

Competing Priorities Cannot Lead to Cuts to the EU's Flagship: Erasmus+

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The **education and training community tirelessly works to ensure a stronger Erasmus+ programme** from 2028 onwards. Halfway through 2026, and with less than one year and half of negotiations remaining, we take stock. The Council of the EU adopted its [Partial General Approach \(PGA\) on Erasmus+](#), i.e. its position on what to change from the [European Commission Proposal](#) (July 2025). The European Parliament CULT Committee is negotiating its position on Erasmus+ through their [draft Report](#) expected for approval in the Autumn. The Partial General Approach of the Education Council and the Parliament Report are the guidebooks used by each institution in the trilogue negotiations.

LLLPlatform welcomes the Council's Partial General Approach (PGA) on Erasmus+ and Parliament's initial positioning. The starting point is a positive one setting Erasmus+ in a situation from which it can be strengthened. However, there is still a long road ahead; civil society organisations in education and training urge decision-makers to address several critical areas, especially since [Cyprus Presidency's first proposed Negotiation Box](#) reduces significantly the Erasmus+ budget.

The general Erasmus+ budget: Ensure fair funding for our future

Education and training stakeholders, Member States' governments and the MEPs align on most aspects of Erasmus+, showing the **importance of education and training** for all, and the **shared commitment of all to improve learners' participation and access to learning**, especially for those with fewer opportunities. However, tensions on the Erasmus+ budget are bound due to the limited resources available. **Assessing the proposed budgets, LLLPlatform identifies significant gaps which do not reflect the citizens' support for Erasmus+.**

An Erasmus+ budget reflecting its importance

The Commission proposed an Erasmus+ budget of 40.8 billion EUR. Considering the merger of Erasmus+ with the European Solidarity Corps, the inflation rate above 3%¹, with historic numbers above 9% in 2022², and the increasing demand for the Programme, **the budget proposal is not an increase.** The Parliament proposed raising this sum to [47.4 billion EUR](#).

¹ Eurostat (2026). Euro area annual inflation up to 3.2%. Available [here](#).

² Eurostat (2026). Consumer prices - inflation. Available [here](#).

Under this proposal, beneficiaries will just be able to continue current 2027 programme actions, with no scope to expand targets or launch new initiatives, even as high demand continues to drive down project success rates. The Council has not agreed yet on a financial allocation, but the [Cyprus Presidency of the Council has tabled a Proposal for its Negotiation Box](#) which puts the Erasmus+ budget at **39.16 billion EUR**. This devastating proposal for the starting position of the Council sees the programme unable to increase its scale or ambitions even if education and training is seen in the Union of Skills as the foundation for Europe's future and competitiveness. People living in the EU rate Erasmus+ as the EU's 4th greatest achievement³, with the programme being, by far, the EU's flagship programme.

The Parliament proposal puts the budget of Erasmus+ only at 2.35% of the total EU budget, and the Council only at 2%. Erasmus+ would need a budget of 60 billion EUR to meet its newly proposed objectives, but, at the minimum, it cannot go below 47.4 billion EUR, or it will fail to meet the current high demand. As the Parliament has set its position on the budget, **LLLPlatform urges Member States to go against the famous adage 'education is the first thing to be cut'**. The return on investment of education and training is clear, Erasmus+ is the greatest promoter of the EU and its values, and the funds required are marginal compared to other programmes, while education and training is contributing to all other strategic sectors' success. **LLLPlatform asks the Member States to at least retain the European Parliament proposal and reject the Negotiation Box initial proposal!**

An earmarking which keeps all sectors safe

When the Commission proposal came out, **stakeholders were disappointed with the absence of financial amounts allocated to each sector within education and training, youth and sports.** Known as earmarking, its absence amounted to a devastating blow to education and training organisations which need the **stability of a yearly allocated budget.** LLLPlatform is delighted to see the Parliament's draft report on Erasmus+ bring back earmarking. **This step forward ensures the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme,** and ensures planning that will save costs and embolden beneficiaries to engage.

Nevertheless, the Parliament's proposal strays far from the status quo, raising risks. Accounting for the merger with the European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+ allocates 79.7% of its funding to education and training, 13.8% to youth and 1.8% to sports. The Parliament report proposes a different allocation: 73.4% for education and training, 14.2% for youth, and 4.1% to sport. The main objectives and the ethos of Erasmus+ revolves around lifelong learning, and the **programme is the EU's flagship initiative due to its specific focus on education and training. Erasmus+'s mission is threatened by the proposed reduction of over 6% of its general budget share.**

LLLPlatform urges the negotiators to retain the 2021-2027 earmarking structure. Most importantly, **it demands that the Programme's core mission is not diminished and that education and training would benefit from at least 79.7% of the total budget.** Moreover,

³ European Union (2019). Standard Eurobarometer 90. Available [here](#).

within this percentage, the Parliament draft report proposes a 0.6% decrease to adult learning funding, which is at odds with the EU's objectives of [bringing more adults into learning by 2030](#). **To this end, adult learning needs to retain its share of 5.8% of the education and training allocation to reach out to the most disadvantaged adults.**

An Erasmus+ in synergy with other programmes

The Council and Parliament connected Erasmus+ with other EU programmes (the European Competitiveness Fund - ECF, Horizon Europe, AgoraEU, Global Europe, and European Social Fund+). LLLPlatform supports this and urges Member State ministries and European Parliament Committees responsible for other programmes to ensure that synergies are retained. If programmes operate in silos, the EU's upscaling is impossible to achieve. If education and training is sidelined from other programmes, the EU will lack the people with needed competences to meet its objectives. **LLLPlatform requests discussions across ministries and committees to ensure that Erasmus+ Programme actions contributing to objectives of other funding programmes are cross-referenced.** We underline the European University Alliances, the Centres of Vocational Excellence and scholarships for strategic sectors.

Did you know that Erasmus+ is more than learning mobility?

Erasmus+ is frequently presented as a learning mobility programme, especially for higher education. Though learning mobility is the biggest programme objective, the programme's growing success is owed to education and training stakeholders collaborating. The decades-long collaboration has been cemented and upscaled by the rise of cooperation partnerships, policy experimentation, and support for EU-wide networks providing awareness raising, capacity building, and partnership building. This cannot be ignored in the negotiation.

Erasmus+ and policy development

The merger of the Programme's previous three Key Actions into two Pillars obscures Erasmus+'s role in policy development. Member States had the opportunity to pilot policy developments across borders and they could work together on initiatives they deemed important and shaped around national needs. **This approach generated impact.** The [EMPL Committee Opinion on Erasmus+](#) strongly brings back references to policy dialogue, experimentation and cooperation, while the CULT Committee Erasmus+ Draft Report makes some steps in this direction. The Council position does not improve this element. **LLLPlatform urges negotiators to give visibility to this technical aspect given the lasting impact it brings to education and training in the EU, and given how it facilitates partnership among Member States.**

Erasmus+ and cross-sectoral collaboration

The future of education and training depends on cross-sectoral collaboration, especially in order to achieve the whole-institution approach (WIA)⁴. Learners no longer follow traditional learning paths in the same ways, and require more communication across learning environments. Though it is more natural to focus on siloed target groups, Erasmus+ needs to improve its references within its objectives for cross-sectoral collaboration. Neither the Council position, nor the Parliament's draft report make this leap. **At least one of the objectives of Erasmus+ needs to directly refer to cross-sectoral collaboration.**

Erasmus+ and the democratic engagement of beneficiaries

Erasmus+ grows thanks to how beneficiaries developed partnerships and created networks to upscale its impact across borders. These EU-wide cooperation networks raise awareness of the programme, engage in capacity building for grassroots organisations and newcomers, and facilitate further partnership. **The collaboration between education and training stakeholders must be in and of itself an objective of the Erasmus+ programme.** This enabler of the programme is its raison d'être, since collaboration is what allows the delivery of all actions, including learning mobility, and improves conditions for all learners.

Moreover, stakeholder collaboration and EU-wide networks play a key role in monitoring and assessing the programme implementation. **The Commission must set-up spaces for them to express their views such as a Civil Dialogue Group, with annual consultations,** reuniting past, current and potential beneficiaries from decentralised/centralised actions, i.e local, regional, national and European stakeholders. Beneficiaries will enrich implementers' knowledge with real-time information on Erasmus+ and they will fulfil the crucial exercise of civil dialogue. This process exists in EU programmes such as European Social Fund+, the DEAR programme, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme. **Beneficiaries' experiences deserve to be heard. The EU institutions and Member States would tremendously benefit from such feedback and ensure evidence-informed approaches to changes to Erasmus+.**

Our calls

- Retain an Erasmus+ budget of at least 47.4 billion EUR.
- Ensure a fair allocation of Erasmus+ funding, without cutting from any sector.
- Ensure clear references to the European University Alliances, Centres of Vocational Excellence, and Scholarships for strategic education sectors in other EU funding programmes, especially the European Competitiveness Fund.
- Bring back policy development more clearly in the specific actions of Erasmus+.
- Increase the references and recognition of cross-sectoral collaboration and EU-wide networks in Erasmus+.
- Democratise Erasmus+: allow beneficiaries to have their say on the programme within a Civil Dialogue Group.

⁴ UNECE (2023). Whole Institution Approach and Education for Sustainable Development. Available [here](#).