

Norway's Preliminary Position on the future European Union programme for Education and Training, from 2021

Introduction

Norway is a committed partner in the European education cooperation, and we strongly support the continuation of the program cooperation after 2020.

As an EEA EFTA country with 25 years of participation in the European programme for education, Norway takes a strong interest in contributing to the process leading up to the next program. This paper outlines Norway's preliminary positions. We aim at making further contributions to the discussions on thematic priorities, instruments and partnerships, later in the process. These positions are based on the present programme. We would however be prepared to adjust our position if the framework of the programme is substantially changed, e.g. Brexit.

Overall Priorities

- A continuation of the current structure of the programme, merging previous sub-programmes, connecting the areas of education, training and youth and dividing the programme into key actions. The introduction of Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances and Key Action 3 (policy level) has been successful. These are actions that provide great impact compared to the costs they incur. In order for applicants, beneficiaries and National Agencies to make full use of the new programme from day one, there should be stability and consistency in the fundamental structure and rules of the programme.
- Continued focus on European added value.
- Mobility, based on institutional cooperation, should remain the core activity of Erasmus+.
- The new framework programme for education should continue to support the pan-European Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area
- The new education and training programme should highlight the links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals when it comes to equal opportunities, access to quality education, and lifelong learning

Centralised actions

- The next programme for education and training should remain a largely decentralized programme.
- Strategic partnerships should remain decentralised actions in order to ensure that all beneficiaries, including newcomers and smaller organisations such as schools, SMEs and NGOs can access and gain experience in the programme. Furthermore, the budget for strategic partnerships in higher education needs to

increase to maintain interest in the action, and to make a real contribution to innovation in higher education.

- Norway requests more transparency and better access to information regarding centralised actions. Improving the transparency and providing access for national authorities and agencies to more detailed information will increase the number of good applicants for Erasmus+ centralised actions. If the Commission accommodates National Agencies access to similar information and a similar role as for Horizon 2020, we would expect more transparency, coherence, and attractiveness of participation in Erasmus+.
- Knowledge Alliances should remain within the framework of the education programme. There is a great interest among key stakeholders in pursuing the objectives of this action, however, the interest is curbed by the limited availability of the action, as well as insufficient guidance at the national level due to the lack of transparency and involvement of NAs.

Better links between the future European Programmes for Education, Research and Innovation

- We will support measures which will better link the future programmes on research, innovation and education. Interplay and synergies in the whole knowledge triangle should be strengthened in the next programme period on the basis of the new programs in research, innovation and education.
- There should be a special focus on entrepreneurship in all sectors.
- Norway has established several international cooperation programs, supporting the development of institutional partnerships between Norwegian institutions and foreign institutions. Special emphasis is placed on integrating higher education and research, and may include business partners. We believe that our experiences with these partnership programs could inspire better links between education, research and innovation on the European level.

International dimension

- We support the merging and inclusion of the international programmes into Erasmus+.
- In the next programme period, efforts should be made to develop more flexibility and predictability within the action.
- The focus should be on capacity building at the higher education institutions and on national policy development.
- We support continued assistance to countries outside Europe in implementing UNESCO's Regional Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications.

Administrative issues

- Increase budget flexibility to enable the National Agencies to transfer more funds between the different sectors and instruments.
- More budget predictability from year to year and for the whole programme period.
- We appreciate the steps that have been taken by the Commission in order to simplify and streamline procedures across sectors. But we would like to urge the Commission to look even further at simplifications regarding applications, management and reporting, that would benefit the participants.
- Continue the development of existing ICT tools rather than introducing new ones.
- As the education and research programmes have overlapping target groups, guidelines and rules should be streamlined and more coherent. In many cases, Erasmus+ has overly prescriptive rules compared to Horizon 2020, making it less attractive to stakeholders, and thereby reducing the potential benefits of exploiting synergies.

Possible new features in the next programme

- The introduction of mobility for all pupils in upper secondary schools. Mobility is an important tool for internationalisation, and adding pupil mobility in upper secondary will likely also result in increased student mobility in higher education and improved language skills. Many upper secondary schools are combined academic and vocational schools, and would like to offer similar mobility opportunities for all their pupils.
- Establish European Centres of Excellence in higher education, or similar excellence in higher education initiatives, for instance in the Partnership Programme projects. The Centres for Excellence in Education Initiative (SFU) in Norway, could serve as model or source of inspiration.