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from: General Secretariat of the Council  
to: Delegations  
Subject : Plenary Session of the European Parliament, 25 October 2012  
**Council and Commission statements - Is ERASMUS in danger?**

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On behalf of the Council, Mr MAVROYIANNIS, Deputy Minister for European Affairs, delivered the speech in Annex.

On behalf of the Commission, Mr LEWANDOWSKI, Member of the Commission in charge of Financial Programming and Budget, indicated that the shortage of funds for the 2012 EU budget was not limited to ERASMUS and was due to systematic under-budgeting. He explained that the 2012 budget had to be amended because 180 million Euros were missing for Lifelong Learning, including 90 million for ERASMUS. Mr LEWANDOWSKI added that 99% of the 2012 budget had already been transferred to national authorities and that he expected more claims for this year. He urged the European Parliament and the Council to agree on a substantial budget increase for 2012.

### *Contributions on behalf of the political groups*

The ERASMUS programme received strong support for almost all speakers, who voiced their concerns regarding the current situation. Ms PACK (EPP, DE) said that the budget shortage sent an alarming signal to the students and blamed Member States for the situation. Mr SWOBODA (S&D, AT) fully agreed with the Commission and called on the Presidency to adopt a tougher approach toward Member States. Mr LØKKEGAARD (ALDE, DK) said that ERASMUS should not be held hostage to tactical struggles between institutions and called on the Council to act, a call that was echoed by Mr MIGALSKI (ECR, PL). Mr MEYER (GUE/NGL, ES) and Ms TRÜPEL (Greens/EFA, DE) felt that the situation was unacceptable; Ms TRÜPEL added that the ESF also did not have sufficient funding left and stressed that the next MFF should provide for sufficient funds for ERASMUS.

Ms ANDREASEN (EFD, UK) said that, given ERASMUS' lack of impact on youth employment and on growth, the programme should be scrapped.

### *Contributions by individual MEPs*

The strong support to the ERASMUS programme was reiterated by the other intervening MEPs, most of them urging the Council to act (Mr SCURRIA (EPP, IT), Mr FERNANDES (EPP, PT), Mr BECKER (EPP, AT), Mr NITRAS (EPP, PL), Ms VEĎALOVÁ (S&D, SK), Ms PALIADELI (S&D, EL), Ms COSTA (S&D, IT), Ms BENARAB-ATTOU (Greens/EFA, FR)). Mr GARDIAZÁBAL RUBIAL (S&D, ES) felt that the current situation was due to last year's rejection by the Council of the European Parliament and Commission budgetary proposals.

Mr SCURRIA and Ms BENARAB-ATTOU (EPP, IT) stressed the importance of ERASMUS for the EU's image, the latter mentioning that the issue of funding also arose for cohesion funds and calling for the EU to have own resources. Mr HÉNIN (GUE/NGL, FR) and Ms ȚICĂU (S&D, RO) thought that ERASMUS should be further developed and its scope extended. Some MEPs said that funds should be saved elsewhere, with Mr BORGHEZIO (EFD, IT) making reference to tobacco and the pensions of senior EU officials and Ms ANGELILLI (EPP, IT) to the abolition of the European Parliament's double seat.

*Concluding interventions from the Presidency and the Council*

Mr LEWANDOWSKI thanked the MEPs for their commitment to ERASMUS and assured them that students benefiting from this programme in 2012 and early 2013 would not be affected. He regretted that the current uncertainty affected mainly students from a disadvantaged background and added that the Marie Curie programme was also threatened by a shortage in funding.

Mr MAVROYIANNIS told the MEPs that he would convey their concerns to the Council and agreed that student mobility was a priority. He stressed that ERASMUS was not in danger and that the Presidency would do its utmost to honour the obligations undertaken.

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President, Honourable Members,

- The Council fully shares the view that Europe's economic prospects are very much relying on skilled and adequately educated human capital and that the Lifelong Learning programme - including the Erasmus programme - is one of the most successful European programmes in the educational sector.
- Therefore, let me assure you that the financing of the Lifelong Learning programme in 2012 and 2013 will not be put in danger.
- Concerning 2012, the Council has started analysing the Commission's proposals as presented in draft amending budget No 6/2012, and will adopt its position on this draft amending budget as soon as possible.
- As far as the appropriations for 2013 are concerned, they will be decided jointly by the European Parliament and the Council during the ongoing budgetary negotiations. I am confident that the two arms of the budgetary authority will reach a balanced agreement on the 2013 budget in November, as foreseen by the Treaty.
- Finally, concerning the future of the Lifelong Learning programme, including Erasmus, you all know that the negotiations concerning the next multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 are still in progress. The European Parliament is involved in these negotiations. However - and surely you will understand this - it would be very difficult for me today to prejudge in any way the outcome of these negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> Check against delivery.