

Erasmus programme awarded "Prize for Excellence in integrating young people into the workforce"

The EU's Erasmus programme for student and staff exchanges in higher education has received the "Prize for Excellence in integrating young people into the workforce" awarded by the NoviaSalcedo Foundation of Bilbao, Spain. The Erasmus programme was the winner of the "public bodies" category for its exemplary action in promoting excellence in the professional integration of young people.

The **Prince of Asturias** handed out the "Prize for Excellence in integrating young people into the workforce" to the Community programme *Erasmus* at a ceremony in Bilbao's Arriaga Theatre on 20 May 2008.

*"I am deeply honoured that this prestigious prize has been awarded to what is undoubtedly one of the best known Community programmes", declared **Ján Figel**, European Commissioner in charge of Education, Training, Culture and Youth. "Since its modest beginnings, when Erasmus supported the mobility of 3 244 students in 1987, the programme has expanded to around 160 000 students every year, so Erasmus is certainly a European success story. We intend to keep this success going, by aiming to have helped a total of three million Erasmus students by 2012. Erasmus not only enriches students' lives in the academic field but also helps them acquire intercultural skills and self-reliance. Studies confirm that participating in Erasmus can be a key asset when it comes to finding a job – a period of study abroad is seen as valuable experience by today's employers."*

The Erasmus programme is a sub-programme of the EU's flagship programme in the area of education and training, the *Lifelong Learning Programme* (LLP). Erasmus has an overall budget of approximately **€ 3.1 billion for the period 2007-2013**, and aims at enhancing the quality and reinforcing the European dimension of higher education as well as at increasing student and staff mobility.

Currently, more than 3 100 higher education institutions in 31 countries in Europe participate in the Erasmus programme, which has so far supported **1.7 million students**. Given the high degree of satisfaction with the programme, as confirmed in many evaluation studies over the years, Erasmus will have made "Europe" more tangible for hundreds of thousands of families for whom it would otherwise have remained a vague and distant concept. 80 % of Erasmus students so far were the first members of their families to study abroad.

The NoviaSalcedo Foundation is a private non-profit cultural Foundation established in 1980, which aims at helping young people through their integration into both the social and professional world. The Erasmus programme has received the prize in the category of public bodies for its exemplary action in promoting excellence in the professional integration of young people, Europe-wide and internationally, both in the labour market and at a personal level.

To find out more:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/index_en.html

http://www.noviasalcedo.es/premio07/premiados_en.asp