Committee on Culture and Education

2023/2002(INI)

27.9.2023

DRAFT REPORT

on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027
(2023/2002(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Milan Zver

CONTENTS

Page

EN

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS

1. Introduction

The objectives of this implementation report are to assess and evaluate the execution of the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2012-2027, in addition to identifying good practices and addressing any challenges in the programme;

This interim evaluation will assess the overall effectiveness and performance of the programme, including new initiatives and the delivery of inclusion and simplification measures;

The Rapporteur has gathered information and drafted this implementation report following intensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. The findings primarily rest on the following written sources:

• The results of a survey issued to Erasmus+ National Agencies (NAs) from the countries who can participate in the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme.

• The results of a survey issued to a wider set of stakeholders who are involved in the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme;

In addition, the Rapporteur also availed of the studies evaluating the early implementation of the programme that were commissioned by the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies and the European Parliamentary Research Service;

In addition to the above-mentioned surveys and studies, meetings of Shadow Rapporteurs with NAs and stakeholders from pan-European organisations were organised in June and July 2023 to discuss the programme's implementation;

The Rapporteur has been in regular bilateral contact with a large number of stakeholders from all the programme's sectors to gather additional information. He also met with representatives of the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Finally, the Rapporteur also considered key Commission documents, including the annual work programmes for the implementation of Erasmus+.

Despite all efforts to collect the relevant information, undertaken with the support of the EP administration, the Rapporteur is well aware that he could not carry out a fully-fledged quantitative and qualitative assessment of Erasmus+ after less than three years of programme implementation. Additional information needs to be assimilated during the remaining programme period in order to acquire a full picture. This will be indispensable when evaluating the final impact of Erasmus+ 2021-2027;

Accordingly, this implementation report intends to provide an overview of the programme's implementation over the first two and a half years of its existence. It illustrates the opportunities and the main challenges and provides suggestions for improvement for the remaining four and a half years of the programme's life span. The conclusions and

EN

recommendations should feed into the European Commission's mid-term evaluation report, due by the end of 2024. The report also provides some ideas for the design of the future programme period;

2. Origin and structure of the programme

The original Erasmus programme was an international student exchange programme that has been in existence since 1987, supporting education and training. It underwent several iterations, with each phase building upon the successes and lessons of the previous ones. During the programming period 2014-2020, Erasmus became a central component of the new Erasmus+ programme;

The Erasmus+ programme encompasses various sectors in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, and it promotes international cooperation and mobility through different key actions and funding mechanisms. It also supports initiatives such as European Universities, Centres of Vocational Excellence, DiscoverEU and the European Student Card initiative;

It provides young people – mostly students, pupils and apprentices – with various opportunities to study, train and work abroad; there are also opportunities for adult learners and teaching staff;

While the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 has maintained the same structure as its predecessor, it has strengthened its priorities in four areas: i) inclusion and diversity; ii) digital transformation; iii) environment and the fight against climate change; and iv) participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement;

Overall, the programme's structure is designed to foster collaboration, mobility, innovation, and policy reform across the board. It has played a significant role in enhancing European cooperation and promoting international understanding through educational exchange and inter-cultural learning. As such, it is one of the EU's flagship programmes, and enjoys a high degree of recognition and popularity among citizens in Europe and further afield.

3. Main conclusions and recommendations

3.1. Preliminary remarks

The Erasmus+ programme for the years 2021 to 2027 aims to reach up to 12 million participants. It holds significant importance as a key instrument to build a European Education Area and support the implementation of the European strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond. Its underlying sectoral agendas advance youth policy cooperation under the Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and develop the European dimension in sport;

The beginning of the current programme proved difficult, starting with a delay in the approval of the Multiannual Financial Framework and, consequently, the Erasmus+ Regulation itself. This was followed by the COVID-19 outbreak and an overall difficult economic situation aggravated by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, causing also high inflation rates across Europe. All this brought unprecedented challenges to the activities falling under Erasmus+. A general sentiment of the institutions involved in the implementation of Erasmus+ centres on the lack of flexibility illustrated during the COVID-19 crisis, in

particular by EACEA. While the measures of the European Commission and EACEA to adapt to the Ukrainian crisis are appreciated, many institutions expressed a clear viewpoint that more could have been done, and that national funding sources were more easily available than funding received under Erasmus+.

3.2. Size and outreach of the programme

The interest in the programme is very high and is currently at the same level as before the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of adult education, the demand for mobility and cooperation activities is much higher than the opportunities available;

It was difficult to implement mobility actions during COVID-19, thus the first year, 2021, saw necessary adjustments by reducing funding for mobility (KA1) and increasing funding for cooperation and innovation partnerships (KA2). It is important that Erasmus+ was not suspended or ceased during the pandemic;

Even during the pandemic, however, physical mobility activities still took place to a considerable degree. The Commission and National Agencies allowed more flexibility; learners and teaching staff were also willing to change their initial plans, and although postponed, they continued to travel. This was accompanied by an extension of virtual and blended learning (eLearning/distance learning), and the building of an infrastructure for digitalised learning opportunities –   something that might have taken much longer to achieve without the pandemic;

The mobility of adult learners, as a new opportunity, is not sufficiently well advertised yet, and the uptake is relatively low. Numbers, however, have increased from 2022 to 2023 and demand in 2024 is expected to match the opportunities;

Youth participation activities seem to attract a lot of interest. Barriers to participate, however, continue to be considerably high, considering the combination of intricate administration and application processes for small-sized applicant organisations and the inability of informal youth groups to apply;

At the same time, the results of the consultations for this report underline that Erasmus+ has indeed become very popular and undoubtedly one of the most successful European brands.

3.3. Recognition and Transferability of Credits

According to a survey of the Erasmus Student Network , almost a third of respondents reported they did not receive full credit recognition, which is far from the objectives laid out in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education. The Rapporteur, therefore, asks the Commission to work towards greater recognition of credits earned during mobility periods, making it easier for students to transfer credits between institutions and ensuring the academic value of their experiences. In addition, the feasibility and need for a 'Joint European Degree' should be explored.

3.4. Main features and structure

EN

The current programme is based on the same approach as the previous programme of clustering activities under Key Actions (KA 1 Learning Mobility of Individuals, KA2 - Cooperation among organisations and institutions, KA3 – Support to policy development and cooperation) plus Jean Monnet Actions. The KA approach now applies to sport as well, unlike the previous programme. The three key actions of the Erasmus+ programme have been well established and are accepted by the various communities in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport.

3.5. Programme Priorities and Impact

Individual mobility continues to be a central component of Erasmus+. While mobility actions enjoy high popularity and receive positive feedback on most aspects, there is room for improvement when it comes to clarity of funding rules and enhancement of programme management, especially via digital tools. Changes to the grant agreement should be a priority in the second phase of the programme, in order to ensure that all participants receive their grants before their mobility commences. Currently, Erasmus grants do not completely meet the additional costs of studying abroad. Funding for education within the Multiannual Financial Framework should increase so that it is possible to attain the set goal of wide access to high-quality mobility and keep up with the increases in actual mobility costs. In addition, DiscoverEU has become a well-established, easy-to-access activity, which is highly sought after by young people;

In terms of outreach towards the wider public in Europe, learning mobility is the most effective activity when we consider the numbers of individuals. This also applies to value-for-money. Small-scale partnerships also reach out to many individual participants. This becomes evident when looking at project reports and listening to the feedback of project promoters;

At first glance, a programme set-up with a few key actions seems simple and easy-to-understand. All actions, however, consist of sub-actions with a lot of variety within each one. This makes the programme relatively complex and difficult for target groups to understand. It also makes the programme's administration challenging;

Inclusion and Diversity:
Erasmus+ places a strong emphasis on promoting inclusion, diversity, and equal opportunities for all participants, to overcome any barriers related to their background, socio-economic status, abilities, or other characteristics. Projects and activities are encouraged to address barriers to participation and promote social cohesion;

The single biggest barrier to achieving inclusion is the insufficient level of grants provided. Strategies need to be further developed to ensure that underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities and those coming from marginalised communities, have effective access to Erasmus+ opportunities;

The European Parliament considers inclusion as central; it focuses especially on the support provided to disadvantaged groups to facilitate their participation. Parliament requests specific information on the socio-economic background of participants and the financial impact of disabilities. At present, this data is not available due to a lack of properly functioning IT tools, in addition to the fact that it is still too early to have completed projects;

Green and Digital Transitions:
Erasmus+ has a strong and legitimate focus on physical mobility, which needs to be balanced with the mitigation of climate change. It is clear that steps have been taken to increase the amount of green travel and higher rates are available for more environmentally friendly ways of travelling;

The Rapporteur welcomes the efforts dedicated to bring about a digital transformation, in particular by stepping up efforts to foster 'Erasmus without papers' and the 'European Student Card'. Linking programme management and the participation of individuals to the eID initiative is particularly important. Implementation, however, is not happening at the initial planned speed. The Rapporteur requests the Commission to enhance digital processes, procedures and tools and to improve the interoperability between the different tools that are available;

Promoting Young People's Participation and Democratic Values:
Erasmus+ aims to empower young people to engage actively in their communities, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute towards building a strong sense of democratic values and active citizenship. Projects are encouraged to foster critical thinking, media literacy, and youth participation in democratic processes;

Research shows that participation in Erasmus+ increases a better understanding and support of European values. According to a study by the ESN, the majority of students identify more as global citizens and with the EU following their Erasmus+ experience without losing identification with their countries and regions. Civic engagement and participation in democratic life is one of the new priorities of the programme, as KA2 will devote greater attention to 'common values, civic engagement and participation', but progress has yet to become evident. Overall, Erasmus+ actions in the field of citizenship education are considerably lacking in systemic impact. Making civic engagement a priority in learning mobility experiences in Higher Education would contribute to the achievement of objectives laid out in the European Strategy for Universities. It would also constitute an integral part of the horizontal priorities of inclusion and participation in democratic life of the programme. Erasmus+ should also promote the 2024 European elections and motivate participation.

3.6. Budget

The estimated overall budget available for 2021-2027 is EUR 26.51 billion, made up of EUR 24.57 billion at current prices and a 'top-up' of EUR 1.938 billion in current prices from the Commission's revenues from fines. Most of the budget (up to 83 %) is earmarked for education and training. Compared to the previous programme, the budget for Erasmus+ has almost doubled, which is undoubtedly a welcome development, despite falling short of the tripling originally requested by the European Parliament. The doubling of the budget, however, has coincided with a surging inflation;

The Rapporteur suggests that the annual budget allocations should have been distributed more evenly over the programme years, in particular for well-established activities;

It can also be observed that during the current programming period, the number of youth organisations receiving Erasmus+ centralised grants managed directly by EACEA has decreased;

It should be noted that the Sport sector has very limited funds, which constrains the scope for mobility, the development of innovation and transnational cooperation. Synergies with the EU4Health programme 2021-2027 also need to be ensured;

The budget available for actions in adult learning and education (ALE) is becoming increasingly unpredictable. The current total amount and the share it represents, 5.8 % of the total budget for education and training, are not sufficient to achieve a participation of 60 % of adults in ALE by 2030. This is within a background of a lack of structural funding for ALE at national and regional levels in Europe, leading to a high degree of dependence on EU project funding.

3.7. Programme Administration

To address past criticism that the programme is excessively bureaucratic, Erasmus+ 2021-2027 introduces a range of simplification measures, such as two-stage proposals, lump sums and small-scale partnerships, all of which have been welcomed by stakeholders. There has been a marked effort to provide clarity about the aims of calls and on the communication of these calls;

From the perspective of the beneficiaries and the National Agencies, there are, however, a number of shortcomings. Examples are the cumbersome registration process, application forms and other processes that require many details, which are hard for smaller entities and individuals to deliver without specific support;

Furthermore, the lack of support or guidance from the central level to the NAs hampers evaluation and reporting processes and leads to inconsistencies between NAs. Over and above, IT tools are an issue;

The 'continuous reporting' request is very cumbersome for beneficiaries and takes away valuable time from project implementation. This requirement should be reconsidered in the remaining programming period and the future programme;

The Rapporteur, therefore, strongly recommends an easing of administrative requirements at all levels and stages, including the application phase. Clearly, the current situation prevents small beneficiaries from applying for Key Action (KA) 1, e.g. youth exchanges, as well as KA2 small-scale partnerships, which are specifically intended for smaller organisations;

IT Issues:
Despite the centrality of the digitalisation priority in the programme, the slow advancement of digital tools foreseen to support the programme's implementation is falling short of all expectations, negatively affecting the participation and the implementation of the programme. It is also hindering necessary data collection and monitoring, and ultimately poses a high reputational risk to the overall image of the programme;

The Rapporteur strongly urges the Commission to ensure that existing digital tools and systems used for the programme's management and implementation are user-friendly. These should be working properly and to their full extent. He calls on the Commission to tackle, without delay, the serious persistent issues relating to the Erasmus+ IT tools and to test them on a sufficiently large scale before their further implementation. He also notes that there are similar issues with IT tools in other EU-funded programmes, including the European

Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe.

3.8. Cooperation and Synergies

The EU has been actively working to strengthen cooperation and creating synergies between Erasmus+ and other EU initiatives, programmes, and funding instruments. These efforts aim at maximising the impact and effectiveness of EU investments in education, training, youth, research, innovation, and regional development. There is, however, considerable room for improvement and the inter-operability of programmes needs to be facilitated both at national and central (EC) level. There is also a need to improve the link between centralised and decentralised actions within the programme.

3.9. Cooperation between EC, Executive Agency (EACEA) and National Agencies

EACEA is responsible for most of the centralised administration. In order to implement projects (e.g., European Universities Alliances), good communication and coordination between EACEA and NAs is required. So far, this is not the case. In 2023, EACEA and NAs signed a Memorandum of Understanding, but this has yet to lead to some improvement. More coordination across the NAs, driven and monitored by the EC, would improve consistency in the interpretation of rules across NAs and help improve the standardisation and quality of evaluations. The EC should ensure NAs and their evaluators have a clear understanding of the difference between project grants and operating grants. It is evident that the capacity-building objective of operating grants that differentiates them from project grants is not well understood.

3.10. European Universities initiative

The centrality of the European Universities initiative has facilitated further attention and dialogue at national and institutional levels on removing the remaining obstacles to international cooperation in higher education. Some Member States have already enacted long-awaited legislative changes that will be beneficial not only to the alliances participating in the initiative, but also to other forms of cooperation, and higher education institutions outside existing Alliances. Nonetheless, a fast track to funding for existing Alliances should be avoided to ensure a fair and equitable system to all;

The further development of the European Universities should be thoroughly informed by the upcoming separate evaluation of the initiative, and based on a sound monitoring framework, to build on what has worked well, in addition to taking stock of what has not worked well. A reconsideration and recalibration of the multiplying overall objectives will be required;

European Universities should be further supported and developed under Erasmus+. This should not, however, be at the expense of other forms of cooperation that are equally vital to support targeted innovation and the development of practical solutions, and which support wider participation of higher education institutions in Erasmus+.

4. Conclusion

EN

The strengths of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 include its overarching position as a programme, which has stood the test of time (more than 35 years, if we count Erasmus) and now has become a globally recognised brand. Accordingly, the Rapporteur insists that the visual branding of Erasmus+ has to maintain a clear link with the EU;
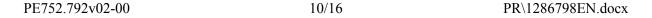
The benefits of Erasmus+ extend far beyond formal education. Overall, participating in the programme offers numerous benefits, from personal growth and cultural enrichment to enhanced employability, improved rounded education, and a more interconnected and inclusive Europe. The programme enables participants to establish networks and form lasting friendships with peers outside their immediate circle;

It is clear that the great potential of Erasmus+ requires sufficient funding in the future to continue with its far-reaching impact on individuals and societies across Europe and beyond;

Results from Parliament's evaluation suggest that it is essential for the future success of the programme that technical issues do not undermine its effectiveness and that further simplification of the programme is urgently required;

The upcoming MFF mid-term evaluation is due to be finalised by the end of 2024 and is expected to deliver further insights into the achievements and shortcomings of the current programme;

First and foremost, Erasmus+ needs to be a programme that is close to the people and accessible to all.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027
(2023/2002(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013[1],

– having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps[2],

– having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach[3],

– having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 – micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment[4],

– having regard to its resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020[5],

– having regard to the study of 11 September 2023 conducted for its Committee on Culture and Education entitled 'EU funding programmes 2021-2027 in culture, media, education, youth and sports: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives – Erasmus+',

– having regard to the study of 20 July 2023 conducted for its Committee on Culture and Education entitled 'Early implementation of four 2021-2027 EU programmes: Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (Strand 3)',

– having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure and Article 1(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education,

A. whereas Erasmus+ ('the programme') is an EU flagship programme supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond;

---

[1] OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.
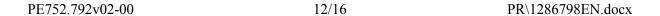[2] OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 2.
[3] OJ C 205, 20.5.2022, p. 17.
[4] OJ C 479, 16.12.2022, p. 65.
[5] OJ C 32, 27.1.2023, p. 58.

EN

B.   whereas the programme is crucial in fostering a European sense of belonging;

C.   whereas the 2021-2027 programme has an estimated overall budget of EUR 26.2 billion and places a strong focus on inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life;

D.   whereas the programme's objectives are being pursued through three key actions (KAs), namely 'Learning mobility of individuals' (KA1), 'Cooperation among organisations and institutions' (KA2) and 'Support to policy development and cooperation' (KA3);

E.   whereas demand for the programme largely exceeds the available financial resources, negatively affecting participation and the number of projects that can be funded;

F.   whereas rising costs of living, high inflation rates and other challenges are putting additional pressure on the programme's budget;

State of affairs and successes

1.   Highlights that lifelong learning, better inclusion of people with fewer opportunities, and the removal of barriers to mobility, such as the lack of automatic recognition of qualifications and financial barriers, are key priorities;

2.   Acknowledges that the existing structure works well, successfully bringing together formerly separate programmes, thus providing a good funding ecosystem;

3.   Acknowledges the importance of a sufficient variety of actions rather than a one-size-fits-all approach;

4.   Values the 'learning community' that Erasmus+ has managed to create, made up of participants, beneficiaries, stakeholders, National Agencies (NAs) and EU institutions;

5.   Welcomes the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the European Education and Culture Executive Agency and NAs; highlights the importance of good communication between these two parties;

6.   Points out that learning mobility and small-scale partnerships have proven to be highly effective activities to reach out to the wider public across Europe, providing excellent value for money considering the number of individual participants;

7.   Is aware that the programme's horizontal priorities have been very well received by different sectors and stakeholders;

8.   Applauds the NAs that have drawn up national plans for inclusion and diversity, taking into account the barriers for inclusion and diversity;

9.   Welcomes the ambition to bring about a digital transformation of the programme;

10.   Appreciates the steps being taken to increase the amount of green travel and the higher rates being paid for more environmentally friendly ways of travelling;

11.   Recognises that the new flagship actions have demonstrated their added value;

12. Acknowledges the warm welcome of the European Universities initiative by higher education institutions and its centrality in facilitating efforts to remove obstacles to international cooperation in higher education;

13. Notes that DiscoverEU, which was initiated by Parliament, has become a well-established, popular and easy-to-access informal learning activity;

14. Recalls that the 2021-2022 budget absorption was almost 100 % despite a delayed start to the programme;

15. Notes the necessary adjustments owing to the pandemic, with a temporary reduction in funding for mobility and increased funding for cooperation and innovation partnerships;

16. Appreciates the swift reaction and enhanced flexibility of the programme to support Ukrainian students, teachers and educators;

17. Notes that some processes for applying have improved, by being made simpler and more efficient;

18. Highlights the very low error rates in comparison with other EU funding programmes, especially considering the programme's complexity;
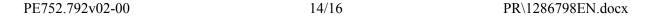
Challenges and problems

19. Calls on the Commission to remove any financial and administrative barriers in order to achieve a truly inclusive programme embracing diversity;

20. Points out that insufficient grants to cover the costs of mobility and delays in payments are the biggest deterrents to participants in mobility projects;

21. Regrets the length of time required to apply for Erasmus+ funding and that applicants often cannot apply without external support; requests that proportionate registration and application processes be devised, both in terms of the length of documents and the comprehensibility of the language used therein;

22. Regrets the fact that complicated processes considerably hinder the participation of small-scale organisations in the school and youth sectors;

23. Is concerned by the fact that almost a third of students in higher education mobility reported that they did not receive full credit recognition, which is far from the objectives laid down in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education;

24. Is disappointed by the low uptake of adult learning and education activities, given its importance;

25. Calls on the Commission to reconsider its adult learning strategy in collaboration with NAs and relevant stakeholders, given the target of 60 % of adults participating in adult learning and education by 2030;

26. Welcomes the lump sum approach being applied in cooperation projects, as many beneficiaries acknowledge it as an effective simplification measure; notes, however, that the requirement of 'continuous reporting' can be a burden, especially for smaller

organisations;

27. Notes that the Erasmus+ sport sector has very limited funds in some areas, thus limiting its scope;

28. Deeply regrets the slow and incomplete development of the IT infrastructure and the improper functioning of IT tools such as the Beneficiary and Project Management modules, which increases the workload of all those involved in the programme's implementation, discourages the participation of newcomers and undermines the programme's ambition to widen participation; notes that similar issues exist with IT tools in other EU-funded programmes, including the European Solidarity Corps;

29. Deplores the fact that IT issues also severely affect data availability, which is essential for the ongoing mid-term review, thus necessitating a much more onerous evaluation methodology and exacerbating the administrative burden;

30. Calls on the Commission to correct the limited usability of the portal for funding and tender opportunities so that data can be downloaded by stakeholders to analyse the characteristics of successful projects in terms of budget and per participating country and beneficiary and project type;

31. Points out the need to take the impact of AI seriously, since it has already facilitated fraudulent actors, but could also ease the workload of NAs and improve data collection;

32. Asks that closer attention be paid to issues concerning the international dimension of the programme such as data protection rules for non-EU countries, the impact of geopolitical issues and visa-related issues;

33. Expects the memorandum of understanding between the European Education and Culture Executive Agency and NAs to produce tangible improvements, leading to the exchange of good practices and the clarification of roles and responsibilities to achieve consistency, coherence and effective communication by NAs;

34. Calls for an improvement in the quality of evaluations of operating grants;

Improving the current and designing the future Erasmus+ programme

35. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, national authorities and NAs to keep Erasmus+ close to the people and ensure it remains a bottom-up 'citizens' programme' offering quality education and mobility opportunities for learners of all ages;

36. Emphasises that the overarching purpose of Erasmus+ is broad and goes beyond labour-market needs;

37. Calls on the Commission to foster the role of Erasmus+ in increasing civic engagement and a better understanding of and support for European values, and to turn the programme into a true promoter of European democracy;

38. Asks that the programme be simplified at all levels, including by assessing whether existing (sub-)actions can be merged, and that this EU flagship programme not be overloaded with new tasks and initiatives that dilute its core objective;

EN

39. Calls for centralised and decentralised actions to be better linked and to enhance the use of flexible funding instruments such as micro-grants;

40. Requests concrete measures to break down existing silos in the programme structure so that different educational areas and actors are not kept distinct from each other;

41. Calls for a better balance between quantitative (the number of beneficiaries and supported projects) and qualitative objectives within the programme, and emphasises that improving the quality of education must continue to be a focus of Erasmus+;

42. Calls for wider use of virtual and blended learning and the building of infrastructure for digitalised learning opportunities;

43. Asks for eTwinning to be integrated fully and seamlessly into Erasmus+;

44. Urges the Commission to step up efforts on the programme's digital transformation, in particular on achieving an 'Erasmus Without Paper' and establishing the 'European Student Card', following the initial planning;

45. Asks the Commission to assess options for a more integrated approach towards youth activities across EU programmes;

46. Calls on the Commission to provide for necessary programme flexibility in the design of the next generation of Erasmus+, while ensuring uniformity and proper scrutiny of the programme, including by Parliament;

47. Asks the Commission to re-evaluate the need for increased visibility of the direct link between the EU and Erasmus+ as its flagship programme in order to increase awareness of that link among current and future beneficiaries;

48. Insists on NAs and beneficiaries, including young people, and Parliament to be actively involved in the co-creation process of the next generation of Erasmus+;

49. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that synergies between Erasmus+ and other programmes such as Horizon Europe or the European Social Fund Plus are fully exploited, and that the programme is better connected with other EU policies such as the 2020-2025 anti-racism action plan;

50. Emphasises that issues with the IT infrastructure similar to those experienced in the current programme period are unacceptable, and expects the IT infrastructure of the next Erasmus+ generation to be fully operational from day one;

51. Calls for more gradual and predictable budgetary increases in the next multiannual financial framework programming period, and insists that, from the very beginning in 2028, funding levels must not be less than those of the last year of the current programme (2027) in order to ensure the smooth continuity and stability of the programme's actions and activities;

52. Declares its determination to ensure a substantial increase in the Erasmus+ budget in the 2028-2033 programming period;

°

EN

°   °

53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

EN