

Higher Education and Training signs multi-billion rand partnership with European Commission to benefit SA students

CAPE TOWN, 17 April 012 - The Dialogue Forum between South Africa and the European Commission is the right avenue to assist government in not only building relations with the European Commission, but to also find concrete solutions for the youth unemployment in South Africa and post-graduate study opportunities in Europe.

Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize, said this at the signing ceremony of the Joint Declaration of the Education and Training Sectoral Dialogue Forum between South Africa and the European Commission at the University of the Western Cape this afternoon.

Through this partnership, a total of 162 South African Masters and PhD students were sent to EU universities as the first beneficiaries of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Programme when it commenced during the 2010/11 academic year in Europe.

Professor Mkhize said that in light of the shortage of skilled graduates, low outputs at post-graduate levels and large numbers of under-qualified academics at particularly the previously disadvantaged institutions, the joint declaration of the Education and Training sector dialogue forum between South Africa and the European Commission will open much needed graduate and post-graduate study opportunities for South African students in both Europe and South Africa.

“Statistics tell us that 4, 5 million South Africans are unemployed, which is an unacceptably high number if one takes into account the millions of young people who are Not in Education, Not in Employment and not in Training (NEET). the Department,” Professor Mkhize said.

The EU is South Africa's principal development partner representing about 80% of all Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), and is earmarked to receive €980 million for various sectors between 2007-2013.

In 2009, three South African Government programmes were being financed by the EU for a total of €137 million. The first programme focused on improving primary education through a sector policy budget support operation of €122 million as well as increasing access to better quality primary education especially for learners in the poorest schools.

The Department of Higher Education and Training obtained funding from this programme, which is implemented by the Department of Basic Education, for its teacher development programme.

The second programme of €5 million provides opportunities for South African students to study in Europe under the Erasmus Mundus Programme. The last programme, the Youth Empowerment Programme of €10 million, aims to support youth to develop their own potential through culture, art and sport.

The Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Programme is the European Union cooperation and mobility programme in higher education which is aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education and promoting dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation.

The Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 programme is implemented through the joint programmes of outstanding quality at Masters and Doctoral levels including scholarships/fellowships and Partnerships between European and Developing Country higher education institutions including scholarships and fellowships for mobility at all academic levels.

Issued on behalf of the Ministry for Higher Education and Training.