

EDUCATION: “Erasmus for All” -first debate on Doris Pack report

Brussels, 20/09/2012 (Agence Europe) - The chairman of the education and culture committee at the European Parliament, Doris Pack (EPP, Germany), unveiled, on Thursday 20 September, the content of her draft report on the new European Commission programme, “Erasmus for All”. She proposes a separate youth chapter and suggests the programme should be renamed “YES, Europe”. Pack's colleagues hailed her work and approved of the draft report which, they find, improves the Commission proposal.

Pack presented the broad lines of her draft report prior to a first debate within the parliamentary committee and the vote scheduled for 6 November. She does not intend to change the three categories of action as defined by the Commission and which group measures currently supported by the action programme in the field of education and lifelong training, the international programme for higher education (the current Erasmus), and the “Youth in Action” programme, namely: (1) the mobility of individuals for apprenticeship purposes; (2) cooperation for innovation and best practice; and (3) support for policy reform. On the other hand, she provides a separate chapter on youth and hopes to make the other kinds of training more visible, whereas university education seems to be the Commission's preference. The names given to the education and lifelong training programmes (Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig, etc.) will be maintained, however. The rapporteur's aim is to give the different sectors greater visibility, deeming the Commission's proposal to be too vague and nebulous. Pack is in favour of the proposal for implementing “Masters Erasmus”, namely a mechanism of loan guarantees for Masters students, but considers that discussions should shed more light on the implementation of that mechanism. More specifically, regarding the Jean Monnet action, the MEPs hope to maintain funding currently granted to six entities, while the Commission suggests that support should no longer be given to more than two of them, namely [the College of Europe \(in Bruges and Natolin\)](#) and the European University Institute (in Florence).

A separate chapter is dedicated to sport, accompanied by a sustainable funding plan. It will be necessary to ensure that there is compatibility between training and sport, a link between sport and health, objectives for combating discrimination, and the aspect relating to social inclusion, Pack stressed. On the subject of the budget, although exact amounts have not yet been mentioned as they are to be fixed by the multiannual financial framework, Pack suggests a minimum allocation of 90% for education and training, while the Commission envisages 56%. Finally, Pack reiterates that the name chosen for the new programme, “Erasmus for All”, is particularly ill chosen, as, on one hand, there could be confusion between the current programme for higher education and, on the other, it is misleading to say “for All” when the programme is only aimed at selected students. She therefore suggests that the programme be called “YES Europe” (YES standing for Youth-Education-Sport).

Taking the floor, MEPs welcomed the work done by their chairperson and warmly approved of the proposals put forward. All were more or less enthusiastic about the new name suggested and in favour of including a separate chapter on youth. Speakers included Hannu Takkula (ALDE, Finland), who nonetheless sounded a note of caution against a programme that might prove over-complicated, being comprised of a host of small measures. He called for an adequate budget to be earmarked for sport. This was also mentioned by Katarina Nevedalova (S&D, Slovakia), who called, moreover, for more

attention to be paid to student loans, so that they are really accessible for the less advantaged students. That question was also raised by Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL, France), who advocates greater visibility for informal education and adult training. While the Commission has recently published the results of an expert report on illiteracy, Malika Benarab-Attou (Greens/EFA, France) called for greater attention to be paid to the problem of illiteracy and school drop outs. On behalf of Emma McClarkin of Britain and the ECR Group, Marek Henryk Migalski of Poland voiced doubt about the structure of a document that hopes to provide greater flexibility.