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UNIMED petition for a Mediterranean Erasmus Generation

This year the Erasmus Programme is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The Erasmus Programme has helped millions of young people and education professionals to travel abroad, study, and gain experience and skills. It has completely transformed European universities as well as European society. As Italian writer Umberto Eco said: “Erasmus created a first generation of European youth”.

Since 2015, the Erasmus+ programme has opened its borders and also reached the Southern Mediterranean countries, acting as a catalyst by paving the way for making international cooperation a priority.

Over time, the European Union received requests by numerous authorities and organisations to support a mobility programme for students open to the participation of academic and educational institutions of the Southern Mediterranean countries. The last relevant initiative was the appeal of five members of the European Parliament in 2011 to stimulate the European Commission to create a Mediterranean Erasmus.

UNIMED has joined the efforts of this appeal by launching, at its 2011 General Assembly, an on-line petition to the EU Commission aimed at promoting the international dimension of the Erasmus programme and at widening the programme to Southern Mediterranean universities. That petition collected around 6.000 signatures from 55 countries and was delivered to the EU Commissioner for Education and Culture in January 2012. This shows the strong interest and need to have a Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus programme.

The extension of the mobility programmes to the Southern Mediterranean countries will give the students and young people of the European and Southern Mediterranean countries the possibility to contribute to create the conditions for the establishment by future political generations of increased cooperation in the Mediterranean basin.

Therefore, following our commitment and the 2011 petition, we still strongly encourage the international dimension of the Erasmus Programme. In particular, we support the two current actions - “International Credit Mobility” and “Capacity Building for Higher Education”-; because we believe that the representatives of academic and



educational institutions must contribute to the definition of new models of education able to guarantee communities leading to a peaceful and prosperous future.

Furthermore, we believe that, through sharing best practices and lessons learned as well as through capacity building activities, the Erasmus+ Programme can support Higher Education Institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region in responding to the need to integrate refugee students in their education systems.

For these reasons, we ask you to support this new petition in order to achieve together, as we did in 2011, new results for the benefit of the future of the students, the university staff and the Higher Education Institutions of the Euro-Mediterranean area.

By signing this petition, you will help us ask the European Commission:

- **To strengthen the International Credit Mobility dimension of the Erasmus+ Programme (programming period 2021-2027) to help participants (students and staff) to acquire key skills, support their professional development and help them deepen their knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This can be achieved by increasing the number of scholarships from the current number of about 8.000 grants per year (students and staff from South to North and vice-versa) to 30.000 per year;**
- **To support Southern Mediterranean Countries in establishing a regional mobility scheme (South-South Mobility);**
- **To continue to support the integration of refugee students and academics in the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education systems;**
- **To reinforce the “Capacity Building” action to work together, develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.**

As UNIMED founder Prof. Franco Rizzi said, “Mediterranean is our destiny” and we, as UNIMED, are convinced that we should live this destiny together, hand in hand, thus creating the vision of a Mediterranean region promoting a new Erasmus Mediterranean Generation for peace and prosperity.