

Policy Paper: Enhancing Transparency and Inclusivity in Erasmus+ Guide 2024



Executive Summary

The Erasmus+ Programme remains a cornerstone of the European Union's education, training, and mobility initiatives. However, recent changes introduced in the Erasmus+ Guide 2024, including a two-year establishment requirement for organizations and a 10-application limit per deadline, have raised critical questions about inclusivity, transparency, and fairness, particularly for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. This paper examines the implications of these updates and proposes actionable recommendations to ensure the programme continues to serve its diverse stakeholders equitably and effectively.

The last Erasmus+ Guide published in November 2023 has introduced **two significant changes**: organizations must now be established for **at least two years before applying**, and they are restricted to involvement in **a maximum of 10 applications** per deadline. While these updates aim to streamline the application process, they raise several **questions** regarding **inclusivity, fairness**, and the **consultation** process, particularly in relation to the **Vocational Education & Training (VET)** sector.

Introduction

Erasmus+ has long been celebrated for its commitment to fostering educational mobility and collaboration across Europe and beyond. Yet, as the programme evolves, it is essential to ensure that updates to its guidelines align with its core values of inclusivity and accessibility. The recently published Erasmus+ Guide 2024, while aiming to streamline the application process, has introduced new rules that disproportionately impact certain sectors and stakeholders, particularly within VET.

This paper outlines key concerns raised by the VET community and presents recommendations for enhancing transparency and inclusivity in future iterations of the Erasmus+ guidelines.

The concerns

As stakeholders within the VET community, we see an urgent need for a **more inclusive** and **transparent** approach when revising future Erasmus+ guidelines. Below, we outline key concerns and areas where improvement is needed:

1. Non-inclusive Consultation Process

The absence of key VET associations, such as the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB), from the consultation process is a missed opportunity. By failing to engage VET experts, the European Commission has overlooked valuable insights that could enhance the program's effectiveness and address sector-specific challenges. Collaborative dialogue should be a cornerstone in policy development, especially when changes have significant implications.

2. Practical Challenges for VET Institutions

The new 10-application limit poses significant challenges, particularly for regions where schools share organizational identifiers (OID). For instance, in Germany, multiple schools under a single district might struggle to stay within the limit, reducing their chances for participation. Similarly, many French Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), having been established less than two years ago, will now find themselves ineligible under the new rule. These limitations disproportionately affect VET institutions and restrict opportunities for growth and innovation.

3. **Unequal Treatment of VET and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**

A critical observation is the exclusion of HEIs from the 10-application limit, creating a disparity between sectors. This differentiation undermines the parity between VET and higher education, despite ongoing efforts to position VET as a competitive counterpart to HEIs. For consistency and fairness, both sectors should either be subject to the same limitations or be excluded uniformly.

4. **Lack of Transparency and Dissemination**

Before the official publication of the guide, informal dissemination of these clauses raised concerns about transparency and equitable preparation time. In addition, similar issues were observed in the 2023 Erasmus+ Guide concerning the lack of accessible information about Pact for Skills coordinators, limiting potential applicants' readiness for LOT2 Innovation Alliances.

5. **Imbalance between Consortia & Quality of design**

There is growing concern within the VET community that the focus of project selection is slowly shifting from the quality of proposals to the strength of consortiums. This risks lowering the overall quality of Erasmus+ projects. Unlike Horizon Europe, where leading multiple projects is seen as a strength, VET institutions are restricted for participating in multiple initiatives, reducing their chances for meaningful engagement.

The Way Forward

To ensure the Erasmus+ programme continues to serve all sectors equitably, we recommend the following:

- **More Open Consultations:** Engaging with key VET associations and stakeholders during the drafting of future guidelines will foster mutual understanding and lead to more effective policy implementation.
- **Consistent Treatment Across Sectors:** VET and other educational strands, such as Higher Education (HE) should be treated equally in terms of application limits and eligibility criteria, reflecting their equally important roles in the European education ecosystem.

- **Enhanced Transparency:** Clearer dissemination of information and more lead time for stakeholders will promote fairness and allow all organizations to prepare adequately.

The Erasmus+ Programme should embrace a collaborative, but also bottom-up approach in developing its guidelines. By prioritising inclusivity and transparency, the European Commission can ensure the fair distribution of opportunities and the continued success of Erasmus+ projects across all educational sectors.

Conclusion

The Erasmus+ Programme's success hinges on its ability to adapt to the evolving needs of its stakeholders while maintaining its core values of inclusivity and transparency. The recent updates to the 2024 guidelines, while well-intentioned, have highlighted areas for improvement that must be addressed to ensure equitable access and meaningful participation for all sectors, particularly VET.

By adopting the recommendations outlined in this paper, the European Commission can strengthen the Erasmus+ Programme's role as a catalyst for educational innovation and collaboration, ensuring that it continues to empower learners, educators, and institutions across Europe and beyond.

References

European Commission. (2023). *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024*.

OECD. (2022). *Equity and Inclusion in Lifelong Learning Policies*.

European Training Foundation. (2024). *The Role of VET in Advancing EU Education Goals*.