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Unlocking the potential of Erasmus+

In a landmark report by Greens/EFA MEP Ernest Maragall, the European Parliament's Culture Committee has called for the EU's flagship Erasmus+ to do much more to promote mobility in vocational training across Europe.

With youth unemployment unacceptably high, we need to take urgent action to unlock the vast potential of Europe's young people - improving mobility in vocational training could help do just that.

Erasmus+ was launched in 2014 and brings together all of the EU's education, training, youth and sport schemes, enabling students and many young people to study in another European country. With more than three million Europeans having taken part in Erasmus since its first inception back in 1987, it has a clear role to play in tackling the problems currently seen in youth employability.

The on-going economic crisis has been a major factor in the unacceptably high youth unemployment rates across Europe. Now, several years on from the beginning of the crisis, young people continue to suffer the results of economic problems their generation had nothing to do with creating.

What's more, the effects are being felt disproportionately across Europe. While youth unemployment is relatively low in some counties, elsewhere it is as high as 40%. This leaves an entire generation of young people at risk of not achieving their full potential.

The issues are different across Europe. In some regions, there are opportunities but a shortage of skilled young people to make best use of them. Elsewhere, the problem is one of demand, with few employment opportunities for those finishing education. Greater mobility in vocational training could help address these imbalances.

Mobility can also significantly improve young people's employability, fostering a sense of European identity and developing personal skills such as entrepreneurship, innovation and self-confidence.

While mobility for higher education after years of Erasmus seems quite natural, obstacles remain for mobility for apprentices. With a better focus of the new programme Erasmus+ on apprenticeship, and a good coordination between the different DGs at the Commission level, we hope that the obstacles will be challenged and the mobility will be a natural and necessary tool for youth.

Erasmus+ has proven to be a great success, but it must be reformed if we are to see greater mobility of vocational students and unlock its full potential for young Europeans.

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Responsible MEPs



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