

Brussels, 9 October 2024

Statement on Draft Budget 2025: inconceivable cuts on education and research

Neth-ER regrets the Council's proposal to cut the 2025 budgets for Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe and calls on Parliament to remain steadfast.

We, the Dutch education and R&I sector, are perplexed by the proposal of the Council to cut spending on education and research in the 2025 EU draft budget. In this proposal, the Council plans to cut EUR 294 million from Erasmus+. Additionally, EUR 400 million will be removed from Horizon Europe, on top of a EUR 160 million cut proposed by the Commission.

Moreover, we deplore the Council's annual tradition to remove funds from the education and R&I budgets. Our sector is not a cash cow. This highly undesirable phenomenon simply needs to stop.

These enormous budget cuts clash strongly with the EU's ambition to boost competitiveness and build a Union of Skills. As both the Draghi and Letta reports show, spending on education, research and innovation, and further integration of the European Research Area is quintessential in times of increased fragmentation and declining competitiveness. The proposed cuts are incomprehensible: Europe needs *more* spending on education and R&I, not *less*.

The Erasmus+ programme enhances the quality of European education, while Horizon Europe unleashes the potential of Europe's researchers and innovators. It is therefore of utmost importance that participating individuals and institutions can count on the EU institutions to fully support the implementation of both programmes. Reducing the budget for Europe's flagship programmes for education and R&I severely undercuts these ambitions.

Instead of unpredictable policy choices, the EU education and R&I sector needs robust, stable budgets. We therefore call for increased budget security to ensure continuity and to allow for confidently setting long-term goals.

While the Council's position is a sizeable blow, the final decision on the 2024 budget has not yet been made. The Hungarian presidency of the Council will have to negotiate the final outcome with the European Parliament.

In this light, we welcome the report of BUDG rapporteurs Negrescu and Herbst which recognises the importance of both programmes by proposing an *increase* of the allocations. The report suggests increases of EUR 70 for Erasmus+ and EUR 242 million for Horizon Europe compared to the draft budget.

We call on the Members of the European Parliament to be the guardians of Europe's education and R&I sector by protecting the budgets of Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.