

JUVENTUS - Move.Change.Work.

Young people tell about their experiences - transnational mobility for "NEETs"

"When you leave your comfort zone, miracles can happen", said a young participant from Catalonia summing up his experience abroad and what happened after his trip.

All participants of the Parliamentary Evening on 6 February in Brussels agreed. Transnational mobility programmes for disadvantaged young people have high labour market integration rates, strengthen the social dimension of Europe and significantly improve the image of the EU.

With the slogan "JUVENTUS - Move.Change.Work. Strengthening Social Europe through Mobility for NEETs", young participants from six EU states met in Brussels at the Representation of the State of Hesse to the European Union to discuss their experiences with MEPs and representatives of the Commission.

Young participants on the podium - national and regional information stands in the marketplace

We must strengthen the social dimension of Europe, said the sponsor of the evening, MEP Thomas Mann. Max Uebe, representing the Commission, agreed with him that disadvantaged young people are under-represented in the EU's existing mobility programmes. Mark Weinmeister, Hesse's State Secretary for European Affairs, had previously opened the event, which was attended by more than 100 guests, and referred to his own formative first experience abroad. He said that a stay abroad could be key to personal development and the further course of a person's life.

The evening focused on the reports and experiences of young participants from projects in Germany, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Catalonia. On the podium and during the subsequent "marketplace of opportunities", the young people reported on their stays abroad, what had changed in their personal and professional lives, and on the confidence and prospects they had gained for their future. The participating countries and regions had set up information stands where the guests could talk to programme managers, project partners and other young project participants. Around 4,400 young people have been able to benefit from a stay abroad within the framework of the programmes that presented information.

Exemplary in Europe

Nine EU Member States and regions are participating in the transnational mobility programme for disadvantaged young people (Not in Education, Employment or Training - NEETs). These programmes are coordinated by the European learning network "TLN Mobility" under the auspices of Germany.

Within the framework of TLN Mobility, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, the Spanish regions of Andalusia, Galicia, Catalonia and the Italian region of Trento are working together. The special feature of the mobility programmes is the intensive preparation and individual support of the young people over several months before they go abroad for two to three months for an internship in a company. After returning to their home country, close contact is maintained with the participants. This allows the mobility programmes to achieve high success rates. Six months after the programme, sometimes more than 60% of the young participants are in work, in training or have gone back to finish school.

A "Social Europe" especially for disadvantaged young people

Exchange programmes are usually aimed predominantly at young people with very high levels of education, and NEETs are clearly under-represented in the youth employment initiative.

The TLN Mobility Partner programmes complement this by targeting disadvantaged young people who find it difficult to gain a foothold in the labour market. There are still around 3.4 million unemployed young people under 25 in the EU, which is currently equivalent to 15.2% youth unemployment.

Despite the successes of recent years, in which the absolute number of unemployed young people has been significantly reduced, the unemployment rate of young people across Europe is still significantly higher than that of the total population. Therefore the target group of young people who are not in employment, (school) education or training (NEETs) must be given support.

Making Europe “tangible”

TLN Mobility and the transnational exchange gives the target group the opportunity to gain practical work experience and self-confidence during their stay abroad, thus significantly improving their training and employment opportunities. The challenge of having to get by in a foreign country allows young people to grow beyond their former limitations and often causes profound personal development. After their stay abroad, the young people often present themselves with a higher degree of self-confidence, purpose and openness. They are richer in valuable experience and often have a clearer picture of what they want to do next.

This positive personal development during a stay abroad is of great importance for many companies, especially regional ones, when selecting among job applicants. Many employers appreciate the practical aspect of the stay abroad and the real-life work experience in companies.

The exchange also sends a clear message that Europe is specifically committed to helping this group through cross-border exchange and thus making Europe “tangible”. The stay abroad, combined with EU funding, allows participants to better understand the idea and objectives of the EU. Young people are much more positive about the EU than before.

JUVENTUS: A fast programme - thanks to the preparatory work by TLN-Mobility

Based on the positive results of the ESF programme “IdA - Integration through Exchange” from the 2007-2013 funding period, the partners of the TLN network have decided to support transnational mobility measures for young people and young adults in the ESF funding period 2014-2020. They have developed common quality standards, coordinated their programmes and provide mutual support for their projects when sending people abroad, e.g. finding cooperation partners in the host countries.

Based on the good results of these mobility measures, the TLN partners have proposed an EU-wide mobility programme for disadvantaged young people with the working title "JUVENTUS". This supplies the component for disadvantaged young people, which is lacking in the existing mobility programmes, such as ERASMUS +, which is aimed at students and those in training. This can be seen in the graphic.



During the parliamentary evening, the JUVENTUS proposal was unanimously supported by the representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament. It is now a question of making the JUVENTUS proposal even more widely known and of attracting further support from Member States, MEPs and the Commission.

More information about TLN and JUVENTUS can be found at <https://www.esf.de/portal/EN/Funding-period-2014-2020/TLN-Mobility/content.html>