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Erasmus + Programme launched

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The European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA), the National Agency responsible for the management of EU educational funds in Malta, on behalf of the European Commission, has today officially launched the Erasmus+ Programme which is the EU funding programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014 2020.

With a budget of 14.7 billion for 7 years, Erasmus+ aims at providing opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. It promotes synergies, cooperation and cross-fertilisation between the different fields namely adult, youths, schools, higher education institutions and vocational education and training (VET).

For 2014 the European Commission has allocated Malta a budget of over 5.5 million euro for the following key actions. Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals; Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; and Key Action 3: Support for policy reform.

Mr Robert Debono, EUPAs National Coordinator said that the agency is committed to raise awareness, promote the take-up of the funds available under this programme, monitor the implementation of initiatives applied for and disseminate good practices to potential beneficiaries.

Mr Pascal Lejeune, Head of Unit, DG Education and Culture, Directorate Youth and Sport; Erasmus+ within the European Commission, said that this funding programme is being launched at a time when nearly six million young people are unemployed in the EU whilst at the same time there are over 2 million vacancies and a third of employers report difficulties in recruiting staff with the skills they need.

This clearly highlights the significant skills gap currently present in Europe. Erasmus+ aims at bridging this gap by providing opportunities for people to study, train or gain experience abroad.

Minister Evarist Bartolo said that keeping in focus the European and National policy objectives, namely the need to reduce the percentage rate of early school leavers, and narrowing the gap currently existing between skills and available jobs, EUPA is undertaking a number of activities to ensure a wider and more concrete outreach aiming at securing a substantial take up of funds available.

This will ensure an increase in the number of youths and students who are ready to face the world of employment. The Minister urged those interested to apply for these initiatives as it broadens the horizons of the individual and may even be a life-changing experience.

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