

Educating Europe

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on 1 to 3 December 2017:

Notes that:

- education is the foundation of a progressive society;
- diversity of education within the European Union should be seen as a strength. Reinforcing common values may further develop the union and cooperation between the EU countries;
- including technology and digital skills through different levels of education and enabling flexibility for entrepreneurial students makes for greater resilience in future generations that face a rapidly developing society and labour market.

Considering:

Vocational education

- in most EU countries, vocational education is still considered as less important than academic studies, however the skills learned in vocational training are vital to everyday life in the European Union;
- the EU has taken a right step with the Copenhagen Process, but yet most of the points of this process have not been put into practice.

Higher education

- that the European Commission ought to use technology to interconnect and interlink educational structures throughout the EU, in order to enhance students' mobility and improve exchanges across the EU;
- the Erasmus+ programme is mainly based on bilateral agreements. The programme costs some 2 billion euros yearly. Year 2020 is approaching and a new budgetary path will be discussed regarding how Erasmus+ is to be modified and funded;
- a joint degree programme is much more valuable in the labour market than an exchange programme. When Erasmus+ is to be continued after 2020, our final objective should be transforming our current "exchange program" into a more ambitious European academic framework;
- more entrepreneurs are needed across Europe, therefore the European Union needs to promote both the achievement of higher studies and the setting up of new businesses. Furthermore, young people need advice in setting up their own business as well as a clear legal status to be able to achieve their studies and working as an entrepreneur simultaneously.

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Calls for European Member States to:

- create a European sense of unity among young Europeans, and help all students realise the need, historical and current, for European unity across national borders through the implementation of a mandatory course on the European History, Institutions and main policy areas.
- introduce more focus on critical thinking, either as a separate subject or through the curriculum and extracurricular activities offered by educational institutions.
- seek alignment of the standards of the vocational training in order to minimise the differences between the EU Member States and recognise all the vocational training from European countries within the EU.
- allow high school and university students to combine a student status with a professional activity as an entrepreneur, albeit adapt the limit of turnover and benefits so that a student entrepreneur does not have fewer rights than a student doing a summer job. Further officially recognise the "student-entrepreneur" status and inscribe this system in State Youth and Job Strategies;
- promote that the following infrastructure is set up in at least one high school and/or university of each country, depending on the overall student population and proportion of young entrepreneurs: young entrepreneurship incubator, with business angels and advisers, so that candidates to young entrepreneurship can receive the best advice possible in terms of business plan and contacts.

Calls for European policy to:

- assure students who apply for the student-entrepreneur status to automatically receive an EU VAT number to facilitate their business dealings with customers in other EU Member States;
- guarantee that the student-entrepreneur be given the opportunity to gain an assigned number of ECTS for setting up and running a student-business, especially in education programmes where it is relevant to the course content, and to guarantee that the student-entrepreneur maintain the right to earn a set amount dependent per country, without any taxation (first threshold) or with a reduced taxation (second threshold). Only beyond a certain threshold, to be determined by each country, will the student-entrepreneur be taxed as a regular self-employed person;
- guarantee strong competition for hardware and software purchases by schools and universities.

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Calls for the European Commission to:

- promote distance learning and massive open online courses (MOOCs) via the cooperation between regional educational stakeholders, especially in higher education; a non-degree exchange option;
- establish two options within the Erasmus+ framework for following courses an institution established in another Member State: a degree-pursuing option as part of a joint degree programme.

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