



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Mr Daniel GÜNTHER
President of the Bundesrat
Leipziger Straße 3 - 4
10117 BERLIN*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 {COM(2018) 367 final}.

The Commission put forward this proposal to ensure the continuity of the current Erasmus+ programme, in which more than 9 million people have participated so far and which is considered a big success story.

The programme will be a key instrument in the work towards a European Education Area, a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders and where speaking two foreign languages has become the norm. It constitutes a concrete response to the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, which called for 'a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent'¹, and follows up on the call of the European Council of 14 December 2017 to 'step up mobility and exchanges, including through a substantially strengthened, inclusive and extended Erasmus+ programme'².

The Commission welcomes the supportive Opinion of the Bundesrat and is pleased that it highlights how the programme contributes to the personal development of its participants, intercultural understanding, the internationalisation of education and the building of a European identity. The Commission concurs with the Bundesrat's assessment that the programme has a clear European added value.

During the 30-years of Erasmus campaign in 2017, the Commission witnessed a broad understanding of the fact that the programme supports not only higher education students, but all education and training sectors as well as youth and sport. The

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration/pdf>

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>

Commission thus proposes to drop the “plus” from the name of the new programme to focus on the well-known brand name. The Commission will continue to communicate, in close cooperation with Member States, about the new programme to ensure that all Erasmus opportunities continue to be well-known and visible.

The Commission agrees with the Bundesrat that the future programme’s primary objective should be to promote physical mobility. It will therefore not reduce the number of physical mobility opportunities. In fact, virtual and blended mobility formats will be complementary and offered in addition to physical mobility to make the programme more accessible and to reach out to more individuals.

As for the Bundesrat’s comment regarding the contribution of the new programme to the Union’s policy agenda for schools, the Commission wishes to underline that this contribution will be within the remit of the overall strategic framework for Union policy cooperation in the field of education, training and youth, in line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The specific attention put on schools in the proposal aims to boost mobility at school level and support teachers and school leaders in meeting common challenges. The contribution of the future programme to the corporate communication activities of the political priorities of the Union is common to all its funding programmes.

Concerning the question of the Bundesrat on the education-related added value of the new “DiscoverEU” initiative, the Commission would like to point out that “DiscoverEU” fits well with the European Union’s ambition to promote learning mobility, active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of young people. As part of a European Parliament Preparatory Action adopted in early 2018, it offers 18 years olds a chance to travel throughout Europe and understand better what the European Union stands for. It promotes informal learning through the discovery of heritage sites, places of historic interest, traditions and cultures in Europe. Building on the current pilot programme, the Commission aims to develop further the “DiscoverEU” initiative, with the help of the Member States and stakeholders, to ensure the consistency of the action with the overall programme objectives.

The Commission takes note of the position of the Bundesrat regarding the use of delegated powers for developing a monitoring and evaluation framework as well as the role of Member States in the implementation of the programme and recalls that these issues are currently being discussed with the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council.

Detailed replies to the more technical comments made by the Bundesrat are provided in Annex.

The Commission hopes that these comments address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Tibor Navracsics
Member of the Commission*

Annex

The Commission has carefully considered each of the issues raised by the Bundesrat in its Opinion and is pleased to offer the following clarifications.

Highlighting of specific fields or disciplines (point 5):

The Erasmus programme will continue supporting all disciplines and fields. Specific sectors are highlighted in the Explanatory Memorandum and in the recitals of the draft Regulation to provide examples of fields in which the programme could contribute to strengthening the Union's innovation capacity.

Simplification and operational costs of National Agencies (point 8):

The Commission will continue working with the National Agencies to simplify further administrative procedures, also taking into account the need to make access to the programme more inclusive and user-friendly. The draft Regulation foresees that the contribution National Agencies will receive for their operational costs will be adapted to the increased budget of the programme.

Budget issues (points 9 and 10):

While the increase in the programme's budget will be implemented gradually, the budget of the first year of the future programme (2021) will already be bigger than that of the last year of the current programme (2020). This is in line with the budgetary profile of all other programmes and the overall availabilities under the future Multiannual Financial Framework and will ensure a seamless transition from the current programme to the next.

National Agencies will continue to manage most of the funds of the future programme. The Explanatory Memorandum of the proposal, under point 3 ('Impact Assessment'), details the criteria that determine how certain actions will be managed. However, the draft Regulation does not name specific actions in order to allow for flexibility over the seven-year programme period, as some actions might evolve from a directly-managed "pilot" phase to indirect management.

The international dimension of the programme will be financed both through future Heading 2 funds (e.g. the Joint Master Degrees) and through Heading 6 funds, channelled into Erasmus through the future Neighbourhood, Development and Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA). While the Erasmus proposal sets out that Heading 2-funded international activities will benefit from a significant increase in line with the rest of the programme, the amounts coming from the Neighbourhood, Development and Cooperation Instrument and the Instrument of Pre-Accession are being negotiated separately and it is not yet possible to be more specific on concrete amounts.

Definitions (points 13, 14 and 15):

In line with the standards for Union legal texts, definitions are listed in the order in which they appear in the text of the Regulation. Consequently, the list of definitions only includes terms that appear in the dispositive part of the Regulation. While the term ‘learning support’ does not appear in the dispositive part of the draft Regulation, it is included under the definitions in order to support the definitions of ‘non-formal learning’ and ‘informal learning’. All terms used in the draft Regulation refer by default to notions and actions related to the programme.

National agencies from predecessor programmes (point 16):

The Bundesrat’s concern is already covered by the draft Regulation and hence no further text would be needed in Article 24(7). In fact, if a new National Agency is designated for the Erasmus programme, Article 24(6) (on revoking the former National Agency), Article 23(3) (on designating a National Agency) and Articles 23(5) and 23(6) (on the ex-ante assessment for National Agencies) apply.

Presentation of concrete proposals regarding implementation (point 23):

In parallel to the ongoing negotiations, the Commission is preparing the ground for the implementation of the future programme to ensure a seamless transition from the current programme to the future one. During this process, the Commission will cooperate closely with the National Agencies in a number of working groups.

The work on preparing the implementation of the future programme will address a number of points raised in the Bundesrat’s Opinion, namely the possibility of setting-up cross-sectorial projects (point 6); the possibility of organising preparatory visits (point 12); the possibility of taking greater account of existing local youth organisations as applicants (point 17); work on the improvement of Information Technology tools (point 18); the possibility of implementing simplified contracts for small-scale partnerships (point 19); the assessment and integration of the findings from the first projects of the European Universities and the Centres of Vocational Excellence under the current programme into the new one (point 20); and work on synergies with other Union programmes (point 21).