Well, in several areas, we're doing pretty well... Let me give you some figures: In 2015, 39% of the EU workforce held a higher education degree. This is important! because skills forecasts indicate that 35% of future jobs in the EU are likely to require a higher education degree... and good grades are still the best job guarantee in times of crisis!

VOICE 1

And here are some more figures! Between 2005 and 2015, the percentage of early school leavers was reduced by almost a third, even though over the past year, progress towards meeting the EU target has slowed down...

VOICE 2

A major challenge for the EU is to further upskill its population and reduce underachievement in basic skills... The latest results from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (the well-known PISA) show that over 22 % of EU students don't do very well in maths, nearly 18 % in reading, and some 17 % in science...

VOICE 1

Considering that the EU's target is to reduce these figures to less than 15% by 2020, there is still some work to do...

VOICE 2

Another EU target is to have at least 15 % of the population aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning. Here however... progress has been very slow, with the EU average stagnant at 11% in 2014 and 2015. So, quick and decisive action is needed if we want to reach the benchmark!

VOICE 1

On a more positive note, this year, the Erasmus student mobility programme, that has allowed more than 9 million Europeans to study and live abroad, turns 30... So, let's uncork the champagne!

VOICE 2

There are indeed many reasons to celebrate! Widely recognised as one of the most successful EU programmes, Erasmus provides a concrete example of the positive impact of European integration.

VOICE 1

According to a recent study, young graduates with an Erasmus experience have more skills and better opportunities than students who have not gone abroad. And they are half as likely to become long-term unemployed as non-mobile students!

VOICE 2

A spin-off from the programme, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, gives *wannabe* entrepreneurs the chance to learn some good tips from experienced entrepreneurs in other participating countries.

VOICE 1

And data show that companies who took part in the programme are more resilient, grow more, and create more jobs!

VOICE 2

And more than a third of the aspiring entrepreneurs see their dream come true! and go on to create and develop their own business after the exchange, generally with more success than other start-ups...

VOICE 1

In the first 7 years of the programme, over 3.000 exchanges have taken place, involving more than double the number of entrepreneurs! So, it's definitely a promising start!

VOICE 2

In today's global and fast-changing world... EU member states may still want to retain control over their national education systems. But unless we all move in the same direction, future generations of EU students may have a hard time finding their place in society and in the world!

VOICE 1

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