

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE EEA EFTA STATES

SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM

Brussels

16-17 November 2017

Opinion on an Erasmus for local and regional representatives

Rapporteur: Nils Røhne

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities (the Forum):

- A. Having regard to the European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU of 1 March 2017, and the subsequent reflection papers on the Social dimension of Europe, Harnessing Globalisation, Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, and Reflection on the Future of European Defence;
- B. Having regard to the draft opinion of the Committee for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs of the European Committee of the Regions on an Erasmus programme for regional and local elected representatives;
- C. Having regard to Article 1 of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement), enshrining the objective of a homogeneous EEA in which there is free movement of goods, persons, services and capital;
- D. Noting the reinforced subsidiarity principle set out in the Lisbon Treaty and its explicit reference to the local and regional dimension and self-government;
- E. Acknowledging the impact of European Union law and policy on local and regional authorities in the EEA EFTA States through the EEA Agreement;
- F. Noting the role of the Forum as a body in the EFTA structure:
 - 1. Welcomes the proposal for an Erasmus programme for regional and local elected representatives;
 - 2. Highlights the fact that, at European level, local elected representatives generally enjoy considerable higher levels of trust than the majority of national politicians;
 - 3. Highlights the current conundrum that while public interest in European elections is decreasing, at the same time, current geopolitical crises, the threat of terrorism and Brexit have made European citizens feel that it is increasingly appropriate to take action at European level to address the common challenges;
 - 4. Is of the opinion that local, regional, national and European levels of government should work in partnership when EU and EEA when policies are being drafted and implemented as the bulk of local and regional authorities' decision are linked to European legislation, e.g. in the fields of energy, water, waste, mobility, equality, health and safety etc., also when they work on European projects and when they cooperate with counterparts in other countries;
 - 5. Stresses that the important role local and regional authorities play in implementing European policies calls for expertise and skills in these areas;

6. Believes that the success of the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport Erasmus+ demonstrates the value of the exchange of good practice across Europe and is convinced of its importance in order to increase efficiency of European policies;
7. Emphasizes that a programme enabling elected local and regional representatives to exchange good practices in key areas of European policy, such as energy efficiency, environment, digitalisation, public transport, employment, etc. would improve the implementation and efficiency of European policies locally and regionally;
8. Welcomes the launch of the Erasmus for apprentices scheme as an additional dimension;
9. Encourages the European Committee of the Regions to adopt the opinion of the Committee for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs on an Erasmus programme for regional and local elected representatives;
10. Encourages the European Union to work closely with the EEA EFTA States when developing an Erasmus for local and regional representatives;
11. Calls on the EEA EFTA States to support this initiative, which can benefit their citizens through better knowledge and implementation of European policies at local and regional level, the fostering of new local and regional initiatives and the constructive links across borders;
12. Instructs the Secretariat to forward this Opinion to the EFTA Standing Committee at Ministerial level.