



DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

**POLICY DEPARTMENT B:
STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES**

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

ERASMUS FOR ALL (2014-2020)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract

The proposed *Erasmus for All* programme (2014-2020) envisions bringing together a wide range of EU activities in higher, school, vocational and adult education, youth policy and grassroots sports. This briefing note presents and reviews the proposed context, architecture, content, and management structure. Further, it makes ten recommendations to ensure that the proposed programme not only seeks to streamline management efficiency but also pays sufficient attention to the individual policy needs of the various sectors. Finally, it gives a detailed outline of the planned action and budget allocation.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

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LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN
Translation: DE, FR

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

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Manuscript completed in April 2012.
Brussels, © European Union, 2012.

This document is available on the Internet at:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/studies>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2011, the European Commission presented its proposed regulation on a new ambitious programme – *Erasmus for All* – for the years 2014 to 2020, bringing together a whole series of hitherto separate programmes in the fields of higher education (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, bilateral programmes with other countries or continents), school education (Comenius), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci), adult education (Grundtvig), youth (Youth in Action), European Integration studies (Jean Monnet) as well as grassroots sports as a new addition. The present document has been prepared for the European Parliament as input for the upcoming discussion of the *Erasmus for All* proposal. The note includes a summary of the proposed regulation (as well as complementary documents that may serve to enhance its understanding), an analysis of its context and main features, and ten recommendations.

Presentation and review of the proposed programme

The proposed regulation is complex, yet not overly explicit in its purpose and aims. It is therefore necessary to refer to preparatory documents, such as its Impact Assessment in the accompanying Commission Staff Working Paper, and to a number of relevant Commission Communications in order to get a better understanding of the programme's implications for policy development (in relevant fields) and budget allocation within the Multiannual Financial Framework.

The analysis of the proposed programme first looks at the European policy context. Specifically, while the new programme builds on a successful generation of previous programmes, it does at the same time address the weaknesses and limitations of former programmes, particularly with regard to their inability to respond to the strong demand for grants, their fragmentation and complexity and their not being sufficiently aligned with the Union's strategies. The proposed integrated programme also seeks to enhance its contribution to the EU's *Europe 2020* macro-strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as to the Union's sectoral policies for education and training (ET 2020) and youth (Youth Strategy). The analysis then turns to the proposed content of the programme, specifically to planned actions and budgets (in as far as these items are included in sufficient detail in the planned regulation or in other relevant Commission documents) and to the proposed model for the programme's implementation at EU and member-state level.

The analysis of the proposed new programme draws attention in particular to the following points:

- The opportunities and risks associated with the programme's overall scope and architecture. The proposal seeks to significantly increase the volume and budget of activities, and plans to consolidate the various activities of EU institutions in the areas of education and training (in a lifelong learning perspective), youth (informal learning) and grassroots sports (an incipient activity at EU level), and to ultimately "streamline" most of these activities via three Key Actions (mobility, cooperative projects and policy support).

- The uncertainties arising from the rather vague, short or absent definitions of eligible groups and persons, proposed “old” and “new” action lines and planned allocation of the budget. The answer to some of these doubts can be found – to a limited extent – not in the regulation, but in accompanying (i.e. non-committal) documents and other information released by the European Commission. However, this creates a significant degree of uncertainty about the programme’s actual content and priorities over the (planned) seven years of its duration.
- The opportunities and risks associated with the proposed “streamlining” of most current activities via three types of “Key Actions”: 1) the mobility of individuals; 2) various types of joint projects aimed at augmenting/improving cooperation between educational institutions with their economic and social environment, together with capacity development in neighbouring countries; and 3) a more focused use of the programme to support development of policies for higher, school, vocational and adult education as well as for youth and sports.
- The pros and cons of the proposed implementation and management model, in particular with respect to the limitations of the envisaged “streamlining”, the use of flat-rate grants, reliance on intermediary bodies such as universities, schools or youth organisations for the award of grants to individuals, and the role envisioned for member states in the model of shared management between the Commission, the Executive Agency, the (coordinating) national agencies and the Programme Committee.

Recommendations

The briefing note contains a list of ten recommendations to the European Parliament. Their main thrust is to ensure that the proposed integration and streamlining of the EU’s activities in the various sectors of education, youth and sports are combined with sufficient attention paid to the differing needs of each of these sectors. The briefing note also highlights the importance of making sure the well-known and highly respected brand name “Erasmus” is applied appropriately, and that the programme’s content and budget allocation are detailed enough to ensure delivery to the various groups of beneficiaries over the seven years of its implementation.

More specifically, the ten recommendations propose that the European Parliament should:

1. Acknowledge that the Commission’s proposal rightly emphasises the need for the EU to invest much more than hitherto in education, training and youth, a change which would indeed require improved alignment with the Union’s strategies for growth and employment, and include a sufficient level of integrating and streamlining programmes in policy areas such as higher education, where such programmes are currently too numerous and fragmented.
2. Question the overall strategy of streamlining across policy sectors proposed for the integrated programme and the suggested use of the name “Erasmus” (specifically, *Erasmus for All*) for a broad spectrum of activities reaching far beyond its current use in higher education. While it is recommended that the individual sectors of the programme keep their own identity, they should not be called “Erasmus School”, “Erasmus Youth”, etc.

3. Explore the possibility of rearranging the integrated programme in such a way that it emphasises streamlining within the different policy areas rather than across them. Bringing different areas under a common, overarching roof and streamlining them, as set out in three proposed Key Actions (mobility, projects, policy support), should not entail distinct sectors of higher education, school education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth (and sports, if it is kept) losing their identity and their need for specific policies – including the need to build stronger bridges between some of these sectors. The proposed scheme for grassroots sports, an activity still in its infancy, could be run separately from the proposed integrated programme, or could be integrated as one of the many items contributing to policy making (Key Action 3).
4. Emphasise the importance of regrouping and streamlining various policies, tools and activities in the sector of **higher** education under the well-known, established and appropriate name “Erasmus”. All external activities in higher education (mobility, cooperation, capacity-building, policy dialogue with non-UE countries) could be integrated, streamlined and summarised as “Erasmus **Mundus**”, a brand name already well known to higher education communities throughout the world.
5. Ensure the stability and continuity for the various categories of applicants and policy makers. This requires more detailed rules concerning eligible grant holders (including recent graduates from higher education and persons already active in the labour market), the future geographical scope of “*Erasmus Mundus*”, the types of policy-support measures that may be funded, and a fixed allocation of 80-85% of the funding to the different sectors.
6. Demand a clear overview as to what extent and in how far a lower budget allocation than the one proposed would affect the overall balance between activities and sectors within the programme. This implies identifying in advance those activities and budget shares that would be cut or reduced in the event of a reduced budget.
7. Object to the proposed transfer of joint doctoral programmes from *Erasmus Mundus* to *Marie Curie*. Such a move would weaken the attractiveness of European universities, make the development of high-level doctoral studies in Europe more difficult and contradict the Bologna reforms based on three (not two) degree levels.
8. Endorse the proposal to guarantee European students loan facilities for full-time degree and post graduate studies abroad, provided that the Union is not associated in any other way than as a guarantor on behalf of students and as long as it remains clear that this is only one of a number of options, open to students at Master's degree level.
9. Request an extensive debate about the essential need for closer contact between the Union and those individuals who actually benefit from grants, design and implement projects on the ground, or participate in them. A foreseeable consequence of the proposed implementation strategy for the new programme (fewer and larger contracts, with grants always run through intermediary bodies) is that it will further distance the programme from its individual users and beneficiaries.

10. Guarantee that member states will have the possibility to implement the programme in the most effective way, according to their own structure of ministries and administrations (i.e. through one or more national agencies) and that they are allowed to not only administrate, but also to discuss procedures and financial management issues, and matters related to policies and substance.

Concluding Comments

The concluding comments stress that while the proposal's overall goals and ambitions are in tune with Europe's vital need to invest more and in a smarter way in education, training and youth, it nonetheless risks falling short of its announced goals and objectives, because it reflects a marked dominance of management considerations over the actual needs for policy making.

The European Parliament may wish to use the presented recommendations to address the proposal's weak points, question some of the options proposed and suggest alternative, more suitable solutions. It may also wish to take the opportunity to open a more fundamental debate about the citizenship dimension of the Union's activities and try to avoid the proposed management model based on mega-contracts awarded to intermediary bodies favouring big organisations and consultancies and creates an even bigger gap between the EU institutions on the one hand, and individuals and smaller organisations on the other.