

Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport 2014-2020

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The Council agreed a **partial general approach** on the proposal for a regulation establishing the "Erasmus for All" programme for the period 2014-2020, for which the Commission proposes a significant increase in funding compared with the current budget. The agreement however excludes any provisions with budgetary implications, pending further developments on the negotiations currently under way on the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Main issues discussed: the Council preparatory bodies have worked intensively on the proposal since January and the agreement reached on the basis of a Presidency compromise text constitutes a political mandate for future Presidencies to engage in informal negotiations with the European Parliament during the second half of 2012 with a view to reaching overall agreement on the proposal early in 2013.

The main amendments made to the Commission proposal are as follows:

- **Youth-related issues** (Chapter IIa, pp. 19-22; Art. 13.1(a), p. 25 and Art. 17.1, p. 33): in response to calls from a large majority of Member States for **greater visibility for the youth field** within the Programme, as well as with the aim of reaching a compromise between those Member States on the one hand that wished to maintain an entirely separate programme for youth and those on the other hand that supported the Commission proposal for a fully integrated programme covering education, training and youth, the Presidency has incorporated a separate chapter on youth containing articles corresponding to each of the three types of action underpinning the Programme. In addition, provision has been made for a separate budget allocation in Article 13.1(a), while access to the Programme has been broadened in Article 17.1 to include non-organised youth.

- **Programme management** (Chapter VII, Arts. 21-24, pp. 36-44): a number of changes have been made to this chapter in order to preserve Member States' freedom to organise management of the Programme at national level as they deem fit. In particular, **Member States will be entitled to designate more than one National Authority and more than one National Agency if they so wish**, although the text also stresses the benefits of lighter administration and improved internal coordination in terms of increasing costefficiency, as well as facilitating internal transfers of funds and communication with the Commission. In addition, some adjustments have been made in order to clarify which Programme actions will be managed centrally and which at national level.

- **Funding** (Art. 13.3a, p. 26 and Art. 13.6, p. 27): firstly, in parallel with Article 13.3 which establishes the principle of minimum percentage allocations inter alia for each of the three types of action, a new paragraph 13.3a has been included to ensure that the various education and training sectors will also receive minimum percentage allocations. As already indicated, further discussion on the actual figures will await further progress in the negotiations on the overall budget for the Programme in the context of the MFF. Secondly, in order to meet the concerns expressed by several Member States about the method used to calculate funding allocations for the National Agencies, the Presidency has introduced a number of changes to the text of Article 13.6 with a view to avoiding significant reductions in the annual budgets allocated to Member States and minimising excessive imbalances between Member States which might occur due to geographical situation or differences in the cost of living;

- **Programme implementation** (Arts. 27-30, pp. 47-49): following requests from a large number of Member States, the delegated acts referred to in Articles 27 and 28 may only be used in respect of

amendments to Article 22.2, which relates to Programme actions to be managed at national level and, even so, may only be adopted with a view to ensuring that additional actions are decentralised. In addition, further detail has been added in Article 29 in order to clarify how the Programme is to be implemented, while Article 30 has been amended (and a new accompanying recital inserted) with a view to reconciling the views of those Member States calling for separate Programme committees to cover the different fields, and those supporting the Commission proposal for a single committee covering both sectoral and horizontal issues to which the Member States would be expected to send the relevant representatives. **The compromise text provides for a single Programme Committee which may meet in specific configurations to deal with sectoral issues, if deemed necessary;**

- **Support for institutions under the Jean Monnet activities** (Art. 10(c), p. 18): in its proposal, the Commission had retained only two of the six institutions active in the field of European integration studies which currently receive direct funding under the Lifelong Learning Programme and had recommended that funding for other institutions be provided on the basis of a competitive tendering. There are diverging views among the Member States on the issue of Programme support for such institutions, but a large majority of countries ultimately favoured **maintaining funding for all six institutions mentioned in the current programme** and the Presidency has amended the text accordingly;

Access (Art. 17.2, p. 33): in addition to the change referred to in paragraph (i) relating to youth, the text has also been modified in order to highlight the need to promote social inclusion, notably by ensuring the participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities;

- **Programme simplification:** two amendments have been made with a view to streamlining and simplifying the text in line with the Commission's stated aims. Firstly, the number of definitions in Article 2 has been considerably reduced, so that these are confined to terms which are either specific to this text or which require some explanation. Secondly, the indicators linked to each of the specific objectives in the Commission proposal have been removed and replaced by more general wording in each of the relevant articles which confirms the need for measurable and relevant indicators, but provides for these to be agreed within the Programme Committee whilst taking due account of existing ones.

Commission reaction: the Commission emphasised that the innovative integrated approach of Erasmus for all must be preserved and that the **distinction between the youth field and the other parts of the programme was in fact artificial**. It welcomed the fact that the fundamental principles underpinning its proposal had been maintained in the Presidency compromise package. However, it regretted some of the changes made, in particular the creation of a separate youth chapter and budget, the removal of specific indicators and the rejection of the Commission's proposal for a single coordinating body as National Agency in each Member State. The Commission also considered that the **important budget allocation proposed** for the programme will **send a clear signal to young people** and also to the adult learners that Europe is strongly committed and will have the means to tackle their problems.

It should be noted that the **Commission has entered a general reservation on the whole text** pending the opinion of the European Parliament and further developments on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), while DK, MT and UK have entered Parliamentary scrutiny reservations.