

EARLALL Position Paper on the Erasmus+ Post-2020

March 2018

EARLALL and its member regions consider that the renewal and improvement of the present Erasmus+ programme after 2020 is of utmost importance and should be considered a priority for the EU institutions.

EARLALL endorsed the conclusions from the programme interim evaluation. These conclusions show that the programme's mobility and cooperation actions have supported European citizens gaining new skills and competences, including language competences. The programme has also become an important tool to strengthen European identity, and to promote European values and social inclusion.

The discussion about the successor of Erasmus+ is the best opportunity to show political commitment to improving the outreach of the programme in the post-2020 financial framework and meet higher expectations in terms of impact and outcomes.

ERASMUS+: A SUCCESSFUL EU PROGRAMME

Erasmus+ is **one of the most successful programmes of the European Union**. For 30 years, it has been offering opportunities to study, train or teach abroad, gaining new experiences and broadening horizons of thousands of students, trainers and teachers. International learning and work experience strengthen young people's skills and contribute to their employability. Besides, education institutions benefit from innovation and exchanges of best practices, which are crucial for the competitiveness of the European education sector.

Currently, the Erasmus+ budget amounts to 14 billion euros, which represent only 1.4% of the total EU budget. Nevertheless, to realise the full potential of the programme, advance on the EU's agenda for growth and jobs, contribute to the knowledge economy and labour market, and achieve an impact on the European education quality, the **Erasmus+ programme requires additional funding**. Synergies with the European Social Fund, Structural Funds and Horizon 2020 successors should be made. Institutions are willing to internationalise and provide students with opportunities, and their ambitions should be fulfilled.

Besides, it would be desirable that Erasmus+ opens to **secondary education**. Adult education should also be better funded as it has only represented 5% of the total Erasmus+ budget.

A NEW STRUCTURE FROM 2014

With the changes brought by the 2014-2020 programming period, many actors had to **adapt to the new Erasmus+ structure**, a process that in some cases has been difficult and time-consuming, especially for smaller entities. Consequently, the programme should maintain the architecture in the next programming period, giving the necessary stability. Transparency and visibility during the discussion regarding the successor of

Erasmus + is fundamental so that organisations and individuals can get ready and fully participate from the programme's first call for proposals.

INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

There are risks arising from a possible "hard **Brexit**." Many schools and educational institutions have partnerships with the United Kingdom and an exit from the Erasmus+ programme of the UK will therefore have a critical impact on individuals and organisations.

Furthermore, it would be positive to continue opening the Erasmus+ programme to other **countries beyond the European Union**.

EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

The new Erasmus+ should face and tackle key common European challenges. It has to empower citizens through education and support the economic growth and employability providing opportunities to acquire and recognise competences and knowledge.

COORDINATION BETWEEN NAs

Agencies could share more **information** about the projects, enabling links between partners working on similar issues and therefore bringing EU added value. Besides, the **services** offered vary a lot from country to country, as well as the information offered (for instance, about the available budgets per Key Action and per sector).

EFFICIENCY OF THE PROGRAMME: SIMPLIFICATION & ACCESSIBILITY

The **administrative burden** for both students and institutions remains too high. Potential participants are often discouraged by the application procedures as well as by the administrative burden, even before a project's start. Also, the low success rates for certain regions make it less attractive for institutions to invest in applications.

In order to ensure **transparency in the evaluation** process, applicants require more feedback regarding why their project was not selected. Sometimes organisations feel that external experts lack insight about the field, and sometimes similar projects get completely different evaluations by different NAs.

In this sense, **less experienced and small institutions** often do not have the capacity to comply with administrative requirements. New simplified forms adapted to the applicant's size (and to small structures) are needed. Current forms related to mobility projects (excluding higher education) and for strategic partnerships do not fit with small-scale training projects. A reduced administrative burden would greatly improve the efficiency of Erasmus+ and make participation more attractive.

Obtaining the **Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter** must reap more benefits for the institutions. We suggest to set more flexible criteria in the "VET Mobility Charter" for the accreditation of bodies with a strong record of successful organization of high-quality mobility for VET learners and staff. In general, the potential of the charter should be **promoted and better supported** at European level.

The Erasmus+ **programme guide** is lengthy and technical, generally perceived as being too complicated. NAs should offer quality information and guidance services targeted at organisations. Besides, some terms are not clear (“intellectual output,” “exploitation”), and there are no examples of documents needed for the application and at later stages of the process.

Finally, **IT tools** should be integrated in one portal and designed in a more user-friendly way. They should also adapt to the size of the organisations when possible, facilitating the participation of small actors applying for lower numbers of mobilities.

FLEXIBILITY

The programme’s objectives should be flexible to adapt to a European context that is in constant change and transformation. Challenges and opportunities like migration, new economic sectors, new needs in the labour market, 4.0 industry, education and business partnerships, etc. should be recognized.

FOCUS ON SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS

Erasmus+ must take the **diversity of target groups** much better into account: VET students with lower general education; apprentices and company-based trainers; students from disadvantaged backgrounds; young people from rural areas; unemployed young people, etc.

A **communication strategy** is necessary to open the programme to all the target groups, making Erasmus+ more democratic and inclusive.

VET AND MOBILITY IN VET



The **Copenhagen Process and the Riga Conclusions** aim to improve performance, quality and attractiveness of VET. The objective is to translate European policy and instruments to national and regional organisations, and Erasmus+ is the main programme to reach this objective and provide adequate support.

In the VET sector, there is a pressing need for an **increased budget** in order to meet the 6% mobility target in 2020 in all sectors.

Furthermore, Erasmus+ should better support **long-term mobility**, and NAs need more flexibility to adapt the funding mechanisms to their national and regional needs.

Moreover, **specific obstacles and barriers** linked to long term mobility need to be considered: (1) the cost for the employer; (2) the different status of the apprentice in each MS and the lack of harmonisation of the contracts; and (3) the even more difficult and burdensome administrative management of the mobility.

The following measures would contribute to the improvement of mobility in VET:

-  enhance the quality of mobility: developing and promoting quality labels could be a good option;
-  focus on the duality school + company;

- facilitate the validation and recognition of skills and competences non-formally acquired, in companies or in training centres;
- ensure recognition of the benefits of the mobility (for all actors) by creating observatories to evidence the mid- and long-term effects;
- take the diversity of target groups in VET into account: apprentices, VET students with lower general education, and company-based trainees.
- Improve the provision of information about VET establishments that is available at the moment. VET centres find it difficult to find peers interested in sharing best practices or exchanges students.

SYNERGIES

First, it should be possible to develop projects and create synergies **between different sectors** (VET, secondary education, higher education, etc.).

Second, a better **complementarity** between Erasmus+, **the European Social Fund** and **Horizon 2020** would increase the impact of the programmes.

Third, **synergies and exchange of results** of the different projects are necessary through thematic international dissemination events of different projects.

THE ROLE OF THE REGIONS

Regions and local authorities play an **essential and specific role** in accompanying and implementing mobility and cooperation projects.

In many Member States, they are **responsible for education and training** and have therefore specific expertise and experience. If regions were involved in the design of the programme, they would more efficiently link it to the public policies.

It would also be important to open the discussion with the European Commission and the NAs concerning a better **territorial balance** when dividing the funding of Erasmus+.