



**2015/2154(DEC)**

17.2.2016

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section III - Commission and executive agencies  
(2015/2154(DEC))

Rapporteur: Yana Toom



## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes with appreciation that in its first year the Erasmus+ programme has retained its key focus on boosting skills and employability, achieved its intended aim of creating closer links between Union programmes and policy developments in the areas of education, training, sport and youth, fostered Union action in such a way as to respond better to the goal of lifelong learning and helped to reduce social, economic and territorial inequalities by reaching many European citizens; points out, however, that there are a number of problems in the Youth section of Erasmus+ related to access to funding, compared to the previous Youth in Action programme; regrets that the Commission did not allocate enough budget within the Erasmus+ programme in order to better communicate on the global changes in the new programme lines in order to be able to take on board a greater number of schools projects;
2. Takes the view that even though the increased decentralisation of funding disbursements for Erasmus+ is better able to meet some of the programme's national and local requirements, depending on the Key Actions, such decentralisation needs to be evaluated in order to prevent it from being an obstacle to the achievement of the strategic goals of Erasmus+, particularly as regards its Youth section;
3. Notes that the Erasmus+ programme helps to integrate young Europeans into the labour market, to promote employability, and to develop new skills; that it bolsters initiatives in the spheres of citizenship, volunteering, and internationalisation of youth and sport; that it helps to improve the quality of education, formal and informal training, and lifelong learning; and that it enhances the sense of European citizenship based on understanding and respect for human rights;
4. Expresses deep concern about the de facto suspension of Erasmus+ youth funding disbursements in Greece, as highlighted in the 2015 report of the European Youth Forum on the implementation of the programme;
5. Notes the difficulties reported by the Commission's DG EAC and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in the initial implementation phase of the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens programmes, in particular with regard to some delays in the opening of the calls for proposals and the disbursement of the funding; hopes that these are exceptional circumstances and looks forward, therefore, to the coming years when these programmes will enter into a phase of greater stability compared to this first year of implementation; recommends that the Erasmus+ programme takes on board more small scale projects, which are the core of innovative experiences in all three domains: education, youth and sport;
6. Welcomes the steps towards funding models based on lump-sums and unit costs which both simplify financial management for beneficiaries of Union funding as well as for the Union itself; points out, however, in particular in the Youth section of Erasmus+, that these lump-sums and unit costs are also insufficient to finance the key operational

expenditure of youth associations and NGOs; maintains that Union investment in the programme should be increased further;

7. Recognises that agencies have significant influence on policy and decision-making and programme implementation in areas of vital importance to European citizens, and in this context commends the work of the EACEA;
8. Recalls that delays in final payments by the EACEA directly affect the beneficiaries' rights, thus jeopardising cultural associations and projects, creativity and the cultural civil society's diversity; encourages the EACEA to further improve its control and payment systems;
9. Expresses concern that the European Schools have not addressed the issues reiterated by the Court of Auditors and highlights the recommendation to the Board of Governors of the European Schools to implement a rotation system for sensitive posts and to address other weaknesses, which may put at risk the basic principles of transparency and sound financial management; notes the adoption in 2014 of the new Financial Regulation for the European Schools as one of the means - if well implemented - to respond to the critical issues identified by the Court of Auditors; calls on the Board of Governors of the European Schools to consider centralising some posts that are currently decentralised, such as the post of accountant, and fostering a separation of the roles of authorisation, execution and control of financial transactions, so as to minimise the risk of error and fraud; believes that a comprehensive review of the governance, management and organisation of the European Schools system would be timely given the concerns raised and the fact that 60 % of the European Schools' budget, EUR 177 million, comes from the budget of the Union;
10. Notes that the mismatch between the seven-year programming of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the ten-year programming of the political and strategic priorities of the Union could adversely affect the consistent evaluation of the results achieved by Union programmes; notes that the upcoming revision of the MFF is a key point in the management of Union spending by ensuring Union investment programmes remain efficient; insists on a thorough simplification of the application forms and criteria, especially for small scale projects, both in Erasmus+ and the Creative Europe programmes;
11. Is concerned about the Commission's payment backlog, which amounted to EUR 26 billion in 2014 - half of which was considered 'abnormal', i.e. not determined by invoices generated at the end of the financial year, as evidenced by the European Parliamentary Research Service - and for Erasmus+ alone the backlog was EUR 202 million; notes that this backlog is caused in part by an excessively inflexible MFF, which does not allow funding to be reallocated and has tight margins, partly due to the failure by the Member States to meet their commitments with regard to payment appropriations;
12. Highlights that the Europe for Citizens programme serves as a unique and direct link between the Union and its citizens in order to support actions, petitions and civil rights; considers the present funding level far too low and emphasises that the programme should be implemented within its content, becoming richer with initiatives empowering

the values of European Citizenship; strongly opposes any further budget cuts or any payment delay for the Europe for Citizens programme 2014–2020;

13. Considers generally that the Union instruments to support the European Agenda for Culture – such as the Creative Europe and Horizon 2020 programmes, or the European platform – must be financially strengthened in order to deliver and serve the objectives set for them;
14. Calls on the institutions of the Union to continue their work to reduce the payment backlog, while respecting payment appropriations and firmly supporting the work of the interinstitutional high-level group on own resources;



## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	17.2.2016
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 24 -: 4 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Angel Dzhambazki, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Rikke Karlsson, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Stefano Maullu, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ernest Maragall, Marlene Mizzi, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Paul Nuttall, Hannu Takkula