

**Official Statement by the Board of the Federal Institute for
Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) on the European
Commission proposal for an “Erasmus for All” programme to run
from 2014 – 2020**

On 23 November 2011, the European Commission presented its draft proposal for an “Erasmus for All” programme to cover the period from 2014 – 2020, for which the planned financial volume will be €17.3 billion. The programme brings together structurally the existing Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes as well as other programmes in the higher education area being conducted in conjunction with third countries to form a single large educational framework programme. The intention is also to include a sport strand.

The **Board of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)** issues the following Official Statement in this regard.

The Board of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training welcomes the fact that the proposal for the “Erasmus for All” programme plans a significantly increased budget for the period 2014 – 2020. The proposal reflects the importance of the EU Europe 2020 growth strategy by including two core educational objectives of its own and emphasises that education is a vital future area in terms of the competitiveness of the European Union and needs to be equipped with sufficient financial resources in the negotiations on the new EU Financial Framework taking place in the Council and in the European Parliament. For this reason, cuts should not be made.

The proposal supports the close linking of the programme with the educational policy objectives of the European Union. It stresses the importance of all measures which assist in bringing about a reduction in youth unemployment in Europe, in particular by strengthening vocational education and training which is of high quality and is closely related to practice. The Board therefore expressly supports the rapid implementation across Europe of the catalogue of measures aimed at strengthening practically related training in the EU contained within the Statement of the Members of the Council of the European Union of 30 January 2012 entitled “Towards growth-friendly consolidation and job-friendly growth”.

It welcomes the objective of systematically expanding support for mobility for learning purposes and of making this a clear policy and content priority of the new EU education programme after 2013. Within this process, the main funding focus should be placed on educational areas where there is the greatest accumulated need and mobility in vocational education and training should be particularly promoted. In the same way as the European heads of state and government, the Board also wishes to emphasise the value and the brand name of the EU vocational education and training programme LEONARDO DA VINCI.

It supports the endeavours to facilitate access to the programme and within this context also underlines the particular importance of easier access for small and medium-sized companies

and for smaller educational establishments. The Board also welcomes the endeavour to simplify administrative procedures via such means as greater use of flat-rate grants.

Despite these positive aspects, the proposal of the European Commission does not meet the expectations of the Board. The Board feels that specific details regarding the structuring and implementation of the programme are absent in many parts of the proposal. It cannot identify how the extensive results produced by public consultation have informed the proposal.

Firmly establishing equivalence and permeability

The Board stresses the necessity of firmly anchoring the concept of lifelong learning into the new programme in a more sustainable manner. This particularly includes the funding of measures which foster equivalence and permeability and the structuring and facilitation of transitions between educational areas.

Taking account of demographic change

Greater consideration still needs to be accorded to the significance of demographic change. The present proposal is predominantly aimed at supporting initial vocational training and academic education. A separate budget line needs to be designated for continuing vocational training and adult education.

Mapping the specific requirements and needs of the educational areas

The Board believes that it is necessary to retain the educational areas as the outline structure of the programme. Most of the objectives contained within the Strategy 2010 are educational area specific. The Bologna Process, the Copenhagen Process and the European Agenda for Adult Learning are of particular significance. The educational systems of the member states are structured along educational area lines, although the form this takes varies. The integration of the Youth in Action programme should take place via the creation of an independent chapter in which youth policy measures are bundled and are visible.

Securing an appropriate budgetary division between the educational areas

The Board has ascertained that the draft proposal produced by the Commission plans to shift financial resources away from vocational education and training in favour of providing funding for higher education. Concentrating funding in higher education will not solve the labour market policy problems in the European Union. For this reason, at least 25% of the programme budget should be earmarked for vocational education and training. At least 85% of the available funding should be allocated to the educational areas in the form of budgets rather than the previous 56%.

Promoting mobility in vocational education and training

The Board welcomes the European benchmark aimed at facilitating a period of learning abroad for 6% of all trainees. Notwithstanding this, the “Erasmus for All” proposal does not make any significant contribution towards further increasing mobility in vocational education and training.

Opening up an international dimension for all educational areas and integrating multipliers

The establishment of VET structures and cooperation agreements provides a lasting contribution to global development. The Board makes an express appeal for the programme to be opened up to international cooperation with countries outside the EU in the field of vocational education and training.

The Board continues to believe that it necessary to introduce measures which assist in the networking of multipliers and decision makers at a European level in order to support the relevant political processes.

Continuing to develop tried and tested structures

In contrast to the Lifelong Learning programme, the participation of the social partners in the Programme Committee is not stipulated and needs to be firmly established in the Resolution.

Organisation of the national implementation of the programme should in all cases be the responsibility of the member states in order to accord due consideration to the differing national education systems and their structures. In Germany, the opportunity to appoint several national authorities and National Agencies has proved a definite success.

The designation "Erasmus for All" has led to considerable public misunderstanding and is not a suitable programme title. It needs to be replaced by a clear and new title such as is suggested by the name "Education for Europe" selected within the scope of the medium-term financial planning. The Board expressly advocates the retention of established brand names (such as COMENIUS, ERASMUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, GRUNDTVIG, ERASMUS Mundus) for actions undertaken within the respective educational areas.