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Don't let young people down in the next EU long-term budget

To the Finance Ministers of the European Union:

My name is Rareş Voicu and I am addressing you as the President of the European Youth Forum, the largest platform of youth organisations in Europe, which represents millions of young people at international level, and advocates for their rights and participation in decision-making processes.

Ahead of the discussions on the next EU long-term budget at the forthcoming European Council meeting on 18-19 June 2026, **we look to you to place the best interest of young people in Europe at the forefront of the negotiations and adoption of the Council's position.** Young people expect a European budget that addresses today's major challenges, from precarious work and unaffordable housing to democratic backsliding and climate change. The EU's long-term budget can either help tackle or worsen these crises.

The **Erasmus+ Programme** has proven to be one of the EU's most successful initiatives, consistently delivering positive impacts on skills development, civic engagement, and a stronger sense of European identity. However, many young people do not have access to it yet. To guarantee that every young person benefits from the programme, **we call for an increase of the Erasmus+ budget to EUR 130 billion, in line with the recommendations in the Draghi Report.** Furthermore, to guarantee predictability and fair distribution of its budget, **it is essential to maintain earmarking for the sectors covered by Erasmus+, and crucially for youth.**

The **National and Regional Partnership Plans** will be key to guarantee sufficient investment in people, promotion of social inclusion, access to employment and quality

working conditions. However, the European Commission's proposal of a 14% minimum target of social investments is simply insufficient. **The funds addressed to social objectives must be raised beyond this percentage, by a standalone *European Social Fund* with an increased dedicated budget line.**

The ***AgoraEU Programme*** is imperative to supporting young people and youth organisations' contribution to the democratic health of the Union today, as well as to safeguarding democracy and citizens' engagement for future generations. **We call for an increase of the AgoraEU budget to EUR 12 billion.** In addition, **the principle of minimum earmarking must also be applied between the Programme strands.** The CERV+ strand must continue to be implemented under direct management to ensure the transparent and pluralistic disbursement of funds, and to continue supporting civil society's work, including grassroots and smaller organisations, in defending rights and democracy.

Last but not least, Europe stands at a crossroads and meeting our generation's challenges will require matching political ambition with adequate financial means. **A stronger and more resilient European Union can only be built through ambitious member state contributions and a credible and sustainable system of *new Own Resources*.**

Europe's future depends on giving young people real opportunities today. Please do not let us down.

Yours sincerely,

Rareș Voicu

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rareș Voicu' in a cursive script.

President of the European Youth Forum