

30 STAKEHOLDERS' ADOPT COMMON MESSAGES ON THE "ERASMUS FOR ALL" PROGRAMME

PRESS RELEASE

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Brussels, 15th December 2011 // Today a coalition of 30 European networks gathering thousands of organizations in secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, youth, adult education and popular education adopted common messages on the future "Erasmus for All" programme. The coalition praises the proposed budget of 19 billion EUR while acknowledging that is a minimum allocation necessary to have a real impact in the current economic crisis and to match the ambitious targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. It also welcomes the commitment to simplify the programme. However it considers that some adjustments could be brought to the proposed Regulation in order to ensure a greater impact and European added value. This concerns the need to reinforce the lifelong learning dimension and the recognition of competences and skills gained through non-formal education, to strengthen the complementary aims of learning – active citizenship, social inclusion as well as employability. Furthermore, it is crucial to better acknowledge the importance of civil dialogue and civil society and the support to them.

In its conclusions of 14th February 2011, the European Council recognised that "*Education and training are key to achieving the Europe 2020 goals. Investing efficiently in high quality, modernised and reformed education and training is urgent because it will both lay the foundations for Europe's long-term prosperity and also, by providing people with more and better skills and competences, help to respond in the short term to the effects of the crisis...*" The future programme should **have sufficient means to contribute to the concrete implementation** of these policy objectives. As the OECD "Education at a Glance" report shows, "*despite strained public budgets, governments must keep up their investment to maintain quality in education, especially for those at risk*". We believe that the current programmes have proved their added value and successes. We thus **call on the European Parliament and Council to adopt the proposed budget as the minimum allocation necessary to have a real impact in the current economic crisis and to match the ambitious targets of the Europe 2020 strategy.**

The coalition welcomes the idea to have a programme that supports a **lifelong approach to learning** that puts at a same level of esteem various ways of accessing learning be it **formal, non-formal or informal**. Learning should be accessible to all at all stages and ages of life. But the proposed Regulation is not adopting such a lifelong learning approach in terms of opening the programme to all type of learners from early childhood to seniors. The **programme should be inclusive** and tailor made for each learner group. We thus call for a better transcription of this approach in the actions and especially for a clearer mention of the specific role of non-formal education in the structure and for trans-sector cooperation. Such access should also be made possible in third countries and especially in **neighbouring states** in all the sectors.

In the current economic context, the **social dimension should be stronger in the Regulation**. Getting more people skilled and educated requires specific efforts to reach out disadvantaged groups. We thus ask the European Parliament and Council to ensure quality and equity with for instance mobility schemes that allow those from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part – for example, by giving them sufficient grants which currently are too low and too flat. The programme should also support smaller organizations that can reach out these target groups. Furthermore, **acquiring and improving skills, knowledge and competences goes beyond the sole aim of improving employability and encompasses developing active citizenship and social cohesion**. This approach should be made clearer in the Regulation.

Last but not least, the management of the programme **should be based on a participative approach**. A structured dialogue with European associations in the education and training fields should be made explicit. We would also like to outline the **specific role of European civil society organisations** that are currently supported by Jean Monnet and Youth in Action **and that of multi-sectoral platforms**. They play a crucial role as multipliers in informing and involving education, training and youth actors in EU cooperation and policy-making and in disseminating cooperation outputs. The current Regulation proposal mentions a “policy dialogue” with relevant European stakeholders but **not a specific support to European associations**. On the contrary the coalition believes it is necessary to strengthen this element and to have a sufficient and sustainable budget allocation to ensure that EU policies and programmes are better known and shared at all levels.

Because we believe that an evolution of the general structure can only be done through a valorisation and examination of the existing programmes and a forward thinking projection, the coalition members agreed to work together on a more **detailed proposal on the Regulation** beginning of 2012 in order to make constructive proposals to help EU institutions to come up with actual, ‘ready for the future’, comprehensive, innovation-friendly and user-friendly programmes for education, training and youth. The members of the coalition also ask the European Commission to be involved in drafting the programme future guidelines.

Notes to the editors: the coalition is an informal group of major European organisations and networks who decided to work together of the future programmes for education, training and youth. Together they represent millions of learners, teachers, educators, youth workers, school heads or human resources professionals as well as thousands of schools, colleges, universities, adult education centres, youth centres and associations across Europe.

