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News | 26.01.2017

30 Years Erasmus

A European Success Story

In 1987, the Council of the European Community decided to promote the mobility of students and to foster cooperation between universities in Europe. At that time, nobody could imagine that Erasmus would become one of the biggest success stories of the European integration project.

Since 2014, the title “Erasmus” does not only stand for university exchanges, but all EU educational programmes to the benefit of apprentices, teachers, young employers and pupils were pooled under the heading “Erasmus+”.

During the last 30 years, the Erasmus programme allowed almost 10 million people to gain experiences in another European country. Participants gain language competences, insights into a new education system and also acquire intercultural competences and knowledge about Europe’s diversity.

This is extremely important for their personal development and becomes even more important with regards to the rising populism and EU-scepticism in numerous EU-Member States, where populists are fishing for votes by deploying negative clichés and stereotypes about groups of society. Populism is mobilising fears and prejudices against foreigners and religious groups. Erasmus is a strong tool to fight resentments through widening personal perspectives, promoting cultural dialogue and allowing to practically experience common European values.

After difficult negotiations with the Council, the European Parliament succeeded to get an increase of the Erasmus+ budget of 40 percent. 14.7 Billion EUR are available for education and exchange programmes. But despite pretty speeches: Member States fell short on their clear commitment for Erasmus. During the last years, a number of programmes was facing financial difficulties due to pending payments by the Member States. This threatened funding, scholarships and salaries of employees of the national implementation agencies. Such problems do not build trust amongst stakeholders and young Europeans. We need more reliability in the financing of the programmes.

Our goal is to further increase the Erasmus+ budget to allow more young people to benefit from the programmes and to ensure that it remains a successful building block of the European house. Our priorities for the next programme period are a higher inclusiveness of underrepresented groups and higher scholarships schemes for disadvantaged young people.

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Contact person



Helga Trüpel

Member

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