

# Bottom-up Erasmus+ with a Focus on Education

*Recommendation on the Future of Erasmus+ Beyond 2027*

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Recommendation issued on own initiative

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## 1 Context

Within the framework of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034, the European Commission will soon propose a new Erasmus+ programme.<sup>1</sup> The MFF is drawn up every seven years and sets the EU budget for that period. Erasmus+ is one of the programmes funded under this framework. Its foundation lies in Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides that the EU shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging, facilitating, and supporting cooperation between Member States.<sup>2</sup>

The programme, which also covers youth and sport, is one of the EU's best-known initiatives. This recommendation focuses exclusively on education.

The Flemish Education Council (Vlor) previously issued several recommendations on the Erasmus programme:

- [The New European Erasmus Programme](#) (2018)
- [Recommendation on the Implementation of Erasmus+ in Flemish Education](#) (2014)
- [Recommendation on Erasmus for All](#) (2012)

The Vlor issues this recommendation on its own initiative, in light of the announced successor to Erasmus+ for 2028–2034. Erasmus+ is of strategic importance for the internationalisation of Flemish education and contributes to achieving core educational and societal objectives, including inclusion, citizenship, sustainability, and professional development.

## 2 Importance of the Programme

The general objective of Erasmus+ is to support the educational, professional, and personal development of individuals in education, training, youth, and sport, both within and beyond Europe.<sup>3</sup> The programme aims to contribute to sustainable economic growth, high-quality employment, social cohesion, innovation, the strengthening of the European identity, and active citizenship.

It affects all educational levels and targets both learners and staff. Its objectives closely align with the needs of Flemish education, such as improving education quality and strengthening the teaching profession.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, its effects extend beyond education, contributing to broader societal development.

For teaching staff, Erasmus+ offers opportunities for professionalisation, international cooperation, and knowledge exchange. Participation in exchanges inspires and motivates, while exposing teachers to innovative teaching practices.

Flemish institutions and teachers can also share their own practices with colleagues abroad, for instance through projects showcasing unique Flemish forms of education such as part-time arts

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<sup>1</sup> As the official name of the new programme has not yet been announced, this recommendation refers to the current programme name, Erasmus+.

<sup>2</sup> [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 7 June 2016, Article 165.](#)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2021). [What are the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme](#)

<sup>4</sup> IDEA Consult (2024). [National report on the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ in the field of education and training the Flemish Community of Belgium](#). Flemish government, Department of Education and Training



education. In this way, Flanders contributes its rich educational expertise to the European education area.

This cross-border knowledge exchange is equally valuable for learners. International exchange fosters not only broad knowledge and language acquisition but also soft skills such as collaboration, flexibility, and intercultural understanding. Young people learn to engage with diversity and acquire competencies that are essential in society. It is therefore crucial that everyone, regardless of socio-economic background, can participate in the programme.

A key goal of Erasmus+ is to strengthen European identity. In today's geopolitical context, marked by rising international tensions and pressures on democratic values, this goal is more relevant than ever. Erasmus+ allows participants to experience what it means to be part of a shared European community through cross-border cooperation.

Interim evaluations of the programme in Flanders show that Erasmus+ participants score significantly higher on indicators such as civic engagement, societal involvement, and resilience.<sup>5</sup> This is of great value to educational institutions tasked with educating conscious, resilient, and engaged citizens.

Erasmus+ is not only a catalyst for individual development or educational quality, but also for social cohesion, shared responsibility, and democratic awareness within Europe.

The Vlor therefore calls for an increased budget to continue realising these objectives.<sup>6</sup>

### 3 Recommendations

The Flemish Education Council makes the following recommendations to build on the strengths of the current programme:

#### Involve all stakeholders through European, national, and regional advocacy organisations

The Vlor notes that the European Commission currently implements Erasmus+ primarily through a top-down approach. The Council advocates for better and more proactive involvement of all relevant stakeholders—at European, national, and regional levels—in the programme's design and implementation, including the development of annual work programmes. This should especially include those directly involved in education and training—such as education providers, teacher unions, learners, and parents. Structural consultation between national agencies and these stakeholders could serve as a key driver.

The Council also calls for sufficient space for bottom-up initiatives, allowing institutions and organisations to propose their own themes for cooperation. This applies both to intra-European projects and collaborations with partners outside Europe.

#### Acknowledge the broad objectives of the programme beyond labour market or security purposes

The Vlor acknowledges the importance of skills in education and the initiatives, such as the Union of Skills, that the European Commission promotes to enhance skills. It also understands that

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3

<sup>6</sup> The Draghi Report on Europe's competitiveness proposes a fivefold increase in the budget. Draghi, M. (2024). [The Future of European Competitiveness—A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe](#).



security is a policy priority in the current geopolitical context. However, the Council urges that these policy objectives be pursued primarily through funding channels other than Erasmus+. These can be complementary but should not come at the expense of the programme.

Within Erasmus+, skills should be broadly interpreted—not solely from an economic or competitive lens. The programme must continue to support a wide range of competencies, including language proficiency, intercultural understanding, and democratic citizenship. The personal development aspect of education is essential in every educational form and is a key element of European cooperation in education.

Investing in skills means investing in all levels of education—from school education and adult education to higher education—not just vocational education and training (VET). A broad approach is also essential to lifelong learning: adult education should not be reduced to mere upskilling and reskilling. A robust adult education sector requires space for developing diverse competencies, including personal, social, and cultural skills.

### Ensure a balanced approach between mobility and cooperation partnerships

Mobility for learners and staff is vital for personal development and European citizenship. Cooperation partnerships, in turn, promote social inclusion and strengthen the resilience and innovative capacity of educational institutions. The impact of projects does not necessarily depend on scale. Both instruments—mobility and partnerships—are indispensable for achieving the ambitions of the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area.

The Vlor urges that Erasmus+ funding be carefully allocated. Resources should not increasingly shift to monitoring, member state-level policy projects, or professionalisation programmes in (large) companies. The programme's focus must always remain on projects that directly benefit learners, staff, and educational institutions.

### Address all educational levels and their specificities

The Vlor calls for continued attention to the different educational levels and their unique characteristics.

Recent European Commission efforts to harmonise—e.g. through European Universities alliances—have generated valuable collaborations in higher education. At the same time, flexibility and simple procedures are needed to maximise the use of these new mobility forms. The Council also advocates for continued investment in individual mobility and partnerships across all levels of education, through Cooperation Partnerships and other KA2 actions.

If harmonisation is extended to primary, secondary, and adult education, the Council asks for their specific contexts to be respected and their involvement in programme development to be guaranteed.

The Council also specifically requests attention to mobility within VET, especially internships for young people. These often have a significant positive impact, particularly for disadvantaged youth. Continued support for this mobility is essential.

### Simplification and transparency

The Flemish Education Council welcomes the European Commission's ambition to simplify procedures and sees major opportunities for Erasmus+ in this regard.



The Council advocates for the continued and, where possible, expanded use of lump sums, which reduce administrative burdens. It also urges the resolution of legal uncertainties and inconsistencies in interpretation or implementation by national agencies.

Accountability procedures could also be simplified. Involving stakeholders in their development could help avoid unnecessary burdens and practical barriers.

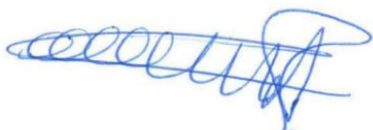
Moreover, greater transparency is needed regarding assessment and audit processes. It is currently unclear how evaluators and auditors apply the criteria. These processes must be open to discussion and participation. An independent appeals mechanism could increase clarity and build trust.

Good policy involves all stakeholders and relies on a strong knowledge base. The Council therefore calls for targeted funding for educational research to strengthen and improve Erasmus+ based on evidence. Better indicators are needed, including to systematically track mobility data per Member State.

### Cooperation with other countries

In the current geopolitical context, it is important that Erasmus+ continues to allow cooperation with non-European countries, based on balanced partnerships and respect for human rights. International exchange remains essential for mutual understanding and global interconnectedness.

The Council calls for continued negotiations with Switzerland and the United Kingdom, with the goal of readmitting them as associated countries to the programme.



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