

Feedback MFF Proposal Erasmus+ programme 2028-2034

November 2025

Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) welcomes the confirmation that Erasmus+ will remain an independent, self-standing programme and that current programme priorities will be continued. Predictability and continuity of the budget are crucial to ensure a sustainable, ambitious and inclusive future for the Dutch universities participating within the Erasmus+ projects.

Budget

UNL appreciates the proposed increase of the budget of the new Erasmus+ programme as compared to the current budget. It is an important and necessary step forward. However, UNL is very concerned this budget, in its proposed form, will be insufficient to deliver on the considerably expanded programme's ambitions for education and training, mobility and skills. Taking into account inflation, increased personnel costs, higher grant amounts, higher expected participation, investments in digitalisation, and the fact that the proposed programme will combine the existing Erasmus+ programme with the European Solidarity Corps, the proposed budget falls far short of its ambition. We therefore urge the Commission to double the budget of the next Erasmus+ programme in order to expand accessible and impactful learning mobility and inclusion for all, to meet increased expenses for universities, and to ensure the success of the new programme. And while we understand the benefits of combining programmes with shared goals, it is important to clarify the budgetary implications of this proposal for the universities' participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

European University Alliances

The new Erasmus+ programme offers opportunities for international cooperation on themes that are important for Europe. From an educational perspective, we therefore consider it positive that the alliances fall under Erasmus+. In addition, UNL greatly appreciates the reference to the Alliances in the draft proposals for Horizon Europe, as well as in the ECF proposal. This represents a significant improvement over the current programme and offers promising opportunities for greater synergy between these programmes and related co-financing schemes. Still, information is lacking on what this means budget-wise. Like with the other parts of the Erasmus+ Programme, budget increase is needed to secure a clear direction and investment path for the alliances under the European Universities Initiative. Without this, this promising initiative risks remaining project-based and fragmented rather than enabling the alliances to become permanent pillars of the European Education Area. Universities make choices regarding capacity and investment based on a plausible perspective. Committing to uncertain trajectories is undesirable, especially in times of budget cuts. The sustainability of ambitious projects such as the alliances therefore requires continuous funding and additional national financing to be successful. To further develop the sustainability of the university alliances without hindering collaboration and innovation measures we recommend:

- Predictability – stable and reliable long-term funding;
- Flexibility in funding requirements to ensure stability and growth until self-sufficiency is achieved;
- Realistic expectations and aims of alliances;
- Specific, additional funding for innovative activities;
- Sharing best practices of self-sufficient models and formats;
- Autonomy in choice of partners and policy.

Priorities

Learning mobility must remain as the core action of Erasmus+. A major concern is that as more activities or extensions of guidelines are introduced, there will be less budget left for student mobility. This is a threat to the inclusivity goals of the programme. Priority must be given to ensuring there is enough budget to meet all mobility needs and in the continuation of existing successful actions. We must remain hesitant in adding too

Vereniging Universiteiten van Nederland

Lange Houtstraat 2
Postbus 13739
2501 ES Den Haag

Tel +31 70 302 14 00
E-mail post@unl.nl
Web universiteitenvannederland.nl

KvK 40480226
IBAN NL61 INGB 0001 5964 15
BTW NL007088784B01

many new initiatives. Members of UNL are concerned that there will be less funding for capacity-building projects because other priorities will take precedence. The proposed simplification of the structure and focus on mobility and capacity building are causing confusion and uncertainty about the future of existing successful action lines. We emphasise the importance of the budgetary continuation of Erasmus Mundus and recommend grants be continually made available beyond the focus on strategic areas.

There is also hardly any reference to sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals in the proposal, while these are essential for addressing global challenges and can be especially relevant in collaboration with third countries. Cooperation with universities outside Europe must remain possible, with enough room for universities to choose their own partners and policy in this.

It is positive that there will be more emphasis on lifelong development and skills in the next Erasmus+ programme. Learning and working (after initial education) are expected to become increasingly intertwined, especially with increasing demand for skilled labour and for contributing to the EU's competitiveness. However, the question here too is what effect this will have on the overall budget, and to what extent Lifelong Learning will benefit from Erasmus+ funding. Lifelong Learning students who pursue education or (re)training at a later age may not want to travel abroad. Of course, there are many ways in which involvement can still be ensured:

- Short-term courses. For example, traveling abroad for one week and then immersing yourself in a program.
- Fully online courses.
- Courses that already exist, where there is already a local group, but which are opened up (online) to international participants (think of courses from the European alliances). A European perspective is interesting for the development of such programmes.

Simplification

Finally, the implementation of the programme urgently needs to be simplified in order to significantly reduce the administrative burden on institutions and participants. This means that adding new priorities and actions should not lead to more administrative pressure. It also means not implementing too many changes in a single call. Adjustments such as increase in individual support, a change in regions, and the introduction of a travel grant all have a significant impact on budget management. Not all organizations are equipped for this, especially when some new priorities entail major (cultural) changes. Collaboration and consultation with stakeholders is therefore necessary to make impactful changes to the programme. And if changes are made, it is essential to provide better general training for Erasmus officers and National Agencies, accompanied by clear communication about the interpretations of Erasmus+ initiatives. A lack of standardised training leads to varying understandings of the programme's rules, hindering its effectiveness. Additionally, proper testing and piloting is crucial when introducing new measures. Last but not least, an important point of attention is to continue to focus on removing legal and administrative barriers to transnational cooperation in order to develop new joint programmes and infrastructures.