

Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "Erasmus": The Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013 (COM(2018) 367 final).

The Committee on EU Policies of Italy's Chamber of Deputies,

Having examined, pursuant to Rule of Procedure 127.1 of the Chamber of Deputies, the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "Erasmus": The Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) 1288/2013 (COM(2018) 367 final);

Taking note also of Resolution 69 - forwarded to the Italian Parliament by the legislative assembly of the Region of the Marches pursuant to article 9.2 of Law 234 of 2012 - setting out a mid-term evaluation of the "Erasmus+ 2014-2020" programme and proposals regarding future planning;

Whereas:

The proposal under examination repeals Regulation (EU) 1288/2013 establishing the current Erasmus+ programme, which runs until 2020, and replaces it with a new Erasmus programme for 2021-2027, which retains the original objective of favouring and promoting exchanges and mobility for lifelong learning and training;

The new programme appears to be significantly enhanced and more ambitious than its predecessors, both with respect to the resources appropriated to it, which, at €30 billion, are more than double the €14.7 billion allocated for the years 2014-2020, and with respect to its stated aim of tripling the number of participating European citizens - students and others - from 4 million (in the 2014-2020 programme) to 12 million (2021-2027);

The legal basis of the proposal is articles 165 and 166 TFEU, which give the EU responsibility for helping Member States improve their education, vocational training, youth, and sport policies.

Without impinging on the prerogative of Member States to set their own policies and make their own organisational arrangements in these areas, the European Union initiative aims to encourage projects on cross-border and international cooperation and mobility, and thus nurture a European identity;

The proposal appears to comply with the principle of subsidiarity because, owing to the cross-border nature, scale and geographical scope of the cooperation and mobility efforts to be financed, no single Member State acting alone is capable of realising its goals;

The proposal also appears to comply with the principle of proportionality in that it limits itself to doing only what is necessary to achieve its stated objectives while maintaining continuity with the current programme;

The new Erasmus programme also seems to contain a number of improvements that are consonant with the findings of the mid-term (2014-2016) evaluation of the current programme. The improvements include: 1) greater inclusiveness by aspiring to increase the participation of students whose educational opportunities are limited by their social or geographical circumstances; 2) the consolidation of initiatives that aim to promote greater understanding and knowledge of the processes of European integration and an enhanced sense of European belonging; 3) stronger action in the areas of schools, education, vocational training and youth; 4) the simplification of bureaucratic procedures for applications and record-keeping; 5) the expansion of educational and training opportunities through the use of new technologies and online courses;

The proposed enhancement and reinforcement of the Erasmus programme are consistent with the perspective of EU institutions to create a European Education Area, an objective that the EU Commission intends to achieve by 2025. Over the coming years, the enhanced Erasmus should lead to the attainment of interim goals such as the mutual recognition of academic qualifications and periods of study and the establishment of European universities;

The programme includes several new initiatives, one of which, Discover EU, will offer young people opportunities for European travel and discovery;

The new programme also aspires to expand the stock of skills and innovation capacities of its participants by providing result-oriented initiatives for study, research, retraining and refresher courses, as well as environments that nurture creativity and enterprise in emerging fields such as renewable energy, climate change, environmental engineering, artificial intelligence and digital technology;

Acknowledging that both this opinion and the final document of the Committee responsible by subject-matter need to be forwarded promptly to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue, as well as to the European Parliament and the Council;

expresses

A FAVOURABLE OPINION

with the following qualifications:

The Committee responsible by subject-matter should consider raising the following points before the appropriate European bodies:

- a) Although the funds appropriated to the programme have been significantly increased to double the amount allocated to the preceding programme, consideration should nonetheless be given to increasing them still further as even the new total seems insufficient with respect to the goal of tripling the number of beneficiaries;*
- b) More precise targets need to be set for the training and upskilling of teachers, which should entail the inclusion of a provision that enables school staff to avail themselves individually of opportunities for mobility for training purposes;*
- c) The programme should include measures to encourage the wider use of funds for university master's degrees;*
- d) The new "Discover EU" initiative should ensure that programme beneficiaries also receive allowances for food and board so that economically disadvantaged students are not excluded;*
- e) Steps should be taken to expand the Erasmus exchange programme also to non-EU countries in the future so as not to circumscribe the process of integration.*