



Policy Paper on the Erasmus+ successor programme

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I. Background

The policy paper outlines the political demands of the European Youth Forum and its member organisations in view of the negotiations and adoptions of the Erasmus+ successor programme within the post-2020 EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). While acknowledging that the Erasmus+ successor programme needs to cover education in all contexts and at all levels, be it formal education, non-formal education and informal learning, this policy paper focuses on the objectives of the separated youth and non-formal education chapter of the Erasmus+ successor Programme.

It outlines the institutional relevance of developing this policy paper at this specific moment, the key demands coming from youth organisations in Europe and the relevance of the youth sector and youth work for the development of young people. It provides an outline of the main actions that should be supported by the Erasmus+ successor programme and presents the view of youth organisations on the governance and management of the programme, as well as on its financial provisions. This policy paper is structured on the basis of the current Erasmus+ Regulation.

This policy paper has been developed with the support of the Expert Group on Funding of the European Youth Forum, which has contributed to its contents and structure during two meetings and a series of online consultations.

a. Institutional context and the importance of investing in youth

As the platform of youth organisations and the voice of young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum represents the interests of young people and advocates for higher and more sustainable financial support to youth organisations in Europe. In view of the negotiations on the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, young people shall not be put in a corner of the EU budget and policies but rather be mainstreamed throughout the EU policy areas and programmes, in addition to a strengthened Erasmus+ programme. The renewal of the European cooperation framework in the youth field will provide further opportunities to harness cross-sectorial approaches and synergies between priorities and actions of the new cycle of EU programmes. The overall investment in youth-related policies by the EU remains limited. In the current MFF less than 2 per cent is spent directly on youth, which means less than 30 EUR per young person per year, and only 1.36 per cent of the whole MFF is available for the overall Erasmus+ programme, which means less than 4 EUR investment per year per European citizen. An important step to improve the situation of young people and to increase EU investments in youth is to demand

an increased funding for the education, training and youth programme within the next MFF.

II. Key demands

- The European Youth Forum calls on the European Commission to develop a proposal for an Erasmus+ successor programme that represents a strengthened educational and volunteering programme, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels.

- The European Youth Forum calls on the European Commission to involve representatives of the beneficiaries, including youth organisations and learners, in the governance of the Erasmus+ successor programme at all levels, to bring the programme closer to young people and to strengthen their ownership of and further participation in it.

-The Erasmus+ successor programme must be accessible and inclusive for all young people. A simplified, low-threshold administration process is decisive to ensure the direct participation of young people themselves. Furthermore, information and communication about the programme should be done in a youth-friendly way in order to reach a broad spectrum of young people.

- The Erasmus+ successor programme should remain a main flagship initiative of the European Union supporting the mobility of young people and learners for studying, training and volunteering in another country.

- The European dimension of the programme should be complemented by a national and global dimension aiming at multiplying the benefit of the programme on local communities, Member States and beyond.

- The Erasmus+ successor programme should promote volunteering and its impact on local communities and young people, stressing its non-formal and informal learning dimension.

- The Erasmus+ successor programme should be developed in a global perspective and contribute to the EU strategy to promote Sustainable Development Goals among the beneficiaries of the programme.

- The Erasmus+ successor programme should continue supporting learning opportunities within Higher Education, VET, School Education, Adult Education, Youth work, Non-formal Education and Sport. It should continue to offer quality opportunities to young people, helping them develop their skills and competences

and share knowledge and experience among organisations from all sectors covered by the Erasmus+ successor programme.

- The Erasmus+ successor programme should aim at building a stronger youth sector in Europe by providing more sustainable structural support to youth organisations.

- The priorities of the successor to Erasmus+ programme should be better aligned with the European cooperation framework in the youth field.

- The architecture of the Erasmus+ successor programme should be based on the needs and practices of youth organisations in Europe as outlined in this paper.

- As the EU's most successful programme, the European Youth Forum calls on Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission to be at least 10 times more ambitious with the Erasmus+ successor programme for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, in terms of resources and outreach, especially for the youth sector. This would be the only way to give more young people the chance to benefit from the programme and to move towards a programme that has the ambition to offer all young people the possibility to experience learning mobility.

III. Youth organisations, youth work and non-formal education at the core of the Erasmus+ successor programme

The work of youth organisations is positively contributing to reaching the objectives of a number of key European policies. **This role should be well acknowledged and reflected in the Erasmus+ successor programme.**

By contributing to the acquisition of competencies and changes in young people's attitudes and behaviours, youth organisations contribute to personal, social, political and economic development and can help tackle the key challenges facing Europe, such as the resurgence of nationalism, the erosion of social cohesion, political disengagement and youth unemployment. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides for Union action in order to encourage the development of youth exchanges and exchanges between socio-educational instructors, i.e. youth workers, and to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. This is what youth organisations are delivering every day around Europe.

The next youth chapter of the Erasmus+ successor programme should be better equipped to build a stronger youth sector in Europe by supporting the

operation and projects of youth organisations across Europe, neighbouring countries and cooperation with the rest of the world. Further investments in supporting the existing actions of youth organisations would contribute to multiply the chances of fully reaching the objectives of the programme.

The youth chapter of the programme should focus on supporting non-formal education and non-formal learning which are based on experiential learning, learner-centred approach and empowerment of young people through participation and ownership of activities. **These activities should be youth-led and run by volunteer-based organisations.** Youth engagement and volunteering should be promoted also in mobility programmes within other sectors of Erasmus+ such as Higher education student, pupil and VET student long-term mobility.

Youth work and non-formal education practices have also shown to be a successful tool to engage a more diverse and large group of young people, including disadvantaged young people and young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and can furthermore complement formal education practices for the acquisition of 'life-skills' and the development of civic participation. **The Erasmus+ successor programme should strengthen its non-formal education focus** if it wants to raise its ambitions of reaching out to more young people, especially the ones coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Erasmus+ successor programme should encourage the other sectors covered by the programme to partner with youth organisations in order to promote non-formal education and social inclusion as complements to formal education.

IV. Objectives of the Erasmus+ successor programme

Social inclusion, lifelong learning, European identity, active citizenship, participation of young people in democratic life, critical thinking, volunteering, intercultural dialogue and learning to live together, gender equality, sustainable development, mobility for all, global cooperation, and the role of young people in peace-building should be the main priorities which the Erasmus+ successor programme should be built upon. While acknowledging that skills and competences acquired through non-formal education, informal learning and volunteering contribute directly to fostering the professional development of young people, **the Erasmus+ successor programme must have the much wider objective of promoting the overall personal development of young people as active citizens in diverse and democratic societies.** The competences acquired through non-formal education and informal learning should be recognised as a contribution to society and valued by both civil society and employers. The

employment of young people should be supported by other EU programmes such as the Youth Employment Initiative, the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation and the European Social Fund. To address the changing and diverse circumstances of young people, it is important that funding is also available for topics that are beyond the already existing political agenda at the European level and those that are identified by young people themselves.

Seeing as these objectives are mostly pursued through mobility programmes, **the Erasmus+ successor programme should support Member States in erasing the barriers to mobility present in national legislations towards third-country nationals** (e.g. visas, residence permits, recognition of study periods abroad) in accordance with the 2016 Visa Directive¹, the process of the revision of the Visa Code aimed at removing mobility barriers and in line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The social inclusion objective of the programme should reflect the fact that youth work, volunteering and non-formal education can be particularly effective in reaching out and engaging disadvantaged young people and those in the situation of NEETs, by providing them with opportunities to partake in more inclusive educational activities through the work of youth organisations. However, youth organisations need to be supported to better reach out to disadvantaged young people and engage them in their activities on a long-term basis. Accessing mobility is not necessarily the first step of involvement for young people with fewer opportunities.

The Erasmus+ successor programme should promote active citizenship and ownership of shared values, participation in democratic life, and develop a sense of European identity. Evidence shows a strong correlation between international youth mobility and voting behaviour in the 2014 European elections: Erasmus alumni were more likely to vote compared to the ones who did not benefit from the programme.

The role of youth organisations should be particularly highlighted in this regard, as they provide opportunities that equip and guide young people to play their part as active citizens and fully engage in democratic life. Moreover, it is essential that **the Erasmus+ successor programme preserves and fosters tools for engaging young people in EU and national decision-making through the EU Structured Dialogue on youth.**

¹ Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing.

V. Actions and governance of the Erasmus+ successor programme

The following part of the paper outlines the type of actions and activities the Erasmus+ successor programme should support in order to achieve the objectives of the programme and to support the work of youth organisations in Europe and partner countries.

Actions described below need to have clear objectives set and **be open in formats and methods to achieve these objectives. This approach would enhance the creativity of young people** and allow thinking **outside of the box in terms of activities** to address the objectives. **More flexible formats to calculate the budget of planned activities should be allowed** to accommodate these creative approaches (e.g. itinerant activities, preparatory meetings, follow-up of mobility, online activities and any other creative format/method that might emerge).

Enhanced cooperation and exchange of information among National Agencies and other managing authorities of the programme (e.g. the Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture - EACEA) is essential to avoid replication and overlap of granted projects. This would result in an optimisation of funding allocations, allowing more young people to benefit from the programme.

All learning mobility actions supported by the Erasmus+ successor programme must also have the possibility to be developed in the form of itinerant activities, implying the movement of all participants at the same time, throughout one or more countries participating in the project.

Local activities should be foreseen as complementary to international activities (i.e. blended activities). The programme should support and encourage the implementation of local activities as an integral part of an international project to enhance and support the local impact of these projects. The use of blended activities will bring the benefits of a European programme to those young people who are not able to experience mobility themselves.

a. Actions of the Erasmus+ Successor Programme

Youth exchanges (currently covered by KA1²)

Youth exchanges need to continue allowing groups of young people from different countries to meet, live together and work on shared projects for short periods. Youth exchanges should be organised and/or facilitated by youth organisations. In order to

² Key Action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals

make this action more attractive to young people and organisations, flexibility in the minimum number of participants per country must be introduced.

Large-scale youth exchanges (NEW)

Large-scale youth exchanges should be introduced to support the organisation of large-scale youth events with clear learning outcomes. What youth organisations are lacking in the current framework is a tool to support large-scale international gatherings of young people, and this action is meant to respond to this specific need.

Mobility of youth workers (currently covered by KA1)

Projects supporting the mobility of youth workers are a prerequisite in order to continue to foster the exchange of good practices, the development of quality youth work and networking opportunities for youth workers in Europe and beyond. This action needs to be conceived in a way that would support organisations offering development spaces to youth workers. Specific activities under this action could include seminars, training courses, networking events; study visits, and job shadowing abroad. Increased resources for this action must be allocated compared to the current Erasmus+ Programme as it is currently under pressure with very high rejection rates. In 2016 less than one in six projects was selected for funding, and it represents a strategic action aiming at building a stronger youth work sector in Europe.

Youth initiatives³ (NEW)

The Erasmus+ successor programme should re-introduce the Youth initiatives as a tool to foster young people's citizenship and mutual understanding through the implementation of projects at the local level. Youth organisations will facilitate and support the participation and ownership of young people in youth initiatives. Youth initiatives could serve as stepping stones for further involvement in mobility programmes. Synergies should be explored and overlaps avoided with the “Solidarity projects” within the new European Solidarity Corps programme.

Capacity-Building in the Youth Sector (currently covered by KA2⁴)

This action must support youth organisations in strengthening their partnerships on strategically relevant projects in the field of youth. Projects supported under this

³ A Youth Initiative is a project initiated, set up and carried out by young people themselves. It gives young people the chance to try out ideas through initiatives, which give them an opportunity to be directly and actively involved in planning and carrying out projects. Participation in a Youth Initiative is an important non-formal learning experience

⁴ Key Action 2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

action could include a mix of the different actions in order to encourage new formats and methods, thus support quality in youth work.

This action would also support the development of capacity within existing and well-established networks and movements to increase their overall impact on young people and their capacity of reach out to more young people.

Global cooperation (currently covered by KA2)

The continued and further strengthened capacity-building projects and networking projects with partner countries are essential in the Erasmus+ successor programme, including long-term volunteering mobility opportunities for young people.

The European Youth Forum calls on the European Commission to better coordinate the planning and management of resources coming from the successor equivalent of current Heading 4 of the Multiannual Financial Framework (Global Europe) in order to make them available to all sectors covered by the Erasmus+ successor programme from the very beginning of its implementation. This would facilitate the participation of organisations from European neighbourhood countries⁵ from the very beginning of the programme.

It is essential that the Erasmus+ successor programme provides support to youth organisations from different regions of the world to work together towards the achievements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific support to multilateral cooperation among Regional Youth Platforms should be included in the programme and in line with the recommendations of the Council Conclusions on the Global Strategy on the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy

Policy innovation projects (Currently covered by KA3⁶)

In the context of new societal challenges for Europe, a specific annual call for proposals must be launched to develop large-scale innovation projects to face emerging challenges and needs at the European level. The objectives of this specific action should not cover topics outside the scope of the Erasmus+ successor programme and the specific focus of those calls should be defined annually in consultation with potential beneficiaries.

Structured Dialogue: interaction between young people and decision-makers in the field of youth (Currently covered by KA3)

⁵ "European neighbourhood countries" refer here to the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the current Erasmus+ Programme: Western Balkans; Eastern Partnership Countries; Russian Federation (Territory of Russia as recognised by international law) and South-Mediterranean countries.

⁶ Key Action 3 – Support for policy reform

It is necessary to continue supporting actions promoting the active participation of young people in democratic life at the European, national and local level through specific grants. Projects granted under this action should include a strong link with the themes and priorities set by the EU Structured Dialogue on youth and the renewed European framework in the youth field. Local actors implementing the recommendations of the EU Structured Dialogue on youth should be supported by the programme as they are the best placed to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities.

Projects supported should aim at:

- implementing the European process of the Structured Dialogue on the local/regional level;
- implementing the adopted joint recommendations from previous cycles of the Structured Dialogue on the local/regional level.

As mentioned in the European Youth Forum proposal for a New EU Structured Dialogue on youth, **this process should continue to be supported by the Erasmus+ successor programme as a participatory process that gives young people and youth organisations, both at the national and European level, the opportunity to be involved in and influence EU youth policymaking.** The programme should continue supporting National Working Groups to coordinate the process at the national level and National Youth Councils should be supported financially to steer the work of the National Working Groups.

The programme should also offer support to the European Working Group, so that International Youth Organisations can reach out to more young people from more diverse backgrounds and also focus on the European-level implementation of the Structured Dialogue results.

Support the functioning of European Non-Governmental Youth Organisations. (Currently covered by KA3)

European Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (ENGYOs) represent millions of young people across Europe and contribute to a number of key European policies in the field of education, training and youth by bringing the voice of young people to decision-makers at different levels. They enable local, national and international participation of young people in the decision-making process, and they help develop quality youth work practices around Europe. In order for their successful work to continue, **the further strengthening of their role is a requisite within the Erasmus+ successor programme by increasing their structural support through the operating grant,** raising its maximum eligible grant to the same level of the operating grants in the education sector.

Support the European Youth Forum.

The Erasmus+ successor programme must continue to support the European Youth Forum as the unique structure at the EU level bringing together all strands of the youth civil society. As the voice of young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum advocates for the interests of young people and their organisations. It also brings young people and decision-makers together to discuss how to make Europe and the world a better place for youth and where young people are equal citizens and are encouraged and supported to achieve their fullest potential as global citizens.

The Erasmus+ successor programme should be supporting its action to actively contribute to the political processes relevant to youth at large on the European level and by making sure that its autonomy and independence are preserved. **The European Youth Forum should be assigned a permanent observer status in the Committee managing the Erasmus+ successor programme** to ensure that the voice of young people and youth organisations is taken into account in the work of the Committee.

b. Financial rules applicable to the different Actions of the programme

For any action supported by the Erasmus+ successor programme, it is necessary that adequate funding be allocated in order to make the programme more accessible and inclusive for young people coming from all social and economic backgrounds. Specific additional budget should be allocated to cover the participation of young people with special needs and the costs incurred by the organisations to the activity.

The use of the simplified grant system (lump sum, unit costs and flat-rate) should continue in the Erasmus+ successor programme. Reporting on projects using a simplified grant system should foresee the possibility to include evidence of the contribution of volunteers to the project. **Projects including volunteer time contribution should receive additional points at the evaluation stage.** In case the programme foresees budgets based on real costs, volunteer time contribution should be recognised as eligible co-funding.

At the moment, the simplified grant system does not provide sufficient support to beneficiaries; in particular it does not reflect the realistic costs incurred by beneficiaries for their staff, travels, board and lodging for projects. A series of adjustments should be introduced in order to **1) overcome geographical inequalities by increasing the unit costs for travels; 2) make the programme more accessible to all young people by increasing the level of unit costs for organisational support and making it consistent across sectors; 3) introduce adequate level of lump sum for project coordination support and staff costs**

across all actions supported by the programme except youth exchanges and youth initiatives, which should be more youth and volunteer-led projects.

As a general rule, **a two steps application process should be introduced for project applications with a minimum eligible grant above 150.000 euros**. A concept note outlining the project idea is submitted first. Based on that, the selection committee will invite the selected Concept Notes that best meet the programme's objectives to submit a full application.

There should not be a budget ceiling for projects involving participants from partner countries neighbouring the EU since it currently pushes organisations to systematically exclude their members and partners from these countries to participate. Instead, the budget ceiling should only concern the actual budget used for participants coming from Countries Neighbouring the EU and not the entire project budget, which includes participants from programme countries as well.

Funding to support the participation of non-EU countries should be made available under the equivalent of the current Heading 4 of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Non-EU countries participating as programme countries in the Erasmus+ successor programme should be able to contribute financially to it and to choose which specific part of the programme they would prefer to subscribe to (i.e. the youth chapter).

Simplified application procedures and open deadlines need to be introduced for youth initiatives and local projects with budgets under 5.000 euros.

The European Commission must make sure that all managing authorities respect obligations regarding timely payments of beneficiaries.

VI. Governance and management of the programme

Young people and youth organisations are the best placed to enhance the vision of the Erasmus+ successor programme and bring it to a next level in accordance with the current and future needs and challenges the future programme is asked to respond to. **This is why young people and youth organisations must be involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of the Erasmus+ successor programme from the very beginning.**

This could be best done by including the European Youth Forum as a permanent observer without voting rights in the Youth Programme Committee. Its presence needs to be laid out in the rules of procedures of the relevant Programme Committee.

At the national level, **the bodies in charge of implementing the programme should include representatives of the National Youth Council in their governing structures** and in the evaluation processes with specific resources allocated. The presence of youth representatives in the governance of national implementing bodies would contribute to set strategic directions of the programme that are more in line with the needs of the beneficiaries, as well as to ensure more balanced and fairer selection processes. **For non-programme countries, National Youth Councils should be involved in the promotion and implementation of the programme in their country.**

A higher degree of flexibility in the budget allocation at the national and European level should be ensured based on the needs of the beneficiaries. The European priorities should be adaptable in order to respond better to concrete needs and priorities of local contexts. However, alignment with European priorities needs to be better ensured and the mid-term evaluation must take place, allowing for periodical fine-tuning of priorities at the European and national level.

As a general rule, the grant request should be submitted to the National Agency of the country where the organisation is based. However, **grant requests for any actions from Europe-wide networks must be submitted to and managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.**

In order to make the Erasmus+ successor programme more inclusive for youth organisations, the Commission should continue its efforts to make the programme less bureaucratic with simplified application procedures. Application forms should be revised so that they are shorter, with clear questions that do not overlap and with a focus on the description of the activity from the beginning. To support the simplification, the Erasmus+ successor programme should also move towards a non-paper system where all bureaucratic procedures can be easily done online through one integrated platform. Additional measures should be taken to support the participation of young people who have difficulties in the access and use of this online platform.

Local branches of national youth and student organisations without a separate legal entity should be able to apply as an informal group of young people for youth exchanges and youth initiatives without passing by the central body of their organisation. Different application procedures should be introduced for different levels of budgets.

As general rule, the mandate should only be requested after the approval of the grant and the programme should allow for more flexibility to change partners. The programme should also facilitate changing the country of departure of participants

from the one originally foreseen in the application, including programme country participants travelling from countries neighbouring the EU.

National Agencies should be responsible for the implementation of the decentralised actions of the Erasmus+ successor programme and a common management system and administration procedures must be applied to all. A system of effective and fair assessment on the progress of the projects must be put in place ensuring that implementing partners are following the quality standards and pursue the expected results. Systematic communication and support from the National Agencies must be given to the implementing partners.

a. Geographical scope

The European Youth Forum stands by the principle that every person has the right to travel, volunteer and work anywhere in Europe and that Europe, as an entity, is not confined to the borders of the European Union. The programme needs to continue supporting cooperation and projects with partner countries neighbouring the EU and other partner countries, as defined in the current legal basis of the Erasmus+ programme⁷, in order to reinforce young people's mutual understanding, sense of solidarity, and tolerance, peace building as well as the development of cooperation in the field of youth civil society.

As a principle, organisations coming from Partner Countries neighbouring the EU, should be eligible for all the actions of the Programme, as potential partners and carriers of projects.

The European Commission should facilitate a fast-track/simplified/preferential visa process for participants of Erasmus+ successor mobility actions encouraging Member States to fully implement the Visa Directive and extend it to all learning mobility opportunities beyond university students and researchers. A specific financial and legal support should be provided for Erasmus+ projects involving third country nationals or legal residents in the EU and specifically young refugees.

It is imperative that non-EU European countries be given the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus+ successor programme. Following this principle, young people and learners from the United Kingdom should have access to the opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ successor programme. **The European Youth Forum calls on British authorities to ensure in the Brexit negotiations**

⁷ The complete list of participating countries can be found in point 1.2 of the Commission Implementing Decision of August 2017 on the adoption of the 2018 annual work programme for the implementation of "Erasmus+": the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport - https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/c-2017-5652_en.pdf

(both withdrawal and future relationship) the participation of British young people in the Erasmus+ successor programme on the same basis as other programme countries.

b. Financial provisions

Youth work, volunteering and non-formal education must be better recognised within the wider education sector and this should be reflected in a bigger budget share within the Erasmus+ successor programme. Therefore, **a separate budget must be foreseen for the youth sector and non-formal education and it needs to account for at least 15% of the overall Erasmus+ successor programme.** Youth organisations are key stakeholders in the non-formal education sector and their role should be further recognised by supporting the operations of European networks of youth organisations through operating grants.

The current Erasmus+ programme accounts for only 1,36% of the overall EU Budget 2014-2020 and it will only benefit 4 millions Europeans by the end of its implementation in 2020. It is essential that the Erasmus+ successor programme be much more ambitious, aiming at reaching out to many more young people and learners across Europe. Therefore, **the Erasmus+ successor programme budget should be multiplied by ten in order to widen its access to an increasing number of young people and learners.**

VII. References

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