

Council
May 6, 2003
37/201

ERASMUS MUNDUS - Public deliberation

The Council reached a political agreement on a common position concerning a proposal for a Decision on a multi-annual programme (2004-2008) for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries. The Council agreed to change its name from "Erasmus World" to "Erasmus Mundus". Once formally adopted at a forthcoming Council session, the common position will be forwarded to the European Parliament for a second reading.

All delegations expressed their strong support for the programme's goals and recognised its importance in contributing to achieving the objectives set by the Lisbon European Council (March 2000) to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010. The budget proposed by the Council for the common position is EUR 180 million. In this connection, the Council agreed to the inclusion of a review clause in view of the Union's next financial perspectives starting in 2007.

The Council also agreed to include the adoption of selection results of "Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses" in the management procedure applicable to the measures necessary for the programme's implementation.

The proposed programme aims to make higher education in the Union more attractive to students and teachers in third countries by means of scholarships and the setting up of around 90 inter-university networks, which will provide some 250 "European Masters Courses". The proposal would allow for post-graduate students from third countries to receive grants at a level of circa EUR 21000 per year, an amount considered comparable to that of other international programmes, such as the U.S. Fulbright Scholarships. The proposal also provides for the mobility of European students and teachers to third countries.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE "EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE"

The Council held an exchange of views on the role of universities in the "Europe of knowledge" on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Presidency.

The majority of delegations stressed the importance of quality assurance systems in higher education, the continuation of the implementation of the "Bologna process" in this area, as well as the importance of promoting accreditation and recognition of diplomas at European level. Networking among universities was also considered as an important contribution to the development of excellence, namely via the exchange and dissemination of good practice.

Some Member States referred to the critical role played by private investment, particularly in the area of research, as well as to the benefits of curricular specialisation and the promotion of higher education "centres of excellence".

Delegations from the Acceding States also took the floor during the debate to concur with the issues raised by Member States.

The Council's exchange of views took into account many of the observations in the Commission's Communication "The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge" (February 2003). Furthermore, the discussion was seen as being closely linked to the aims of the "Erasmus Mundus" programme (see above).

YOUTH

THE FUTURE OF YOUTH IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Council held an exchange of views on the future of youth activities in the Union, on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Presidency.

All delegations expressed positive views on the importance of giving priority to youth information and participation. Delegations were overwhelmingly favourable to the maintenance of a separate programme specifically targeting young people and youth activities, in view of the success of the current Youth programme and the positive feedback received at national level from a number of different actors involved in this field.

Many delegations welcomed the effective and flexible use of the "Open Method of Co-ordination" in this policy field as an appropriate instrument to exchange good practice and promote the sharing of successful experiences among Member States. They also underscored the importance of keeping future objectives concise and focused.

The discussion took into account the Commission's White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth" (November 2001), the "European Framework of Co-operation in the Youth Field" established by a Council Resolution in June 2002, as well as the recent Commission's Communication (April 2003) on the follow-up to the White Paper which proposes common objectives for the participation and information of young people.

Furthermore, the discussion was closely linked to the Conclusions on the future of youth activities in the context of the new generation of programmes, which were adopted by the Council on 6 May under the list of "A items" (i.e. items adopted without discussion; see page II for the text of the Conclusions).

"THE SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE" - Declaration

"THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL:

1. **STRESSING** the social and health significance of sport for young people, both male and female, and its role in forging identity and bringing people together as affirmed in the declaration on the social importance of sport annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam,