



National Agency

for European Educational Programmes
and Mobility

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Educational Programmes and Mobility

Dear readers,

The Republic of North Macedonia is very similar to the other member states of the European Union in many ways, and not only in terms of the common area they share. Faced with the reality that the old continent, Europe, does not have ore resources, nor oil or gold, the only thing that the development of these countries can rest on is the mind! Hence arises the importance of education and science in Europe.

The Republic of North Macedonia has been a candidate country for membership in the European Union since December 2005. Unfortunately, the European path of the country was completely blocked by neighboring Greece due to the decades-long name dispute. However, with the Prespa Agreement, a compromise was reached between the two neighboring countries and many common opportunities were open. It is evident that the European path is becoming a reality for the Republic of North Macedonia. If, by the end of the year, the EU Council sets a date for commencement of the accession negotiations for membership in the EU, then the Republic of North Macedonia will begin a long and a difficult process of negotiations according to 35 chapters. One of those chapters is Chapter 26, which refers to the fields of education, culture, and since recently to youth as well.

At first glance, this chapter seems to be one of the easiest to negotiate because in the fields of education, culture and youth, they do not have a common European policy (with insignificant exceptions in secondary vocational education and in regulated professions). For this reason, this chapter is being opened and closed among the first chapters. However, the recent developments taking place at the level of the European Union suggest that education and training are becoming increasingly important. An indicator of this is the fact that there is a consensus among all European stakeholders that for the next multiannual financial framework, the funds that will be given in education should be doubled. On the other hand, the Members of the European Parliament consider that even three times more funds can be allocated. In other words, if for the period 2014-2020 we spoke about an amount of approximately 15 billion euros, it is certain that for the period 2021-2027 that amount will be at least 30 billion Euros.

Moreover, it is estimated that approximately 3.2 billion Euros will be allocated to young people within the European Solidarity Corps initiative for the same period. The increased amount and the built consensus at the EU level speak of the importance that education, training and youth will have in the upcoming period within the EU.

Education is important for the Republic of North Macedonia due to another fact as well. Namely, when the negotiation process begins, the 35 chapters will be overviewed to the smallest detail for the purpose of faster harmonization and transposition of the European legislation. It is a painstaking process involving a large number of experts, mostly civil servants. The course of the negotiations will not be very clear and understandable to the average citizen, and therefore the Chief Negotiator is obliged to communicate on a regular basis - mainly through the media - in regard to the achieved progress and the importance of each next opened and closed chapter.

This process will not mean a lot to the average citizen! However, the accession will get a completely different dimension at the moment when the benefits of the legislation's harmonization and takeover of the European policies and values will become visible - in other words, when in the street one can hear people speaking Spanish, French, Estonian, German, Portuguese, etc., and even Gaelic or Welsh and other less common languages. Visibility will also be felt in the cultural habits and differences that will send the message that the Republic of North Macedonia is a part of a larger picture dominated by the thought that we all live "united in diversities."

The road to there? Very simple - through the Erasmus plus program or whatever it will be called in the next seven-year financial framework. Through this program, mobilities will be financed - both among young people and in education. The exchange of experiences will take place with such an ease that it will be simply incomprehensible to have no experience gained in another European country. And then, the National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility will be the role model institution, known to everyone as the nursery of European experiences, knowledge, skills, practices, and values.

Respectfully,

Lidija Dimova