



Report

Stakeholders' conference on the post-2027 Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programming period

18 February 2025

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On 18 February 2025, a stakeholders' conference was held to exchange and gather insights on the future programming period of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps post-2027. This meeting served as a platform for various stakeholders (national authorities, national agencies, umbrella organisations, programme beneficiaries and participants) to express their expectations, experiences, and recommendations for the enhancement of the programmes in the next EU

Political Messages

Ms Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen, the Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture opened the meeting and highlighted its purpose – to show the added value of what some call the ‘jewels in Europe’s crown’, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Later on, Ms Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, expressed her wish that the future Erasmus+ stays strong and becomes even stronger and more inclusive. The programme is a crucial part of Europe’s DNA, as it shapes the skills and competitiveness of our economies. Erasmus+ should be a vehicle for EU leadership in the world in the areas of education, training, youth and sport. Very important elements of the programme, such as the Universities Alliances and Centres for Vocational Excellence should continue to bring out benefits to European education systems.

Finally, Mr Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, committed to push for the strongest possible budget of the next generation of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. He announced the open public consultation that the European Commission had launched just a week before, which encompasses the education, training, youth and sport field. It is the way to deliver this message and ultimately make the programmes simpler and better for the beneficiaries.

Experiences and Expectations

Participants shared their various experiences with the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes have offered them, underscoring the importance of mobility, intercultural exchanges, and skills development. The programmes have taken individuals all over Europe and beyond, embedding a sense of European identity and cooperation. The audience expressed a desire for their ideas to be seriously considered, advocating for increased accessibility, simplified guidance, and constructive feedback integration in shaping the future of these initiatives.

Messages to the European Commission from the audience

Attendees emphasised the need for greater financial investment, simplified processes, enhanced inclusivity, and stronger collaboration with national authorities. They advocated for sustaining democracy, focusing on youth, and adopting greener travel initiatives. Recognising the current efforts, it was agreed that while the programmes have significantly helped to enhance skills and promote EU values, there is room for further improvement, particularly in strengthening the inclusion dimension and incorporating the green and digital dimensions in funded projects.

Panel discussions

A panel discussion with representatives from the European Commission, the European Disability Forum, an Erasmus+ National Agency and the Centre for European Volunteering discussed horizontal aspects of the current programme implementation.

Mr Michael Teutsch, Acting Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ in the European Commission highlighted that everybody must have access to the programme, thus for the future we need to attract even more the harder-to-reach audiences. A lot has been done in terms of simplification of the programmes so far through the accreditation systems and the wide use of lump sums, but there is more to be done.

Ms Loredana Dicsi, representing the European Disability Forum, pointed out that in terms of inclusivity of the programme, there is still room for improvement. She noted that if resources are not available, people with disabilities cannot simply go on a mobility experience, regardless of their desire to do so. If hosting organisations are not accredited to host people with disabilities, then it is difficult to get the resources needed to organise inclusive learning mobility activities.

Ms Lorraine Gilligan, Executive Director at Léargas (Erasmus+ National Agency in Ireland), pointed out to general strong results from participants in the current generation of the programme but challenges remain within the implementation of some horizontal priorities, for instance the digital transformation one. She underlined that the accreditation has been transformational, as it develops pathways and reflects them into the daily work of organisations. Microgrants should be explored to make the programme even more accessible, as applications are still quite difficult for some target audiences.

Ms Gabriella Civico, Director at the Centre for European Volunteering, pleaded for change of the European status of people involved in volunteering, as for instance disabled people lose their benefits when going abroad. She also pointed to a perceived lack of clarity of some horizontal priorities – if they concern the project objectives and/or methodology. Further simplification is needed to make the most out of the limited resources available.

Breakout sessions

The conference continued with a series of parallel workshops, discussing topic of common interest across the programme fields:

SKILLS AND COMPETITIVENESS

Discussions focused on assessing the strengths and weaknesses of current programmes in supporting skills and competitiveness, while exploring ways to align them with future priorities. Mobility was identified as crucial for skill acquisition across all sectors, requiring expanded opportunities for staff and learners and improved pre- and post-mobility support. The recognition of skills was also emphasised, as paramount to ensure that acquired competencies are more visible to employers and participants through better use of existing EU tools. A Life-Long Learning approach should be central, promoting continuous upskilling and reskilling from an early age. Additionally, programmes should enhance their relevance to labour market needs by strengthening cooperation with employers. Thematic calls under Key Action 2 were highlighted as a way to address evolving skills gaps effectively, while extracurricular activities and

community-business collaborations were recognised for their valuable contributions to skills development.

Key recommendations included expanding thematic calls under Key Action 2 through indirect management to ensure adaptability to changing European and national needs. Mobility should be a priority for all, reinforcing its role in skills development and making it more accessible. Additionally, activities outside formal education, such as extracurricular initiatives and local partnerships, should be further recognised and supported for their role in fostering skills. Overall, greater flexibility, enhanced skills intelligence at national level, and stronger integration of existing tools and initiatives, such as the Pact for Skills, were seen as essential for improving programme effectiveness in addressing future skills and competitiveness challenges.

INCLUSION AND OUTREACH TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

Discussions emphasised the need for a more inclusive Erasmus+ Charter, with dedicated funding for inclusive mobilities, increased flexibility, and a focus on diverse groups based on bottom-up needs. Organisations should develop individualised internationalisation strategies and have access to microgrants and an inclusion toolbox. Mental health support during mobility was highlighted as essential, requiring better preparation and onsite assistance. Capacity building should be strengthened across all fields by leveraging experienced beneficiaries as peer mentors to support new participants, particularly those with fewer opportunities. Expanding age eligibility, further simplifying programmes, and centralising application processes were suggested measures to encourage the participation of younger individuals, especially those under 18. Additionally, inclusion should be integrated into all projects, with efforts to diversify outreach and enhance funding for underrepresented groups.

Key recommendations for the plenary included providing every Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps grant with dedicated inclusion funding and implementing capacity-building initiatives. The design of programmes should be more inclusive by ensuring user-friendly applications, language accessibility, transparency on inclusive measures, and support for inclusion officers. A cross-sectoral approach to data collection, beginning at a young age, was seen as crucial for reaching groups facing multiple barriers and improving accessibility. Other suggested recommendations included harmonising the top-up system across sectors, ensuring later-stage application flexibility, and enhancing communication on available inclusion measures to increase participation among disadvantaged groups.

PARTICIPATION, CITIZENSHIP, EU VALUES, PREPAREDNESS

Discussions highlighted the challenge of addressing EU common values as a broad topic, which goes beyond participation, civic engagement, and citizenship. A longer-term and strategic approach to collaboration is necessary to ensure meaningful impact. Mobility alone is not enough to promote EU values or democracy; the role of both sending and hosting organisations is crucial. Innovation should be rewarded, and stronger connections should be fostered between national agencies, ministries, and beneficiaries. Microgrants with reduced administrative burdens were proposed to create a more inclusive programme, particularly with funding for participation support.

The plenary discussions emphasised the importance of sustainable engagement. Encouraging youth civic engagement from an early age is essential, extending beyond those already involved to a wider audience and providing more support for alumni structures. A local network approach, or a “village for common values,” was proposed, where experts in inclusion and mobility can offer

support. To foster collaboration, award and selection criteria should be adjusted to prioritise well-networked beneficiaries and innovative projects over simple mobility arrangements. Finally, making Jean Monnet actions for schools more accessible through decentralisation, simplifying the application and grant process, more targeted communication, and introducing a structured “menu of activities” across sectors were identified as key improvements.

GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITIONS

The discussions across the tables revolved around enhancing the programme's visibility and effectiveness by focusing on its two main priorities and embracing digital and green initiatives. Participants stressed the importance of crafting tailor-made actions aligned with specific sub-priorities and creating "Hubs" to showcase good practices, aiming to illuminate the tangible impacts of projects. To avoid redundancy in funding and bolster awareness, effective tools for compiling and promoting good practices in the two focus areas were deemed necessary. The discussions suggested a more inclusive and innovative digital approach, advocating for the development of digital skills among all participants, thereby integrating digitalisation into everyday life. A proposal to include digital training within all projects emerged, alongside a suggestion for flagship actions to strengthen digital dimensions and capacity building through fostering resource links and visibility. The need to target innovative themes, such as artificial intelligence and digital pedagogy, by involving education providers to enhance training quality and ethical AI usage, was also highlighted.

On the green priority, the conversation focused on defining it more clearly for stakeholders to ensure sustainable actions persist beyond individual project cycles. Participants suggested promoting sustainability education and good practices to help shift mindsets towards environmentally friendly behaviours. A significant point was to consider green travel as a default option, with allowances for exceptions to push for a mindset change and encourage investment in sustainable travel infrastructure such as rail. Some stakeholders proposed radical measures like ceasing funding for unsustainable travel. The plenary emphasised the need to refine the green priority and budget focus beyond green travel, fostering tailored sustainability education. In promoting digital competence, including digital training in all projects was one of the top ideas forwarded, reflecting a commitment to elevating digital skills and inclusivity as a standard component of the programme's initiatives.

SIMPLIFICATION AND COHERENCE

The discussions highlighted the need for structural modifications within the programme to enhance accessibility and efficiency, particularly for newcomers. Participants proposed dividing small-scale partnerships into two strands, targeting both newcomer and experienced organisations, to open more avenues for participation by new entrants. Simplifying application and reporting procedures by making them proportionate to the funding level and target groups was stressed as essential to alleviate administrative burdens. Enhancements to IT tools and the simplification of grant agreements were suggested to make them more user-friendly. A network of multipliers through municipalities was proposed to increase reach and engagement with potential new participants. Furthermore, recommendations were made for disseminating programme information in user-friendly formats, such as concise factsheets, information sessions, and robust human support, to improve programme understanding and appeal.

In line with increasing efficiency and inclusivity, discussions pointed towards broader implementation and harmonization of lump-sum funding across sectors, emphasising outcome-

focused project management. The need for streamlined rules with minimised data collection was underscored to boost efficiency and the inclusion of more organisations. Three key ideas emerged: the introduction of lump-sums across more actions, including transnational cooperation activities (TCA) and networking (NET); the establishment of a new action specifically designed to facilitate newcomers' entry into the programme; and matching the application and reporting load to the project's scale and grant size, to ensure a proportionate administrative effort relative to the project's expected impact and funding.

MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

The discussions highlighted the need for more flexible mobility formats, including simplified international opportunities, easier fund reallocation, and reduced paperwork. A key focus was on making mobility more inclusive and sustainable, with better support for blended activities and enhanced cooperation beyond Europe. Virtual mobility was debated, with calls for improved implementation guidance and incentives, while blended mobility would require clearer methodologies and better funding to maximise its qualitative impact. The Erasmus+ programme was emphasised as a tool for fostering European identity and inclusion, with a need for more adaptable funding to support underrepresented groups and ensure equal opportunities. Additionally, harmonised implementation was proposed to eliminate taxation on grants and create a unified participation framework.

The discussions also stressed the importance of recognising transversal skills gained through mobility activities by implementing multilingual certification and standardised quality assessments. Calls for decentralisation of certain centralised actions, such as Jean Monnet initiatives for schools and small-scale sports partnerships, aimed at increasing accessibility and relevance. Improved transparency and communication with EACEA were also suggested to support grassroots organisations. The three main ideas presented to the plenary were increasing flexibility in mobility formats, enhancing blended and virtual mobility opportunities, and ensuring more inclusive programmes open to all participants.

COOPERATION OPPORTUNITIES

Discussions focused on improving cooperation within Erasmus+, particularly for small and newcomer organisations. Participants highlighted the need for targeted support, ensuring that budgets intended for newcomers are not used by more experienced actors. Application processes, especially for centralised actions, should be simpler and more coherent, as current requirements pose significant barriers for certain institutions like schools. The programme should also allow partnerships to address national and regional needs, ensuring that funds are used by relevant actors. While lump sum funding was seen as a positive step in simplifying the programme, clearer guidelines on budget distribution and daily rates are needed. Additionally, an increase in the KA2 budget, particularly under indirect management, was suggested to attract higher-quality applicants and maximise impact in fields like higher education.

Participants also discussed balancing flexibility with ensuring that cooperation opportunities are primarily used by relevant actors. To enhance project effectiveness, a dedicated multiplier network managed by national agencies was proposed to help reach newcomers and disseminate results. The possibility of introducing thematic calls alongside broad partnerships was also explored, inspired by past Erasmus+ initiatives in digital education and creative skills. Ultimately, three key ideas were prioritised: ensuring long-term support for project results to increase their impact and sustainability, making cooperation opportunities more accessible to small and

newcomer organisations, and simplifying the application and reporting processes, particularly in centralised actions.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

The discussions emphasised the need for better support for volunteers, ensuring their experience is impactful and well-recognised. Key recommendations included improving pre-departure and post-return support, enhancing tools like Europass and Youthpass, and formalising a European Volunteering status. Strengthening recognition and validation mechanisms was also highlighted, with proposals for national-level recognition, legal frameworks for volunteer services, and annual awards for best practices. Another major focus was on fostering engagement with local communities, encouraging deeper connections between volunteers and their host environments through events, school visits, and tailored community projects.

Participants also stressed the importance of reinforcing sending organisations, recognising their role in preparing and protecting volunteers. Providing more funding, training, and resources for these organisations would help ensure better support before, during, and after volunteer missions. The need for capacity building within these organisations was also emphasised to maintain quality and sustainability. Another key idea was promoting intergenerational volunteering within a youth programme framework, fostering mentorship between older and younger generations. The plenary identified the top three priorities as increasing support for volunteers, strengthening sending organisations, and promoting intergenerational volunteering.

POLICY SUPPORT, IMPACT AND SCALING UP OF RESULTS

Discussions focused on increasing the impact and visibility of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps through structured support and better data utilisation. A key proposal was to establish a national cross-sector community of practice, coordinated by a dedicated research and policy team, to scale up project results and influence national policies. Additionally, participants emphasised the need for two-year microgrants to help outstanding projects sustain and transfer their results effectively. Another crucial aspect was improving data collection and communication, suggesting a revamp of the Erasmus+ project results platform and better dissemination tools to ensure a more systemic impact and clearer visibility for policymakers and stakeholders.

Further recommendations included creating a structured approach for project dissemination and collaboration, such as sector-specific networking activities and synergies events to prevent duplication and build on existing successes. Participants also highlighted the need for better monitoring using open data and statistics to showcase programme effects, improve communication, and support policy decisions. Strengthening the link between key actions (KA1, KA2, and KA3) was seen as a way to enhance learning mobility and workforce development. Lastly, increasing policy support at local and regional levels, sector-specific branding, and more accessible funding opportunities for youth and sports were recommended to boost engagement and visibility. The participants prioritised the establishment of a national cross-sector community of practice, microgrants for top projects, and improved data collection as the top three ideas for implementation.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION, ENLARGEMENT

The discussions focused on strengthening international cooperation within Erasmus+ by addressing key challenges such as inclusion, budget allocation, visa access, and procedural

simplification. Participants explored ways to enhance mobility with non-associated countries, facilitate the association of candidate countries, and improve engagement with EU neighbouring nations. Cooperation with like-minded industrialised countries (e.g., Canada, Australia, Japan) and partnerships with regions like Africa, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific were also key topics. A major emphasis was placed on promoting EU values, ensuring equitable access to opportunities, and leveraging existing structures to streamline processes and create well-functioning National Agencies in new partner countries.

The plenary identified three main priorities for action. First, ensuring a smooth enlargement process by establishing high-quality National Agencies in candidate countries, with support from experienced agencies through job shadowing and partnership-building initiatives. Second, developing a clear European strategy for cooperation with EU neighbouring countries, including dedicated actions to promote EU values, reciprocal exchange opportunities, and a streamlined funding process. Lastly, enhancing the quality and efficiency of new National Agencies through capacity-building initiatives, training, and knowledge-sharing to ensure long-term success in managing Erasmus+ programmes effectively.

Stakeholders' vision for the future

A discussion with representatives from the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, the European Youth Forum, the Lifelong Learning Platform and the European Organisation for Grassroots Sport provided an opportunity to exchange on the vision for the future generation of the programmes of different groups of stakeholders.

Ms Sophie Beernaerts, Director of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, emphasised the need to stop targeting similar groups repeatedly, advocating for a more streamlined approach. Maintaining EU values at the centre of these initiatives is crucial, as they embody belief in the EU and democracy. She stressed the importance of communicating the essence of the programmes more clearly to the public. Support for civil society organisations was underscored as vital for the programme's success.

Mr Álvaro González Pérez, Senior Policy Officer at the European Youth Forum, highlighted the importance of financial investment and cited the Draghi report as a reference for ensuring programmes' meaningful impact. Simplification in the youth chapter of Erasmus+ is crucial, along with regular meetings and dialogue spaces with beneficiaries. Addressing the issue of exclusion due to programme complexity, he noted that smaller grants should be introduced for ease of access. Finally, the need to keep youth at the heart of these programmes was emphasised.

Ms Brikena Xhomaqi, Director at Lifelong Learning Platform, argued that better engagement of stakeholders is necessary, along with an increased budget to support their initiative. She also noted that promoting cross-sector collaboration and fertilisation is crucial to maximise the impact of EU funding.

Ms Sara Massini, Secretary-General of the European Organisation for Grassroots Sport, acknowledged that Erasmus+ and European Solidary Corps contribute significantly to competitiveness. She noted that the sport sector advocates for increased cooperation between sectors and pleaded to create more space for organisations to discuss their ideas and be able to participate in the programmes.

Conclusion

The conference concluded with strong support for continuing and enhancing Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps as vital programmes for Europe's future. The European Commission reiterated that Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps are essential. They not only contribute to competitiveness and skill development, but also foster cooperation, inclusivity and promote EU values.

As the programmes evolve, stakeholders stressed the importance of collaboration and dialogue to ensure their lasting impact and success in the post-2027 era. Collectively, the participants remain committed to refining these programmes to maximise their benefits for future generations across Europe.

The Commission reminded the participants of the importance of taking part in the recently published [open public consultation](#).

