

MINUTES OF MEETING: IGLO Higher Education working group – Next Erasmus+ programme (European Parliament and stakeholders)

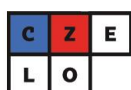
Date:	30 March 2026
Minutes taken by:	<i>Tereza Čechová, Consultant for Education; Tomáš Fíbek, Consultant for Education</i>

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On 30 March the CZELO office participated in the meeting of the IGLO Higher Education working group. The topic of this meeting was the next Erasmus+ programme. Representative of the European Parliament from the CULT Committee presented the current state of play of European Parliament's position on the Commission's proposal for a future Multiannual financial framework and the future Erasmus+ programme, underlying that the given information may be subject to change based on the results of the negotiation process. Then representative of the European University Association (EUA) presented **joint statement of EUA and other 16 Higher Education Organisations of 7 January 2026 on the next Erasmus+ proposal**.

State of Play of the European Parliament

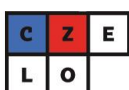
- The rapporteur and his team have completed the consultation process.
- In total, there were five consultations: sport and youth were already covered in December, followed by higher education and mobility, and education and training. The final consultation, on volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps, was completed in February.
- They received large interest, approximately 100 to 150 organisations took part, and many written contributions were submitted.
- There were also joint amendments from higher education institutions, as well as from the youth sector.
- They are currently facing a slight delay of about one month. Normally, they would need to submit a position around 10–15 May. They are now fully in the drafting phase.
- The text is usually sent for translation around mid-May. It will be presented in the CULT Committee on 4 June.
- The aim is to reach as many compromise amendments as possible. Normally, all technical meetings take place before the summer break, with the vote scheduled for September. A vote in July is no longer possible.
- There will be four opinions on the report.
 - o The most important one is the budgetary opinion. On 8 April, MEP Zdrojewski will also take the floor.
 - o The budgetary opinion is binding, so it will have to be adopted as it stands.
 - o There is also the opinion of the Budgetary Control Committee, which is already available, and whose deadline has just passed.
 - o Another opinion comes from the Employment Committee, which has submitted 350 amendments.
 - o The last opinion will come from the Development Committee and will relate to the European Solidarity Corps.



- Each committee has its own competences, so much will depend on the amendments. Some committees seem to be missing the opportunity to focus on issues such as VET, as they are concentrating primarily on budgetary and other broader matters. Every decision is taken at a horizontal level by the MFF team.
- During the drafting phase, it is important to keep a close eye on the Council, which is expected to finalise its text at the beginning of April. At this stage, nothing in the text is really expected to be tied to the budget.
- As for the schedule, the vote on the report is planned for September at the CULT committee level, and there is also an intention to push for a plenary vote. The target is the second plenary session in October, in the week between 19 and 23 October, so that the Parliament is ready for interinstitutional negotiations, at least at the technical level.
 - o However, due to the delays, trilogues will probably only begin in January, during the Lithuanian Presidency.
- The biggest issue remains the budget, particularly the sectoral budget. One key demand is to restore separate chapters and articles for youth and sport. Another highly political issue concerns scholarships and funding. Major issue is also the question of association and partnership agreements. These are expected to be among the most politically sensitive points. Governance is also an issue.
- The majority of stakeholders support a budget of EUR 60 billion.
- In the opinion adopted for the MFF mandate, Parliament asked for EUR 50 billion, although figures vary depending on whether they are calculated in current or constant prices, which creates significant differences. The Commission proposed EUR 40.9 billion, while the Parliament's figure is only EUR 36.6 billion. A 10% increase might still be achievable, but that would not be sufficient from their perspective. The Erasmus+ is considered a flagship file, and they are pushing for more. Any additional funding above the 10% increase would already be seen as a major success.
- At the same time, some MEPs consider the Commission's proposed budget already too high.
- MEP Sousa Silva, the rapporteur of MFF, takes part in all MFF meetings. While these do not take place every week, there are two budgetary meetings at present. Even a 5% difference on a EUR 40 billion budget represents a very significant amount.
- On the budgetary side, the discussion is difficult, particularly in relation to Horizon Europe and the Competitiveness Fund. Inclusion measures are linked to the ESF (European Social Fund), and political groups are contesting this issue.

Questions

- What kind of actions are envisaged to create synergies?
 - o The main issue is the Commission's new initiative on scholarships. MEPs are not entirely opposed to scholarships as such, but one scholarship may correspond to the cost of 25 mobilities, which is not desirable. This will need to be assessed during the process.
 - o If scholarships are retained in some form, they would require additional funding. There are also new inclusion measures linked to the ESF. From a legal perspective, it is possible to ask for synergies without pre-empting what will ultimately be included in the Competitiveness Fund.
 - o Which topics are likely to be the most heavily negotiated?



- This time Parliament appears closer to the Council than to the Commission. The most important issues will be the budget and the sectoral budget. Flexibility will also be a key question.
- Scholarships are expensive; they would maybe be better financed through additional funding. Everything related to national agencies is more of a priority for the Council. Some of Parliament's issues are more strategic, and it will be necessary to see what can be traded in order to secure key priorities.
- An additional important point concerns the restoration of separate articles for sport and youth, together with the allocation of a sectoral budget. The question of volunteering under youth still needs to be clarified. The draft position is one thing; the amendments may still change it. There is also interest in further developing European University alliances.

European University Association (EUA)

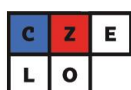
Joint statement of 7 January 2026

- Regarding the joint statement on the budget, EUA called for a budget of EUR 60 billion as a minimum.
 - There are various ways of calculating the figures, but in their view the Commission's proposal of EUR 40.9 billion would merely allow the current level of activities to be maintained, rather than improved or expanded.
 - They want Erasmus+ to deliver on new targets, including the consolidation of the European Universities Initiative (EUI) and Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE).
 - Targets related to mobility and suggested raising the mobility target to 23%. This position is based on extensive consultation with members. According to Eurostat data, approximately two thirds of the relevant needs remain unmet, which, in their view, justifies an increased budget.
 - The importance of strengthened inclusion measures in Erasmus+, which are seen very positively.
- On education and skills mainstreaming, the objective is to allocate 20% of the MFF to education and skills, whereas the current level is understood to be around 14%.

Joint amendments

The joint amendments, submitted on 18 February, focus on the following points:

- objectives such as mobility and intra-institutional collaboration, which would also justify co-financing;
- a budget allocation of EUR 60 billion;
- synergies with other EU funding sources;
- scholarships in strategic educational fields, while also raising the question of whether there are other ways to encourage students to choose STEM-related priorities;
- committee procedure;
- the possible use of outside expertise, particularly for Erasmus+, in order to strengthen evidence-based reasoning;
- the international dimension of the programme;
- support for students and staff at risk, including amendments aimed at strengthening resilience within Erasmus+, for example in the context of Ukraine, and more concrete support for human rights defenders.



Question: How was this received by Parliament?

- On committee procedure, from a strategic point of view, it is in Parliament's interest not to rely on a delegated act.
- This leaves a margin for negotiation involving the legal service and the horizontal service. This will be one of the last points to be negotiated in the final text.
- On other issues, there were many questions concerning third countries, in particular the distinction between different categories such as partial and full association agreements. There is now a better understanding of these categories, although the geopolitical context continues to evolve rapidly.
- Erasmus+ forms part of broader negotiations, meaning that the Commission cannot be too constrained or the programme made completely closed.
- The international dimension is highly political in Parliament.
 - o Some view it in very political terms, even as a form of propaganda, and link it to migration, which makes the issue more complex.
 - o The scholarship question raises further concerns, particularly regarding funding and the definition of what should count as a strategic sector.

Additional remarks

- As regards other funding sources such as Horizon, the outlook for securing additional funding specifically for Erasmus+ does not appear very positive.
- On talent attraction, the issue is ultimately political: if the EU wants to attract talent, it must create real opportunities. This will remain a key point in the political debate.
- In the Western Balkans, some countries may not yet be ready to establish national agencies, so this may affect how accession-related participation is approached.
- There are also links with the Global Europe instrument.

The budget

- The Commission proposal is EUR 40.9 billion in current prices.
- Parliament generally uses constant prices, which can sometimes make press releases confusing.
- In constant prices, the Commission proposal is around EUR 36 billion.
- The aim remains to fight for a larger budget, but if everything goes well, the Budget Committee may secure an increase of around 10%.
- In practice, this would bring the amount to roughly EUR 40 billion in constant prices.
- They are still pushing for more, but any additional billion beyond that would already be considered a major success.

