



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Culture and Education

16.10.2013

WORKING DOCUMENT

on Erasmus+

the new multiannual programme for education, training, youth and sport

Committee on Culture and Education

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DT\1006752EN.doc

PE521.609v02-00

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United in diversity

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Background

The new Erasmus+ programme builds upon earlier Union initiatives promoting exchanges and the development of education and training systems and youth work.

- The Erasmus programme was launched in 1987. Parallel to this, Youth for Europe (1988-1991) and Youth for Europe II (1992-1994) supported the youth sector.
- A broader programme – Socrates – followed in 1995. In addition to the Erasmus sub-programme for higher education, the Comenius sub-programme addressed primary and secondary education, Grundtvig adult education, Lingua education in European languages, and Minerva information and communication technology in education. Leonardo da Vinci, a separate programme, dealt with vocational education and training. Youth for Europe III (1995-1999) continued the earlier initiatives in the youth sector. In parallel, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) was developed from 1998 onwards.
- Socrates II and Leonardo da Vinci II ran from 2000 to 2006. The EVS was integrated into “Youth”, the fourth programme for the youth sector.
- Lifelong Learning (2007-2013) brought Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci together under one umbrella and also included the Jean Monnet Programme, originally launched in 1989, supporting teaching and research on European integration. In the same period, “Youth in Action” was the stand-alone programme for the youth sector.

Erasmus has grown into one of the EU’s most successful and most well-known initiatives – some 2.3 million students took part in exchanges between 1987 and 2011 – and it has served as a template for mobility programmes in other sectors of education, training, and youth work. Moreover, mobility programmes between Member States (and other participating countries, such as Switzerland) have been complemented by higher education cooperation programmes with other regions of the world, such as Erasmus Mundus (2009-2013), Tempus (since 1990), Alfa (since 1994), Edulink (since 2006) and cooperation programmes with industrialised countries (since 2002).

The Commission proposal

In November 2011, the Commission presented its proposal for a Regulation setting up a new multiannual programme for education and training, youth and sport for the years 2014 to 2020. It merged all current actions in the field of education, training and youth, and also included provisions for Jean Monnet activities and a separate chapter for sport. Another new element was a student loan guarantee facility for Master-level students. The Commission proposed a budget 70% greater than that for the combined 2007-2013 programmes.

Apart from a much bigger budget, the other main innovation was a drastic simplification in the programme structure. Previous programmes had been built up of relatively self-contained sector-specific sub-programmes, with comprehensive and detailed actions. However, in the new proposal, the chapter on education, training and youth set out only three key actions, each

of which was relevant to all three sectors.

Key Actions	Focus of activities
Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals	Staff, higher education and vocational education and training students, joint masters degrees, Erasmus Master (student loan guarantee facility), youth
Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and good practices	Strategic partnerships, knowledge alliances, sector skills alliances, IT platforms
Key Action 3: Support for policy reform	Support to Europe 2020 governance and the open method of coordination

The positions of Council and Parliament

The Council reached a partial general approach on 11 May 2012. Its main provisions:

- inserted a separate youth chapter and a separate budget allocation for youth;
- restored a list of six academic institutions active in the field of European integration studies that had received operational grants under the Jean Monnet strand of the Lifelong Learning Programme;
- rejected the proposal to set up a single coordinating National Agency in each Member State in favour of Member States having one or more National Authorities and National Agencies;
- inserted minimum budget allocations for each educational sector into the text;
- left open the overall programme budget, the breakdown of this budget between the sectors, the level of minimum allocations, and the loan guarantee scheme.

The EP rapporteur presented her draft report on 9 July 2012: 1,057 amendments were tabled. The Committee voted on 27 November 2012. Its main changes to the Commission proposal:

- accepted in whole, in part or in spirit a range of improvements suggested by the Council, especially a separate youth chapter with its own budget allocation;
- re-instated the well-established brand names Comenius, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus,

- Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig and Youth in Action (the Commission had proposed to drop these in favour of “Erasmus Schools”, “Erasmus Youth Participation”, etc);
- rejected the proposed programme name “Erasmus for all”, which was misleading about the content of the programme and the extent of access to mobility actions;
 - transformed the proposed specific objectives for education, training and youth into objectives for the programme as a whole and introduced additional specific objectives for each educational sector;
 - added further detail to key actions to make it clearer which activities in the various educational sectors would be eligible for funding;
 - maintained references to all sport activities initially proposed by the Commission, most importantly to support for non-profit European sport events;
 - moved the evaluation indicators for the programme proposed by the Commission to an Annex and made it possible to change these by delegated acts;
 - supported the student loan guarantee scheme and added an annex with details on the implementation of the scheme and social safeguards which financial intermediaries needed to offer to students;
 - set out clear budgetary allocations for education and training, youth, sport and Jean Monnet activities and included minimum allocations amounting to 83% for the various educational sectors.

The agreement

On 18 December 2012, the Committee appointed a negotiating team (the chair, rapporteur and shadows) with the adopted report as its negotiating mandate. Trilogues were held with the Council (under the Irish presidency) and Commission on 19 February, 11 March, 19 March, 23 April, 14 May and 17 June and were concluded on 26 June when COREPER confirmed the result of the negotiations.

The key points of the agreement reached are:

- Erasmus+ as the title of the new programme. Members believe that this title is highly recognisable, and simple to understand and translate. Furthermore, it highlights the Erasmus action as the central mobility sub-programme, while indicating that the programme contains more than simply a higher education mobility action. Finally, it points to the expanded scope (youth, sport, external cooperation programmes) and ambition of the programme (matched by a much bigger budget).
- Retention of well-established brand names (Comenius, Leonardo, etc) for the individual sub-programmes and provision of additional detail about the key actions in education, training and youth to make clear which activities will be eligible for

support.

- Up to 10% of the budget allocation set aside for sports will be available to support non-profit European sport events.
- Programme indicators are set out in an Annex, rather than being developed separately by the programme committee.
- Specific budgetary allocations for education and training (77.5%), youth (10%), Jean Monnet (1.9%), sport (1.8%), operating grants to the National Agencies (3.4%) and administrative expenditure (1.9%). Within the allocation for education and training, 85% of the budget is allocated to the educational sectors (43% for higher education, 22% for vocational education and training, 15% for school education and 5% for adult learning). The margin of flexibility for the individual sectors is restricted to 5% of each of the allocated amounts.
- The share of the overall programme budget allocated to the Student Loan Guarantee Facility will be 3.5% (the Parliament had pressed for 5%: Council had wished to cap this at 2%). The Commission will provide a detailed report on the effects of the facility on beneficiaries and higher education systems by the end of 2017.
- The overall programme budget formed part of the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework for 2014 to 2020. While the Commission had initially proposed a budget of EUR 17.299 billion, this amount was reduced in the course of the negotiations on the MFF to EUR 13.010 billion in Heading 1a plus an as yet unspecified additional sum (specifically for cooperation actions with third countries) in Heading 4. Both the proposal and the subsequent negotiations on the financial envelope were based on 2011 prices. In current prices, the total financial envelope amounts to approximately EUR 14.7 billion.

Conclusion

The future programme will be a sensible consolidation of the current range of separate programmes while maintaining the individual brand identities of the various sectors. The overall programme budget is a big increase on the current level of EU support for programmes in these areas and is a good outcome in difficult economic circumstances. The budget breakdown reflects the relative weight of the sectors concerned, while the student loan facility offers the promise of leverage of limited funds. User-friendly brand names are retained and the programme's clients are provided with sufficient detail to make clear which activities are eligible for support.

In short, the overall agreement is a good compromise and a clear and substantial improvement on the Commission's initial proposal. Prolongation of the legislative procedure would delay the launch of the new programme by at least a year without the prospect of any compensating further improvements to the text. The negotiating team therefore recommends the plenary to confirm without amendment the agreement reached.

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