

# Position Paper

## UEAPME<sup>1</sup> position on the proposal for the Erasmus programme (2021-2027)

### Summary:

- UEAPME welcomes the proposal for doubling the Erasmus programme budget to € 30bn for the period 2021-2027.
- UEAPME appreciates the continuity of the current three main strands for key actions in the programme dedicated to Education and Training and in particular the strand on learning mobility.
- UEAPME assesses positively the Commission's objective to simplify the access to the programmes for smaller organisations, which should also apply to small businesses.
- UEAPME asks for more financial possibilities for preparing VET students and apprentices to learning mobility periods abroad with language courses and inter-cultural training, since the current Online Linguistic Support is not appropriate for VET learners.
- **UEAPME particularly supports the idea of partnerships of excellence and funding of "Centres of vocational excellence"** as long as all partners can demonstrate a high quality level.

### Introduction

UEAPME and its members very much appreciate the contribution of the Erasmus programme to education, training and youth and to learning mobility activities of young people in Europe, especially of those in vocational education and training.

### 1 – Erasmus contribution

UEAPME considers the Erasmus programme as a true European added value to promote learning mobility in general and in vocational education and training (VET) in particular. Erasmus is essential for apprentices, VET students as well as VET teachers and trainers. With its support, they can have increasing opportunities to acquire additional professional and soft skills abroad, including foreign language competences. It highly contributes to increase their employability by giving them the necessary key competences required on the labour market. Furthermore, the programme rightly supports cooperation projects and networks of education and training organisations and institutions which contribute to innovative initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> UEAPME subscribes to the European Commission's Register of Interest Representatives and to the related code of conduct as requested by the European Transparency Initiative. Our ID number is [55820581197-35](#).

Despite a number of existing weaknesses and shortcomings related to a large part to the administrative complexity of the programme, Erasmus is a real success for supporting learning mobility of VET students and VET trainers and should be strongly further supported for the next period.

## 2 – UEAPME views on the EC proposal for the Erasmus programme (2021-2027)

1 - **UEAPME particularly welcomes the proposal for doubling the overall budget to €30bn**, compared to €14.7bn for the period 2014-2020, with the aim to substantially increase the overall number of beneficiaries of the young generations, to make the programme more inclusive and to further increase its efficiency and contribute to building a European education area.

UEAPME appreciates the **€5.2bn earmarked** for actions in VET but also would like to express some key recommendations for an optimal use of the budget.

UEAPME recommendations:

- In order to be in a position to absorb the additional funds dedicated to VET in a meaningful way - in particular when it comes to learning mobility of individuals – the implementation should be accompanied by large-scale and tailor-made awareness raising campaigns at European but even more at national, regional and local level, already before 2021, in order to reach out to VET learners and providers in an effective way and thus to finally bring individuals to embrace the increased opportunities.
- Adequate financial means for the support of such activities should be provided. Already in the current period, we observe that it is very difficult to make a larger number of VET learners aware of their opportunities and thus to motivate them to participate.

2 - **UEAPME appreciates that the Commission maintains the current existing structure of the programme** under the Chapter dedicated to Education and Training, with three main strands for key actions, namely Learning mobility as Key action 1, Cooperation among organisation and institutions as Key action 2, Support and policy development and cooperation as Key action 3.

UEAPME gives it full support, under “Key action 2 - Cooperation among organisations and institutions” to the partnerships and platforms as these instruments can foster innovative approaches in the field of E&T overall and contribute to the modernisation of Member States’ education and training systems;

UEAPME recommendations:

- When it comes to Key actions 2 and 3, the administrative burdens have to be kept to an absolute minimum for all stakeholders involved.
- Regarding the definition of 'vocational education and training learner' in Art 1 (9), it is very positive that continuous vocational education or training is explicitly mentioned therein and that the definition comprises recent graduates from VET programmes. In general, access to funding for working people should be significantly improved compared to the current programme, which is only funding learning mobility up to 12 months after completion of the initial VET (IVET).

### **3 - UEAPME assesses positively that the willingness to simplify the access to the programme for smaller organisations, such as grassroots organisations.**

This should highly contribute to facilitate the involvement and promoting the investment of small companies. The company is a key player in the organisation of sending and hosting learning mobility. SMEs and small businesses need simple application procedures and to reduce bureaucracy to a minimum. . This is a crucial point for transnational mobility in apprenticeship training. Further the work of intermediary bodies and in particular of skilled crafts chambers and training centres to mobilise, prepare, support and foster the investment of small businesses in the process should be fully recognised. There is an important role for the Commission and the National Agencies to come with suitable reflections for adequate and tangible simplification proposals.

UEAPME recommendations:

- In the case of the establishment of long-term mobility schemes (similar to Erasmus Pro under the current Erasmus+ programme), it will be important to implement them according to the current demand in the different Member States and take into account the specific requirements of apprentices, who are on average younger than academic students participating in long-term mobility schemes. The requirements of SMEs, for which a return on investment in apprentices is of particular importance, necessitate specific support for involvement in long-term apprentice mobility schemes.
- The ambition mentioned under recital no.18 to further extend international mobility activities also to other sectors, such as in vocational education and training is very positive. However, it has to be ensured that in particular the Commission and Member States, but also the relevant stakeholders such as Craft masters, make the necessary efforts to put this ambition into practice.
- In the context of VET mobility, a requirement for language and intercultural preparation should be introduced which goes beyond the current Online Linguistic Support (OLS). The OLS does not correspond to the specific needs of VET learners. Language preparation is important in particular for VET learners and needs to be boosted which also requires a higher financial support.

### **4 - UEAPME particularly supports partnerships of excellence and “Centres of vocational excellence”**

UEAPME particularly supports the idea of partnerships of excellence and “Centres of vocational excellence” as stipulated under Art. 5 (b) and as described in the accompanying Staff Working Document.

UEAPME recommendations:

- In order for this instrument to meet its ambitious objectives, it has to be ensured that all transnational platforms that are established in this context have to demonstrate a high level of quality.
- Their selection has to be made against a clearly defined set of criteria and the consortia have to be made up of the already existing organisations and stakeholders on the ground, which do have the respective expertise, competence and experience, such as in particular social partners.

UEAPME would like to get further clarification regarding the instrument “European universities” as stipulated under Art. 5 (b) and as described on pages. 5 and 6 of the accompanying Staff Working Document, the concept

certainly contains ambitious objectives. However, in our view the description of the instrument still remains vague on a number of important points and it lacks the demonstration of a clear EU-added value as well as of synergies with and delimitation towards other existing EU instruments in this field, such as e.g. the EIT.

## **To conclude:**

UEAPME is largely positive about the current proposal for the Erasmus programme 2021-2027 and in particular about the doubling of the funding. However, the programme would entirely satisfy the VET sector expectations, if the current “one size fits all” approach applied in Erasmus+ is abandoned and its forms, tools and procedures are really adapted to the VET realities and needs.

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