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Strengthening Erasmus+ 2028–2035: Unlocking the Full Potential for Schools

Preamble ETTAS e.V. (European Teacher Trainers Association) is a growing European network of educational institutions committed to improving the quality and accessibility of international training and learning mobility in school education. Our members include school consortia coordinators, regional education authorities, teacher training institutions, universities, and other stakeholders engaged in the professional development of teachers and schools across Europe.

As practitioners and coordinators of Erasmus+ school education projects, we bring direct experience from the field—managing mobility for both learners and staff, supporting structural innovation at school level, and building strategic partnerships that sustain impact beyond individual projects. Many of our members coordinate multi-annual Erasmus+ consortia that support hundreds of schools, especially those with limited resources or rural contexts. Others are involved in teacher education and contribute to the integration of European cooperation into national training frameworks.

With more than 150 active consortia coordinators from over 16 countries, mobility consortia represented in ETTAS reach thousands of schools across Europe. These consortia engage in regular activities, including quarterly peer learning meetings, joint mobilities, and cross-national networking events for schools and teachers.

With the next Erasmus+ programme generation (2028–2035) under development, we believe it is crucial that the voices of those implementing the programme on the ground are meaningfully included. This position paper outlines concrete recommendations to strengthen the strategic role of school consortia, improve access and quality in pupil mobility, and enhance alignment between European and national policy frameworks. It draws on our collective expertise, current research, and the lived realities of programme implementation in diverse school systems.

We submit this contribution in the spirit of constructive dialogue, aiming to support the European Commission in ensuring that Erasmus+ remains a transformative force for inclusion, innovation, and cooperation in school education across Europe.

Executive Summary As preparations for the new Erasmus+ programme (2028–2035) advance, it is crucial to prioritise the role of schools in building a more inclusive, innovative, and cohesive Union of Skills across Europe. Schools are key to fostering European values, inclusion, and future-oriented competences. Building on the success of the current programme, particularly structured school consortia, we call for increased support to expand

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pupil mobility, strengthen cooperation frameworks, and ensure national-level policy alignment.

To further enhance the impact of Erasmus+, we recommend the systematic exchange and networking of school consortia coordinators on an inter- and intranational level. This will promote mutual learning, ensure consistent quality standards, and contribute to a more coherent implementation of the programme across Europe. Moreover, mobility activities must be embedded in a comprehensive quality framework, including structured preparation, support during the stay, and thorough follow-up.

Key Messages

1. **School Consortia: A Cornerstone for Sustainable Internationalisation in School Education** Since their introduction in Erasmus+ 2021–2027, school consortia have proven highly effective in expanding access to European cooperation, particularly for small and rural schools. Their value extends far beyond administrative support: consortia act as strategic enablers of school development, capacity building, and sustainable internationalisation.

To unlock their full potential, Erasmus+ must recognise and support consortia as development actors. This includes dedicated funding for strategic growth, investment in digital infrastructures, long-term cooperation models, and coordinated training for consortium leaders. A Europe-wide network of coordinators would further enhance quality and foster systemic exchange.

2. **Quality Mobility as a Standard, Not an Exception** Mobility must be embedded in quality frameworks that ensure meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable learning. We encourage the introduction of *European Job Shadowing Weeks* as part of Erasmus+ priorities, where schools host and send teachers across borders in coordinated efforts. This bilateral hosting should be supported structurally, with training and incentives for host schools. New rules in the programme already encourage more job shadowing—we support this direction and call for additional mechanisms that promote "internationalisation at home" and ensure mutual benefits for host and sending schools.
3. **Coherent Policy Support Across Governance Levels Is Urgently Needed** Erasmus+ must evolve from a project-based funding instrument into a catalyst for systemic change in school education. To achieve this, stronger alignment between EU objectives and national frameworks is essential. Ministries and national agencies should embed Erasmus+ into teacher professional development, school evaluation systems, and long-term educational strategies.

4. **Learner Mobility: A Missed Opportunity Without Structural Reform** Despite increasing political recognition, pupil mobility remains significantly underutilised. Its transformative potential—for learners’ intercultural competences, personal development, and European identity—can only be realised through substantial structural improvements.

We propose a clear, ambitious goal: Every child in Europe should have at least one opportunity to participate in Erasmus+ mobility between the ages of 3 and 18. With increased programme funding, this target becomes achievable. At present, even schools within consortia struggle to offer mobility to all interested learners due to limited funding. Moreover, the funding levels for consortia and individually accredited schools are often similar, despite consortia taking on significantly more coordination work. Research shows that consortia achieve better outcomes than individual schools because they can offer more comprehensive support and take over key tasks, ultimately increasing the impact of Erasmus+ in schools.

5. **Schools Cannot Do It All Alone – Stronger Lobbying and Support Structures Are Needed** Compared to other Erasmus+ sectors, the school sector lacks sufficient advocacy and intermediary structures. Associations and consortia need support to represent school interests, provide training, and translate EU goals into actionable strategies. Stronger lobbying is needed to increase awareness, funding, and policy commitment at all levels.

Policy Recommendations

To realise the full potential of Erasmus+ in the school sector, the future programme must be rethought not only in its content but in its structure. The role of school consortia should be elevated from logistical facilitator to strategic actor of innovation and cooperation. This shift requires targeted investment in their capacity building: dedicated funding lines, access to digital tools, and long-term cooperation frameworks must underpin their future work.

Administrative burdens remain a persistent barrier, particularly for public schools and local authorities. The current programme design leads to a duplication of effort, where schools and public coordinators must enter the same information into multiple systems or rephrase responses for reports and applications that ask redundant questions. Administrative work needs to be compensated fairly, especially for public beneficiaries who are not permitted to use Erasmus+ funding to hire support staff. The Beneficiary Module and other tools must reflect school realities—providing clarity, stability, and ease of use.

To fully integrate pupil mobility as a motor of European education, its financial and logistical foundation must be significantly strengthened. This includes increased and diversified

funding for learner mobility and centralised tools to reduce complexity. Erasmus+ mobility should not be a luxury only for a few, but a structural component of learning pathways accessible to all learners—with particular attention to disadvantaged contexts.

Furthermore, the integration of Erasmus+ into national education systems is essential for long-term sustainability. Participation in the programme should be recognised as a formal part of teacher professional development and school improvement. Ministries of education must provide co-financing, policy alignment, and support for implementing European priorities in national contexts.

Finally, we cannot ignore the systemic issue of underfunding. Currently, many schools and consortia are unable to participate in Erasmus+ or meet the demand for mobility due to insufficient financial resources. This is one of the most urgent problems of the programme, and if left unresolved, undermines the goal of equity and inclusion. Every school in Europe should have the real opportunity to participate in Erasmus+, and that requires a significant increase in overall funding.

Conclusion School consortia are key enablers of high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable education within Erasmus+. They foster participation, build strategic capacity, and connect schools across Europe. To ensure their continued impact in the next programme generation (2028–2035), Erasmus+ must provide the right framework: one that reduces administrative burden, increases operational flexibility, and offers long-term planning security.

We therefore call on the European Commission to embed these priorities—strategic support, simplification, and sustainability—in the redesign of Erasmus+ from 2027 onwards, so that consortia can fully realise their potential and contribute meaningfully to a Union of Skills for all learners.

