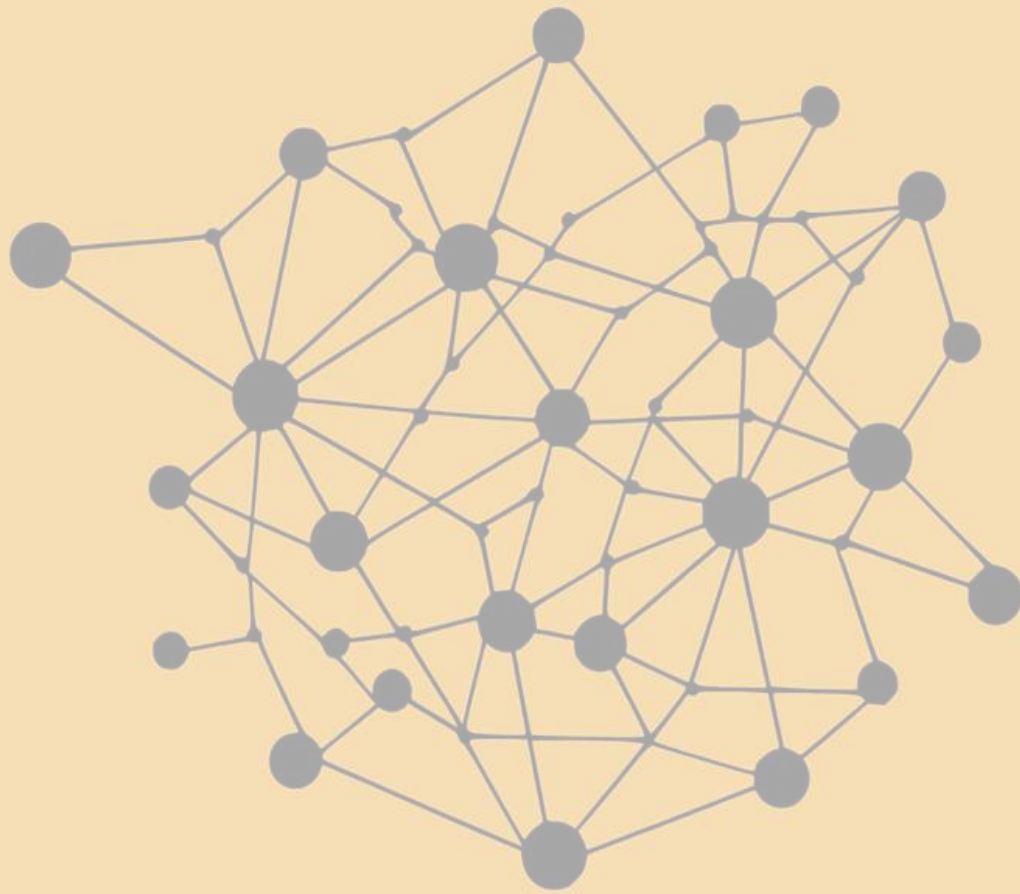


Position Paper

the Upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034



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EVBB Position Paper on the Upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034

Ensuring Stable, Strategic Investment in Skills, VET, and Lifelong Learning

As the European Commission and Member States begin shaping the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the discussion arrives at a time when Europe faces major economic, social and demographic pressures. Skills shortages persist in almost every sector, regional inequalities are widening, and both companies and workers must adjust to digital transformation, the green transition and shifting labour market patterns.

For EVBB, the MFF negotiations represent a crucial moment. Over the past decade, European programmes such as **ESF+**, **Erasmus+**, **Digital Europe**, **Horizon Europe**, **ERDF**, **RRF**, **the Just Transition Fund** and others have played a decisive role in strengthening vocational education and training, expanding mobility opportunities, modernising institutions and supporting adults in reskilling. The next MFF must preserve these achievements while equipping Europe to respond to challenges that will intensify during the 2030s.

This position paper outlines EVBB's expectations for the forthcoming MFF, offered in a constructive spirit and with full appreciation of the fiscal pressures faced by Member States.

1. Why stable and ambitious investment in VET and skills is essential

Across Europe, VET providers report the same issues: difficulty recruiting trainers, pressure to update equipment, new demands for digital and green competences, and rising needs among adults who must retrain to remain active in fast-changing labour markets. These challenges cannot be addressed through short-term or fragmented funding. They require a stable financial framework that allows institutions to plan, innovate and build long-term partnerships.

The evidence is consistent: investment in skills supports employment, productivity, competitiveness and social cohesion. Skills policies reduce mismatches, strengthen regional development and help societies adapt to technological and demographic change. Without sustained investment, the gap between labour market demands and training capacity risks widening, affecting both companies and individuals.

The next MFF has the opportunity to support a Europe that is ready for the future: a Europe with stronger VET institutions, confident learners and well-prepared workers across all regions.



2. A forward-looking MFF must recognise the central role of VET

EVBB hopes the next MFF will reaffirm that vocational education and training is one of the most strategic investments the EU can make. Over the last years, VET has increasingly been recognised as essential for industrial competitiveness, social inclusion and resilience. The upcoming MFF can reinforce this progress in several ways.

First, it can ensure that **ESF+** continues to be the main driver of skills development, supporting institutions as they modernise learning, reach disadvantaged groups and cooperate with employers. ESF+ has allowed many VET providers to implement programmes that would not be possible otherwise; maintaining and strengthening this role will be crucial.

Second, the next **Erasmus+** should remain accessible to VET providers of all sizes. Mobility plays a powerful role in improving quality, supporting staff development and promoting innovation. To keep mobility available for young people, adults, teachers and trainers alike, Erasmus+ needs stable resources and simple procedures.

Third, programmes such as **Digital Europe**, **Horizon Europe**, **ERDF** and others should continue enabling institutions to acquire equipment, develop new curricula, upgrade facilities and participate in innovation ecosystems. VET providers must have the means to engage in digital transition projects, green skills initiatives and regional collaboration.

3. Ensuring accessibility and continuity for VET providers

One of the most important aspects of the next MFF will be the **continuity** it provides for training institutions. VET providers often work within limited budgets and need clarity to plan their investment in staff, equipment and partnerships.

A stable MFF can help in several ways:

- by keeping procedures clear and manageable for smaller organisations,
- by encouraging long-term cooperation instead of short project cycles,
- by providing room for regional and cross-border partnerships,
- and by ensuring that programmes remain consistent so institutions do not need to rebuild their expertise every few years.

Such continuity will allow VET providers to focus on quality and learner support rather than administrative adaptation.



4. The MFF should promote inclusion and equal opportunities

As negotiations advance, EVBB encourages decision-makers to preserve the strong social dimension of European funding. A large share of Europe's future workforce consists of adults who need to update their skills, migrants and refugees who require guidance and training, older workers navigating job changes, and young people at risk of dropping out.

The upcoming MFF should ensure that programmes remain accessible to those who benefit most from VET: people who rely on vocational pathways to enter or re-enter the labour market. Funding should continue supporting basic skills, personalised guidance, and programmes tailored to learners who need additional support to succeed.

VET providers, who work closely with these groups, rely on European funds to deliver inclusive, well-designed learning opportunities. Maintaining this focus will ensure Europe's social and economic goals move together.

5. Cooperation and coordination across programmes

Europe's funding landscape is rich, but sometimes difficult to navigate, especially for smaller organisations. EVBB encourages a future MFF that promotes **coherence across programmes**, without reducing diversity.

Better alignment between ESF+, Erasmus+, ERDF, Digital Europe and other programmes would help providers combine resources more effectively, develop multi-annual partnerships and avoid unnecessary duplication.

This does not require major structural change. Even modest steps—harmonised guidelines where possible, clearer communication, well-defined complementarities—can reduce administrative pressure and help institutions use resources efficiently.



6. EVBB's recommendations for the next MFF

As discussions progress, EVBB encourages the Commission and Member States to consider the following principles:

- Maintain a strong focus on **skills, VET and lifelong learning** across all relevant programmes.
- Ensure that **ESF+ and Erasmus+ remain accessible and predictable**, especially for small and medium-sized VET providers.
- Keep the social dimension at the centre of funding decisions, ensuring opportunities for young people, adults with low qualifications, and regions facing economic adjustment.
- Support **teacher and trainer development**, as well as the modernisation of facilities, equipment and digital infrastructure.
- Make cooperation across borders and sectors easier, allowing VET providers to participate fully in European partnerships.
- Avoid major disruptions to programme architecture so organisations can rely on continuity from one funding cycle to the next.

These suggestions aim to help the MFF respond realistically to the needs of learners, providers and communities while remaining aligned with national budgetary realities.

7. Looking ahead

The upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework will help determine Europe's capacity to respond to technological change, demographic shifts and economic restructuring. EVBB believes that investing in VET and lifelong learning is one of the most effective and socially responsible choices the EU can make.

We offer this position paper as a constructive contribution to the ongoing discussions. EVBB stands ready to work with the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member States and regional authorities to help design a financial framework that supports high-quality vocational training, innovation, social mobility and growth across all of Europe's regions.

