



2015/2327(INI)

17.11.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus +’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2006/EC (2015/2327(INI))

Rapporteur: Emilian Pavel

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas, according to Eurostat, unemployment was still at 10.1 % in July 2016; whereas across the EU, youth unemployment stands at 18.8 %;
 - B. whereas the results of the Erasmus Impact Study of 2014¹ show that those who have studied or trained abroad are twice as likely to find work compared to others who lack similar experience;
 - C. whereas the unemployment rate for those who have studied or trained abroad is 23 % lower five years after graduating²;
 - D. whereas 85 % of Erasmus students study or train abroad in order to enhance their employability abroad³;
 - E. whereas nowadays 64 % of employers think international experience is important for recruitment; whereas this was only 37 % in 2006⁴;
 - F. whereas 64 % of employers say graduates with an international background are given greater professional responsibility⁵;
 - G. whereas one in three Erasmus trainees is offered a job at the enterprise where they did their traineeship⁶;
 - H. whereas almost 1 in 10 Erasmus trainees who did work placements have started their own company and 3 out of 4 plan to or can envisage doing the same⁷;
 - I. whereas the Erasmus+ programme, which runs from 2014 to 2020, is aimed at modernising education, training and youth work across Europe and is open to education, training, youth and sports organisations across all sectors of lifelong learning; whereas it will provide opportunities for over four million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad;
1. Considers that the Erasmus+ programme plays a vital role in fostering European identity and integration, solidarity, inclusive and sustainable growth, quality employment, competitiveness, social cohesion and youth labour mobility by making a positive contribution to the improvement of European education and training systems, lifelong learning, active European citizenship, and better prospects for employment, by providing Europeans with an opportunity to acquire transversal and transferable sets of personal and

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

professional skills and competences via studies, training, work experience abroad, and volunteering, as well as by offering individuals the chance to live more independently, adapt more easily and achieve personal development;

2. Considers that Erasmus+ is one of the key pillars for adapting the European population to lifelong learning; calls on the Commission and the national agencies to better promote the relevance of cross-cutting projects, as further emphasis needs to be given to the lifelong learning dimension of the programme;
3. Points out that, at present, only 1 % of young people in work-related training schemes, including apprentices, are involved in mobility schemes during their training; points out that it is essential to create the conditions for greater apprentice mobility within the EU, so as to give apprentices the same opportunities as higher education students and thus meet the objectives of the fight against unemployment, particularly youth unemployment; encourages the Member States to provide young apprentices with better information on the possibilities open to them and to give more support to learning centres seeking to become involved in the Erasmus+ programme, but also to put in place ancillary measures in cases of cross-border mobility experience in neighbouring countries in order to assist apprentices with accommodation and transport;
4. Emphasises that the number of study periods completed abroad through the Erasmus scheme has been steadily increasing since 2008, despite the economic, financial and social crisis; draws attention to the fact that, at the same time, the number of work placements abroad has increased exponentially; concludes that work placements are obviously regarded by young people as an excellent opportunity to enhance their employability; recommends that the Commission and national agencies, organisers and institutions take note of this development;
5. Regrets that the growing inequality within and between some Member States and the high youth unemployment rate in the EU are making access to the programme difficult as they create barriers to mobility for applicants from lower-income regions that have been more heavily hit by the economic crisis and the cuts; states that the Erasmus+ programme and vocational and education training (VET) need to be active in remote and border regions of the EU too; considers the provision of access and equal opportunities for inhabitants of these regions to be a very positive move and a vehicle to cut youth unemployment and aid economic recovery;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase efforts to simplify procedures and reduce the high administrative burden for students, institutions and for host companies involved in Erasmus+ projects, in particular those that are not sufficiently exploiting this opportunity in order to improve and facilitate equal access, registration, validation and recognition processes; maintains that information on this programme has to be provided in all the official languages of the EU in order to encourage greater involvement; calls on the Commission and the national agencies to standardise the access criteria with a view to ensuring access for the highest number of applicants possible; encourages the national agencies to make the available budgets per key action and per sector easily accessible following each application round in order to allow applicants to strategically plan their future actions, and to publish the results of projects selection and budget lines, so that adequate external monitoring of the programme can take place; calls on the Commission

and the Member States to ensure that large institutions are not favoured over their smaller less well-established counterparts, in terms of programme applicants;

7. Continues to express concern that Erasmus+ is viewed by young people and the wider public primarily as a programme for higher education; recommends, therefore, that greater importance be attached to raising the profile at the European, national and regional level of the different sectors that people can apply for, including school-level education, higher education, international higher education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth and sport, and volunteering as well as highlighting the possibility of having cross-cutting projects, notably by means of an information campaign and public relations work regarding the content of all programmes;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, including EU agencies such as Cedefop, to improve the quality, accessibility and equality of access to VET mobility programmes so that they deliver added value for all participants as regards qualification, recognition and content, and to ensure that quality standards are introduced for apprenticeship programmes;
9. Notes the imbalances between the Member States concerning admission criteria for the Erasmus+ programme; insists that the Commission ensure that the programme rules are applied in a harmonised way across national agencies, respecting common quality standards and procedural practices, and thus ensuring the internal and external coherence of Erasmus+ and positioning it as a true European programme; in this regard, calls on the Commission to develop a European implementation guideline for the Erasmus+ programme for the national agencies; encourages the national agencies, which have to be an inherent part of the monitoring process, to also focus on setting up or facilitating a forum for constructive dialogue between the authorities in charge of education and labour policies in each Member State; strongly encourages better coordination between the agencies to match the projects dealing with similar issues;
10. Points to Erasmus+ as an important instrument for improving the quality of VET across the EU; highlights the fact that inclusive quality VET and VET mobility play a vital economic and social role in Europe, in a rapidly changing labour market, as a means of providing young people and adults with the professional and life skills needed for a transition from education and training to work; stresses that VET and VET mobility should foster equal opportunities, non-discrimination and social inclusion for all citizens, including women who are under-represented in VET and people in vulnerable situations including Roma, unemployed young people, people with disabilities, inhabitants of remote areas, inhabitants of outermost regions, and migrants; suggests also focusing on low-qualified beneficiaries in order to increase their participation and thereby improve the outreach of the programmes;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase training opportunities abroad for VET and to position VET as a top choice for finding a job and starting on a promising career, and to ensure access for all citizens of all ages, and to provide adequate funding as the funds set aside for VET are not proportional¹ to the number of potential applicants for

¹According to the Commission, in 2016, owing to a lack of funding, the success rate of eligible applications for VET mobility under Erasmus+ was 42 %. The situation has worsened over the years – in 2014 the success rate was 54 %, and then in 2015 it was 48 %. Although the funding available has increased slightly over the years,

the mobility programmes on offer; strongly supports an efficient promotion and encouragement of VET mobility among women and considers that ambitious targets should be set by the Member States in this regard and the progress should be strictly monitored;

12. Highlights that a redefinition of jobs and skills is taking place, especially due to the ongoing transition towards a more digitised economy with new business needs arising, and future-oriented sectors; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the Erasmus+ programme reflects this reality;
13. Calls on the Commission to regularly review the levels of financial support, such as lump sums for travel and subsistence allowances, in order to ensure that they match real living expenses and to avoid indebtedness caused by a training period, and therefore to help prevent discrimination and abandoning people with fewer financial means and/or special requirements;
14. Highlights the importance of clear learning outcomes and specific job descriptions for Erasmus+ work experiences abroad for vocational education and training students, trainees, and apprentices, and volunteers; stresses that the preparation of the candidates before their international experience is an integral part of the activity and needs to include career guidance sessions and language courses, as well as social and cultural integration training courses, including cross-cultural communication that would foster people's participation in society and improve their working and living conditions; taking into account the importance of multilingualism in improving the employability of young people, considers that more efforts should be made to promote and support multilingualism in the Erasmus+ programme; welcomes the fact that the foreign language skills of participants in Erasmus+ projects will be enhanced, including neighbouring languages that can increase mobility and employability in the cross-border labour market; considers that the language courses for incoming mobility participants could be delivered in cooperation with the educational institutions and the host companies, and adapted to their field of study or traineeship;
15. Acknowledges that, with regard to the high youth unemployment rates in certain Member States, a primary objective of Erasmus+ is to prepare young people for employment; places particular emphasis, at the same time, on the need to preserve the status of activities outside of school, vocational training and study within the Erasmus+ programme;
16. Stresses that previously, Erasmus and Leonardo were mainly geared towards young people with higher skills levels and with better labour market access options and fell short in targeting the most vulnerable; points to the EU target to decrease early school leaving and poverty; stresses that early school leavers, a high-risk group for poverty and unemployment, should be strongly targeted by Member States in implementing Erasmus+; stresses that programmes for early school leavers cannot be the standard mainstream VET or exchange programmes but should focus on their specific needs, on easy access and

the demand has grown much faster, but the limited resources of Erasmus+ does not allow for funding to keep up the pace with demand.

uncomplicated funding hand-in-hand with informal or non-formal learning environments;

17. Reminds the Commission that people with disabilities such as the hearing impaired have special needs and therefore need adequate funding and appropriate support, such as sign language interpreters, and access to greater information and a reasonable grant so they are able to access the Erasmus+ programme; calls on the Commission to continue its work on introducing further measures to grant people with disabilities barrier-free and non-discriminatory access to all scholarship programmes in the framework of Erasmus+; considers it worthwhile, if deemed necessary, to appoint so-called coaches within national agencies aimed at advising on the best possible allocation of funding;
18. Considers that there is room for improvement in the promotion of youth work, artistic and cultural activities, political participation, adult education and mass sports;
19. Calls on the Commission to present and on Member States to endorse a quality framework for apprenticeships and a proposal on increased mobility for apprentices to ensure a set of rights for apprentices, interns, trainees and VET learners so as to ensure that they are adequately protected and that these mobility programmes never substitute standard employment contracts; calls for quality and remunerated traineeships and internships, and requests that the Member States report the situations where conditions concerning the tasks or rights of Erasmus+ beneficiaries are infringed;
20. Calls on the Commission to work with the Member States to create stronger cooperation between education institutions and key stakeholders (local/regional authorities, social partners, the private sector, youth representatives, VET facilities, research organisations, and civil society organisations) in order to enhance the responsiveness of the education and VET systems to genuine labour market needs, and to guarantee that this cooperation is reflected in Erasmus+; believes that active involvement of beneficiaries and all stakeholders in the design, organisation, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the programme ensures its viability, success and added value;
21. Calls for greater promotion of mobility programmes for advanced levels of higher education to ensure mobility between European research centres and further develop the aim of making European universities international;
22. Strongly encourages more transparency in the evaluation of applications and the quality feedback to all applicants; calls on the Commission to ensure an effective feedback system in order for the programme beneficiaries to report back to the Commission on any irregularities that they might identify with respect to the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme; further calls on the Commission to improve and increase the flow of information between the European institutions responsible for implementing the programme and the national bodies; encourages national agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, with a view to improving the implementation of the programme, to provide training opportunities for evaluators, and to organise regular meetings with beneficiaries and visits to projects;
23. Stresses that, due to the European Qualifications Framework (2008/C111/01), clear improvements have been made in recognition and validation systems of diplomas, qualifications, credits, skills certificates, competency accreditations in education and VET, but notes that problems still persist; highlights the importance of ensuring that the

competences and qualifications developed through international mobility experience in any setting – formal learning environment, company traineeship or volunteering and youth activity – are properly documented, validated, recognised, and made comparable within the home system; calls on the Commission to reform and make progress towards strengthening the European Qualifications Framework from the current recommendation to a stronger instrument so as to support free movement; calls on the Commission and Member States to make systematic use of and further develop existing European instruments such as the Europass, Youthpass and ECVET; encourages the development of joint VET qualifications that can ensure international recognition of qualifications; calls on the Member States for the full and timely implementation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning;

24. Highlights that volunteering is an expression of solidarity, freedom and responsibility that contributes to the strengthening of active citizenship and to personal human development; considers that volunteering is also an essential tool for social inclusion and cohesion, as well as training, education and intercultural dialogue, while making an important contribution to the dissemination of European values; believes that the European Voluntary Service (EVS) should be recognised for its role in fostering the development of skills and competences that can facilitate the access of the EVS participants to the labour market; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure decent working conditions for the volunteers and monitor whether the contracts under which volunteers work are fully respected; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that participants in the European Voluntary Service are never considered or used as a labour replacement;
25. Highlights that non-formal adult education and learning promotes basic skills and soft skills such as social and civic competences that are relevant for the labour market as well as well-being at work and a good work-life balance; points out that non-formal adult education and learning play a crucial role in reaching out to disadvantaged groups in society and helping them develop skills that support them in entering the labour market and finding a sustainable and quality job, or improving their employment situation as well as contributing to a more democratic Europe;
26. Notes the new societal challenges and the job content that is under constant evolution; recalls that the Erasmus+ programme also prepares young people for employment and considers that a special focus should be laid on a shift from on-the-job-competences to soft skills, promoting the acquisition of transversal and transferable sets of skills and competences such as entrepreneurship, ICT literacy, creative thinking, problem-solving and an innovative mind-set, self-confidence, adaptability, team-building, project management, risk assessment and risk-taking, as well as social and civic competences that are highly relevant for the labour market; considers that this should also include well-being at work, a good work-life balance, and the integration of people in vulnerable situations into the labour market and society;
27. Taking into account the importance of multilingualism in raising the employability of young people¹, considers that more efforts should be made to promote and support

¹ JRC Science and Policy Report on Languages and Employability, 2015.

multilingualism in the Erasmus+ programme;

28. Stresses the requirement to support, either financially or by means of tax incentives, SMEs that offer vocational training under the Erasmus+ programme;
29. Believes that quality measurement should be equally important as a quantitative measurement; calls for the elaboration of the former in the context of Erasmus +;
30. Stresses the need to increase awareness of the Erasmus+ instrument as a means of improving an individual's own skills and giving them an added dimension, which should ensure the right approach to this instrument for the purpose of guaranteeing its effectiveness, and eliminating the risk of turning it merely into a life experience;
31. Supports greater mobility in education and in apprenticeship programmes and traineeship periods under the Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative programmes, with the aim of trying to ease the high levels of youth unemployment and geographical imbalances within the European Union;
32. Calls on the Commission to draw up and make available updated statistics and conduct follow-up studies on the implementation of Erasmus+, in particular the take-up rate among young people, broken down by region and gender, the impact it has had on employability, as well as type and rate of employment, and impact on salaries and how it may potentially be improved; calls on the Commission to analyse why some countries are applying for more VET mobility, where the gender gap is greatest and reasons for this gap, or where there are more applicants with disabilities, and build a plan on how to increase the involvement of the other countries; calls therefore on national agencies in Member States to work closely on the exchange of information and statistics; maintains that the results of the studies and statistics need to be included and taken into consideration in the next Erasmus+ mid-term review;
33. Recalls that at a time of particular crisis with regard to the fundamental values of the EU, the Erasmus+ instrument can provide a fundamental opportunity to promote integration, understanding and solidarity among young people; calls therefore for the integration of young people to be promoted by means of awareness of different cultures and traditions and their mutual and necessary respect;
34. Proposes that the Commission maintains entrepreneurship education and training as one of the objectives of a future Erasmus+ programme in the next financial period (post-2020), including mobility, and includes the following elements as part of the programme:
 - (i) careful assessment of the impact of existing measures promoting entrepreneurship through education and training and potentially adapt them, while paying special attention to the impact on under-represented and disadvantaged groups;
 - (ii) promotion of better defined learning content and tools for formal and non-formal education targeting all students – both theoretical modules and practical modules, such as student entrepreneurial projects;
 - (iii) promotion of partnerships between educational institutions, enterprises, non-profit organisations and non-formal education providers, in order to devise suitable courses and

provide students with the requisite practical experience and models;

- (iv) development of skills in the areas of entrepreneurial processes, financial literacy, ICT literacy and skills, creative thinking, problem-solving and an innovative mind-set, self-confidence, adaptability, team-building, project management, risk assessment and risk-taking, as well as specific business skills and knowledge;
 - (v) highlighting of non-formal and informal learning as a privileged environment to acquire entrepreneurship competences;
35. Encourages Member States to take further part in the Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs and to promote it further among young people who wish to engage in business projects, so that they can gain experience abroad and acquire new skills which will help them to carry out their business projects successfully;
 36. Strongly encourages peer-to-peer learning following studies, training, and work experience abroad in order to increase the impact of Erasmus+ on local communities; highlights that the sharing of good practices is vital for improving the quality of the projects under Erasmus+; welcomes the Erasmus+ platform for dissemination of project results and calls for a stronger approach to the sharing of good practices and international exchanges of views for national agencies, partners, and programme beneficiaries; calls on the Commission to provide support to programme applicants to find international partners, by developing user friendly platforms that combine public information about the various beneficiaries and their projects;
 37. Calls on the Commission to optimise the performance and user-friendliness of IT tools, such as the Mobility Tool, or other IT support platforms such as the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), in order to ensure that the programme beneficiaries make the most of their experiences, as well as promoting cross-border collaboration and the sharing of best practices;
 38. Calls on the Commission to improve the programme guide and make it more user-friendly and understandable, and to develop specific information brochures on each of the key actions; calls on the Commission to streamline the application process in terms of administrative burdens;
 39. Supports the development of adult learning institutions through on-going professional development and mobility opportunities for teachers, school leaders, trainers and other education staff; encourages the development of skills and competences, particularly in the effective use of ICT in adult learning, for improved learning outcomes; underlines the importance of exchanging best practices;
 40. Welcomes the development of pilot projects such the 'European framework for mobility of apprentices: developing European citizenship and skills through youth integration in the labour market' aimed at implementing cost-efficient cross-border apprentice mobility schemes between VET institutions, companies and/or other relevant organisations, as well as formally recognising and validating learning outcomes and supporting the mutual recognition of diplomas, and 'Youth mobility in vocational training – Better youth mobility' aimed at improving the mobility of young people in vocational training; calls on the Commission to implement effectively the two pilot projects and their long-term

integration into the Erasmus+ programme;

41. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee increased and more long-term structural support to European civil society organisations in the field of education, training, youth and sport in the form of operating grants, as they are the organisations providing learning opportunities and participation spaces to European citizens and residents to develop and implement European policies;
42. Calls on the Commission to consider an appropriate solution to the situation of the European level non-governmental organisation based in Brussels applying for funds in Belgian national agencies.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	8.11.2016
Result of final vote	+ : 48 - : 3 0 : 1
Members present for the final vote	Laura Agea, Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Ole Christensen, Martina Dlabajová, Lampros Fountoulis, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Jan Keller, Ádám Kósa, Jean Lambert, Patrick Le Hyaric, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Javi López, Morten Løkkegaard, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Anthea McIntyre, Joëlle Mélin, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, João Pimenta Lopes, Georgi Pirinski, Terry Reintke, Sofia Ribeiro, Maria João Rodrigues, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Siôn Simon, Jutta Steinruck, Yana Toom, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Georges Bach, Amjad Bashir, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Csaba Sógor, Helga Stevens, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Flavio Zanonato
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	David Coburn