



YERUN Reaction to the MFF Consultation on Funding for Cross-Border Education, Training, and Youth Engagement

The Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) is pleased to contribute to the European Commission's (EC) public consultation on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its priorities for cross-border education, training, and solidarity.

YERUN calls on the Commission to **prioritise cross-border education and training that is flexible, inclusive, and driven by innovation**. It is essential that future funding frameworks are designed to reflect the evolving needs and realities of Europe's diverse university communities and student populations.

Erasmus is one of the EU's most successful initiatives because it has transformed higher education across Europe by enabling millions of university students and staff to study, teach, or train abroad. Since 1987, it has strengthened academic cooperation, improved graduate employability, and fostered a shared European identity. For the next MFF and the **continuation of the functioning of the existing initiatives** of the programme, a **three-fold increase** in funding will be necessary. To implement the **expansion of Erasmus** to other novel sectors, a **fivefold increase** will be needed.

This paper highlights the specific areas of Erasmus that YERUN considers essential for investment under the next (MFF, with a focus on advancing cross-border education and mobility in the university sector. These are: short-term and virtual mobility, blended intensive programmes (BIPs), cross-border lifelong learning, curriculum innovation and teaching reform, STEAM, not just STEM, and simplification and flexibility of programmes.

Priority Areas for Investment within the Erasmus Programme

Short-Term and Virtual Mobility

While semester-long exchanges remain important, many students cannot afford long-term mobility due to rising costs, housing insecurity, and personal commitments. Virtual and hybrid formats **democratise mobility** and should be mainstreamed within Erasmus+ and beyond.

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

BIPs have become a **cornerstone of accessible mobility** for YERUN institutions. With large proportions of students working or caregiving, short and flexible formats are essential. BIPs offer a vital entry point for international engagement, especially for students from underrepresented or non-traditional backgrounds.

Cross-Border Lifelong Learning (LLL)

YERUN universities are experiencing growing demand for lifelong learning (LLL) and micro-credentials, which are also key priorities for the European Commission in the Union of Skills. Cross-border LLL provision can help upskill Europe's workforce in strategic areas while generating sustainable additional income for universities.

Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Reform

Shifts in labour market demands require continuous updates to curricula, particularly in AI, sustainability, and interdisciplinary thinking. **Universities are ready to be even more adaptable than they already are**, however, universities need support to reimagine educational models.

STEAM, Not Just STEM

YERUN strongly supports an expanded definition of STEM that includes the arts, humanities, and social sciences (STEAM). These disciplines are **essential for ethical, critical, and human-centred innovation**. This needs to be coordinated and implemented across borders to ensure there will be adequate transferability.

Simplification and Flexibility of Programmes

Bureaucratic complexity continues to deter smaller institutions and less-resourced actors from fully engaging with EU programmes. This is especially true in cross-border education, where **administrative burdens around recognition, mobility documentation (e.g., Erasmus without Papers), and funding compliance remain high**.

To ensure progress, **YERUN calls for the implementation of the following recommendations:**

- *Introduce specific funding streams for short-term, virtual, and hybrid mobilities with a strong inclusiveness component.*
- *Continue and expand dedicated funding for BIPs. Encourage flexibility in programme design, including open eligibility for non-EU participants and virtual components.*
- *Expand funding for universities to implement microcredentials, modular programmes, and cross-border adult learning pathways, with dedicated support for institutional capacity-building.*
- *Establish a "Teaching and Curriculum Innovation Fund" to support the redesign of learning pathways that align with EU skills priorities while preserving comprehensive and values-based education.*

- *Integrate support for Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) and the Arts in all research and education programmes related to AI, digital transformation, and sustainability. Interdisciplinary will be crucial for the long-term sustainability and efficient implementation of objectives related to strategic areas.*
- *Simplify application and reporting processes and enhance support for implementation of digital tools across institutions. Full implementation of the European Student Card initiative.*

Conclusion

Cross-border education is not a luxury, it is essential for building a more resilient, competitive, and future-oriented European Union. YERUN universities are committed to advancing high-impact, inclusive, and innovative forms of collaboration across borders. By prioritising cross-border education within the next MFF, the EU can ensure that the next decade of education policy fully reflects the diversity, strengths, and potential of Europe's university sector. Adequate and sustained investment is not only critical for the success of future programmes, but also key to maximise the return on previous investments and secure long-term impact.

- About YERUN -

YERUN - Young European Research Universities Network - founded in 2015 and based in Brussels, brings together excellence and value-driven young research universities. The network's objective is to strategically represent its members in the decision-making process at EU level, thus shaping their future and promoting their role in European societies. Further to its policy advocacy activity, the network also strengthens cooperation opportunities among its members in areas of mutual interest and raises their visibility via a dedicated communication strategy.

- YERUN Members -



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