



## **AER Conference on the Crisis and the Regions** **“Youth as a source and a lever of regional growth in times of crisis”** 08<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Warsaw, Mazowieckie (PL)

### Final reports of the Thematic Panels

**Panel 1:** Youth Mobility Programmes: which perspectives and challenges for young European citizens in 2013 and beyond?

The first session of the conference “Youth as a source and a lever of regional growth in times of crisis” dealt with the issue of youth mobility and allowed an in-depth view among the panellists on how mobility of young people can help tackling the problem of youth unemployment among youngsters by offering them more possibilities in the pursuit of their educational and professional career. As underlined also by Mr. **Beat Rohner**, president of the Youth Regional Network of AER during the introductory session, regions can do a lot to fight youth unemployment by implementing programmes that allow young people to gain work and study experience abroad, learn foreign languages, and learn about different cultures and customs.

Ms. **Jutta Steinruck**, Member of the European Parliament and Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the first speaker of the session, stressed the importance of “improving the quality of education and training so that people are better equipped for the labour market” and in particular emphasised that youth mobility can play a major role in this challenge because “it enhances job prospects for graduates and adolescents in vocational training or unemployment. In particular, Ms. Steinruck pointed out the positive results achieved by the Youth on the Move Initiative and acknowledge the importance of adopting effective youth guarantee schemes at EU level. Prof. **Markus Muller** from Baden-Wurttemberg Region stressed the relevance of professional education in the dual education system in Germany as a major source of low youth unemployment in his country and in his Lander in particular. According to Prof. Muller, though for two thirds of the young generation dual education seems to be attractive and promising it needs to be put in scene in a world where only academic education seems to be valuable: youth international mobility programmes could be a key element to foster and popularize dual education among young people.

Also Mr. **Mateusz Jezowski**, research officer at the Polish National Agency for the Youth in Action Programme stressed his concern about the vulnerable position young people have in the labour market and after underlying the importance of combining formal and non-formal learning argued that youth mobility programmes can be a very effective instrument that help to fill the gap between the labour market and the formal education system. According to Mr. Jezowski Regions could play a crucial role in informing about mobility opportunities, given the proximity they have with their citizens. Ms. **Magdalena Zurowska** defended the role of Erasmus programme and the commitment of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to remove barriers to

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Assembly of European Regions

6 Rue Oberlin - F-67000 Strasbourg

Tel.: +33 3 88 22 07 07 - Fax : +33 3 88 75 67 19 Tel./Fax : +32 2 880 95 60

E-mail : [secretariat@aer.eu](mailto:secretariat@aer.eu)

210 Avenue Louise - B-1050 Bruxelles

E-mail : [aer.brussels@aer.eu](mailto:aer.brussels@aer.eu)

[www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)

youth mobility in order to enable anyone to have the chance to study or work abroad. Ms. Zurowska emphasised the fact that Life Long Learning projects and its successors are providing Europe with a new generation of workers: open minded, ready to work in international teams and well educated in foreign languages, and that's why it's important to foster mobility programmes and not to neglect the support young people need from decision makers at all levels.

**Panel 2:** Developing educational schemes and accompanying measures for young entrepreneurs: What can Regions do?

The second session of the conference that took place in the afternoon dealt with youth entrepreneurship. Mrs. **Hande Ozsan-Bozatli** and Mrs. **Wiesława Krawczyk** stressed the importance of small and medium businesses in their regions, Istanbul and Mazowieckie and how important it is for young people to understand how their personal commitment in business can make a difference with respect to the critical situation our economy and society are faced with.

According to Mr. **Jean-Luc Vanraes**, Member of the Regional Parliament in Brussels-Capital Region, the SMEs represent the backbone of the productive system of the region and it's important to encourage young people to start their own business in order to resume growth and fight unemployment. Mr. Vanraes underlined also the importance of Education to Entrepreneurship and the role regions can play to support their entrepreneurs. Ms. **Karolina Horbaczewska** from Opolskie Region presented the YES Programme (Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies) whose main objective is increasing the number of entrepreneurs and accelerating competitiveness in Europe. In order to achieve these goals it's important according to Ms. Horbaczewska to integrate an entrepreneurial perspective into the education systems at national and regional level and develop qualities such as creativity, responsibility, risk-taking, team-working and problem-solving from an early stage of one's life.

Mr. **Nicolas Bouzou**, director of the Consultancy "Asterès" and economist, argued that it would be more appropriate to say that the world economy is facing a "deep mutation" rather than a "deep crisis" due to a huge "innovation tsunami" caused by the progresses and discoveries made in sectors like nanotechnologies, genetics, cognitive science, green energy. Young people have therefore a good opportunity to reap the benefits of a fast-changing society, and policy makers should make their part by embracing with more conviction the belief in progress and innovation. It is also essential, according to Mr. Bouzou, to intensify the relations between European Regions, as AER does, and accelerate the circulation of production factors (in particular capital and intelligence) within the single market. Ms. **Dominika Hofman**, owner of the firm "Maturowo" in Katowice brought a very concrete testimony of how a young person with ideas and commitment can run a successful business and contribute to generate employment among young people who share the same ideals and vision. Ms. Hofmann underlined also the importance of incubators in Poland and especially in the Region of Silesia, emphasising the very concrete help and support they provide to young people who want to start their own business, a support that goes beyond just words and promises and that helps young people make their first steps into the job market.