

EARLALL Summary Position on Erasmus+ in the MFF 2028–2035: Focus on the Role of Regional and Local Authorities

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EARLALL envisions a future Erasmus+ that is decentralised, inclusive, and anchored in regional realities. Regional and local authorities are indispensable for ensuring the programme delivers real impact on the ground. In the MFF 2028–2035, they must be recognised not just as implementers, but as strategic partners in the co-creation, governance, and innovation of Europe's flagship education programme.

1. Background and Strategic Context

EARLALL (European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning) welcomes the ongoing reflections on the future of Erasmus+ and supports the ambition for an increase in its budget under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2035. This is essential to realise a truly inclusive and transformative Erasmus for All. The programme must evolve to become more responsive to the diverse and localised educational needs across Europe in line with the Union of Skills and the Competitiveness Compass.

EARLALL supports the principle of *“evolution rather than revolution”* in shaping the future Erasmus+ programme. The current objectives and priorities are widely appreciated by beneficiaries for being broad yet relevant, effectively addressing Europe's educational challenges while offering sufficient flexibility for regional adaptation. Maintaining these priorities ensures continuity, fosters trust, and allows regional and local authorities to build on existing strategies and partnerships. At the same time, EARLALL stresses the importance of enhancing **policy coherence** across EU instruments. Many regional and local actors implement Erasmus+ projects that align with the goals of other EU frameworks—particularly those of DG EMPL, DG REGIO, and DG GROW. Stronger coordination and integration between Erasmus+ and these complementary programmes will reduce fragmentation, increase efficiency, and reinforce the systemic impact of EU investments in education, skills, and social cohesion.

2. Strengthening Regional and Local Engagement

Regional and local authorities are essential actors in the implementation and success of Erasmus+. EARLALL emphasises that their role must be reinforced to better connect EU-level priorities with local realities.

Key demands include:

- **Decentralised Implementation:**

The Erasmus+ programme should maintain and strengthen its decentralised components. Regional authorities, often working in close cooperation with

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National Agencies (NAs), are well positioned to implement Erasmus+ actions that are tailored to the specific educational, social, and economic contexts of their territories.

- **Support for Regional and Local authorities:**

Regional and local authorities, particularly those involved in promoting Erasmus+ and increase participation of local stakeholders, need enhanced support and clearer guidance to handle the programme's complexity. EARLALL advocates for increased investment in capacity building and training for these institutions.

- **Context-Sensitive Flexibility:**

Implementation frameworks must account for local differences, such as rurality, multilingualism, demographic challenges, and varying levels of institutional capacity. Greater flexibility will allow regional actors to ensure better inclusion and relevance.

3. Strengthening Participatory and Multi-Level Governance

EARLALL calls for a multi-level governance approach that integrates regional and local authorities throughout the Erasmus+ policy cycle:

- **Structured Stakeholder Consultation:**

Regional and local authorities must be systematically included in structured and regular consultations during the design and evaluation of the Erasmus+ Annual Work Programmes. Their practical insights are crucial for shaping realistic and impactful programme features.

- **National Erasmus+ Committees:**

EARLALL supports the inclusion of regional and local representatives in National Programming Committees. This will enhance programme ownership and transparency, and ensure a bottom-up perspective in national-level decision-making.

- **Sectoral Working Groups:**

To better reflect the programme's diversity, EARLALL recommends the establishment of sectoral working groups with active regional participation, especially in the fields of VET, adult education, and lifelong learning.

4. Tackling Social and Economic Challenges Through Regional Action

Regional authorities are well placed to reach the most vulnerable learners and deliver targeted actions. EARLALL stresses the need for:

- **Equity-Based Budgeting:**

Dedicated funding must be allocated for regional initiatives aimed at learners with fewer opportunities. Regions can develop and implement tailored strategies for inclusion based on local socio-economic data.

- **Targeted Capacity Building:**

EARLALL highlights the need for EU-level support for regions to build capacity in inclusive education, recognition of prior learning, and lifelong learning strategies. Regions must be equipped to tackle the most pressing inclusion challenges in their communities.

- **Synergies for Skills and Transitions:**

EARLALL emphasizes that a well-resourced Erasmus+ programme is essential not only for promoting social inclusion, but also for advancing Europe's economic competitiveness and enabling a just green and digital transition. Through strategic investment in education, training, and skills development—particularly at regional and local levels—Erasmus+ can equip citizens for the jobs of the future. These efforts complement regional inclusion strategies and reinforce the programme's capacity to address both social and economic challenges in an integrated way.

5. Empowering local actors and fostering innovation through Erasmus+

EARLALL believes that simplifying Erasmus+ procedures will significantly enhance access for local authorities and smaller actors:

- **Proportionality and Administrative Simplification:**

Local authorities, particularly smaller ones, are often discouraged by complex application and reporting requirements. EARLALL calls for streamlined processes and proportionality in administrative tasks, based on the scale and scope of actions.

- **User-Friendly Communication and Tools:**

The Erasmus+ Guide should be redesigned with local stakeholders in mind—modular, digital, and tailored to different levels of expertise. Clearer guidelines will empower more local actors to participate confidently.

- **Robust IT and Support Systems:**

Current IT issues are a barrier to effective implementation. EARLALL recommends robust digital infrastructure and technical support for regional and local applicants and project managers.

- **Support for Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs):**

EARLALL supports the continuation and expansion of the Centres of Vocational

Excellence (CoVE) initiative within the next Erasmus+ programme. These projects offer a unique opportunity to consolidate and develop vocational knowledge across Europe by connecting regional and local actors who share a commitment to high-quality, future-proof skills development. Locally anchored CoVEs ensure that vocational education remains closely aligned with the evolving needs of regional labour markets and business ecosystems. For EARLALL members, they represent a powerful mechanism to educate a workforce fit for the future, grounded in strong cross-border cooperation and local relevance.