

Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET – a lifelong learning approach

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The European Parliament adopted by 577 votes to 37 with 90 abstentions, a resolution on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in Vocational Education and Training (VET) – a lifelong learning approach.

Members recalled that according to Eurostat, unemployment in the EU remained as high as 10.2 % in 2014 despite there being a slow recovery. Across the EU **youth unemployment currently stands at 22.1 %, while only 51 % of the 55-64 age group is in work** and the gender gap in the employment rate for older workers stands at 13.6 percentage points.

Against this background, non-formal and informal learning and vocational training have an important contribution to make in tackling current challenges in lifelong learning, such as early school leaving, unacceptable numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and skills shortages and mismatches.

Taking stock of results and identifying key challenges: Members stated that education is a fundamental human right and a public good that should be equally accessible to all. They called on the EU and the Member States to **address all socioeconomic limitations** that prevent equal access for all to VET opportunities, including mobility.

The Commission, the Member States and key stakeholders to increase the **visibility of VET programmes** in order to remove cultural barriers and combat the phenomena of lack of motivation, lack of proactive predisposition and lack of language skills, particularly in those areas most affected by youth unemployment; believes that it must be ensured that these programmes are accessible to all citizens without discrimination; calls for the targeting of groups at risk of unemployment, such as people with disabilities.

Parliament insisted on the need to **facilitate the implementation of mobility in Erasmus+**, by taking action to raise the success rate of applications, **simplifying the design and use of electronic tools** for mobility management, raising awareness of the value of mobility programmes in all general and vocational education establishments in the Union, and providing better-targeted information and training to beneficiaries and intermediaries of the programmes and actions.

The Commission was asked to create a **“European student e-card”** which would grant the status of EU student in a mobility context and offer access to services.

Raise awareness among SMEs: Parliament called on the Commission, the Member States and public employment bodies to publicise and raise awareness of the Erasmus+ programme and other tools aimed at promoting mobility in the area of VET, in particular among SMEs. It stressed the urgent need for industry and services in both private and public sectors, including the production sector (notably SMEs and micro-enterprises), to be consulted and/or involved in the design, framing, implementation and support of quality VET mobility programmes.

Members called for the recognition of the role of **Skilled Craft Chambers** and their **training centres** in supporting mobility and very small companies; all measures taken to improve VET schemes should also focus on domains promoting zero carbon energy and sustainable mobility.

European apprentice statute: Members recalled that, at present, only 1 % of young people in work-related training schemes, including apprentices, are involved in mobility schemes during their training. They pointed to the vital need to create the conditions for greater apprentice mobility within the EU, so as to give apprentices the same opportunities as higher education students. They, therefore, encouraged the definition by the EU of a statute of the ‘European Apprentice’. They also:

- called on the Commission to present, and on the Member States to endorse, a proposal for an **EU apprenticeship scheme** that would guarantee a set of rights for apprentices and VET learners;
- highlighted the positive role that “**seniors**” can play in the education and training of youth with a view to maximising intergenerational exchange;
- encouraged the adoption of concrete measures to ensure that apprenticeships and traineeships under Erasmus+ are **not misused** by being turned into an instrument for lowering the cost of labour.

Access: improving mobility options for young people in vocational training: Parliament encouraged the creation of a framework along the lines of the previous Leonardo da Vinci programme, to be referred to in the dedicated Erasmus+ calls, that identifies as clearly and precisely as possible the mobility options for young people in VET, especially through cross-platform campaigns launched by public authorities, with the coordinated participation of all stakeholders who play an active role in or have an influence on VET. It encouraged the Commission and the Member States to provide **sufficient financial resources** to support mobility programmes, taking into account potential financial barriers.

From mobility to employability: validation and recognition of learning outcomes, skills and competences: Members underlined that the opportunities offered by learning and training mobility, such as building international networks, may also have positive effects on employability, transnational cooperation and Europe’s competitiveness. They considered that the current and future measures to tackle skills mismatches should both facilitate the involvement of employers, businesses and local communities, and be better connected with forecasts concerning labour market developments and future skill needs.

The Commission was asked to **keep track of demand and supply on the labour market** within the EU, as well as of geographic and occupational mobility, in order to match the needs of the labour market.

Towards more efficient, accessible and inclusive mobility programmes: Parliament urged the Commission and Member States, also in collaboration with CEDEFOP, to define and strengthen the role of the intermediary institutions, both territorial and sectoral, involved in the preparation, management and follow-up of mobility. It stressed the need for such intermediary institutions to have adequate budgetary and human resources to enable mobility organisation and management structures to guarantee the involvement of the network of vocational training schools. They stressed the need for legal protection of minors abroad.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to establish and effectively implement a **European network of workshops and incubators**, as being crucial for encouraging knowledge alliances among schools, universities and businesses and promoting access to training, experience, refresher courses for teachers and lecturers, apprenticeships and start-ups.

Lastly, Parliament also called for the:

- setting-up of a **one-stop-shop mechanism** for pooling data and communication tools in order to provide a convenient and efficient service for those seeking information and support regarding the various mobility programmes existing at EU, national, regional and local level;

- provision of **up-to-date statistics** and to carry out assessments and/or studies regarding Erasmus+ and other VET mobility programmes;
- review/revision of the **multiannual financial framework (MFF)**, to be based on criteria including the prior assessment of the effectiveness of measures to combat unemployment, with funding for the less effective provisions being cut.