

# EARLALL Position Paper on the MFF 2028-2034 Erasmus+ Proposal

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## Strengthening Regional and Local Authorities as Strategic Partners

Brussels, 20.11.2025

### Executive Summary

EARLALL welcomes the European Commission's proposal for the Erasmus+ programme 2028-2034 (COM(2025) 549 final) and acknowledges its ambitious vision for a more inclusive, competitive and cohesive Europe through education, training, youth and sport. However, **the proposal significantly underrepresents the critical role of regional and local authorities** as strategic partners essential for translating EU-level ambitions into meaningful territorial impact.

Regional and local authorities are not merely implementers—they are the indispensable bridge between EU policy objectives and local realities. They possess unique territorial knowledge, governance structures, and democratic legitimacy to ensure Erasmus+ delivers transformative results for all European citizens, particularly the most vulnerable.

This note builds on EARLALL's earlier contribution on Erasmus+ in the 2028–2035 MFF (see [EARLALL's MFF position](#) for background and recommendations).

### 1. Strengthening governance and territorial insight

Erasmus+ should ensure that programme design, implementation and monitoring benefit from the experience of the actors closest to learners, labour markets and communities. EARLALL therefore calls for clear and systematic channels for territorial input throughout programme planning and follow-up. This does not require prescriptive governance structures, but rather a commitment to multi-level collaboration that maintains flexibility and recognises the diversity of education and training systems across Europe.

Article 7 (Support to policy development) seeks to “support policy development at European level, helping shape policies that can trigger modernisation and reforms” at European, national, regional and system levels. Regional authorities, in particular, serve as laboratories for policy innovation in education and training. They:

- Develop competence frameworks adapted to regional economic structures

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- Coordinate education providers activities with teacher professional development
- Design regional lifelong learning strategies
- Pilot systems for validating non-formal and informal learning

To reflect this role, EARLALL calls for stronger references to regional policy development throughout Article 7 and for regional and local authorities to be systematically included in EU-level peer-learning activities, policy dialogues and working groups.

The proposal also places strong emphasis on contributing to the Union of Skills and addressing labour-market needs (Articles 3; Recitals 10, 24, 27). EARLALL therefore calls for regional authorities to be recognised as strategic partners in implementing the Union of Skills through Erasmus+ at territorial level.

## 2. Ensuring capacity, accessibility and simplification

Many regions, cities and organisations—especially smaller or less experienced ones—need accessible support to navigate programme rules, build partnerships and design high-quality projects. Strengthened capacity-building measures, peer learning opportunities and administrative simplification would increase participation, reduce territorial disparities and help the programme reach its inclusion goals.

## 3. Objectives, pillars and overall focus

To remain true to its mission, Erasmus+ should safeguard a holistic understanding of learning:

- **The programme's specific objectives must remain balanced.** While skills, competitiveness, and labour-market needs are important, the programme's objectives must remain balanced, ensuring that lifelong learning, transversal competences, and active citizenship—and the broader professional and personal development they support—continue to be core goals in their own right.
- The shift to a **two-pillar structure** offers welcome simplification, but Pillar 2 (Capacity Building Support) must more explicitly support policy development and systemic reform, including innovation in competence frameworks, validation, teacher professional development and lifelong learning strategies.

## 4. Budget and sector balance

The proposed Erasmus+ budget does not represent a real increase once inflation and the merger with the European Solidarity Corps are taken into account. Maintaining the programme's current level of ambition by 2028 would require a higher allocation. To

provide stability for planning and implementation predictable and transparent sectoral funding is essential.

EARLALL calls for the return of sector-specific earmarking or, alternatively, multi-year minimum allocations per sector (VET, adult learning, , youth, etc) to ensure balance and continuity. Without this, long-term planning becomes impossible for many education systems and territorial stakeholders.

## **5. Flagship initiatives and inclusive participation**

Flagship initiatives such as Centres of Vocational Excellence, European Universities and Teacher Academies offer clear added value. However, their success depends on strong local ecosystems and the continued vitality of small-scale and newcomer partnerships. CoVEs, for instance, thrive when embedded in regional skills ecosystems connecting education providers, businesses and public authorities. Without systematic regional involvement, these initiatives risk becoming elite projects disconnected from local labour markets and community needs. Erasmus+ must preserve avenues for grassroots collaboration that feed into larger-scale innovation and maintain accessibility for new players.

## **6. Synergies across EU programmes**

Erasmus+ should actively foster synergies with ESF+, ERDF, Horizon Europe and the European Competitiveness Fund. Clearer coordination mechanisms and platforms that bring together the relevant national, regional and local actors would strengthen complementarity and maximise the territorial impact of EU investments.

## **Conclusion**

Erasmus+ remains Europe's flagship learning programme. To achieve its ambition for the next decade, EARLALL recommends that the final regulation:

- Reinforces multi-level governance and systematic territorial input;
- Enhances capacity building and accessibility across all territories;
- Preserves a balanced and holistic set of programme objectives;
- Provides predictable sectoral budgets through earmarking or multi-year allocations;
- Anchors flagship initiatives in strong local ecosystems while supporting small-scale and newcomer participation;
- Ensures territorial diversity is recognised and addressed;

- Promotes coherent synergies across EU funding instruments.

With these elements in place, Erasmus+ can fully deliver on its potential to support inclusive, relevant and transformative learning for all Europeans.