



Position Paper

August 2018

European Commission proposal for 2021-27 Erasmus programme for education, training, youth & sport

What we like

- **Doubling the overall programme budget to €30bn**, thereby aiming to increase the overall number of beneficiaries. This reflects the high importance attached to education and training by the European Commission, which is fully supported by EUROCHAMBRES.

Recommendation: While we certainly welcome the increase in the Erasmus budget, it will have little or no added value if it is not accompanied by a rigorous simplification of the management of the next programme. This must apply to the submission process and subsequent reporting requirements, both of which must be considerably more user-friendly if the political objectives behind the doubling of the programme budget are to materialise into positive tangible effects for end-users and beneficiaries.

- **Increase of the budget dedicated to the field of VET** within the programme (€5,23bn. compared to €2,51bn. for the current period). However, it is critical that this additional funding reaches the end beneficiaries, individual learners. This cannot be taken for granted and indeed, already in the current period, Chambers note that raising awareness of opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme across a critical mass of VET learners is challenging.

Recommendation: In order to be in a position to absorb the additional funds dedicated to VET in a meaningful way - in particular when it comes to learning mobility of individuals – the implementation of the additional funds should be accompanied by large-scale and tailor-made awareness raising campaigns, not only at European but also at national, regional and local level, ideally already before 2020. This will facilitate outreach to VET learners and providers and ensure that these final target groups embrace the increased opportunities. Adequate financial means should be ring-fenced for such activities.

Recommendation: Any new long-term mobility schemes for apprentices (similar to ErasmusPro under the current Erasmus plus programme) must be implemented according to the actual demand in the different member states and take into account the specific requirements of apprentices, who are on average younger than academic students participating in such schemes. The requirements of businesses, in particular SMEs, for which a return on their investment in apprentices is of particular importance, also necessitate specific support for involvement in long-term apprenticeship mobility schemes, as underlined in EUROCHAMBRES' position on the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation.

- We support the explicit reference to continuous vocational education or training in the **definition of a 'vocational education and training learner'** and that the definition also includes recent graduates from VET programmes.
- The ambition mentioned under recital no.18 to further **extend international mobility activities** also to other sectors, such as in vocational education and training, is very positive.

Recommendation: Not only the Commission and member states can ensure that this objective becomes a reality and it is important that relevant stakeholders such as Chambers are also mobilized and involved through the programme.

Recommendation: Adequate preparation of the individual before a period abroad is a crucial factor in the success of any mobility scheme, so language training and other aspects must be delivered in a practical, hands-on and structured manner. The proposed online tool for language learning does not correspond with the needs of VET learners.

Recommendation: Preparation for mobility programmes must also include the businesses that are either hosting or seconding a learner. Feedback for example on German regional Chamber's mobility coach scheme reveals that such advice and guidance can be particularly beneficial to small businesses and can be the difference between the success and failure of periods abroad.

- **The reference to the possible participation of third countries** is supported by Chambers, thereby aiming to increase the overall number of beneficiaries. This reflects the high importance attached to education and training by the European Commission, which is fully supported by Chambers.

Recommendation: We acknowledge that a specific reference to the UK is not practicable given the ongoing negotiations on this member state's withdrawal from the EU and on future relations. Nonetheless, we encourage the Commission and co-legislators to ensure that this option remains open and available, given the considerable popularity of the UK as a destination for mobility schemes and the size of the British economy.

- We fully support the explicit reference to partnerships and platforms under "Key action 2 - **Cooperation among organisations and institutions**," as these instruments can foster innovative approaches in the field of E&T overall and contribute to the modernisation of MS's education and training systems.

Recommendation: especially when it comes to Key actions 2 and 3, the administrative burden has to be kept to an absolute minimum for all stakeholders involved.

What requires additional clarification

- The proposal to establish under the programme new "**Centres of Vocational Excellence**" as stipulated under Art. 5 (b). Based on the proposal, it is hard to gauge how the new Centres will operate and what their precise purpose is. We are concerned that:
 - The mandate referred to is too wide. For example, we understand that the Centres are intended to act as 'a catalyst for business investment and support European and regional innovation strategies'¹; these are laudable objectives, but not ones that VET practitioners are best placed to fulfil.
 - The lack of precision and specific criteria referred to in the text of the regulation and accompanying staff working document allow too much interpretation at national and sub-national level.
 - The proposed joint VET curricula and qualifications will follow a sectorial path, thus excluding more transversal approaches that prove effective in some member states.

¹ Extract from slide presented by DG EMPL to EUROCHAMBRES 'People Committee', 18 July 2018

Recommendation: all trans-national platforms established under this instrument must demonstrate a high level of quality in order to meet its ambitious objectives. Their selection must be based on a clearly defined set of standardised criteria and the consortia made up of already established and recognized VET organisations and stakeholders on the ground, which have the respective expertise, legal competence and experience, such as Chambers of Commerce & Industry in several member states.

- Regarding the instrument ‘**European universities**’ as stipulated under Art. 5 (b) and as described on pp. 5 and 6 of the accompanying SWD, the concept certainly contains ambitious objectives. However, in our view the description of the instrument still remains vague on a couple of important points and it lacks the demonstration of a clear EU-added value as well as of synergies with and delimitation towards other existing EU instruments in this field, such as e.g. the EIT.
- We would advocate **greater transparency and detail in the breakdown of the budget by actions** from the start of the process.
- **Governance of the programme** requires greater precision and must reflect the interests of and incorporate its ultimate target beneficiaries.

Recommendation: the European Commission’s Erasmus programme committee should be extended to include experts from relevant stakeholder organisations. This should not be limited to social partners, but also include a small number of other key EU level education, training and youth interest groups, notably Chambers, youth organisations and VET providers.

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