

Erasmus+ Communication Strategy

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DG EAC

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1. Executive summary

This document covers the communication strategy of DG EAC's key programme: Erasmus+. After 33 years of development and expansion, the 2021-2027 programme sees not only a significant increase in budget, but also an update to suit the programme's changing landscape. This strategic document outlines a detailed and researched communication approach to cover all facets of Erasmus+. It takes into account the core priorities: making it more inclusive and accessible; reinforcing the digital dimension; and tackling climate change.

The strategy was developed following thorough research involving interviews, focus groups and stakeholder mapping. These resulted in a communications strategy and creative assets which are to be implemented over the whole programming period.

According to this communication strategy, the focus for the new Erasmus+ programme should be: "Erasmus+ is a powerful learning experience that opens up opportunities for everyone to develop". This inspires the new Erasmus+ storytelling approach, creates enthusiasm for the new, enhanced project, and aims to reach a more diverse audience.

This strategic document explores the diverse approach that DG EAC intends for Erasmus+ 2021-2027. It covers tone of voice, target audiences, creative assets and an outreach approach for the campaign. Together these will help create a positive momentum and appeal to all target audiences, from individuals to organisations working with the programme, stakeholders and other involved actors.

The communication strategy is meant to guide and inspire Erasmus+ content creators - at European and national level alike - to communicate about the new programme and engage with different audiences in a consistent way.

2. Introduction

2.1. Context

2021–2027 marks the new Multiannual Financial Framework for Erasmus+, which sees a significant increase in budget for the EU’s flagship programme ⁽¹⁾. The new Erasmus+ has three key priorities:

- + a more ‘inclusive and accessible’ Erasmus+ designed to reach out to individuals with specific needs or fewer opportunities, and to more diverse organisations ⁽²⁾;
- + a reinforced digital dimension, tackling a clear need for better infrastructure and connectivity, as well as access to digital tools essential for education and the development of digital skills and competencies; and
- + a greener Erasmus+: showing the importance of tackling climate change challenges in the future.

The new programme will bring a series of novelties to all the sectors it covers: higher education, vocational education and training (VET), school education, adult education, youth and sport.

Moreover, DiscoverEU – the EU initiative that gives 18-year-old European citizens the opportunity to discover Europe through learning experiences – will become part of the new Erasmus+.

2.2. Strategy development

In order to develop the strategic positioning of the new Erasmus+ programme, a research analysis was conducted by following the below steps:

1 Research

- 1.1. Desk research
- 1.2. In-depth interviews with programme experts, key stakeholders and beneficiaries
- 1.3. Focus groups with key stakeholders and beneficiaries
2. Stakeholder mapping and analysis
3. Development of the communication strategy
4. Development of creative concept (3 different routes for telling the story of the new Erasmus+)

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/commission-adopts-proposal-next-erasmus-programme-2021-2027_en

² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20190222STO28402/the-future-of-erasmus-more-opportunities>;
<https://euobserver.com/who-is-who/146417>

2.3. Methodological approach

The key steps are summarised below.

		STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
		Research and Analysis	Creative concepts development	Communication strategy development	Creative assets and guidelines
PURPOSE		Understanding policy, context, novelties, audiences, challenges. Define inspiring insights and strategic direction.	Developing a long-term creative storytelling approach for the new Erasmus+ programme	Highlighting strategic recommendations for the communication approach and actions in the years to come.	Providing ready-to-use materials and inspiring content creators to develop their own materials.
PROCESS		Desk research – social media listening, review of relevant documents. In-depth interview. Focus groups.	The creative team’s ideation process. Creation of Manifesto, and look and feel/graphic approach to convey the story.	Based on research findings, selected creative approach and ongoing feedback sessions with DG EAC and selected experts.	Development of specific assets based on immediate needs. Guidance for other appropriate communication tools and actions.
DELIVERABLE(S)		Creative brief. Research report.	3 different creative routes. Selected route to be decided on.	Communication strategy document.	Key creative assets and guidelines document.

3. Research highlights

3.1. Desk research

The desk research consisted of three parts:

1. Review and analysis of key documents:

- + Inclusion and diversity strategy in the future Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes
- + Sustainable strategy for the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes
- + Digital strategy for the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes
- + Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation (2017)
- + SALTO Inclusion & Diversity compendia and SALTO Communication Hub
- + The Erasmus+ programme guide (2020)
- + Dissemination and exploitation of programme results strategy (2015 and 2019–2020)
- + National Agencies Communication Network and dissemination of projects
- + What's new – messages for Erasmus+ and ESC
- + Erasmus Days 2020 strategy
- + Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ programme 2018
- + Erasmus+ impact studies: 2019 higher education partnership report; 2019 Erasmus+ factsheets
- + EuroDesk survey 2019
- + Digital education action plan 2021–2027.

2. Social media monitoring and research:

The social media monitoring strategy was conducted for the period from 1 September 2020 to 9 November 2020 and was aimed at identifying insights such as: users' feelings towards the programme; key topics, events and communication hooks; and top influencers. Moreover, the social media research provided an overview of the main social media channels for Erasmus+ at both European and national level; top organic posts; the type of content targeting different audiences; and the type of posts likely to ensure high levels of engagement. The insights gathered provided a basis for discussion with DG EAC social media and web teams.

3. Secondary research conducted in different areas:

- + policy, history of the programme and novelties
- + content and messages
- + communication and outreach
- + stakeholders.

3.2. Interviews

In-depth, hour-long interviews with DG EAC programme experts, key stakeholders and relevant beneficiaries of various opportunities within Erasmus+ were conducted. Recordings were made for reporting, providing the interviewees gave prior permission.

- + The respondents for the Erasmus+ interviews were: DG EAC Head of Unit, Erasmus+ Sport
- + DG EAC Director of Youth, Education and Erasmus+
- + DG EAC Director for Policy Strategy and Evaluation
- + Erasmus+ beneficiary
- + Programme expert Erasmus+ International Cooperation
- + Programme expert Erasmus+ Higher Education
- + Programme expert Erasmus, school education, VET, adult learning sector.

3.3. Focus groups

Two focus groups were organized for the Erasmus+ programme, one with stakeholders and one with the National Agencies. The focus groups were conducted via Teams, lasted for approximately 1.5 hours and were recorded.

Stakeholder focus group respondents:

- + Viken County Council (upper secondary education, VET and higher education teaching staff)
- + Chargée de l'accompagnement des Itinérants à l'international (VET sector)
- + European Olympic Committee (sport sector)
- + Erasmus Student Network president (higher education sector)
- + European Association for the Education of Adults (adult education sector)
- + Pour la Solidarité (PLS) organisation (youth sector)
- + Eurodesk (youth sector)
- + University of Granada (higher education sector)

National agency focus group respondents:

- + Spanish National Agency -
- + Irish National Agency
- + Georgia National Erasmus+ office partner country,
- + Finnish National Agency
- + Romanian National Agency
- + Icelandic National Agency
- + Estonian National Agency

3.4. Key findings

The key findings were clustered into three main areas: policy, people (including organisations) and communication. The key findings were shared with the larger project teams to inspire the development of creative concepts and storytelling lines, as well as a strategic direction for the creative and communication approach.

On policy

- + The Erasmus Programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was launched in 1987 and has evolved massively since: seven previous programmes (Comenius, Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, Jean Monnet, Youth in Action and Sport) were merged under Erasmus+ in 2014, with DiscoverEU being added from 2021 ⁽³⁾. The communication strategy needs to reflect the growing diversity of opportunities offered by Erasmus+.
- + 'Erasmus+ is much more than a mobility programme for students. It is a European programme that enables different structures to work together to provide European citizens with continuous education on current socio-economic issues that are essential for building a sustainable Europe.' *Erasmus+ organisation beneficiary*
- + From beyond the borders of a few European countries to beyond the borders of Europe itself, with international cooperation and mobility actions with partner countries all over the world, the programme now offers enormous (two-way) global opportunities.

³ An overview of the Erasmus+ key opportunities is included in the Annex.

- + New Erasmus+ has three key priorities: inclusion and diversity, digital, and green.
- + The proposed communication strategy needs to reflect the importance of these three respective strategies for Erasmus+ 2021–2027.
- + The EU’s flagship programme, often cited by officials in their speeches, has already impacted the lives of millions of Europeans and, thanks to a considerable increase in budget, it will reach even more people and organisations by 2027.



On people and organisations

- + Erasmus+ generates a wealth of powerful, personal stories that are ready to be shared and likely to create excitement.
- + Very positive experiences that provide a lot of European, educational and personal benefits that change people and organisations.
- + Erasmus+ in one word? ‘Game changer.’ *National Agency interview.*
- + Some individuals may think Erasmus+ is not for them as they have fewer opportunities, or they might not be aware of the many possibilities the programme offers.
- + ‘[The] programme is still only linked with student mobility. It’s an obstacle for the programme as a whole.’ *National Agency focus group.*
- + ‘We need to reach people that are not in [the] E+ bubble.’ *Stakeholder interview.*
- + Reaching out to a more diverse audience is a key ambition for the new programme. There is a need not only to properly relay a positive message and explain how Erasmus+ is even more inclusive, but also to reflect on the best ways to reach underrepresented potential beneficiaries.
- + Similarly, some smaller organisations may find it difficult to participate because of their lack of resources or know-how.
- + ‘Schools have so much to do all the time; this (Erasmus+) comes on top. A lot of work and effort is required.’ *Stakeholder focus group.*
- + The new Erasmus+ will be more inclusive for organisations. The planned simplification of processes and easier access to the programme are important elements of communication when it comes to addressing this barrier.
- + There are a lot of opportunities under the Erasmus+ programme. However, these may not always be clear to certain potential participants, whether individuals or organisations, as they may not always understand which programme best suits them, or which one they would qualify for. The role of communication will therefore be two-fold: to communicate opportunities offered under the new

programme; and to direct interested individuals and organisations towards the most suitable sources of information and contact points at national, sector (e.g. higher education) or European level.

On communication

- + Erasmus+ is a real ‘lovebrand’ that is well known and appreciated. ‘Erasmus+ has enabled millions of people to study, train and work abroad, which has made it into a well-known, successful EU brand’ (4).
- + However, the downside of the Erasmus+ heritage might be that the communication around Erasmus+ continues to follow the established schemes and is not always innovative enough.
- + ‘The programme has been running for 33 years and some people are a bit stuck [in doing things] always in the same way. They don’t know anymore WHY they are doing it.’ *Stakeholder interview.*
- + There is a need not only to position Erasmus+ 2021–2027 as one that will build on its successful predecessor, but also to tell a new story about Erasmus+ to create enthusiasm about the new programme and generate new ideas.
- + The Erasmus+ tag line – ‘Enriching lives, opening minds’ – remains true under the new programme and is an important aspect of the brand’s identity.
- + There is a lot of communication out there about Erasmus+, yet the style is not always consistent. ‘We need [a] toolkit, branding to ensure consistency, flexible material that can be adapted for different countries.’ *National Agency focus group.*
- + The proposed communication approach aims to bring more consistency to Erasmus+, but still needs to allow enough flexibility to communicate on diverse strands of the programme and on different needs across participating countries.
- + Erasmus+ has dedicated EC Facebook and Twitter accounts with a lot of followers, which means great potential for enhanced and consistent engagement.
- + Key stakeholders and multipliers play a crucial role in the dissemination of information, and the way in which the programme is perceived at national level. However, they do not have the same level of resources, with some being able to run a lot of actions on their own and others needing more support and guidance. As such, there is a need for more coordination.
- + ‘We should coordinate more, we should share more.’ *Stakeholder focus group.*
- + DG EAC should produce materials that can be disseminated by stakeholders, but also further encourage sharing of best practices and materials between the different actors, using existing platforms such as the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and SALTO. This new communication strategy should build on the existing dissemination and exploitation of results strategy.
- + Finally, countries have different needs or may need to focus on certain aspects of the programme more than others. Central guidance needs to go hand in hand with a flexible approach.

4. Goals and objectives

4.1. General aim and overall ambition

The overall communication ambition is to develop a storytelling approach for the new Erasmus+ programme that can power communication campaigns and actions in the years to come (2021–2027).

⁴ Rimantas Šadžius, Member of the European Court of Auditors.

Simple graphic design elements and creative tools can inspire all contributors to Erasmus+ communication to create their own materials, ensuring a more consistent approach at European and national level.

4.2. Specific communication objectives

The graphic below highlights the target audience(s) for whom each specific objective is relevant, and the key moments that can be used for communication in the years to come (2021–2027).

Ultimate beneficiaries (individuals/organisations)	Stakeholders and multipliers	Decision makers	Communication moments
Communicate the new initiative (novelties) and lesser-known opportunities of the new Erasmus+			Starting in 2021 (first 18 months)
Reach out to underrepresented target audiences and people with fewer opportunities			Before each application round
Attract more applicants (taking into account the relevant fields and allocated funds)			Before each application round
		Influence decision makers to ensure continued support	Yearly, when positive results are available. Enhanced actions before the new round of negotiations.
	Empower them to make the programme more visible within their networks		Before the bigger campaign launches and/or each application round
Make the programme’s strands clearer and better known			Starting in 2021 (first 18 months)
Celebrate the achievements of the programme and spark a feeling of pride among EU citizens			2022/2027: 35- and 40-year anniversaries
Clear communication around COVID-19, how this is affecting the programme and the solutions			Ongoing while the pandemic lasts

5. SWOT analysis

A “SWOT analysis” was conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the Erasmus+ programme. This was chosen over the alternative PEST analysis, because PEST is limited to external factors and does not take the internal situation into account. Internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) are very relevant for a programme like Erasmus+. However the SWOT analysis also considered factors that would have been included in a PEST analysis, e.g. COVID-19 with its social and economic impacts, political factors like the importance of diverse EU policies, etc.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Positive emotions and experiences. + A critical mass who have been part of Erasmus+ and can become genuine ambassadors for the programme. + Erasmus+ is a well-established brand and enjoys high popularity. + Strong network of stakeholders and multipliers. + Novelty addressing previous criticisms (e.g. a more inclusive programme, increased support, simplification of administration). + More opportunities for different programmes (e.g. early childhood education, mobility for pupils, care staff and sport). + New or established digital tools that can support or enhance the experience (i.e. European Student Card Initiative, EPALE, SELFIE, eTwinning, School Education Gateway). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Complex, bureaucratic process for applications. + Application process requires a lot of knowledge and resources that some smaller organisations or individuals may lack. + Opportunities and processes may be confusing. + The new priorities of the programme (i.e. inclusion, digital, green) may be difficult to grasp without strong proof points or concrete examples. + Higher education still seems to be the main opportunity that Erasmus+ is associated with by some people.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Acquiring strong professional and academic skills is crucial in a post-COVID-19 scenario, where economic recovery will play an important role. + Grow the alumni community beyond Erasmus+ Higher Education. + Potential synergies with EU corporate priorities: i.e. EU Green Deal, Recovery, Next Generation EU. + International events and moments that can be used as hooks for communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Mobility, a core feature of Erasmus+ programme, is hugely affected by COVID-19. + Mobility may attract negative comments in the context of ‘a Greener Europe’. + Lack of clarity around Brexit, and exchange and cooperation possibilities with the UK. + Criticism of the programme/EU-scepticism. + Other political priorities: i.e. the international health situation, economic crisis/recovery, migration.

5.1. Key challenges and ways to tackle them

Following the SWOT analysis and research findings, the key challenges and potential ways to tackle them were identified.

- 1. Create positive momentum around the new Erasmus+ programme.** Even though the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ builds on the success of its predecessors, it is important not only to inform stakeholders about the differences and novelties, but also to create enthusiasm around it and position Erasmus+ as a new chapter for European education.
- 2. Bring more consistency while inspiring more diverse storytelling.** There is much differing communication on Erasmus+ out there, at European and national level, with diverse graphic styles and communication approaches. The communication resources available from one country to another, or from one organisation to another, are also different: some are able to develop and run actions on their own, while others need more guidance.

That's why, along with brand guidelines, an inspiration book will be shared with key stakeholders. It will contain easy-to-use guidelines that can improve consistency and are flexible enough to integrate national needs. The result will help empower all content creators at both European and national level.

A simple storytelling and graphic approach with versatile elements will improve understanding, and make it easier for communicators to create their own assets or actions. Moreover, it will help make the sharing of Erasmus+ experiences consistent.

- 3. Convey a positive image of Erasmus+ mobility in a challenging context.** The core feature of the programme – mobility – is challenged by COVID-19 and may be further questioned when introducing the ambition of greener Erasmus+. 'Green is a paradox – a programme is based on travelling by plane.' *National Agency focus group.*

It is important to remind people of the benefits of Erasmus+ mobility, to offer reassurance about measures implemented during COVID-19 (blended mobility), and provide clear information on how Erasmus+ mobility can become more sustainable.

- 4. Reach out beyond the 'Erasmus+ bubble'.** Those who still associate Erasmus+ mainly with student exchange may think the programme is limited, and is not for them. Other potential beneficiaries of Erasmus+ may think the programme is not for them, as they come from a background with fewer opportunities. Some organisations might also think that they do not have enough resources to be part of Erasmus+.

In terms of both messaging and outreach, the new Erasmus+ communication strategy needs to take into account the ambition to reach beyond the individuals and organisations that may already be aware of Erasmus+. The new story needs to be centred around the diversity of opportunities offered by Erasmus+, and on various solutions that will make the programme more accessible for all.

- 5. Counterbalance the perception of administrative burden and difficult or confusing processes.** The programme's development over the past years marks positive progress, expanding in terms of geography, opportunities and features. However, while the programme keeps on growing, it might become overwhelming for potential participants who, more than ever, need clear guidance to find the relevant opportunities for them. Some participants may be discouraged completely from applying because the administrative process can be difficult to grasp.

As well as informing potential candidates about all the positive changes that will result in a decrease in the administrative burden of Erasmus+ (e.g. the European Student Card Initiative), we should aim for more simplicity in communication. Creative concepts need to be simple and understandable for all individuals and organisations involved. A clear call to action is needed to enable potential beneficiaries to find out more about the relevant opportunities of Erasmus+, and to discover the tools and support they might need

(e.g. help with the application process). Better coordination should be further encouraged to avoid any duplication of communication efforts, for example, across the ever-growing Erasmus+ social media presence.

6. Target audience

The target audience for the new Erasmus+ is even more diverse than before, with various actors playing different roles. A snapshot, including segmentation of target audiences and specific objectives for different segments, can be found below.

<p>A. Potential applicants</p>	<p>Individuals They can be segmented based on their age (from school pupils to senior citizens), education level, occupation (e.g. teachers, apprentices, trainers, etc.), and can be addressed with Erasmus+ opportunities adapted to their needs.</p> <p>Specific focus on young people Even though Erasmus+ addresses very diverse audiences, many opportunities are most relevant for young people (at school/studying, entering the job market, etc.). They can be guided towards the EU Youth Portal to discover more about what Erasmus+ can offer them.</p> <p>Specific focus on those with fewer opportunities Includes people with disabilities, special needs, health problems, learning difficulties, economic social or geographical obstacles, and immigrants and refugees.</p> <p>Organisations Specific focus in reaching out to small organisations, opening up Erasmus+ to a more diverse audience.</p>
<p>Key objectives for potential applicants</p>	<p>Make the programme’s strands clearer and better known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The communication needs to raise awareness of diverse opportunities offered by Erasmus. <p>Reach out to underrepresented target audiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + To address more diverse audiences, new ways of reaching out beyond the EU/Erasmus+ bubble need to be encouraged. <p>Attract more applicants (taking into account the relevant fields and allocated funds).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Once awareness of Erasmus+ opportunities is raised, communication can focus on attracting more applicants for the various programme strands.
<p>B. Direct beneficiaries (those who already participated in Erasmus+)</p>	<p>Organisations Smaller and bigger scale, covering different sectors (i.e. schools, universities, sport, VET, adult learning organisations, youth associations; Erasmus Student Network).</p> <hr/> <p>Individual participants When relevant, other Erasmus+ opportunities can be communicated to those who have already taken part in Erasmus+ experiences. (e.g. communicating to DiscoverEU applicants/participants about other Erasmus+ opportunities relevant to them).</p>

<p>Key objectives for direct beneficiaries</p>	<p>Communicate the novelties and lesser-known opportunities of the new Erasmus+.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + They are already aware of some of the opportunities offered by Erasmus+, but the communication should allow them to discover what exactly the new programme can offer them. <p>Clear communication around COVID-19, how it is affecting the programme and what the solutions are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The programme’s beneficiaries are the ones directly interested in how COVID-19 affects Erasmus+ mobility and what solutions will be introduced to tackle this challenge. <p>Celebrate the programme’s achievements and spark a feeling of pride among the EU citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Erasmus+ beneficiaries are the best ambassadors for the programme. Their engagement is crucial in spreading the news about the achievements of Erasmus+.
<p>C. Stakeholders and multipliers*</p>	<p>Organisations and institutions who influence the way in which Erasmus+ is deployed in Member States, as well as those who influence perceptions of Erasmus+ through their own communication actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + National Agencies, EuroDesks, National Erasmus+ offices. + Universities; VET, sport and youth networks; student associations.
<p>Key objectives for stakeholders and multipliers</p>	<p>Empower them to make the programme more visible within their networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Their role is essential in achieving all other communication objectives towards other target audiences. + Along with providing clear information on programme novelties and ambitions (inclusion, green, digital), communication should inspire them and give them the relevant tools to disseminate communication about Erasmus+.
<p>D. Decision makers</p>	<p>Those who can enhance future financial and political support for the programme at European (European Parliament, European Commission), national and local level.</p>
<p>Key objectives for decision makers</p>	<p>Influence decision makers to ensure continued support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Communicating the ambition of the programme, its priorities and how they are aligned with European/national policies. <p>Celebrate the achievements of the programme and spark a feeling of pride among EU citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Erasmus+ is already considered a flagship EU programme, and it is important to maintain a high level of support for the programme and share its achievements.

At this point, it is important to state that certain entities, such as universities, schools or the Erasmus Student Network play a double role, both as beneficiaries and multipliers. For example, a school can benefit from the staff exchange, while also co-creating and multiplying the Erasmus+ messages for their own audiences.

Geographical scope

Erasmus+ targets all EU Member States, but it is more than a European brand: it is truly international, with cooperation and mobility opportunities with partner countries all over the world.



Source: *World Erasmus+ 2019 factsheet*; *Erasmus+ International 2019*

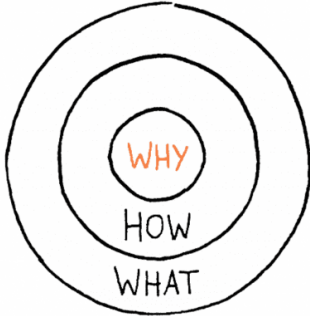
The strategic process identified the following traits common to programme beneficiaries – both individuals and organisations.

-
- + They are curious and enthusiastic.
 - + They want to see what is going on beyond the borders of their country or organisation.
 - + They want to see how others are doing things and are interested in new collaborations.
 - + They are continuously striving to be better. They know they can improve themselves and their organisations when exposed to different ways of studying, cooperating or working.
 - + Some may have had international experiences in their personal lives and are keen to have more.
 - + For others, it may be the first time they go abroad. They may be a little anxious at the thought of leaving their comfort zone or discouraged by the administrative process. Still, they are eager to go for it and may just need to be reassured that this is the right opportunity for them.
 - + And it is all worth it, as Erasmus+ is indeed as good as it gets!
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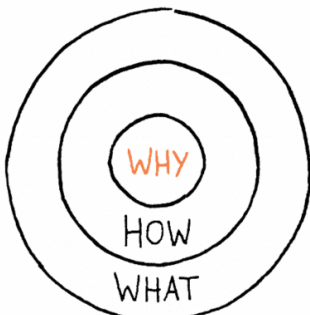
7. Key messages

7.1. Positioning

In order to position the new Erasmus+, Simon Sinek's 'golden circle' model ⁽⁵⁾ was used. With this, the programme's mission and values could be defined, and the ultimate offer for each audiences could be clearly identified. The model is explained below.

	<p>WHY? The very reason the programme exists. It is the cause; the core belief.</p> <p>HOW? How is the programme special, different or relevant? What are the key values or aspects of the programme?</p> <p>WHAT? What exactly does the programme offer, today and tomorrow?</p>
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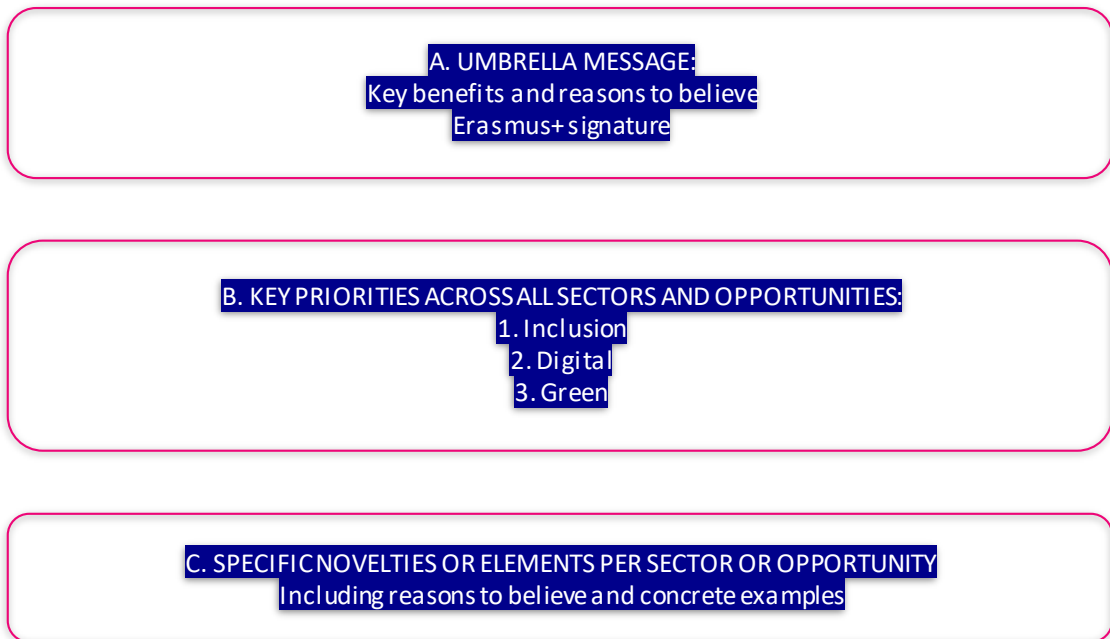
Erasmus+ positioning:

	<p>WHY? Erasmus+ believes we all have the potential to evolve, regardless of our background or struggles. And cross-border learning, development and cooperation opportunities make us better equipped to build a more inclusive and open European society.</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Formal and non-formal learning opportunities: mobility and cooperation projects that go beyond the traditional ways of learning + Inclusive: offering diverse opportunities for all individuals and organisations + Digital: tools to make the process easier, as well as to facilitate sharing and virtual learning. Supporting education and training to be truly fit for the digital transition. + Blended mobility: combining the cross-border dimension with digital learning. + Sustainable: greener travel and promoting sustainable practices among programme participants <p>WHAT? A variety of educational and apprentice experiences aimed at serving beneficiaries (individuals and organisations alike) at different stages in their life, from early school years to adult education.</p>
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⁵ 'Start with why': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3SfI4>.

7.2 Messaging matrix

A snapshot of the messaging matrix is visualised below, and details are included as sub-sections.



Note: the messages included in the following sub-sections, except the tagline 'Enriching lives, opening minds', represent strategic direction for content creators rather than final (citizen-facing) copywriting, which will be created based on the chosen creative concept.

Specific calls to action will be further developed in future communication plans along with these messages.

A. UMBRELLA MESSAGE

Based on the above strategic positioning, the following strategic direction has been identified to define the new Erasmus+.

The powerful learning experience that opens up opportunities for everyone to develop.

The strategic direction focuses on the powerful experience that is highly likely to have a profound impact on a person's life, evolution or professional growth.

- + It is a transformative 'before and after' experience.
- + This development is not only limited to individuals, it is also about developing organisations, as well as societies (more inclusive, greener and more digital).
- + The word 'everyone' suggests inclusion, and diversity of the opportunities on offer, as the new Erasmus+ is open to a more diverse set of participants.

The key benefits of Erasmus+ are varied and apply to the full range of opportunities.

KEY RATIONAL BENEFIT DEVELOPMENT	KEY EMOTIONAL BENEFITS EMPOWERMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Professional/academic skills + Multilingualism + Digital skills (creativity, computational thinking, digital and media literacy) + Communication skills + Entrepreneurial mind-set + Knowledge acquired in a multinational environment + Talented staff + Problem solving + Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Self-confidence + Open-mindedness + Making friends + Energising, fun + Ability to adapt quickly to new situations + Increased tolerance and motivation

As self-development leads to higher employability, Erasmus+ gives programme participants a chance of getting a better job. In addition to the rationale and emotional benefits, Erasmus+ boosts the feeling of being European, empowering participants to (re)connect with other Europeans, and strengthening the sense of European belonging.



The strategic and creative development process considered the existing Erasmus+ tagline, 'Enriching lives, opening minds', which neatly sums up the Erasmus+ experience. It is an important element of the Erasmus+ identity that can ensure consistency across offline and online communications.

A. UMBRELLA MESSAGE

Erasmus+ is a powerful learning experience that opens up opportunities for everyone to develop.

Key benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + EMOTIONAL: empowering experience, better equipped for today's challenges + RATIONAL: self-development, employability, European feeling, solid cooperation network, sharing know-how
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + It offers more funding for more participants and organisations, and will therefore open up more opportunities to more diverse audiences. + Already more than 10 million participants.
Erasmus+ tagline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Enriching lives, opening minds.

B. KEY PRIORITIES			
	INCLUSIVE	DIGITAL	GREEN
Individuals	New Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for everybody	Erasmus+ opens up digital learning opportunities	Erasmus+ inspires greener living
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Open to people from all backgrounds and abilities + Opportunities that go beyond higher education and students + Financial support for disadvantaged target audiences + Blended mobility: a more accessible opportunity for those who are not able to take part in a long-term physical mobility + Learning support (e.g. linguistic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Blended mobility: offering digital learning experiences on top of physical mobility + Specific tools or platforms (details in annex) that facilitate individuals' digital and entrepreneurial skills + Digital education to prepare participants before the programme starts, or enhancing the experience during or after + Development of digital skills and competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Encouraging more sustainable mobility (e.g. www.erasmusbytrain.eu) and more sustainable daily-life abroad + Top-up for green travel (making green choices more inclusive) + Supporting innovation through projects that foster a green and circular economy.
Organisations	New Erasmus+ opens up more opportunities for all organisations	Erasmus+ opens up more digital learning opportunities for all organisations	Erasmus+ inspires organisations to create a greener Europe
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Opening up the participation in Erasmus+ to smaller organisations + Accreditation system expanded to all programme sectors + Simplified processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Smoother administrative process (e-forms, e-documents or e-signatures) + Specific tools or platforms (details in annex) that facilitate organisations' digital development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Increasing the number of mobility opportunities in green fields + Sharing best green practices + Testing innovative practices to turn beneficiaries into actors of sustainable change + Supporting university-business cooperation activities that help HEIs and VET and companies (above all SMEs) to contribute to the sustainable development of their regions.
Stakeholders and multipliers	Let's offer everyone more opportunities with new Erasmus+	Let's open up more digital learning possibilities	Let's create a greener Erasmus+ for a greener Europe
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Focus on inclusion in new programme features + More projects on inclusion and diversity + Shared ambition to reach out to more underrepresented target audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Overall strengthened policy focus and digital transformation incentives throughout all sectors and key actions + Promotion of established and future digital tools and platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Share ambition of the carbon-neutral mobility programme + Focus on sustainability in new programme features

C. SPECIFIC MESSAGING	
COVID-19 communication	Erasmus+ keeps offering opportunities to develop yourself Learning does not (and should not) stop, even during times of crisis.
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Blended mobility/learning solutions + Specific reasons to believe can be adapted to different audiences: Individuals: stories of participants who keep learning with Erasmus+ despite challenging conditions Organisations: highlights of impact studies, e.g. 60 % of higher education institutions think that being part of a European university has been helpful in times of crisis ⁽⁶⁾.
Higher Education	The European Universities Initiative will help transform higher education in Europe.
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Supporting higher levels of mobility, encouraging deeper cooperation among HEIs and with relevant stakeholders, and promoting European values and identity, while revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. + Lead role in the digital transformation of the higher education sector in Europe Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative_en
Higher Education	Inclusion message: Erasmus+ opens up more opportunities for <u>all types of students</u>
Reasons to believe	<p>Specific reasons to believe can be adapted to different audiences.</p> <p>Individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + More accessibility for students with fewer opportunities (special needs, disadvantaged backgrounds, underrepresented study fields, etc.). + More flexible and tailored mobility formats such as blended, international and short-term mobility for doctoral candidates to accommodate the needs of all types of students. + The Erasmus+ mobile app can guide people through the application process and can also be used for calls to action when relevant (e.g. download the Erasmus+ mobile app and discover what opportunities await you. Available on App Store and Google Play.) <p>Higher education institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Exciting new cooperation opportunities, and support for internationalisation and innovations, such as Blended Intensive Programmes and the possibility of using a portion of KA131 funds to support international mobility. + Blended mobility also supports innovative learning and teaching practices, and curriculum design.
Higher education	Digital message: It's time for a more digital Erasmus+ experience
Reason to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Digital tools, such as the Erasmus+ app or European Student Card, which simplify the administration and planning process. + Blended and/or digital learning opportunities. + High-quality online content. + Digital transformation plans under Cooperation projects + Digital Opportunity Traineeships as part of Erasmus+ general call
C. SPECIFIC MESSAGING	
Higher education	European Student Card Initiative: a digital one-stop shop to open up more opportunities for students and universities.

⁶ Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on European universities.

Reasons to believe	The European Student Card Initiative digitalises and simplifies the administrative processes linked to mobility, both for mobile students and higher education institutions. Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en
Higher education	Greener Erasmus+ for students and universities
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Top-up for green travel + Focus on greater sustainability in Erasmus+ projects
School education, adult education, VET	Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for all ages, from early childhood to adult education
Reasons to believe	<p>Individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Mobility for all school pupils including VET learners. + Increased language learning support. + More international mobility opportunities in a partner country outside of Europe. <p>Organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Better opportunities for new, smaller and grassroots organisations. New accreditation tool accessible to smaller and new organisations. + Centres of Vocational Excellence contributing to high-quality skills for quality employment and career-long opportunities
School education	<p>Teachers (including early childhood and care staff):</p> <p>Erasmus+ supports mobility and reinvention of the classroom.</p> <p>Erasmus+ supports digital transformation by offering cooperation projects</p>
Reasons to believe	<p>Erasmus Teacher Academies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Increasing the digital competency and awareness of teachers and trainers. + Digital pedagogical material. + New role of teachers in the virtual classroom. + More virtual classrooms with Erasmus+.
Youth	Your (youth) engagement starts with Erasmus+
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Boosting youth involvement in society with new local and transnational participation activities led by young people and/or youth organisations + Continued informal intercultural learning mobility experiences through the well-established Youth Exchanges + New programme features and increased budget are a powerful tool to support youth work and mitigate risk of marginalisation or effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

C. SPECIFIC MESSAGING

DiscoverEU	Open to all 18-year-olds ready to expand their comfort zone
Reasons to believe	+ After a successful pilot programme, DiscoverEU is part of the new Erasmus+, giving all 18-year-old Europeans the opportunity to explore Europe through learning experiences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Specific features such as top-ups for young people from remote areas or support for young travellers with special needs. + Travelling mainly by train, DiscoverEU participants can become ambassadors for sustainable travel. + Participation in DiscoverEU expands their ‘digital comfort zone’: most programme features are digital.
International cooperation	Erasmus+ opens up more worldwide opportunities The whole world starts with Erasmus+
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + More opportunities for international learning mobility in the field of HE and Youth , and new mobility offers in other sectors such as VET and Sport. + New Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters features to attract higher education institutions from third countries and create unique opportunities for student mobility. + Support from a new EMJM Design Measures sub-action when setting up innovative and highly integrated master programmes. + New capacity building activities with third country VET and sport institutions. + After a successful pilot, the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges form part of the new programme.
Sport	Be active and get moving with Erasmus+ Active living starts with Erasmus+
Reasons to believe	Staff at sports organisations can improve their competencies and acquire new skills thanks to cross-border mobility under the new Erasmus+. Focus on inclusion: more accessibility for smaller organisations. Innovative links with health, the promotion of healthier lifestyles and the prevention of risk factors for athletes.

8. Communication approach

8.1. Tone of voice

The general communication approach and tone of voice used are based on the following elements.

Friendly and approachable

Think of Erasmus+ as your supportive ‘learning coach’ throughout your life. With many choices to explore, you can find a learning experience that is relevant and accessible to you.

Feel-good

Erasmus+ is a positive movement that leaves people and communities feeling energised after their experience outside of their comfort zone has ended.

Memorable

Whether a week of collaboration or months spent training or studying abroad, it will be something participants will remember years after the experience is over.

Inspiring

People are ready to share their experience and need to be inspired to do so.

People @heart

This is about the experiences of the people and organisations who grow together through the programme.

Where communication targets only decision makers through official documents, the tone of voice will slightly be adapted to reflect the institutional norms.

8.2. Vocabulary

When beneficiaries and stakeholders are asked to summarise the Erasmus+ experience in a single word, some inspiring terminology emerges. Summarised below, they can help draft rich, yet consistent citizen-facing messages.

Growth. Multiculturalism. Progress. Adventure. Lifelong. Kaleidoscope. Mind-shifting. Everything. Travelling. Story. Challenging. Independence. Open-mindedness. Rainbow. Development. Essential. Discovery. Freedom. Worth it. Unforgettable. Opportunity. Networking. Unique. Brilliant. Evolution. Memories. Mind blowing. Awesome. Amazing. Life-changing. Friendship. Love. Immortal. Possibilities. Inspiring. Complete. Vision. Fantastic.

Source: Erasmus+ Facebook account, interviews and focus groups

8.3. DOs and DON'Ts

DOs – what to say/approach to take	DON'Ts – best to avoid
Storytelling: the creative approach expresses the 'transformative' power of Erasmus+, likely to create before and after memories.	Underestimating the huge role that an Erasmus+ experience plays in someone's life or in an organisation's existence.
Approach: Inspiring, light-hearted.	Institutional and/or too technical.
Target audience + various opportunities: adapt messages, tools and channels to the target audiences.	While key identity elements must always be present, avoid a 'one size fits all' approach for content.
People: put people and their experiences (individuals or organisations) first.	Policies enable human experiences; they are not the central point in communication.
Call to action: straightforward emotional ('starts here') or rational ('apply now') call to action must always be easily visible.	Multiple or complex messages without a clear indication of where people can find out more about a certain topic.
Vocabulary: fewer opportunities, experience, evolution, growth.	Disadvantaged background, elitist, privileged.
Visuals/content: use diverse and real examples in communication.	Avoid stock imagery or similar examples when possible.
Sharing: be proud in sharing communication actions or tools that have worked.	Copy or imagery that may not be relevant locally. Make sure it fits with local culture and realities.

9. Creative approach

The creative route, '**Erasmus+ It all starts here**' was selected and further developed.

The creative concept is based on the positioning and umbrella strategic message presented in points 7.1 and 7.2. '*Erasmus+ is a powerful learning experience that opens up opportunities for everyone to develop*' has been translated into various creative proposals and the chosen route has been positively evaluated in focus groups with programme stakeholders and potential beneficiaries.

RATIONALE OF CHOSEN CREATIVE CONCEPT

We are not born equal and we do not start our journeys from the same place. But where we start should not determine where we end. Erasmus+ is committed to giving everyone the opportunity to have a learning experience that could shape the rest of their lives.

This idea of 'beginnings' will let us emphasise the:

- + inclusivity of the programme, highlighting the diverse backgrounds of Erasmus+ participants and where they started from;
- + digital aspects of the programme, highlighting how innovative changes start with Erasmus+;
- + green ambition of Erasmus+, showing how we can all start tackling climate change challenges.

We will show that Erasmus+ fosters entirely new beginnings for individuals and organisations alike, whether through vocational training, adult learning, joint Master's programmes, youth exchanges, etc.

'It all starts here' can be also turned into a powerful call to action: with Erasmus+ it is possible to begin a new learning experience.

With this creative concept, we aim to create enthusiasm for the new programme: a truly new beginning for Erasmus+.

ERASMUS+ IT ALL STARTS HERE

MANIFESTO

At Erasmus+ we all have different beginnings, filled with worries, dreams and hidden possibilities, that we turn into endless opportunities and entirely new beginnings.

Beginnings of boundless cultural enrichment, unforgettable learning experiences, and unique chances to work together.

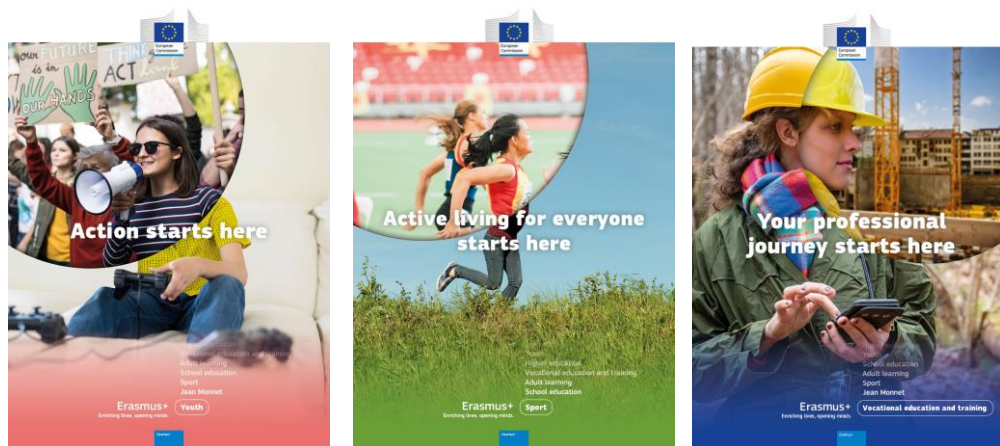
Beginnings of unexpected friendships, impactful exchanges, and once-in-a-lifetime memories.

Beginnings that are creating new paths towards an inclusive, greener and digital Europe.

Here, no matter how you begin, you will go further than you thought.

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

VISUAL EXERCISE FOR THE CREATIVE CONCEPT



VISUAL COMPOSITION

Two contextually different photographs are merged into a perfectly aligned composition in order to highlight the before-and-after impact of Erasmus+ on the lives of its participants.

The circle is positioned to create the effect of a magnifying glass and to help the audience to focus on the programme's transformational outcome (the 'what comes after').

In the animated version, the circle transforms into one of the many dots that make up the '+'. This creates a sense of inclusion and connectedness, which the programme aims to facilitate.



Each key visual showcases a specific sector that is part of Erasmus+. The sector that is portrayed in the visual is also highlighted at the bottom of the page.

VISUALS EXECUTION

While the examples that will be produced highlight the sectors below, the same mechanism can be used to develop more executions.

- + Sport
- + School education

Different colours may be used in accordance to different sectors or topics in order to intensify the message. For example, Green can be used for a youth project on sustainability.

When creating the visuals, it is important to consider a fair balance in terms of gender, age, nationality and race. Individual and group visuals are equally relevant depending on the sector that is highlighted.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

The key design elements are:

Photography: While the photography used is meant to reflect the multiple facets of Erasmus+, the style of the photography is the same across all visuals. The photos should feel as natural and real as possible, both for the individual ones, as well as for groups.

Circle and background: while the circle highlights the future (during or after the Erasmus+ experience), the background picture depicts the person's or organisation's present or past (before starting the programme).

Tagline and logo: The signature is very straight-forward. *Erasmus+ Enriching lives, opening minds*, always accompanied by the EU flag. This must be always be used in both online and printed visuals.

Typography: When the layout follows the charter of the European Commission, the use of EC SQUARE SANS PRO is mandatory. When the layout does not follow the charter of the European Commission, the use of ROBOTO is mandatory.

COPY ELEMENTS

Headline: The headline is a reference to the sector portrayed in the respective visual. There is a common part in all headlines – '... starts here' which is a powerful statement that Erasmus+ can offer a (new) positive start at any stage in the life of an individual or organisation.

List of all sectors: The various sectors of Erasmus+ are listed towards the bottom of the visual. In digital formats, they can be clickable and the audience can navigate throughout the various opportunities.

Tagline and logo: The signature is very straight-forward. *Erasmus+ Enriching lives, opening minds*, always accompanied by the EU flag. This must be always be used in both online and printed visuals.

Hashtag: An optional hashtag can be added – either #Erasmusplus as an additional branding elements or a partner hashtag, if case.

The creative concept has been further developed into graphic guidelines and the communication materials requested. The Visuals Guidelines are available as a separate document.

10. Outreach approach

10.1. European and national communication

The various actors involved in the Erasmus+ programme have different roles and responsibilities when it comes to communication of the programme.

- + DG EAC: develops European guidelines which highlight the novelties of the programme, and visual guidelines/an 'inspiration book' to encourage consistent communication; launches communication actions and campaigns at European level, mainly communicating the 'bigger picture'.
- + Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA): supports DGEAC, boosts the launch at European level, and communicates funding opportunities related to centralised actions.
- + Key stakeholders and multipliers (National Agencies, EuroDesks, national Erasmus+ offices, EC Representations): adapt communication to national realities, run national communication actions and share feedback with other countries and DG EAC. Responsible for communicating more practical information about the application process, and promoting different touchpoints where potential beneficiaries can find support at national level (e.g. WhatsApp groups).
- + Beneficiaries (individuals, as well as organisations such as the Erasmus Student Network, universities, associations and schools): co-create valuable content powered by own experiences and share them with their peers and networks, becoming genuine ambassadors for the programme.

When managing key communication campaigns or actions (such as the launch of the new Erasmus+ programme), it is important to keep a stronger focus on internal communication and stakeholder engagement so as to balance the communication launch at European level. Regular, structured sessions with the internal teams, as well as with key stakeholders and multipliers, will lead to complementary communication efforts and avoid potential overlaps in outreach. An overview of this can be found below.

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
	Internal launch	Key stakeholder and multiplier engagement	EU launch and national adaptation	Structured sharing of information and assets
PURPOSE	Align DG EAC and EACEA teams on communication ambitions and approach.	Align key stakeholders and multipliers on novelties and European communication approach.	European launch and preparation for launch at Member State level.	Sharing intelligence aiming to inspire and enhance the sense of community for those creating communication around Erasmus+.
ACTION	Video briefing session and sharing of visual guidelines/'inspiration book'.	Webinar/video briefing sessions and sharing of visual guidelines/'inspiration book' and other relevant documentation.	DG EAC launches communication on its own channels. Key stakeholders and multipliers adapt them to create national communication plans and materials, which are in line with the European guidelines/'inspiration book' and respond to their own needs.	Sharing best practices and communication materials through stories via different channels outlined in detail in the communication plan.

TIMING	Min. 2 weeks before Phase 3.	Min. 1 week before Phase 3.	Launch moment.	Regular exchanges. Ongoing via platforms/monthly live catch-ups.
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DG EAC has defined a strategy for the dissemination and exploitation of programme results, which covers the Erasmus+, Creative Europe (CE) and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes over the 2019–2020 period. This new strategy builds on the 2015 one, and has taken on board the recommendations from an external evaluation that was carried out in 2017, most importantly by aligning it with the needs expressed by stakeholders (including EACEA and Erasmus+ National Agencies). The strategy is organised around four key objectives.

- + Objective 1: Produce project stories with policy relevance for communication purposes.
- + Objective 2: Provide support to beneficiaries on communication, dissemination and utilisation of projects.
- + Objective 3: Facilitate the exchange of experiences among Erasmus+ National Agencies and EACEA.
- + Objective 4: Foster sharing and re-use of project information and results via the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and ESC Project Results Platforms.

DG EAC, EACEA, Erasmus+ National Agencies and project beneficiaries are instrumental in selecting and disseminating stories and supporting communication efforts on programme results. Reinforced support for stakeholders in their communication shall therefore be provided, for example: additional guidance when needed (especially before big campaigns, communication actions or when new tools or priorities are announced); and more templates/models for other formats such as videos, factsheets and stories. This support will be particularly beneficial for stakeholders or multipliers with fewer communication resources.

10.2. Tools and tactics

Tools and tactics proposed in this section will be further developed in the communication plan, giving more detail, and showing how and when different tools can be disseminated. The chosen tactics will also be further aligned with the dissemination and exploitation of results strategy. Long-term communication products will also be highlighted in the communication plan.

Inspiration book

Inspiring and easy-to-use guidelines, created and disseminated by DG EAC, to help improve consistency while being flexible enough to integrate national needs. The inspiration book will include:

- + the manifesto;
- + tone of voice and creative DOs and DON'Ts;
- + proposal(s) on how to tell the Erasmus+ success stories under the new concept;
- + other ideas/inspiration for how to communicate around the new concept;
- + brand guidelines.

With this tool, different stakeholders will be able to create their own communication materials inspired by the new Erasmus+ storytelling, and be consistent with proposed branding elements. This will enable the story of the new programme to be told by many voices, adding to its richness, and growing over time.

Simple toolkit

Stakeholders, but also DG EAC, expressed the need for more comprehensive communication materials, such as:

- + a one-page PDF with infographic(s) illustrating new Erasmus+ in a very simple, visual way (need for clear and simple communication material to convey messages about the programme);
- + videos to explain the programme in the local language;
- + social media materials such as readymade posts, GIFs, etc.;

- + electronic brochures for online events;
- + recorded presentations, videos, tutorials, etc.

Maximising existing channels

Existing channels will be analysed in the communication plan, including: the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (VALOR) ⁽⁷⁾; the Communication Hub for promoting Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps youth programmes (SALTO) ⁽⁸⁾; existing newsletters; events, etc. These will need to be thoroughly mapped and studied, together with their governance and performance, so that they can be streamlined (if not centralised) and play a coherent role in the overall strategy in the years to come.

Digital communities (European level)

As mentioned in the previous sections, Erasmus+ has dedicated Twitter and Facebook accounts with large communities. Management of these communities needs clearer audience targeting and content tailoring for each channel. In particular:

- + Twitter would mainly target stakeholders and decision makers with content and updates that are relevant for them.
- + Facebook would mainly target current and future beneficiaries, including potential applicants, with shareable engaging or interactive content that is likely to increase the size of the community.

Umbrella accounts, such as European Youth or EUSport on Twitter, often host information about Erasmus+ too. In this case, extra attention should be given to the Erasmus+ branding elements, to ensure the audience immediately recognises that the post is related to the Erasmus+ programme in general, or to one of the opportunities within Erasmus+.

Youth engagement

It is important to strengthen the communication actions targeting youth, especially on social media, given that young people are a core audience for Erasmus+ actions. The key to communicating with young people is to create fresh, engaging and attractive content (GIFs, memes, funny and unexpected visuals) and use informal 'edutainment'-focused language. For example, a special tone of voice and youth-friendly visual content can be applied to Facebook and Instagram posts. This will ensure that messages resonate well with the audience while still being in line with the overall tone of voice for each account.

Mix of traditional channels and new media or innovative actions

The communication approach would always consider a good balance between actions that are typically used (e.g. stakeholder outreach, traditional media such as local newspapers and magazines, presence at relevant events) and more innovative actions that are likely to reach more people and go beyond the 'usual suspects' (e.g. podcasts, Vice, Konbini, gaming platforms).

Video content

There are a lot of things to communicate about the Erasmus+ programme and experiences. Most of them could be portrayed in a more dynamic and engaging way, such as creating short, animated GIFs ⁽⁹⁾ or explainer videos ⁽¹⁰⁾. We recommend increasing efforts to create video content that would enhance the storytelling. Based on Cisco forecasts, video will represent 82 % of all consumer internet traffic by 2021 ⁽¹¹⁾, so not adapting to the media that audiences are used to consuming may result in a loss of interest in the content we are disseminating. A new DG EAC YouTube account could be set up for video content. If that is not an option,

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

⁸ <https://communication-hub.eu/>

⁹ Example of an animated GIF: <https://twitter.com/EUErasmusPlus/status/936277191775662085>

¹⁰ Example of an explainer video on social media: <https://twitter.com/HorizonMaqEU/status/1286684674643898368>

¹¹ Source: https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/m/en_us/solutions/service-provider/vni-forecast-highlights/pdf/Global_2021_Forecast_Highlights.pdf. The forecast was done before the COVID-19 crisis. Video consumption has increased even more with the pandemic.

we would recommend producing and posting more content on existing social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). Some of the videos could also be uploaded to DG COMM's YouTube playlist.

Live (Q&A) sessions with the audience

Regular live interactions organised with DG EAC and/or EACEA, involving young people and other potential beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ programme from all over Europe, will create a more intimate level of engagement with the audience and help bring the European institutions closer to its citizens. Live sessions could take the form of informative sessions about the new programme, pandemic updates in relation to Erasmus+ opportunities, and facilitate the sharing of real stories. Whatever the topic, they are very likely to attract larger audiences, generating more visibility and strengthening the idea of a Europe that is closer to its citizens. In terms of format, they can be webinars or Facebook Live Q&As. Participants would depend on the subject, and the Q&As could feature a DG EAC social media manager as moderator, with different guests such as DG EAC policy/programme experts, project beneficiaries, stakeholders and National Agencies.

Real stories

The power of the reality factor for a programme that puts experiences at its heart goes without saying. Erasmus+ stories are stronger when real people, real environments and real experiences are shared. Real stories can be disseminated at national or European level, and we recommend an even stronger focus on sharing the real, exciting experiences that people or organisations have had thanks to Erasmus+.

Moreover, a script and/or structure for how these stories can come to life (both in terms of content and shape) can help content creators develop more consistent stories from one opportunity to another, or from one country to another. This type of script can be included in the 'inspiration book' for guidance.

Finally, these real stories must highlight key aspects of the new Erasmus+, namely inclusion, sustainability and digital: someone with fewer opportunities or a smaller organisation that benefited from Erasmus+; a group of young people who travelled by train or bike to the destination country and had fun on the journey; or someone who got a new job thanks to improved digital skills. These stories must be put in the limelight. People from similar walks of life will relate to their stories and be inspired to go for the programme or to go green as well.

11. Monitoring and evaluation

Following the recommendation of a stronger focus on internal communication and stakeholder engagement, these actions shall be measured as follows.

- + Surveys sent to stakeholders and multipliers to assess the satisfaction level with the materials and guidance received, as well as to gather insights on what can be improved in future. To get an inclusive perspective, the survey can cover representatives from all Member States, using EUSurvey or other online survey tools such as Voxco.
- + Calls with key partners (e.g. National Agencies, EuroDesks) will enable a more in-depth assessment of what went well, the most useful materials received, best practices, and needs and expectations for the future. A balanced representation of Member States (geographically, by size and by availability of internal resources) can be identified. Video calls can take place using software such as Teams and follow a pre-defined discussion guide.
- + Working group with key partners and selected stakeholders/multipliers. Based on observations and insights from the previous points, a working session on communication could be organised to discuss the results and way forward. This would be a live session, via video call or – even better – in person, when face-to-face meetings are possible again.

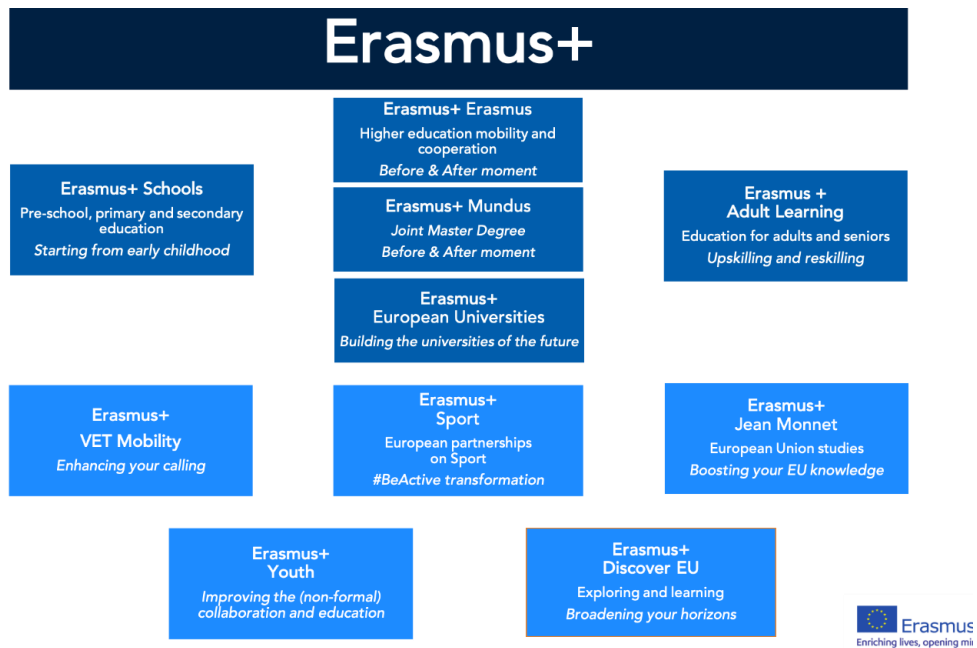
12. Additional recommendations

1. Consider dedicated communication campaigns to raise the profile of digital tools and platforms connected to Erasmus+, while clearly highlighting how it can help or boost the Erasmus+ experience. These platforms may be very useful, but there is little awareness about them compared to the Erasmus+ brand.
2. Consider boosting alumni participation, beyond higher education alumni networks. Those who have experienced the programme are motivated and energised, and are therefore the best candidates to become genuine ambassadors for the programme. Inspired by the ‘Swedish number’ tourism campaign ⁽¹²⁾ consider a ‘Call an Erasmus+ Alumni’ campaign.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkvaqWYS-MM>; <https://www.theswedishnumber.com/>

13. Annex

13.1. Key Erasmus+ opportunities



13.2. Digital platforms and tools connected to Erasmus+

eTwinning	Encouraging European schools to collaborate
	https://www.etwinning.net
School education gateway	Europe's online platform for school education
	https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
	https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en
Youth portal	Access to youth related European and national information
	https://europa.eu/youth/EU_en
SELFIE	Tools meant to help schools assess their digital learning potential, involving the whole school community in the process (leaders, teachers, students)
	https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en
Europass	Personal tool for learning and working in Europe
	https://europa.eu/europass/en
Youthpass	Tool that documents learning outcomes from youth and solidarity activities
	https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/about/
European Student Card Initiative	A digital one-stop-shop through the Erasmus+ mobile app for students to manage all administrative steps related to their mobility and access services before, during and after.
	Through the Erasmus Without Paper Network, higher education institutions also have a one-stop-shop to facilitate digital mobility management.

	https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en
HEInnovate	www.heinnovate.eu

In addition to these existing digital platforms and tools, under the digital education action plan, a flagship initiative will be launched in the upcoming years: the European Digital Education Hub, enabling EU-wide exchange for digital educational cooperation (¹³).

There are also various digital initiatives not directly connected to Erasmus+ that can still be used to promote the programme and its role in digitalisation of European education:

- + European Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, launched in September 2020 (¹⁴)
- + Scientix (¹⁵)
- + Code Week (¹⁶)
- + Digital Education Hackathon (¹⁷).

13.3. What does ‘fewer opportunities’ mean?

- + Disability (participants with special needs, whether mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other).
- + Learning difficulties (early school-leavers; low-qualified adults; young people with poor school performance).
- + Economic obstacles (people with a low standard of living, low income or dependence on social welfare; homeless people; young people in long-term unemployment or poverty; people in debt or with financial problems).
- + Cultural differences (immigrants or refugees, or their descendants; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties).
- + Health problems (people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions).
- + Social obstacles (people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.; people with limited social skills, or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; (ex-)offenders; (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans).
- + Geographical obstacles (people from remote or rural areas; people living on small islands or in peripheral regions; people from urban problem zones; people from less well-served areas, with limited public transport, poor facilities, etc.).

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

¹⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/european-digital-skills-and-jobs-platform-project-team-starts-work>

¹⁵ <http://www.scientix.eu/>

¹⁶ <https://codeweek.eu/>

¹⁷ <https://digieduhack.com/en/>