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## European Stakeholders' Forum

### *on EU Cooperation in Education, Training and Youth*

### 28-29 October 2010, Brussels

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This Forum was organised by the DG EAC and the EUCIS-LLL Platform (European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning) in partnership with the European Youth Forum with the aim of consulting European stakeholders on the future of the programmes Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus. It followed online public consultations on the programmes that the DG EAC launched in September 2010.

More than 120 participants were invited to exchange ideas on the priorities and objectives of the future programmes as well as to address possible ways to improve them. A transversal discussion allowed participants to identify synergies between them as well as possible common answers to improve their implementation. This event was also an opportunity to discuss the contribution of these programmes to the accomplishment of the strategic challenges identified in "Europe 2020" and more particularly its flagship initiative "Youth on the Move". Furthermore, the discussions were linked to the financial perspectives for 2014+ as the realisation of these goals will highly depend on allocated budgets for youth, education and training programmes.

Participants took part in a World Café discussion on the priorities, synergies and implementation of the three programmes. There was a plea for administrative simplification and for the possibility to include non-European participants. Other statements were about improving information and access, ensuring a transversal dissemination of projects' results, ensuring more sustainability for projects and networks, providing quality assessment and transparent evaluation, innovative and flexible management, etc. The great majority of the stakeholders did not see the point of merging the current programmes - "evolution, not revolution". Some have begun to be well known and we would lose the benefit of it if we changed the name again or if the entry point to EU support is too loose. Furthermore, many participants outlined the need to have specific programmes for specific publics. These messages were also expressed during the workshops that took place on the different programmes the next day.

This document proposes a synthesis of the discussions that took place and proposes some main conclusions. It represents one element, one voice, in a larger debate that is taking place on the future of the European programmes. Participants *do* hope that decision-makers will seriously take on board their views, as main users and multipliers of EU programmes.



## ] Key messages on the future of the Lifelong Learning Programme, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus

### 1. Vision on the future programmes

The future programmes must:

- Be pragmatic, ambitious, well-communicated;
- Be adequately funded with realistic targets;
- Be fully inclusive, including different ways of learning in a learner-centred environment – this emphasises the need for recognition of informal/non-formal as well as formal learning across all sectors of society;
- Promote active citizenship and not forget our global setting (a “non-fortress Europe”);
- Promote creativity & entrepreneurship (programmes should aim to promote opportunities for people to acquire transversal competences for life);
- Not just focus on professional or skills development but also on personal development (not just addressing economic needs but building a new society of active citizens in all walks of life);
- Promote a competency-based process within different learning settings.

### 2. Synergies between programmes and priorities

- Better co-ordination with Structural Funds (ESF) and other programmes (e.g. Europe for Citizens);
- Improve linkages between projects across different programme strands – better impact and dissemination;
- Need to raise awareness on the programmes to a wider audience (focus on those currently excluded or difficult to reach); e.g. using ambassadors, community leaders, new IT tools and Member States taking ownership of promoting them;
- Most effective areas of cooperation focus on overcoming shared challenges;
- Synergy between programmes should be firmly based on the strategic priorities of ET 2020;
- Bureaucracy and application process should be simplified and common to all programmes (“universal basis of rules”);
- Integrated or not integrated - that is a question. More links could exist between sub-programmes (e.g. European Voluntary Service and Leonardo; Transfer of innovation (managed at MS level) and Development of Innovation (managed at EU level). But the programmes have different target groups/methods/approaches: “no one size fits all”!
- Mobility should be incorporated and more evident in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

### 3. Reflections on the implementation and sustainability of the programmes

- Simplify applications, procedures and reporting across all programmes;
- Simplify financial regulations and bureaucracy;
- Faster decision-making and increased transparency based on quality;
- External evaluation of final outcomes of projects after conclusion;
- Implement co-management in the governance of all programmes (e.g. co-management of the European Youth Fund of the Council of Europe but further reflection is needed to see if it could be applied to all the programmes);



- A single platform for dissemination and funding opportunities could be set up;
- Promote projects that are sustainable and have real IMPACT (e.g. set up an assessment centre);
- Need to consider how quality projects/initiatives can be supported in to the future with the programmes – don't reinvent the wheel!
- Mobility funding should allow learners to live with dignity.

## II] Key messages from the thematic workshops on the future of the programmes

### 1. Workshop 1: International cooperation (future ERASMUS MUNDUS)

Co-chairs: Kathleen van Heule (EAIE) and Michael Hörig (EUA)<sup>1</sup>

The Erasmus Mundus programme is based on the following set of values:

- **Excellence:** the master/doctoral programmes are considered to be prestigious and the grants are reserved for the best students from around the globe. However, the focus on excellence should not prevent an in-depth analysis on equity.
- **Attractiveness:** Erasmus Mundus plays an ambassadorial role for European higher education.
- **Mobility:** Erasmus Mundus promotes mobility and the personal and professional development of students, researchers and academic staff;
- **Cooperation:** Erasmus Mundus promotes partnerships and exchanges amongst higher education stakeholders in view of increasing quality in higher education and facilitating mobility;
- **Capacity building:** Erasmus Mundus (action 2), which concerns Partnerships with non-EU higher education institutions and scholarships for mobility, promotes capacity building and development issues.

For the future of Erasmus Mundus, the following conditions should be considered:

- **Continuity:** Erasmus Mundus has built up a strong brand name and is currently being promoted by various actors, including alumni. In order to continuously support these efforts, the future programme should not change drastically. Also the visibility of European higher education towards external actors should be taken into account. Internal changes are not always easily explained to the rest of the world.

On the other hand, **joint bachelor programmes** might be an issue to be addressed in the near future especially from the point of view of universities in non-EU partner countries (especially those from Africa, Asia and South America) because a solid academic/scientific base for masters programmes is not always existing at their universities.

- **Funding:** the link between funded masters programmes and students' scholarships should be evaluated. With a longer list of programmes operating and only some eligible for student support from the Commission, a clear communication towards potential applicants becomes increasingly difficult. Students should have the option to apply for Commission support for any Erasmus Mundus master programme.
- **Language issues:** more emphasis should be placed upon multilingualism, both in terms of the programme as such as in information material. This should also be seen in the perspective of the equity issue: access to the programme and to information for those who should really benefit from these programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the low attendance of this workshop, the chairs would like to state that this is not a stakeholder reflection.



- **Synergies** should be sought with other EU programmes dealing with higher education such as Tempus, Alfa, EDULINK, Atlantis, Erasmus etc. More **coherence and simplification** should be developed in EU action on higher education.
- **Information:** access to information is important and information should be coherent and consistent.

## Workshop 2: Youth (future of YOUTH IN ACTION)

Co-chairs: Maarten Coertjens (European Youth Forum) and Manos Valasis (AEGEE)

- What are the **needs** of young people?

Young people are a very diverse group and have varied needs but they also have the common need to grow up in a healthy and supportive environment - an environment in which they can also fully participate and that takes them seriously. Young people want to develop themselves in all aspects of life and have a need for support programmes providing mobility opportunities. These support mutual learning and volunteering and lead to acquisition of skills that need to be recognised, thereby enhancing social and professional inclusion. All young people should have access to these programmes and one pre-condition to that is a programme that is known among young people.

- How can the Youth in Action programme support **European youth work**?

The Youth in Action programme should support youth work structurally at European level by continuing and increasing the current support grants. Furthermore, it needs to provide further opportunities for mobility inside and outside the EU, for example by expanding the pilot action on mobility of youth workers. Lastly, it should support a general learning framework for youth workers. Cross-sector learning should be facilitated and youth work needs to be improved by fully recognising the experience acquired from it.

- How can the Youth in Action programme contribute to the **EU2020 strategy**?

The Youth In Action programme contributes to the EU2020 strategy but the way in which it does is not always clear. It does so by providing learning opportunities through participation, volunteering and non-formal education, that are not available somewhere else, thereby increasing competences of young people and their chances on the labour market. It further contributes to the other aims of EU2020 such as reducing poverty and higher levels of inclusion for young people. There was the clear message from the Group that it does not make sense to randomly merge programmes but that all programmes should complementary contribute to it with their own specific contribution. Both formal education and non-formal education programmes should contribute to the Youth on the Move.

- In which way the Youth in Action programme can support further **democratic participation**?

Another issue to discuss was the way for Youth in Action to further support democratic participation. The participants thought that there should be support to youth and youth organisations on all levels to engage in policy-making and support youth organisations and youth councils to involve all young people in these processes and see how best to use multipliers. The Youth in Action programme should support democratic participation in all European countries, not just in the EU. It has to take care that gender balance is reached in all countries and actions. Last but not least, further care should be taken to involve young people with fewer opportunities. The support should be concrete and extensive but Youth in Action should not prescribe the topics as true participation gives young people the freedom to set their priorities based on their reality and needs.



- How can the Youth in Action programme support **youth policy development**?

Democratic participation is inextricably linked to youth policy development and Youth in Action should embody this principle through supporting a Structured Dialogue between youth organisations and institutions (e.g. Council of Europe co-management). This should be complemented by giving sufficient possibilities to young people to discuss topics of their interests in seminars and study sessions.

- What is **missing** in the current Youth in Action?

The Youth in Action programme is very appreciated by users and stakeholders and does not need to be drastically changed. New actions could however be necessary to better reach objectives or address new needs. Suggestions for improvement are:

- The possibility to include non-European participants in all actions of the programme;
- Include children from the age of ten;
- Have an open action for new ideas & innovations;
- Ensure sustainability and concrete results of successful projects by enabling long-term funding of them, while keeping in mind that other resources are needed besides financial ones;
- The possibility for young researchers to have research funded on youth issues.

### **Workshop 3: Lifelong learning and mobility (main trends on the future LLP)**

Co-chairs: Allan Päll (ESU) and Stefano Tirati (EFVET)

- **General statement on the values and impact of learning mobility**

“Learning Mobility has a strong impact on transforming society, while sustaining peace and promoting tolerance, making people more mobile in general and supporting their personal and professional development which also yields academic and economic benefits at various levels.”

- **Awareness raising campaigns**

- More communication efforts are needed to involve more institutions and educational providers as well as those who are potential end beneficiaries;
- Grants/support for mobility beneficiaries for running local seminars or activities at their home or visiting destination to promote mobility;
- Train educational staff at the national level about European opportunities on mobility;
- Use former mobility beneficiaries as ambassadors / testimonies.

- **Recognition**

- Enforcing the legal basis for all levels of education;
- Ensuring the status of mobility beneficiaries.

- **Networking of mobility players at institutional and operators levels**

- Facilitate partnerships and exchange of good practices;
- Include more organisations besides the institutions to build and endure a qualitative learning mobility experience (associations, NGOs).



- **Language and intercultural education**
  - Raise the profile / importance of language teaching and intercultural education.
- **Finance**
  - In order to reach ambitious targets we need more funding at different levels, from the European Commission as well as from local authorities, including ESF;
  - Fight against mobility divides; ensuring dignity for those undergoing mobility and an equal approach, allowing mobility also for those coming from a poor family background and more balanced mobility flows within Europe.
- **Management**
  - Allow also hosting organizations (and individuals when applicable) to apply for grants, not only sending organization contrarily of what is now the case in some programmes;
  - Build mixed funding schemes and give specific support for hosts if they have difficulties in attracting learners in mobility due to other obstacles (bad climate, language barrier, expensive);
  - Need to share know-how on what needs to be done within the 3 phases of mobility: before, during, after;
  - Ensure organisational / logistic / didactic support from the sending side as well as in the host / destination country, according to the different users' needs.
- **Geographic coverage**
  - Extension of the scope of the mobility schemes, not only for higher education. Suggested phases:
    - A) All European Economic area
    - B) Neighbouring countries
    - C) Beyond Europe, global mobility

#### **Workshop 4: Lifelong learning and cooperation projects / partnerships (main trends on the future LLP)**

Co-chairs: Peter Backfish (EVBB) and Audrey Frith (EUCIS-LLL)

- How should the programme(s) be a **contribution to EU 2020 and ET 2020 strategies?**
  - Focus on policy implementation in the Member States – implementation of best practices;
  - Involvement of stakeholders at national and regional levels;
  - More efficient dissemination;
  - Streamlining of objectives.
- What kind of **structure** for the new programme?
  - Evolution but not revolution: programmes should be improved and not changed completely. We need to rationalise the application process and have a sound management at EU and Member State levels. The national level has an important role of information and guidance (ministries, national agencies, etc.) but all countries should apply the same European rules and applications!



- Partnerships should be expanded in the future LLP for their added value and considered as a basis for mobility actions (= 1 application for partnership projects + all types of mobility could be added in the framework of the partnership enabling mobility to take place in a trustful environment);
  - Cooperation projects are important for their contribution to policy development (EU2020) and should be maintained in the future LLP;
  - European networks (operating grants) should be stronger in the future programme. The support should be done in a sustainable way in order to acknowledge these networks as European civil society organisations and not just projects. They play a key role as multipliers and strongly contribute to reach the objective set;
  - In terms of simplification and clarification, Jean Monnet could be integrated in the sectoral actions of the LLP;
  - Allow the participation of non-EU partners in our projects!
- **Improving access and information:**
    - We should have similar application forms for all actions and a homogeneous application of rules;
    - Information and advice at national level is important. There should be good quality information in ALL Member States (an unequal access to information from National agencies was reported by some participants);
    - Use new communication forms (social networks, IT platforms...) to address people who do not know EU programmes;
    - Information where people are: within schools, parents, networks, etc.
- **Sustainability:**
    - New sub-programme to enable the sustainability (2 years?) of good projects;
    - There should be specific rules (no co-funding?) to allow the follow-up and dissemination of these good projects;
    - These grants should be managed at EU-level because of their EU added value BUT we need to ensure a quality assessment (how to choose « good projects »?);
    - Visible and quality information about good projects (database, platform), easy and targeted research should be made possible.

### **Workshop 5: Lifelong Learning and support to policy development (main trends on the future LLP)**

Co-chairs: Sue Waddington (EAEA) and Stefan Delplace (EURASHE)

The group first pointed out the **factors that have had an impact on the programmes:**

- The surge of mass education: programmes developed from 'elitist' to accessible to all learners;
- The growth of number of stakeholders, with different orientations and interests;
- Societal evolutions & the current economic crisis.

The programmes will survive only when continually **adjusting to needs** and when continuing to **serve society**. They should be flexible enough to allow new ideas and concepts. But we have to bear in mind that "Education should be its own officer"; it should not be used for other purposes, other "agendas".



- **Focus of the programmes:**

There has to be a **stronger involvement of stakeholders**. The programmes should be more focused on all staff in education, parents of pupils/students and ICT. In line with societal evolutions, (the validation of) non-formal and informal learning has to receive more attention, as well as the relation between parents and teachers.

Parents are concerned with 'overburdening' of children. Often key competencies are not covered and even extras are asked. Challenges and benchmarks are often too ambitious taking into account the time set for them.

There is a feeling that the programmes are **insufficiently embedded in real life**. Involvement of stakeholders can remedy this, even though they have conflicting interests. We have also to take into account the "private sector" that may show the need of the market.

It is up to the European level to identify **common trends and standards** in the different countries, but the programmes have to allow enough **flexibility**.

- **Policy enforcement:**

In accordance with the "subsidiarity principle", the national (and regional) governments have the prime responsibility of education, but the "European level" (European Union) has to ensure the "European dimension" (such as mobility and quality in education) and address issues that are insufficiently dealt on the national level. There is a need for Guidelines for Quality in Education on a European level (as there are for Higher Education).

National governments are often selective in what kind of advice/policy they take from the "European level". This can be seen from the way some deal with the issue of 'student-centred' approach to learning. Too much insistence on 'labels' can be counter productive. Some policy instruments are not supportive of the policy they are meant to sustain, and do not add to "quality". The example that was given was of the PISA surveys.

- **On Social Inclusion / Active Citizenship:**

There is a growing gap between the educated/skilled and the non-educated/unskilled, and this is not only a "migration problem". The role and importance of the school system is stressed here, taking into account the different cultural contexts in Europe. But more important than a well-functioning school system, is the individual approach towards the learner. Back to pedagogies and the individual relationship of teacher and learner is crucial. There is a need to focus more on the learning process and the learning environment. In addition, there should be a way of making the stakeholders in education feel responsible/accountable.

- **On Creativity and Innovation / Entrepreneurship:**

It is obvious that innovation (like capacity for research) is a necessary component in the education process, which must be stimulated from a young age. Entrepreneurship is a competence next to the other competencies. It corresponds with an attitude to evaluate positively new ideas.

Final note: could there be a role for an **European Institute of Lifelong Learning**, which would make it possible to continue useful reflections amongst main stakeholders?

## **Workshop 6: Management simplification (all programmes)**

Co-chairs: Jonathan Favereau (OBESSU) and Steven Stegers (EUROCLIO)

- **General statement: "Rules and procedures should support the effective implementation of policies"**

1/ Issuing call for proposals:



- An **ABSTRACT** would be helpful;
- A **2-stage approach**, especially for very competitive grants or certain projects are a good way forward;
- Deadlines should be adjusted to the **needs of the applicants** (e.g. deadlines for the Comenius Individual Mobility Grants).

#### 2/ In application procedures:

- Information about the organization that has to be sent repetitively can be **stored centrally** (like or together with PADOR but simpler). This can also help with dissemination, finding partners, reducing the amount of paper, etc.
- **Information in the application form should not be duplicated** (role of partners in general, and for each work package & hours in the budget and the application).

#### 3/ In implementing the projects:

- More **flexibility in budget lines**;
- The **need for amendment** should be prevented as much as possible, by making contracts less specific;
- Where it is the need to amend, **procedures should be easy** but well argued;
- Receiving the first instalment **3 or 4 months after the start of the project** is not acceptable;
- **Lump sums and flat rates** (as the Jean-Monet Programme) make financial administration easier.

#### 4/ Reporting:

- **Criteria for evaluation** should be transparent and clear for both those reporting and evaluating;
- **Review of the evaluation process** is needed; it is now distant and dialogue is lacking;
- The main focus should be on: **are the objectives achieved?**

#### 5/ Finances:

- **Lump sums and flat rates** (as in the Jean-Monet Programme) make financial administration easier and must also be usable by smaller organizations;
- **Not-for-profit rule** is unsustainable. A build in tolerance would help, for example 10% (it is happening for grants for Environment);
- **Volunteer time** should be accepted as co-financing;
- The **effectiveness of co-financing** rules for effective implementation of policies should be reviewed;
- **Telephone and Communication** should be direct costs;
- While audits are a necessary part of the process, financial rules should be **adapted to small and not-for-profit organisations**.

#### 6/ General:

- Procedures should be **simpler for less expensive programmes**;
- **Terminology** can be much simpler;
- Rules should **be similar** in each National Agencies and tailored to needs of applicants;
- Limit hard copies to **1 copy only**;



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- Beneficiaries would **benefit from training** in Media, Legal Issues and Financial Administration, as their expertise is often not in these fields;
- Possibility to give **structured feedback** on applications would be greatly appreciated.

### III] Panel discussion

#### 1/ Closing remarks by H el ene Clark, Director of Directorate B “LLL: policies and programme”, DG EAC

H el ene Clark started her intervention encouraging the participants to take part in the online public consultation on the future programmes for European lifelong learning and youth. Indeed, this Forum takes place in a larger context of broad consultations launched by the European Commission.

Mrs Clark reminded the successes of the current programmes and that we should build on what already exist. The suggestions that were made during this Forum can help the European Commission to improve them. They also seem to correspond to the main ideas emerging from the public consultations.

Mrs. Clark outlined some key messages she heard from the workshops:

- **Strong focus on mobility** (// EU2020 flagship ‘Youth on the Move’);
- **Programmes shall be inclusive:** mobility should be a crosscutting issue in all the programmes and involve all people (“mobility 4 all”) at all levels of education and training;
- **Mobility shall be quality-based:** recognition of mobility learners’ statute;
- **But LLL policies are more than mobility:** partnerships/projects are very important too especially to implement EU2020 objectives and to contribute to modernising education and training systems;
- **There is a need for management simplification** in the three programmes. The current programme already moved in that direction (more lump sums, etc.) and further efforts should be made especially in the structure of the programme with maybe less sub-actions;
- **Better dissemination:** ambassadors, new communication tools are a key to further achievements;
- **But we shall be careful: we cannot do everything with the programme.** We need to be selective and agree on core priorities. We also need to look at complementarities with the European Social Fund for example. Synergies should be sought.

#### 2/ Closing remarks by Gregory Paulger, Director of Directorate E “Youth and Sport”, DG EAC

Gregory Paulger began his intervention pointing out the success and popularity of the “Youth in Action” programme, which supports every year over 7500 projects despite its relatively modest budget. Demands are rising year after year showing the enthusiasm around it.

Mr Paulger highlighted that proposals for the future programmes will take place in a difficult budgetary context, as the negotiations on the 2011 EU budget have already illustrated. Some countries strongly oppose increase in the EU budget and, indeed, seem to favour cuts.

In this context it is important to **achieve partnerships not only at the European and/or national level, but also at the local/regional level** (“additionality” in the technocratic vocabulary).

Mr Paulger acknowledged the importance of stakeholders' consultations in the current phase of design of the future programmes and also encouraged organisations to participate in the online public consultations on the future Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus programmes. He also stressed the **need to take**



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into account the current economic crisis and its consequences on the future budget for the period 2014-2020.

### 3/ Closing remarks by Jordi Curell Gotor, Director of Directorate C “LLL: higher education and international affairs”, DG EAC

The European Commission supports a range of international education and training activities. Erasmus Mundus aims to enhance mobility and quality in higher education through scholarships and academic cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world.

Mr. Curell outlined some key messages that came out from the conclusions of the workshops:

- The **importance of international exchanges and capacity building** to facilitate mobility and academic cooperation and foster quality in higher education;
- The importance of **strong partnerships to develop qualitative joint Masters or PhD programmes** and efficiently organize mobility;
- The importance of the programme to promote **attractiveness and excellence** of European higher education;
- **Finding synergies** between Erasmus Mundus and other EU higher education programmes in order to improve the quality, coherence and effectiveness of EU action in the field;
- The need to **work further on awareness rising**.

All the directors thanked the participants and encouraged further dialogue via notably the online consultation. Gina Ebner (EUCIS-LLL Platform) and Maarten Coertjens (European Youth Forum) also thanked the audience for their active participation and reminded that this Forum represents one step in the debates taking place on the future programmes. They encouraged European stakeholders to continue to work together for strong European cooperation programmes.

End of the conference.