



Invest in learning to reap its benefits: EU and national funding in the coming years

With the upcoming EU Elections, citizens have another chance to make their voice heard: EU and national funding programmes for education and training have a big role to play in the coming years.

In the upcoming European elections, it is more important than ever to #UseYourVote and shape Europe's future. Politics isn't just the domain of politicians: as citizens, we all have the right and duty to actively participate and engage in political processes. Oftentimes, we may feel detached from politics, but our choices - who to vote for and even whether we vote or not - are inherently political acts.

The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) works at the forefront of European education and training. It unites over 40 EU networks that collectively represent over 60,000 educational institutions and associations across Europe, engaged in formal, non-formal, and informal learning. At LLL, we understand the importance of these elections and why they should matter to every citizen. Through education, we empower individuals to comprehend their roles as active members of society.

This empowering requires, nevertheless, adequate funding. From the EU level, one of the tools in this regard is the Erasmus+ programme. Its funding has been a driving force in fostering cross-cultural exchanges and educational collaborations. While doubling the funding for the current EU long-term budget was a commendable move, it's imperative to recognise that it's not enough. **Education stands tall as the cornerstone of society**, uniting people across generations. Without adequate investment and support for the Erasmus+ programme, the fabric of our society risks tearing apart, leaving individuals feeling more disconnected from the EU. Besides, education is often - and rightfully so - recognised for its potential: it is time to match political claims and ambitions with budgetary measures.

Erasmus+, the EU's flagship program for education, training, youth, and sports, offers incredible

opportunities to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad. It also provides opportunities for testing new policy approaches to learning, developing innovative tools for the recognition and validation of learning, for the flexibilisation of learning pathways or for collaborating across borders. It's one of the European Union's most celebrated initiatives and yet, while its benefits are well-known, there are significant concerns that need addressing. **Accessibility, recognition of competences gained abroad, financial barriers detrimental to inclusion of all learners, bureaucratic burdens to schools and applicants are just a few of the many challenges** that, if collectively overcome, could make education in Europe take a significant step forward.

We cannot truly be proud of the Erasmus+ program until we address these critical issues and ensure that learners and the broader beneficiaries have the social right to education and training in a fair and stable manner. Ongoing discussions aim to increase funding to better support students and trainees, thus enabling broader and more equitable participation in the program.

Additionally, the Erasmus+ programme is not only a vehicle for learning mobility. Though 70% of its funding is dedicated to teaching and learning in different countries of the EU, there remains a component that supports Member States in addressing challenges that impact them all when it comes to lifelong learning. The rest of the funding ties with the additional funding that ESF+, ERDF, the Technical Support Instrument and other EU funding strands provide lifelong learning opportunities in Europe and beyond. However, it is Erasmus+ that establishes the values and objectives in the sector, and for this, **additional funding is required to ensure that all people in the EU can develop holistically and be active participants in society.**



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LLLP shall not stop advocating for more.

While a driving force and a beacon for changing the paradigm in education and training, the budget dedicated to Erasmus+ in particular and to EU education programmes in general is dwarfed by the comparison to other EU programmes and initiatives and even more so if we take into exam national funds. This is why LLLP insists on committing EU Member States to increase their own budgets to all forms of education and training which, to date, remain the most important creators of education opportunities for learners. The principle of subsidiarity remains a pillar in EU education policies, but one behind which countries should not hide, and also one which does not invalidate the spending discrepancies across Member States and their reduced national investment in the sector since recent economic crises.

Post-elections, **LLLP remains committed to advocating for robust investment in education**, at EU and at national and regional level. This is especially true as negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (long-term EU budget) are expected to start shortly, impacting the forthcoming EU programmes, starting from Erasmus+. We are well aware of the importance of our presence in shaping the next steps for Erasmus and education as a whole. The Lifelong Learning Platform stands as a hub of collaboration, bringing together stakeholders from diverse educational sectors. Our commitment extends beyond rhetoric; we are ready to roll up our sleeves and push for tangible progress. Together, **let's ensure that education remains at the forefront of the EU's agenda**, enriching lives and fostering a sense of belonging across Europe.

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