

## Norway's position paper on the next Erasmus+ programme (2028-2034)

Norway welcomes the European Commission's proposal for a new Erasmus+ programme. The programme is recognisable, and builds on the success of the current programme, which we greatly appreciate. We are pleased to see the increased focus on skills and the merger with the European Solidarity Corps. Norway also finds the emphasis on preparedness and resilience important. However, even with its close alignment to overarching political objectives, it is important to maintain the core identity of Erasmus+ as a learning programme.

Norway has participated in the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors for over 30 years, and we greatly value our participation. As such, Norway wishes to contribute with our input in the development of the next programme.

### Main messages:

- **Flexibility should not come at the cost of the predictability for beneficiaries.**
- **Provisions on budget distributions between fields and management modes should be included.**
- **A specific reference to the EEA Agreement in the regulation would be welcomed, as Norway's association to Erasmus+ is based on the EEA Agreement.**
- **The cost-benefit ratio of Erasmus+ scholarships should be further discussed. Scholarships should complement – rather than potentially come at the expense of – mobility and cooperation partnerships.**
- **The Erasmus+ Committee should be preserved.**

### Stability and predictability

The proposal opens for more flexibility, which can be a strength and allow for strategic adjustments within the programme period. However, **flexibility and targeted policy calls must not come at the cost of the predictability for beneficiaries and newcomers.** A stable framework makes it possible for applicants to plan participation strategically and in a long-term perspective.

Norway is in favour of **including an indicative budget distribution** to ensure sufficient predictability for the different sectors. Moreover, we would stress that the programme should **keep the current budget distribution between direct and indirect management.** The National Agencies are equipped to understand the sectors, recruit newcomers, validate organisations, follow up beneficiaries and monitor projects in a way that a centralised structure cannot.

Simplification and proportionality should remain a guiding principle when it comes to administrative requirements and procedures. However, whilst Norway **welcomes certain steps towards streamlining actions across sectors**, we find it essential that the programme is designed with an understanding that individual sectors differ in terms of role, structure, target groups, and needs. Each sector operates under distinct conditions and priorities. To ensure that the programme is relevant and effective, it must **accommodate these sectoral differences.**

Furthermore, the increased emphasis on the programme's contribution to several overarching political objectives demonstrates the programme's broad relevance. However, it is **essential that the actions are designed in such a way that the respective sectors can easily identify their contribution towards the goals.**

Norway is pleased to see that the international dimension is included in the proposal. This increases the attractiveness of education, training and youth work in Europe, which is more important than ever given the geopolitical context. In the next programme, **we recommend that all sectors have an international opening.**

Norway's association to the Erasmus+ programme is based on the EEA Agreement, which foresees full access to all parts of the programme for participants from the EEA EFTA States. We would welcome **a specific reference to the EEA Agreement in the regulation**, as this would provide more legal clarity and ensure predictability as regards the rights of the EEA EFTA States.

### Skills, scholarships and synergies

Norway welcomes the focus on skills in the proposal, which demonstrates **the central role Erasmus+ can play in addressing Europe's challenges ahead**. Covering all levels of education and training, as well as informal learning and volunteering, Erasmus+ is in a unique position to contribute to the priorities set out in the Union of Skills communication. Still, it remains **key to preserve the core of Erasmus+ as a learning programme**.

One of the novelties in the Commission's proposal is scholarships incentivising students to pursue studies in strategic educational fields. Norway welcomes the initiative to explore how Erasmus+ can contribute to developing and retaining skills and talents in Europe, and to strengthen strategic fields. However, to deliver sustainable impact, scholarships should serve as **a mechanism to further foster collaboration among educational institutions, enabling them to offer exceptional and attractive learning opportunities, and contributing to Europe's competitiveness**.

Norway emphasises that strategic educational fields is relevant to all levels of education. We encourage reflection upon **how to better accommodate higher vocational education and training (HNET)** in the next Erasmus+ programme, including in actions such as scholarships in strategic educational fields. This sector provides targeted practical education that supports lifelong learning, and plays a vital role in developing skills across key areas.

Moreover, Erasmus+ scholarships would require a considerable budget. Norway is concerned that funding scholarships for a limited number of individuals could potentially lead to reduced mobility opportunities for a broader group of participants, including those with fewer opportunities. Additionally, Norway remains concerned about limited funding for decentralised cooperation partnerships. Thus, we encourage further dialogue to **identify the most effective measures for the desired impact, whilst preserving sufficient funding for core activities of Erasmus+**.

Norway **supports the new provisions on synergies with other EU programmes** concerning funding, including the possibility to apply a single set of rules. However, synergies should not only be viewed in terms of funding, but also on the added value of combining different programmes to achieve interrelated goals. It remains key that **EEA EFTA States fully associated to Erasmus+ are not excluded from activities implemented in synergy with other programmes**.

### Comitology

The Erasmus+ Committee plays an important role in setting out annual priorities, concrete actions and other details of programme implementation. Norway **calls for the continuation of the Erasmus+ Committee**, as it creates a space for the Commission to present its suggestions, and for all countries financially contributing to and participating in the programme to have a say, whilst maintaining the right of Member States to decide. **The EEA EFTA States should be represented in the programme committee, in line with the terms of the EEA agreement**.

### Closing remark

Erasmus+ has developed into a robust and well-functioning funding ecosystem, which has extensive added value at both European and national level. Norway is therefore committed to contribute with our input in the shaping of the next programme period. We hope this position paper is a useful contribution, and we look forward to the coming discussions.