Implementation of the current Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027

2023/2002(INI) - 16/01/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 486 votes to 62, with 61 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027.

Erasmus+ is an EU flagship programme supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond. With an estimated overall budget of EUR 26.2 billion, it places a strong emphasis on inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.

State of affairs and successes

The resolution stressed that the programme focuses on an increasing variety of measures, including lifelong learning, better inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and the removal of barriers to learning mobility, in particular the lack of automatic recognition of qualifications, and financial barriers. It acknowledged that the existing structure works well, successfully bringing together formerly separate programmes, thus providing a good funding ecosystem. Learning mobility and small-scale partnerships have proven to be highly effective activities to reach out to the wider public across Europe.

Members welcomed the ambition to bring about a digital transformation of the programme, and digital learning opportunities. They appreciated the steps being taken to increase the amount of green travel and the higher funding rates being paid for more environmentally friendly ways of travelling. They also noted that some processes for applying have improved, by being made simpler and more efficient.

Challenges and problems

Parliament pointed out the following issues:

- insufficient grants to cover the costs of learning mobility and delays in payments are among the biggest deterrents to participants in mobility projects;

- many young people with fewer opportunities are kept from spending longer periods of time abroad by financial or other obstacles;

- complicated administrative processes at all stages considerably hinder the participation of newcomers and small-scale organisations;

- it remains time-consuming to apply for Erasmus+ funding and that applicants often cannot apply without external support;

- almost a third of students in higher education mobility reported that they did not receive full credit recognition;

- the insufficient funding for Centres of Vocational Excellence in view of the demand for them;

- in 2022, the number of beneficiaries of centralised youth operating grants was reduced drastically, severely impacting an already COVID-weakened, volunteer-led youth civil society sector;

- the Erasmus+ sport sector has very limited funds in some areas, particularly for the organisation of events, thus limiting its scope;

- the slow and incomplete development of the IT infrastructure.

Improving the current and designing the future Erasmus+ programme

Parliament called on the Commission, the Member States, national authorities to **keep Erasmus+ close to the people** and ensure it remains a bottom-up 'citizens' programme' offering quality education and mobility opportunities for young people and learners of all ages. The programme should be **simplified at all levels**, including by assessing whether existing (sub-)actions can be merged. **Digital tools** should be optimised by 2025 at the latest to create a user-friendly, accessible, reliable, speedy and efficient environment that respects data protection.

In particular, the Commission is invited to:

- remove all barriers, including financial, linguistic and administrative barriers, such as those created by the new ICT tools, in order to achieve a truly inclusive programme embracing diversity;

- correct the limited transparency and usability of the results of successful projects;

- strengthen its work with stakeholders on European 'inclusion targets' for the programme and to make available data on projects which include participants with fewer opportunities;

- step up efforts on the programme's digital transformation, in particular on achieving an 'Erasmus Without Paper' for all education and training sectors and establishing the 'European Student Card';

- contribute to solving the accommodation problems of students in Erasmus+ mobility projects;

- discuss with the co-legislators, as early as possible, the sustainable continuation of the European Universities Alliances as a flagship initiative;

- use the programme's tools to encourage accommodations that would open up sectors where women are underrepresented and subsequently facilitate women's integration into these segments of the labour market;

- promote the European dimension in teachers' professional development and to encourage mobility among them;

- issue a call for projects to enable secondary school students to visit a site connected with the atrocities committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe;

- foster the role of Erasmus+ in increasing a sense of belonging, civic engagement, a better understanding of the Union and support for European values, and to turn the programme into a true promoter of European democracy;

- strengthen the educational dimension by establishing stronger synergies between learning mobility and DiscoverEU;

- increase the visibility of the support available for adult learning and education activities;

- ensure that synergies between Erasmus+ and other programmes such as Horizon Europe of the European Social Fund Plus are fully exploited.

Parliament declared its determination to ensure a substantial increase in the Erasmus+ budget in the 2028-2034 programming period and commits itself to tripling the current envelope, taking the requirements of the programme into account.