**Challenges of the Erasmus+**

Keynote lecture

10.15 – 10.45 on Thursday, 23rd April

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Since 1987, the European Union, and especially DG Education and Culture, has busied itself with organising mobility for students, pupils, staff, teachers, trainers, etc. The target of 3 million students on the move was reached already in 2012. Erasmus+ builds on this legacy by offering to 4 million people to study, train, teach or volunteer abroad by 2020…An increase of 40% of the budget is foreseen. But Erasmus+ has to cope with the consequences of the economic and financial crisis which has had a profound impact on society. Unemployment has reached unacceptably high levels in many parts of the EU, particularly among Europe’s youth. This is certainly the number one concern of the new Commission under its President Juncker and especially for the new Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, Sport, Tibor Navracsics. He is also involved with Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness and the Digital Single Market. Inevitably these aspects are already reflected in the priorities of the Call and will be reinforced in the Call 2016! There is a strong economic and social case for investing in education. Education contributes to productivity, competitiveness and innovation, while levelling the playing field and breaking cycles of disadvantage. But Education is facing its own structural challenges. Population ageing means that Member States will have to exploit fully the pool of talent amongst the school-age population. Productivity, competitiveness and innovation will have to grow, with relatively fewer people to rely on. Education in many Member States is, at the same time, out of touch, as systems are still struggling to meet 21st century expectations. These challenges pre-date the crisis, but are now aggravated by a consolidation of public finance. The deadlines for the Call 2015 are behind us, the new applications will have tried to do better than in 2014, knowing what worked and what did not work. Erasmus+ will continue to support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe. It is also the precondition to stay competitive in the global arena with its knowledge-based economy. In reviewing the Europe 2020 strategy and following the results of the European Semester, the new call will probably put emphasis through its priorities on how our education systems can grasp the huge opportunities of digitisation for better and more accessible teaching and learning, and how digital tools can increase youth participation, helping this way European universities to be among the best in the world.