◗ EU YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Youth education and training have always been at the centre of EU policy with various projects aimed at co-operation and exchange among the education systems of EU member states. Until 2013, the Lifelong Learning Programme was one of the major initiatives and included the following projects: **Erasmus** – a student exchange scheme for higher education; **Leonardo da Vinci** for vocational education and training; **Comenius** for pupils and teachers of pre-school, primary and secondary schools; **Grundtvig** for adult education. As of 2014, in order to streamline activities and improve efficiency, these and other schemes, like Youth in Action, were brought together under the programme **Erasmus+**.

Erasmus+

[June 2013] A new EU programme, originally planned to be named as 'Erasmus for All', of approximately €16 billion will support initiatives in education, training, youth and sport over the next seven years. Over four million people will benefit from EU grants for education and training opportunities abroad between 2014 and 2020 – almost doubling the numbers who currently receive these supports.

Erasmus+ will focus on mobility, cooperation and policy reform. Improvements will be made to supports for international study, training, teaching and volunteering opportunities. These improvements will benefit higher education and vocational students, trainees, teachers, trainers and youth workers. Good practice will be shared through cross-cultural and cross-institutional learning in education and training institutions, and youth organisations. These will be formally put in place through 'Knowledge Alliances' at university level and through 'Sector Skills Alliances' in vocational institutions. The private sector will also be involved to foster innovation and to ensure that practical learning and education is brought to the fore.

ERASMUS+
2014 - 2020 programme for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport

The final agreement on Erasmus+ was reached under the Irish presidency of the European Council and the Irish Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, T.D., said that with youth unemployment at very high levels, the new programme would have a key role. 'Erasmus+ will improve the employability of young people and open up new opportunities for them. Since 2007, approximately 400,000 people a year across Europe have benefited from the current programmes, and today's development means that many more people of all ages and backgrounds will be eligible for these supports,' he said. He added that by 2020 it is estimated that nearly 35% of all jobs will be classified as high-skill therefore 'We need to ensure that our young people are equipped to meet the future demands of the labour market, and that we are providing them with opportunities that will reveal their full potential.'

Source: http://eu2013.ie/

READING COMPREHENSION

2 **Read the EU press release and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F). If there is not enough information, choose 'doesn't say' (DS).**

	T	F	DS
1 The EU has increased the budget for education and training initiatives.	☐	☐	☐
2 The number of people receiving EU grants will increase by around 50%.	☐	☐	☐
3 One aim of the Erasmus+ programme will be to reorganise policies.	☐	☐	☐
4 'Knowledge Alliances' and 'Sector Skills Alliances' will both have the same purpose but in different educational institutions.	☐	☐	☐
5 The private sector will be more important than the public sector.	☐	☐	☐
6 Ireland put forward the plan for Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐
7 Erasmus+ will be vital to help solve problems of youth unemployment.	☐	☐	☐
8 400,000 people have helped by the current programmes since 2007.	☐	☐	☐

SPEAKING

3 **Discuss these questions in pairs.**

- Have you ever taken part in any kind of student exchange programme?
- If so, what did you think of it? If not, would you like to? Why/Why not?
- What do you think students learn from these cross-cultural and cross-institutional schemes? And teachers?