

## The Guild's recommendations for the new Erasmus programme

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## Introduction

The Guild welcomes the European Commission's proposal for establishing the next Erasmus programme (2021 - 2027) and its vision to work towards a European Education Area by 2025.

The success of the programme so far lies not only in enabling millions of mobility experiences that have enhanced European citizenship. It has also contributed to the institutional development and internationalisation of education institutions through strategic collaboration and best practice exchange.

We welcome the new level of ambition foreseen in the new programme and support calls for tripling the budget to ensure that the programme is even more effective, inclusive and transformational. Erasmus should provide innovative formats to be tested, not only in the framework of European Universities, but throughout the entire programme. At the implementation level, these ambitious goals should be supported with further simplification and digitalisation measures.

**The Guild makes the following recommendations ahead of the negotiations for the new Erasmus programme:**

## 1. Reinforce Erasmus student and staff mobility

### a. Increase support for the development of transferable, intercultural, critical thinking and language skills for students

Besides aiming at making mobility a reality for all, Erasmus should reinforce the quality of mobility experiences. In a rapidly changing world, young people need to acquire transferable, intercultural, critical thinking and language skills, which are crucial for their employability. All students, regardless of their academic discipline, should be offered these opportunities, either through face-to-face courses or online tools.

With reference to the Commission's aspirations for 'Open Science and Open Innovation', new types of transferrable skills are needed to meet the demands of the labour market such as numeracy skills, creative thinking, critical reasoning, interdisciplinary collaboration, digital literacy and a capacity for statistical analysis. Therefore, we call for further investment in skills development. For example, a similar scheme to the Erasmus+ digital traineeships, supported by other funding instruments, could enhance entrepreneurial or citizenship education at higher education institutions.

Regarding language skills, more funding and support should be offered for effective face-to-face

language teaching to complement the Online Language Support (OLS) tool. Students should also be encouraged to be more ambitious in learning the language of their host institution – for instance, by receiving a recognised certificate at the end of the language course. Additionally, more flexibility in the use of OLS is needed: licenses could be offered to first-year students to prepare them for Erasmus mobility.

#### **b. Offer new and flexible mobility formats**

We support shorter mobility opportunities for students, such as summer schools or short study programmes that would enable higher education institutions to embed learning mobility within their curricula. In addition, these formats could offer an international experience to students who might not otherwise benefit from long-term Erasmus mobility (e.g., working students, student parents, etc.). If we want to motivate students to be mobile, it is important to eliminate the administrative burden related to these shorter mobilities. They could be set up as “fast-track mobilities” with simplified access, and often be combined with virtual formats.

#### **c. Maximise the potential of staff mobility and its relevance for higher education institutions**

Support should be offered to teaching and administrative staff in higher education institutions, e.g. on how to engage with cultural diversity in teaching or on how to engage with the graduate tracking initiative. The new programme should maximise the potential of staff mobility and its relevance for higher education institutions by allowing more flexible use of teaching and training activities. For instance, it could reduce the minimum number of required teaching hours, which in turn could stimulate participants to combine teaching and research activities and allow collaboration with industry experts.

#### **d. Create new synergies with Horizon Europe**

We support calls for synergies with other funding programmes, particularly with Horizon Europe, if we wish to create meaningful links between education, research and innovation. Students could take part in Horizon Europe projects through

traineeships while links between the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) and Erasmus could be created by using short-term grants for PhD students to participate in training courses for early-career researchers that are organised by the Innovative Training Networks of the MSCA. Also, programmes promoting entrepreneurial skills could be developed in collaboration with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

## **2. Make Erasmus more inclusive through flexible mobility formats**

#### **a. Support people with fewer opportunities**

We welcome efforts of the Commission and Parliament to put greater focus on inclusion in the next Erasmus programme by removing obstacles to participation for those individuals or groups who have so far been underrepresented in the programme.

The 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report recognises that only a limited number of students are mobile considering the whole student population, with main obstacles being financial reasons, curriculum organisation, language barriers, and personal circumstances. With this regard, we support a broad definition of people with fewer opportunities which considers the diverse nature of obstacles (economic, social, cultural, geographical, health, etc.) and is in line with the European Solidarity Corps programme.

For simplification reasons, we suggest using the existing top-up mechanism for students and staff with fewer opportunities.

#### **b. Virtual opportunities not to replace physical mobility**

The Guild welcomes virtual opportunities – in addition to physical mobility – to help prepare students for mobility or as follow-up activities upon return to the home institution. Virtual learning should make the best use of online tools already developed and tested under the Key Action 2 (KA2).

### **3. Support cooperation projects in the higher education sector**

#### **a. Provide more funding for cooperation projects and offer Small-scale partnerships in the higher education sector**

Cooperation projects offer substantial potential for institutional development. Having in mind the low success rates for KA2 projects and the new initiatives planned under this Action, we advocate for additional KA2 funding in the new programme.

Strategic partnerships have already produced tangible results, including new curricula, online tools, policy recommendations, and methodological approaches. They should be further disseminated and financially supported in the new programme.

We welcome the Commission's plans to support universities in their ability to innovate and their capacity to educate future innovators. It is important that universities can develop their approaches to innovation through European collaboration. Hence, the budget for Strategic Partnerships and Alliances needs to be increased. We welcome the introduction of small-scale partnerships, which are missing in the current programme, to be used for blended mobility development, summer schools, feasibility studies for new joint programmes, student initiatives, and follow-up cooperation based on KA2 project results.

#### **b. Reintroduce Capacity building projects in the higher education and the youth sector**

Capacity building projects in the higher education and youth sectors, although foreseen in the new programme, are not included in the Commission's proposal. We strongly support including Capacity building projects under KA2 partnerships for innovation to reassure applicants, including those from non-EU countries, about funding possibilities.

#### **c. Provide opportunities to develop transferable skills that can spur innovative approaches in all study fields**

The Guild strongly recommends removing examples of forward-looking study fields. Rather than identifying special study fields that are deemed to be essential for Europe's growth, Erasmus should provide opportunities to develop transferable skills that can spur innovative approaches in all study fields. Innovation does not adhere to academic boundaries; therefore, the programme should contribute to strengthening the Union's innovation capacity by supporting mobility and cooperation activities across all disciplines. Partnerships for innovation could test different aspects of the European Education Area in cooperation with key stakeholders.

### **4. Strengthen European identity through Jean Monnet actions**

#### **a. Maintain the level of funding for Jean Monnet actions earmarked for the higher education sector**

The Guild supports extending Jean Monnet actions beyond the higher education sector allowing debate on European integration to reach a wider audience, notably groups that are not already familiar about the European Union.

Jean Monnet networks have been important in creating meeting places for young researchers to cooperate and issue publications in EU studies. Also, by being open to higher education institutions worldwide, Jean Monnet actions reinforce the international dimension of Erasmus. We recommend to at least maintain the level of funding in the new programme earmarked for the higher education sector, as these actions can have an important role in increasing the interest and participation of young people in democratic processes.



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