Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here in the press room today to present the findings of the Erasmus Impact Study.

I am sure none of you will need reminding just how successful Erasmus has been since its launch 27 years ago, with more than 3 million students participating in exchanges. But this new study goes beyond what the success stories tell us.

For the first time, the Erasmus Impact Study measures the real impact of Erasmus on employability skills. Tests before and after their stay abroad reveal that students return not only more confident, more tolerant towards other cultures, but also quicker to solve problems, better equipped to adapt to new situations and with improved organisational skills.

These are personality traits which are highly valued by more than 90% of employers, according to the study.

Former Erasmus students and employers alike report that the Erasmus experience is an advantage in the job market. Young people who study or train abroad are half as likely to face long-term unemployment compared with those who stay at home.

They also increase their chances of developing an exciting and fulfilling career. They are given greater professional responsibility, according to 64% of employers interviewed. And their job environment is more international.

Erasmus is not only about studying abroad. An increasing number of young people have seized the opportunity to acquire practical work experience through Erasmus traineeships.

The study's findings are extremely positive in this respect: 1 in 3 Erasmus trainees are offered a position in their host company abroad after their traineeship. They also develop an entrepreneurial attitude, sometimes we want to encourage in Europe: 1 in 10 trainees have started their own company and more than 3 out of 4 plan to - or can envisage doing so.

A traineeship is not only of value to the student, it is also highly appreciated by employers. "A breath of fresh air for our company," was how one of the employers interviewed for the study put it.

But moving abroad during studies changes lives in many other ways too.

More than 40% of former Erasmus students have changed their country of residence or work at least once since graduation, double the number of those who were not mobile.
during their studies. And almost one in three former Erasmus students met their long-
term partner while abroad!

The study also shows how important staff mobility is for the internationalisation of higher education institutions. More than 90% of institutions said teaching and training abroad is beneficial for motivating young people to go abroad, promoting internationalisation at home, for introducing new pedagogical methods and for enriching their courses. Academic staff greatly appreciate how Erasmus increases their field-specific knowledge and social and intercultural competences.

The study's findings not only provide us with very useful evidence about the impact of mobility today; they also deliver important messages for the future.

The findings are extremely significant in the context of unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment in the EU. **The message for the future is clear: if you study or train abroad, you are more likely to increase your job prospects.**

The new Erasmus+ programme will offer EU grants to nearly four million people between 2014 and 2020, allowing them to experience life in another country through studies, training, teaching or volunteering.

Earlier this summer, the first students and staff received grants for the start of their journey with Erasmus+ and an opportunity to boost their employability and career development.

With an overall budget increase of 40% on previous levels, Erasmus+ is able to offer more than before, not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of quality and impact. For example, it will help to improve recognition procedures for academic qualifications and provide more linguistic support.

Inclusion is also crucial in Erasmus+, which offers specific support to people with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds or from remote areas.

So, in a nutshell, the Erasmus Impact Study is an extremely valuable contribution to measuring the impact of the programme on the 3 million students and 350,000 staff who have taken part in Erasmus exchanges to date.

Before taking your questions, I would also like to briefly mention the findings of a separate study, the Erasmus Voting Assessment Project, which monitored the participation and voting behaviour of Erasmus students in the European Parliament elections.

One of its most important findings is that Erasmus helps young people to develop a stronger sense of European identity and to become well informed, active European citizens.

It is only natural that today young people are focused on employability, but we should not forget that this sense of European identity and active citizenship has always been, and will always be, at the heart of what it means to be part of the Erasmus generation.

I am confident that Erasmus+ will play an even greater role in supporting mobility, innovation and modernisation in education in the years to come. And most important of all, it will continue to do what it has always done: to change the lives and open the minds of millions of young Europeans. Thank you.