

PRESENTATIONS

1.

Every year in Europe, more than one hundred thousand young people (of whom more than ten thousand are Italians) follow in *Erasmus'* footsteps and travel to another European country in the north, south, east or west of the continent, to complete and to enrich their studies.

Since 1987, the *Erasmus* programme and its successor *Socrates/Erasmus* have provided these young people with a splendid opportunity to 'live Europe'; and, as the President of the European Commission told the European Parliament in 1999, they have become "one of the European programmes of greatest success".

However, the *Erasmus/Socrates* programme is not solely a splendid adventure in personal growth and academic enrichment for those taking part; it is also a springboard towards the Europe of tomorrow, the Europe of new occupations, of all-round expertise (social skills, language knowledge, self-esteem and adaptability).

Erasmus facilitates entry into employment and fosters professional growth because it encourages the development of these skills. This is one of the key messages that emerge from the interesting analysis conducted by the Statistical Observatory of the University of Bologna; a heartening message for those, like myself, who have believed in this adventure and tenaciously supported it from the outset, and also for the eight hundred thousand *Erasmus* students who have had the courage to pack their bags and set off on their European adventures.

Adjunct Director General
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Commission

2.

The aim of the **Socrates Programme** is to develop the European dimension of education in order to strengthen the spirit of collaboration among the member-states and enhance the cultural assets of each. **Erasmus** is the action pursued under this programme which concerns itself with higher education, encouraging the mobility of university students in particular.

Consequently, appraisal of the impact of European mobility programmes on the student population, the monitoring of participation in these programmes, comparisons among the experiences of students from different countries and different universities, and reflection on the criteria for admission to mobility programmes, are activities of vital importance for the Socrates Programme in its entirety. The present **Report**, compiled by the Statistical Observatory of the University of Bologna on behalf of the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, is an important contribution to the achievement of these ends.

The Report considers the **graduates** from eighteen Italian universities, using information provided by **ALMALAUREA**, the database of Italian university graduates and diploma-holders for the world of work and the professions. The strengths of the survey are the following:

- the **large size** of the populations analysed (almost 40,000 interviews were conducted for the Graduate Profile Survey, and almost 6000 for the survey on the occupational situations of graduates), and the **breadth** of the information collected;
- the research design, which took the form of a **comparison** between the population of graduates who had taken part in *Erasmus* programmes and the population of those who had not;
- the **not exclusively academic** perspective adopted by the analysis: after examination of the families, performances at upper-secondary school and university, and expectations on graduation of *Erasmus* and *non-Erasmus* students, comparison is extended to the **post-university** careers of these students, surveying their employment situations one and two years after graduation.

To conclude, it is my earnest hope that the ALMALAUREA database will also be of service to the heads of the Socrates/Erasmus Programme, in consideration also of the fact that the number of universities belonging to the ALMALAUREA Project –

and consequently the number of graduates available for interview – is constantly growing.

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Service

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Research