

ERASMUS+ 2028-2034

EUA response to the European Commission's public consultation on the EU's next long-term budget (MFF)

EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture, and creative sectors, values, and civil society

November 2025

The next iteration of Erasmus+, a uniquely emblematic and impactful programme of the European Union, is entering a pivotal stage of its preparation.

In its [initial reaction](#), the European University Association (EUA) welcomed the European Commission's proposal for the next [multiannual financial framework \(MFF\) from 2028 to 2034](#), as well as the [proposal for a regulation to establish the Erasmus+ programme](#) during this period.

The proposal confirms the continuation of Erasmus+, with most of its actions and activities to be continued and enhanced. This is very welcome news, in line with the needs and aspirations of the European higher education sector.

Nonetheless, many open questions remain. These include the budget allocation per sector and new initiatives such as scholarships for excellence in priority sectors. As the main European institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) embark on the next stage of discussions on the future of the programme, additional detail and clarification on such points is essential. Furthermore, key stakeholders, including universities and the wider European education and training sector, must be closely involved in these discussions, and expert advice and existing evidence from the current programme should be fully utilised.

As such, EUA is pleased to share some key considerations, which build upon its [detailed analysis and recommendations on Erasmus+](#), based on the experiences of 500 higher education institutions with the programme.

In a challenging geopolitical and economic context, strengthening cross-border education is one of many urgent tasks that the EU's next long-term budget must address. As every Euro can only be spent once, Erasmus+ should be ambitious and innovative, but the programme also needs to focus on actions that provide distinct added value for European citizens. Indeed, the future Erasmus+ programme must reflect the realities of Europe's societies and remain relevant for universities, their staff and students, as well as their societal partners, including industry.

EUA and its broad membership of universities across Europe stand ready to contribute to the further development of the Erasmus+ programme. As the programme takes shape, EUA urges policy makers to:

1. INCREASE THE ERASMUS+ BUDGET

Various projections – by policy makers, representative bodies and experts – demonstrate that the Erasmus+ budget would need to be multiplied to meet Europe's needs and the ambitions outlined by the European

Commission¹. The current proposal for 2028-2034 is not sufficient to cover inflation, increased costs and integrated actions (Solidarity Corps, outgoing third country mobility), as well as new actions such as full degree scholarships of excellence in strategic fields.

To use taxpayers' money in a responsible way and ensure balanced investment in many different areas, Europe must make strategic decisions. In the current context, increasing investment in Erasmus+ is about much more than additional funding for Europe's higher education sector. It is about enabling the programme to further boost Europe's competitiveness, prosperity and resilience by giving it the means to achieve current and future policy objectives.

2. ALLOCATE TENTATIVE BUDGETS TO SECTORS AND ACTIONS

EUA calls on the European Commission to provide a breakdown of the proposed budget allocation for the different programme actions, with minimum funding levels for the different education sectors. This is an important requirement for the eventual implementation of the programme, but also for its current development. It is not possible to have an informed discussion on the future programme and its possible actions without a comprehensive overview of the financial realities of the budget.

Therefore, policy makers should clearly indicate how much funding will be allocated to education and training in general, and to higher education specifically, over the seven years of the programme. The process and criteria for budget allocation throughout the lifetime of the programme must also be specified. Should the budget be decided from year to year, this may lead to delays in implementation and negatively impact beneficiaries' ability to plan their activities. The same is true for national and European policy makers and the agencies implementing the programme.

3. CLARIFY THE PROPOSAL FOR FULL DEGREE SCHOLARSHIPS OF EXCELLENCE IN STRATEGIC FIELDS, INCLUDING IN JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES

As soon as possible, the European Commission should share more detailed information on the costs, feasibility, expected impact and added value for the proposed full degree scholarships of excellence in strategic fields, including in joint study programmes.

This is an entirely new measure, and conditions are as yet unclear. For example, will this be a centralised action? Will students be required to participate in a mobility experience? Alongside existing joint programmes, what will be the added value of this measure? And what will its relationship with the existing Erasmus Mundus scholarships be?

This might become a very selective action, with 'strategic fields' and 'excellence' as key eligibility criteria. It is not clear, however, how these criteria will be identified and selected². As full-degree scholarships are a cost-intensive, scaling up would take a considerable portion of the Erasmus+ budget³. Keeping it small, would mean low success rates and impact. Even if focused on joint programmes, provided by European Universities alliances and other initiatives, scholarships would be certainly welcome but would not suffice to tackle the funding problems of a larger alliance with several joint programmes and student cohorts.

1 The European Parliament has called for the Erasmus+ budget to be [tripled](#) and [Mario Draghi's report](#) suggested it be quintupled. Prior to the announcement of the MFF proposal, [an article on EUA's Expert Voices blog](#) argued that €46 million would be needed just to sustain Erasmus+ at its current level, but "in order to support the Union of Skills and ramp up mobility in higher education, Erasmus+ needs and merits a budget of €60 billion for 2028-2034, with €20 billion earmarked for higher education mobility and cooperation measures."

2 The 2026 Erasmus+ work programme envisages a pilot for the action, where, the EC mentions a focus on STEM.

3 In the 2026 pilot, the budget is €5 million for 4 grants with a total of at least 100 scholarships. The cost for one student would be around €50,000.

In general, joint programmes are a fairly high cost measure, due to the required student and staff mobilities and additional efforts for joint design, management and delivery. The proposed Erasmus+ scholarships, on the other hand, whatever financial dimension they may take, will not be able to provide sufficient funding. As such – and compared to other actions – they would benefit a relatively small number of students and institutions at high costs.

Therefore, these scholarships' potential contribution to the policy goals of reducing skills gaps and attracting international talent would be rather symbolic and promotional, demonstrating the value international higher education collaboration and joint delivery, and thereby encouraging more investment. This needs to be considered, also in view of the European learning mobility target⁴ and the ambition to enhance participation – for which measures that require less funding, such as short-term mobilities, micro-credentials, blended intensive programmes and digital classrooms, would be more suitable.

4. CONTINUE THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE

EUA welcomes the continued integration of European Universities alliances, one of the most ambitious forms of transnational university cooperation, within the Erasmus+ programme. The alliances cover a large number of topics, many of which correspond to the pre-eminent challenges that face Europe. This needs to be retained, and it needs to be ensured that alliances have the freedom to develop their own academic mission without excessive top-down direction.

If alliances, and the universities that form them, have the leeway to focus on their academic mission, that is, to shape their own education, research and innovation priorities, then their contribution to achieving Europe's wider societal goals and systemic impact will naturally follow. On the other hand, ex ante overloading with policy objectives will put this, as well as the academic community's ownership of and support for the alliances, at risk.

The action must be kept open for new alliances and offer fair conditions for continued funding to existing ones, also through synergies with other funds.

5. CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON INCLUSION, AS WELL AS OTHER SOCIETAL PRIORITIES

The continued emphasis on inclusion is most welcome, as is the European Commission's stated aim of closely monitoring implementation. This should be reflected across the entire programme, but put a particular focus on student mobility.

That said, other priority areas under the current programme should also be retained. These include environment and the fight against climate change, digital transformation, participation in democratic life and civic engagement.

In the current context, these topics are more important to Europe's competitiveness, prosperity and resilience than ever before, not to mention their resonance with current and future generations of students. In addition, there is clear evidence of the impact higher education institutions achieve in these priority areas, when supported by Erasmus+⁵.

The strength of Europe's higher education sector lies in its diversity, and its interconnectivity, allowing exchange and collaboration on wide range of issues across national boundaries. Erasmus+ is a key enabler for this. EUA strongly welcomes Commissioner Minzatu's pledge that every student should have an

⁴ [Europe on the Move](#)

⁵ See EUA's consultation of the European higher education sector, "[Use and impact of the Erasmus+ programme \(2021-27\) at higher education institutions - Survey report and recommendations](#)" (2025) p. 24, section 2.2 Impact of Erasmus+ horizontal priorities, and p 9, Recommendation 3

Erasmus+ experience, and would add that every higher education institution should have the opportunity to actively contribute to Europe through Erasmus+.

6. CONTRIBUTE TO EUROPE'S PRIORITIES THROUGH AN OPEN PROGRAMME

Erasmus+ is a connector, among people, higher education institutions and other organisations, including employers and industry, governmental and non-governmental bodies. This is due to the fact that it is truly inclusive, open and eligible to all types of higher education institutions, all disciplines and professions, and a wide range of topics and courses. It has contributed to the higher education sector's ability to detect and quickly respond to major educational and societal changes, and its capacity to contribute to European policy goals such as economic competitiveness and the Union of Skills. However, too much top-down direction could harm this collective shared intelligence.

To this end, systematic dialogue on Europe's strategic priorities and how education can contribute is needed. This should involve not only policy makers and higher education institutions, but also industry partners, employer organisations and other civil society groups. Expert input is also essential, also leveraging evidence on the situation in different member states, as announced in the Union of Skills. As EUA previously stated in its response to the Union of Skills⁶, in view of skills shortages in many areas, and the technical, economic and demographic changes that Europe faces, the solution cannot just be more STEM.

7. MAKE THE MOST OF THE LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE CURRENT PROGRAMME

The present Erasmus+ programme, as well as its predecessors, have been major successes, with a trend towards continuous improvement as evidenced in the European Commission's reviews.

Therefore, its further enhancement is more than justified, including by increasing the budget and enhancing existing actions. Any additional actions and policy priorities for Erasmus+ are also welcome, provided that they do not come at the cost of well-established parts of the programme, many of which are vital to the education and training sectors, but are also at risk of oversubscription in terms of budget.

Oversubscription, low success rates and large numbers of unsuccessful applications have been a big problem in the 2014-2021 programme. This should not be repeated, as it is drain of public funding, as unsuccessful proposals are prepared by predominantly publicly funded higher education institutions.

Therefore, EUA welcomes the proposed exploration of funding synergies with other EU programmes, such as Horizon Europe (FP10), the Global Europe Fund and the European Competitiveness Fund, and looks forward to further details on how these will be established.

EUA also calls for a reflection on the establishment of a European trust fund for education, which could provide grants and loans to institutions and individual learners, and allow industries and other donors to invest in Europe through Erasmus+. Beyond the financial contribution, this would also provide a very concrete basis for strengthened dialogue and partnership on strategic priorities among different actors, as foreseen in the Union of Skills. This is true of collaboration with industry, but also international collaboration, for example on micro-credentials or joint programmes with higher education institutions in the Southern Mediterranean and Africa.

⁶ EUA 2025. [Skills and education for Europe's competitiveness](#).