



The strong and united voice of universities  
of science and technology in Europe

# Erasmus+ for a prosperous, competitive and skilled Europe through science and technology

Position dated 23 June 2025

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CESAER regards Erasmus+ as one of the most valuable EU funding programmes and strongly supports efforts to develop an ambitious Erasmus+ for 2028–2034. The [political guidelines](#) of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the Commission's strategic initiatives including the [Competitiveness Compass](#) and [Union of Skills](#), and the recent high-level reports by [Draghi](#), [Heitor](#) and [Letta](#) all emphasise the role of education, skills, and training in securing Europe's prosperity and competitiveness through scientific and technological leadership across the full knowledge triangle. Erasmus+ is vital to these ambitions, reinforcing the education pillar and strengthening synergies with research and innovation through mobility and training.

Universities of science and technology play a key role in equipping Europe with the talent, knowledge, and skills needed to address societal priorities and global challenges through advanced science and technology. Through the integration of education, research, and innovation, and through close collaboration with industry and society, they contribute to educating the next generation and supporting efforts to generate societal and economic impact across Europe and beyond.

Europe's future prosperity depends on a strong, collaborative education system underpinned by excellence in science and technology, with Erasmus+ as the most effective instrument at EU level for fostering long-term, cross-border cooperation and innovation in education and training. It enhances Europe's global standing in higher education, facilitates the free circulation of scientific knowledge and talent, and makes our societies more resilient. To fully deliver on our shared objectives, Erasmus+ requires decisive and ambitious investment.

To support this vision for Erasmus+ 2028–2034, we offer five key recommendations: a bold budget increase, unlocking joint programmes and alliances, connecting the knowledge triangle, simplification, and strengthening international cooperation. In doing so, we reaffirm our strong commitment to working alongside EU institutions, member states, and partners to ensure Erasmus+ remains a world-leading programme for education, training,

mobility, and cooperation—notably in the advanced science and technologies that are increasingly shaping our world.

## 1. Strengthening Erasmus for Europe’s prosperity

To sustain current Erasmus+ activities and effectively support new initiatives—such as the Union of Skills, the Investment Pathway for European Universities alliances, the European Degree, enhanced mobility targets, and greater inclusivity—a bold and ambitious increase in the Erasmus+ budget is critical to meeting Europe’s objectives for skills, education, societal prosperity and economic growth. This is particularly critical in high-demand areas such as science, technology, engineering and digital skills, where Erasmus+ makes a direct contribution to tackling important skills shortages.

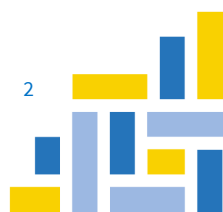
We strongly support the European Parliament’s call to triple the budget for Erasmus under the EU budget 2028-2034 compared to the EU budget 2021-2027, which is essential for achieving a competitive, resilient, and skilled workforce for today and tomorrow. To complement this and strengthen synergies across the full knowledge triangle, we strongly support the European Parliament’s call for a substantially increased budget for the successor to Horizon Europe, in line with the proposals of over €200 billion put forward in the Draghi and Heitor reports and [jointly supported](#) by universities, research and technology organisations, research performing organisations, research funding organisations and industry.

While Erasmus+ budgets for mobility and projects have grown, success rates for collaborative projects under Key Action 2 (KA2) have declined. The European Commission should rebalance Erasmus+ budget priorities reflecting the strategic importance and growing scale of cooperation initiatives.

The additional mobility generated by the European Universities alliances offers a valuable opportunity to advance the goals of Erasmus+. To fully realise this potential, it is essential to ensure that increased demand is matched by substantial reinforcement of KA1 budgets, which are already under pressure. Exploring the introduction of dedicated funding lines can help support the alliances’ mobility ambitions while safeguarding the broader objectives of the Erasmus+ programme. A significant increase in the number of mobility grants under KA1 is needed to build a strong European Higher Education Area and to support the achievement of the mobility objectives set for the European Universities alliances, without imposing detrimental limitations on student and staff mobility beyond the alliance members.

**We call on EU institutions to:**

- Triple the Erasmus+ budget to deliver on the warmly welcomed bold ambitions for Europe on skills, education, and training—particularly in advanced science and technologies—as elaborated in the Union of Skills and the Competitiveness Compass.
- Improve Erasmus+ success rates to enable the programme to deliver more effectively and maximise its contribution to European priorities.
- Revise Erasmus+ budget priorities by substantially increasing funding for collaborative projects, reflecting the growing strategic importance of European cooperation initiatives.



- Enhance grant levels in projects to address rising costs, including those driven by inflation, safeguarding the viability and appeal of the programme, as outlined in our position paper [For a flexible, resilient and impactful Erasmus+ \(2024\)](#). This is needed both to support more participants and to increase per capita support, particularly for KA2.
- Effectively support the ambitious mobility targets within and beyond the European Universities alliances. It is essential to properly resource the activities of the European University alliances through specific funding lines without imposing detrimental limitations to other Erasmus+ partnerships, thereby safeguarding existing KA1 and KA131 budgets and boosting success rates overall.

## 2. Unlocking the full potential of joint programmes and alliances

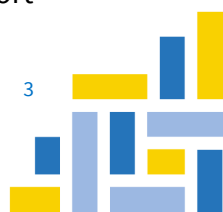
With a proven track record, Erasmus Mundus (EMJM) is a flagship programme fostering academic excellence, institutional cooperation, and attracting top global talent. It plays a vital role in developing Europe’s human capital by equipping graduates with high-level skills, cross-cultural competencies, and international experience vital for a competitive global labour market, particularly for the [Engineers of the Future \(2024\)](#).

New initiatives, such as the European Degree (label), have the potential to build on these achievements and further strengthen cross-border cooperation. Realising these opportunities requires sustained investment from the EU and member states, particularly to meet mobility targets, support high-quality delivery, enhance international student retention and staff mobility, and improve alumni career tracking for evidence-based strategies.

Funding constraints limit Erasmus+’s impact, reflected by declining EMJM success rates. To optimise resources and ensure coherence, funding for the European Degree (label) should be aligned with EMJM with a significant budget increase. However, the label should not be a funding prerequisite for EMJM, as the decision to implement it must remain with universities offering the joint programmes. Tying funding to label adoption could inadvertently exclude universities that choose not to implement it at this stage, for instance because they have other pre-existing, successful approaches that embody the same vision.

We welcome the Council of the EU’s conclusions of 12 May 2025 on the European degree (label) and the European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education, which strongly emphasised the reduction of administrative burdens and clear added value for higher education institutions as key measures of success for these new approaches. This must remain central to the next steps and implementation. By combining reduced administrative burdens, lower costs, high quality, and parity with other joint programmes, the success and long-term sustainability of these approaches can be ensured.

Alliances should be incentivised as ‘living labs’ for innovative solutions to European challenges. Funding must prioritise their strength, ambition, and capacity particularly in research-driven science and technology education to strengthen Europe’s global position in higher education. Sustainable, open, excellence-based EU funding for alliances should come mainly via the Erasmus+ successor, complemented by coordinated national support



addressing staffing, local needs, and regional disparities. Alliances require strengthened mechanisms within Erasmus+, embracing both bottom-up and top-down cooperation, while preserving continued support for other essential higher education actions. For alliance research and innovation funding, please refer to our position [Empowering excellence: European Universities Alliances as laboratories for success stories](#) (2024).

We use the definition of alliances—not limited to only European Universities alliances—as adopted by the Council of the EU on 12 May 2025, referring to groups of at least two European higher education institutions engaged in transnational, long-term, structural cooperation.

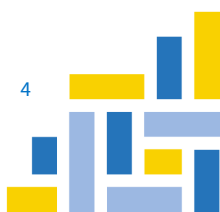
We call the EU institutions to:

- Increase funding for EMJM to meet demand, integrating European Degree (label) funding within its framework, backed by a substantial budget rise to boost success rates overall.
- Safeguard purpose-driven use of the European Degree (label), and not to make the label a funding prerequisite for EMJM participation.
- Promote and support the broad use of tracking systems to monitor international alumni career paths across Europe. Leverage these insights to inform the design of incentives and supportive measures—such as easing administrative, visa, and residency procedures and promoting attractive careers—that encourage top talent to remain engaged with and within Europe.
- Increase funding for staff teaching assignments (STA) and staff training (STT) to strengthen professional development and expand the impact of transnational cooperation, such as EMJM and alliances, and international partnerships.
- Establish open, excellence-based and competitive funding for alliances within the Erasmus+ successor supported by increased overall budget for Erasmus+ to safeguard overall increase in success rates, and incentivising alliances to act as ‘living labs’ advancing best practices across the knowledge triangle through strategic international collaboration rooted in excellence in research-based education.
- Secure national funding commitments to support alliances’ staffing, local needs, and reduce regional disparities.

### 3. Bridging research and education for a competitive and prosperous Europe

To advance Europe’s global position in advanced science and technologies, an integrated, dynamic system is needed where education, research, and innovation reinforce each other. A long-term strategic framework for skills development should actively connect these areas to create a self-sustaining ecosystem of excellence, talent, and impact.

We urge the European Commission to deepen synergies between Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, recognising that stronger links within the knowledge triangle is essential for addressing Europe’s societal, technological, and economic challenges. This includes translating research into teaching, linking innovation with curriculum development, and supporting research mobility for graduate and doctoral students.



By fostering these connections, Europe can accelerate the realisation of the fifth freedom—enhancing research, innovation, and education within the Single Market as outlined in the [Letta report](#)—and thereby boost its position in the global knowledge economy.

We call on EU institutions to:

- Position the fifth freedom of the [Letta report](#) at the heart of a long-term strategic framework for skills development that systematically connects research, innovation, and education, driving Europe’s swift realisation of the fifth freedom as an enabler for reinforcing Europe’s global position in future-proof skills and education in advanced science and technologies.
- Leverage the essential role of universities of science and technology in strengthening the knowledge triangle, and create enabling frameworks that support their excellence in research-based education, innovation, industry collaboration, and knowledge transfer.
- Develop Erasmus+ pathways—including through Cooperation Partnerships, alliances, and similar programmes, especially with key players in the science, engineering and technology sectors—to integrate Horizon Europe research outcomes into education and training, building on existing mechanisms.
- Establish a dedicated category to support mobility for research-based education for students, including graduate and PhD candidates, to strengthen links between education and research. Ensure the attractiveness and adequacy of mobility grants for research students, ensuring they can fully participate in international research opportunities and focus on driving breakthrough discoveries.

## 4. Call for simplification

We recommend the European Commission prioritises a return to direct management for all Erasmus+ KA2 actions, supported by increased staffing and capacity at the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). A centralised approach is especially vital for capacity-building and international cooperation, as it better supports new and associated countries, ensuring smoother integration and more effective programme delivery than decentralisation.

Additionally, the Commission should consider adopting a unified Model Consortium Agreement (MCA) for KA2 projects. This would simplify processes across Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, provided the MCA remains sufficiently flexible to accommodate diverse project needs and partner circumstances.

Our association welcomes the exploration of lump sum funding in Erasmus+ for its potential for flexibility and reduced administrative burden. However, legal uncertainties, inconsistent rules between European and national agencies, and rigid budget caps limit its effectiveness, especially for complex projects. A more flexible, customised lump sum model—like in centralised KA2 actions—would better support diverse projects. Full legal certainty, aligned procedures, and regularly updated reference staff rates are essential to improve fairness and ease implementation.

We call on EU institutions to:

- Prioritise a return to direct management for all KA2 Actions under Erasmus+, backed by strengthened staffing and capacity within the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to ensure effective oversight and implementation.
- Explore adopting MCA for KA2 projects that is as standardised as possible, and as differentiated as necessary, to best support the diverse nature of Erasmus+ KA2 projects.
- Ensure full legal certainty for lump sum funding across the entire project cycle, including clear, aligned procedures between European and national agencies, external auditor approval processes, and uniform guidelines on key aspects such as accession forms and liability clauses.
- Improve the flexibility and fairness of the lump sum model by introducing regularly updated reference staff rates, greater budget flexibility, and practical tools like a standardised MCA to support diverse project needs and reduce administrative burden.

## 5. Strengthen international cooperation

International cooperation remains a core dimension of Erasmus+, contributing to Europe’s global standing in higher education, while supporting broader societal, diplomatic, economic and geopolitical objectives through partnerships built on mutual respect, and shared knowledge and interest.

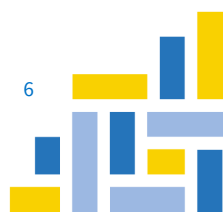
Recent signals indicate a trajectory towards reduced budget for international cooperation and a stronger focus on intra-European interests, even as Erasmus+ advances external priorities like pre-accession, Mediterranean ties, and the Global Gateway. With more countries joining or entering pre-accession phases, relying on a single instrument risk diverting funds from core priorities, underscoring the need for separate strands for global, neighbouring, and pre-accession cooperation.

While aligning with broader European priorities, Erasmus+ must continue to support academic-led collaboration that supports and advances university autonomy and academic freedom. This is essential for Europe’s credibility and soft power in global education, research, and innovation, for building strong partnerships amid geopolitical volatility, and as a strategic investment sustaining Europe’s innovation, talent appeal, and long-term prosperity.

Furthermore, the programme should move beyond a development aid logic and embrace equal, reciprocal partnerships. Finally, better alignment between KA171 and KA131 mobility actions is needed to streamline administration and enhance efficiency, while preserving flexibility for context-specific, academic-led projects.

We call on EU institutions to:

- Balance top-down directionality with bottom-up cooperation, ensuring academic-led initiatives remain central to international academic partnerships.
- Refine capacity-building actions by establishing distinct strands for global partnerships and for pre-accession/neighbouring countries.



- Improve alignment between KA171 and KA131 actions by simplifying administrative processes without compromising the flexibility needed for tailored, strategic academic cooperation.

## Our commitment

Our Members consider Erasmus+ one of the EU’s greatest achievements. We stand ready to contribute our expertise and experience to support this European success story in its future development and substantial expansion, ensuring it remains a world-leading programme for education, training, mobility and cooperation in science and technology and beyond.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our Advisor for Benchmark & Higher Education, [Touko Närhi](#).

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