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Report

INVESTING IN LIFELONG LEARNING

HOW CAN THE NEXT MFF SUPPORT EUROPE'S LEARNERS?

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Initiated by EAEA and Lifelong Learning Platform together with a number of MEPs, the European Parliament's Interest Group on Lifelong Learning brings together civil society representatives and MEPs to discuss key issues connected to lifelong learning with strong emphasis on adult education.

An important reason to form the Interest Group on Lifelong Learning was the new Juncker's European Commission and its priorities. We stand for a comprehensive and trans-sectorial lifelong learning approach, and want to stress that education is not only about employment, but is linked to personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship, and much more.

The interest group works as a "watchdog" to what the European Union is doing on lifelong learning.

FOREWORD

This third meeting of the Lifelong Learning Interest Group in 2018 focused on how the next EU **Multiannual Financial Framework** and generation of EU programmes can support education, training and lifelong learning. This ranges from the flagship Erasmus+ programme to others which touch on various dimensions of learning such as Horizon Europe and the Rights and Values programme, or where improving access to and the quality of education is among their specific objectives, namely the European Social Fund+.

Recent developments at the European level - including the proposed vision of a European Education Area and the first-ever Education Summit - show the **growing recognition of the role that learning in all its forms can play in securing a better future for Europe's citizens**, as well as the immense benefit of EU cooperation in complementing Member States' policies in this area. This meeting - with speakers and stakeholders from diverse perspectives - therefore offered an opportunity to reflect on how the next EU budget can foster this potential. Identifying fruitful synergies between the various funding programmes - including how such synergies could be put into practice - was a great part of the meeting.



THE PARLIAMENT'S WORK TO SUPPORT EDUCATION

Following introductions from the moderator Conny Reuter, SOLIDAR, MEPs Jill Evans and Emilian Pavel took the floor to discuss the European Parliament's position on the next Erasmus+ programme.

Ms Evans, shadow rapporteur for the CULT Committee's report, highlighted the **importance of Erasmus+ in supporting the transition of young people from education to adulthood**. She emphasised its impact on employability and the promotion of active citizenship, in particular participation in European elections. Confirming the Parliament's ambition of tripling the programme budget, she underlined the need for the new programme to be more inclusive, supporting organisations working with marginalised groups. She likewise called for regular review of financial support to meet the real needs of students, and support of language learning, including language

minorities.

Mr Pavel shared his confidence in a positive approach towards Erasmus+ in the EP, as evidenced by the almost unanimous vote on the EMPL Committee's Opinion for which he is rapporteur. He said **VET and lifelong learning should have a crucial role in the future programme** and emphasised that not only Erasmus+, but also other programmes such as ESF+, should be strengthened. He recalled that lifelong learning is a priority of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which underpins the EP's interim report on the next MFF.



MEP EMILIAN PAVEL AND MEP JILL EVANS

THE COMMISSION'S PERSPECTIVE



GINA EBNER AND JYRKI KATAINEN

Jyrki Katainen, European Commission Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, next took the floor to share the Commission's perspective. He highlighted that **the next MFF would have the highest ever share of investment in human capital**, vital for enhancing people's resilience in the face of rapid technological changes.

In addition to the important role of Erasmus+, which he hopes in the next programme period will benefit more VET learners and teachers, he referred to the strong social investments that the proposed InvestEU programme will promote, as well as synergies between ESF+ and Erasmus+ for supporting disadvantaged groups. Fostering synergies between programmes is a priority in the next MFF.

STATEMENTS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY

Gina Ebner, President of LLLP and Secretary General of EAEA, followed Mr Katainen's intervention by also emphasising the value of cooperation between the various EU programmes, as well as between different education sectors. Ms Ebner called not only for a lifelong learning approach in Erasmus+, but also stressed the importance of finding and fostering links between education and other sectors such as agriculture or health. Looking at the opportunities given by the MFF, she underlined their potential to reduce inequalities, reach out to disadvantaged learners, promote democracy and values, but also address inequalities within countries and within the lifelong learning sector itself where some sectors get more funding than others. Ms Ebner furthermore recalled the value of European cooperation in the lifelong learning arena when it comes to policy as well as programmes - it helps to drive and scale up the grassroots innovation that the programmes can generate, even if this is small. Concerning adult education specifically, Ms Ebner pointed out that, while opportunities for young people are undoubtedly very important, learning opportunities for adults - as parents, consumers, volunteers - are also needed in order to promote resilience.



MARGUERITE POTARD, WOSM, ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE

Giulia Meschino, EVTA welcomed the proposed increases in the next MFF for education, training and youth, stating the importance of this for fighting the populist movement. Outlining the three priorities of investing in people, VET and civil society, she continued by calling for a resilient ESF+ supporting structural changes in education and training. We should not forget the need for re-skilling and upskilling in order to keep young people in the labour market. Ms Meschino also called for investment to improve the provision of VET, in this respect welcoming the launch of the Centres of vocational excellence initiative. These systems of innovation, however, should also foster mutual learning and the exchange of good practices. Investment in civil society is also needed because it reaches the grassroots level.

Marguerite Potard, WOSM stressed the need for support for non-formal education, not only through Erasmus+ but under the ESF+ as well.

Katrina Koppel, ESU addressed the new European Universities initiative which the next Erasmus+ will fund, expressing concern that it will end up increasing exclusivity rather than inclusion. There are conflicting messages from the Commission and Parliament about this. She likewise expressed concern about the DiscoverEU initiative as it gives the impression that learning mobility is seen as simply travelling around. Ms Koppel welcomed the focus of many of the amendments from the Parliament on Erasmus+ on strengthening inclusion. This is particularly important when it comes to students with disabilities as their participation in the programme is very low.

Mr Pavel recalled the amendments tabled in his Opinion on Erasmus+ on putting a ceiling for the funding of the European Universities initiatives. The initiative will encourage universities to collaborate more and use their intellectual potential to contribute to the EU. In his Opinion he likewise proposed ceilings for the funding and geographical coverage of the Centres of vocational excellence. Such structures are currently not well developed at the European level.

Arja Krauchenburg, EPA recalled the vital role of parents who come from all walks of life and their connection to civil society. They also represent the intergenerational aspect of learning. Under Erasmus+ there should be provisions for parents to access mobility grants. We should invest in parents and all parents, no matter their profession, should exert their influence in this capacity.



JYRKI KATAINEN, GINA EBNER AND CONNY REUTERS



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An important reason to form the Interest Group on Lifelong Learning is the European Commission and its priorities. We stand for a comprehensive and trans-sectorial lifelong learning approach, and want to stress that education is not only about employment, but is linked to personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship, and much more. The interest group works as a «watchdog» to what the European Union is doing.

The group aims to fight inequalities and discrimination in education in order to reach the Europe 2020 and Education and Training 2020 headline targets and contribute to the EU growth strategy this way.

Visit our website
<http://www.lll-interestgroup.eu/>



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