



FOR STRONG EU PROGRAMMES FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

## Erasmus+ Civil Society Coalition contribution Report on the Implementation of Erasmus+

### Trans-sector / lifelong learning approach

The new architecture is in fact quite similar to the old one in the sense that it **does not encourage cross-sectorial engagement** more than it did before especially in education and training. In the same way, the **European dimension** of this Programme seems to have been hindered by decentralisation.

- Further emphasis should be given to the **lifelong learning dimension of the programme**. We encourage the Commission and National Agencies to more strongly promote the relevance of projects that target several education and training sectors.
- Extend the possibility to submit **cross-sectorial strategic partnerships under KA2 to NGOs** (e.g. partnerships between schools and NGOs) and ensure that evaluators have a broad understanding of educational areas including non-formal education.

### European added value & decentralisation

The increased decentralisation of the Programme towards the national level represents a strong concern for European level NGOs. Most of them are based in Belgium as “international association” and therefore have to apply in Belgian NAs. The success rates are therefore very low especially considering the small budget available, which is discouraging for many applicants. Besides, it is very difficult to get support for large-scale policy projects with more systemic impact and strong European added value because of the limited scope of the Strategic Partnerships (KA2) and of the limited budget allocated to Key Action 3 (KA3). The KA2 projects do not allow them to involve their members and even their board members, even though the organisation is a network. The 10% increase to the overall budget of the Belgian NAs is not sufficient - **action is needed to both open more possibilities for European NGOs to apply at the centralised level and alleviate the pressure on the Belgian NAs.**

- We call for a **partial centralisation of the management of KA2 projects at the EACEA level (5%).**

- Allow the participation of representatives (who are often volunteers) from European networks to take part in activities in KA2 projects. For example, currently the president of an organisation cannot participate in project meetings since only staff travelling from the country in which the legal constitution is declared can be covered by the project.
- **Better coordination between the agencies** to match the projects working on similar issues – coordinators’ meetings could be organised to share results and therefore bring EU added value.
- Adapt the provision in KA1 projects that at least one of the sending or receiving organisations in each activity has to be from the country where the NA is based to which the application was submitted. For example, currently a Belgium-based European umbrella organisation can only coordinate EVS mobility where each individual mobility either is from or to Belgium. This prevents European scope projects taking place.

### Coordination and harmonisation between NAs

The decentralisation of the programme at national level has the advantage that applicants can rely on the national agencies in order to get information (NA). However the services offered vary a lot from country to country. There is a clear **lack of harmonisation** between the agencies (6% believe the NAs implement guidelines in a similar way, LLLP Survey 2015).

- To put in place a system that would guide National Agencies towards **common quality standards** (e.g. upcoming EU-CoE Quality framework for learning mobility in the field of youth).
- To make the **available budgets per Key Action and per sector easily accessible after each application round** on each NAs website in order to allow applicants to plan strategically their future actions, as well as results of project selection and budget lines, so that adequate external monitoring of the programme can take place.
- **Define European implementation guidelines or a European “FAQ”** answering the most frequently asked questions to the various NAs. The European Commission would centralise the information and share it with applicants and the NAs in order to ensure a more standardised interpretation of the programme rules.
- **Share specific information brochures** on each of the Key Activities as well as on important elements such as dissemination, exploitation of results and project management.

## Simplification

Potential candidates are frequently discouraged by the application procedures as well as by the administrative burdens that come with managing EU projects. Even though applicants appreciate the use of flat rates, the **increase in bureaucracy** is a major problem for most of them. For example in the school sector, teachers have to go through their administration in order to submit projects. It tends to **favour bigger institutions including specialised consultancies**.

- Allow individual applications for KA1 mobility projects in the school sector.
- The **e-form** could be improved especially as regards the financial section (offering a financial overview, limited the number of clicks, etc.) for projects involving more than 5 partners.
- The flat rate and simplified reporting system is not applied by all National Agencies.

## Quality information & user-friendly programme

The Erasmus+ **programme guide** is generally perceived as being too **complicated**; it is lengthy and technical. NAs should be trained in order to offer quality information and guidance services especially targeted at organisations who would gain a lot from their participation in Erasmus+. Today we observe that more and more private consultancies are getting projects at the expense of smaller educational institutions and youth organisations.

- The programme guide should be written in a **user-friendlier language** (“intellectual output”, “exploitation”, etc.)
- It should come with a track changes version from the previous edition and hyper-links should be created in the pdf version of Programme Guide to connect quickly relevant parts of it.
- Provide **clear indications as to which documents are needed at each stage** of the project cycle and provide samples of those documents in a clear and accessible way (e.g. auditing rules).
- **Ensure that NAs and EACEA have enough resources to be able to improve the implementation of the programme**, for example, by organising regular meetings with beneficiaries and visits to projects.

## Quality evaluation and feedback

It is important to **ensure transparency in the evaluation process**; however, many applicants feel that the external experts that are doing the evaluation of their projects lack insight about their field and lack the capacity to evaluate innovation. Some applicants who failed in the first round of KA2, decided to re-submit their projects by taking into account the comments made by the evaluators; because other evaluators are involved in the second round, they sometimes get completely different evaluations that are not recognising progress made and sometimes even criticise what was praised by the first.

- More transparency is requested on the way applications are evaluated: **extensive quality feedback** should be given to all applicants.
- Put in place **an evaluation system that would allow applicants to receive punctual feedback** on the different parts of their applications. All NAs should train the evaluators before they assess projects so that they have sufficient knowledge to evaluate especially cross-sector projects and those with a policy focus.

### More balanced funding

**Lump sums** are considered to be **too low** which means that the co-funding to be provided is in fact higher than it used to be under the previous programmes.

- **The overall project coordination is not properly covered by the administration lump sum** (500 EUR per month for the coordinator and 250 EUR for the partners). This amount is the same all over Europe when we know there are great differences especially in terms of daily rates for staff costs. Besides this amount is supposed to cover dissemination costs (e.g. participating in events to present the project, creating a website, managing social media, etc.). Running Erasmus+ projects appears less and less feasible for small and medium-size organisations and the fairness of the programme is jeopardised.
- **Overcome geographical inequalities** – travel costs should better take into account geographical realities and differences. We recommend increasing the travel rates thus ensuring a broad access to the Programme especially to beneficiaries coming from remote areas.
- We call for **the integration of volunteer time contribution in Erasmus+** (e.g. for the Intellectual Outputs some NAs accept them while others do not), as a follow-up to the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe. The same applies for travel.

### Increasing Policy Support Actions and Cooperation with Civil Society

**Important actions** such as the transfer of innovation networks and policy networks of the Lifelong Learning Programme **are no longer supported**. The decentralisation of the Erasmus+ programme has led to an unfavourable situation for many **Brussels-based European NGOs and European level NGOs in general**.

- **Increase the overall budget of Civil Society Cooperation in KA3.** Longer term structural support to European NGOs should be ensured in the form of operating grants as they are the organisations providing learning opportunities and participation spaces to European citizens and residents to develop and implement European Policies in the field of Education, Training, Youth and Sport.
- NGOs in education, training, youth and sport are the ones receiving the less operational support as compared to other sectors such as a health, social affairs, gender equality and culture. This is hindering their capacity to create a large-scale debate and engage learners, educators, youth workers and young people in building European integration. **The level of the operating grants they receive should be re-considered and better aligned to that of other sectors.**

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*The **Erasmus+ Civil Society Coalition** is a group of more than 40 European Civil Society Networks active in the field of education, training, youth and sport. They represent key stakeholders in Europe active in the Erasmus+ Programme. This civil society alliance is led by the [Lifelong Learning Platform](#) and the [European Youth Forum](#).*

*The members of the Coalition aim to create ownership on EU policies and to voice the concerns and needs of millions of citizens to the EU. They play a crucial role as intermediaries and multipliers in informing and involving education, training and youth actors in EU cooperation and policy-making and in disseminating cooperation outputs. They can reach a critical mass and ensure a long-term impact.*

**For further information:**



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