



EUROCITIES' statement on the Erasmus for All programme

Three-quarters of Europe's population lives in cities and towns. Cities provide the infrastructure for economic growth and social mobility as centres for business, trade, jobs, education and services.

As city administrations, we have first-hand knowledge of local social and economic situation. We are responsible for preschool and primary education, adult education and for maintaining and managing of local educational infrastructure. We design and co-ordinate comprehensive local development plans that set out the priorities for action in many policy areas, including education and training. In particular, we encourage, support and often lead actions to facilitate the link between education and the labour market by bringing together schools, universities, research centres and businesses.

We are convinced that achieving the Europe 2020's targets in education will not be possible without full involvement of cities.

EUROCITIES is the platform representing 135 major European cities. We propose changes to Erasmus for All to:

- strengthen the urban and local dimension of the programme; and
- strengthen the social dimension of the programme.

Strengthening the urban and local dimensions of the programme

We welcome Article 17.1 in the current proposal which states that 'any public and private body in the areas of education, training and youth' can access the programme. We also welcome the broad definition of 'staff' in Article 2.7 as it opens up the possibilities for local administrations to take part in mobility actions. However, the proposal makes no explicit references to city and local authorities, so we therefore propose the following:

- **Make a clear reference to cities in the recitals**

Cities often experience higher rates of early school leaving than regional and national average. Early school leaving also tends to concentrate in specific neighbourhoods which usually suffer from higher levels of poverty and exclusion. City governments have a lot of experience in dealing with such complex problems through neighbourhood approaches combining interventions in different policy areas.

- **Add a clear reference to public authorities at all levels in Article 2.4**

At the moment, the Article 2.4 defines 'cooperation for innovation and good practice' as 'involving organisations' (...). The article should make specific reference to public authorities alongside organisations to ensure their access to the action referenced.

- **Add a reference to local authorities in Article 5.c;**

Promoting European lifelong learning and cooperation in the field of youth cannot be successful without meaningful engagement of local and regional governments in identifying challenges and in tackling them. Local and regional authorities have first hand knowledge of existing and emerging problems and are usually the first to address them. Finally, in most countries they share responsibility for education, training and youth policies with the national level.

- **Add a clear reference to promoting cooperation at local and regional level in education, training and youth in Article 8**

At the moment, the actions under Article 8 focus only on cooperation across sectors and within education-business environment. The Article does not mention local and regional authorities. That is despite the fact that the Communication accompanying the proposal clearly refers to promoting local and regional actions across sectors¹. Moreover, local governments have experience in the field of youth policy and youth work. Many cities are already involved in partnerships and networks to improve the education at all levels, from primary to tertiary level. These partnerships include a wide range of stakeholders, such as schools, welfare services, social workers, employment services as well as chambers of commerce, businesses, universities or research institutes.

Such actions encourage innovation and more efficiency in tackling complex problems and the lessons from them would substantially add value to the programme.

Strengthening the social dimension of the programme

We welcome the general objectives of the programme, in particular the focus on quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation in educational institutions, as outlined in Article 5.b. We are also supportive of linking the programme closer to the Europe 2020 strategy, as stated in Article 4.2. However, we are concerned that the social dimension of the proposed programme has weakened, as compared to the current Lifelong Learning Programme. Therefore, we suggest the following:

- **Add 'promoting social inclusion and access to education and training' to the programme's objectives (Article 5);**

Problems such as early school leaving, exclusion of young people, low educational attainment and poor educational performance are rife in urban areas. Moreover, regardless of a city's prosperity, these problems tend to concentrate in certain socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods.

- **Add 'promoting active citizenship' to the programme's objectives (Article 5);**

Education is also a tool to promote active and responsible citizenship. In this context, formal, as well as informal and non-formal education settings encourage the development of skills that are essential in today's social, economic and political reality. Local governments can play an important role in promoting active citizenship among citizens and especially young people.

¹COM(2011) 787 final, *Erasmus for All: The EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport*, Brussels, 23.11.2011, page 10