Europe's future needs investment: Protect Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe

Statement of the European Students' Union on the Irish Presidency's Negotiating Box

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The European Students' Union (ESU) is deeply concerned by the Irish Presidency's proposal for the Council's Negotiating Box on the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The proposal follows the footsteps of the Cypriot presidency in cutting funding for Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe below the European Commission's proposal, at a time when Europe needs to widen access to education and strengthen research.

The Negotiating Box allocates €39.165 billion to Erasmus+, which is below the European Commission's proposal and also far below the €47.4 billion called for by the European Parliament and the Erasmus+ Coalition. For Horizon Europe, the proposal sets €158.187 billion, against the Commission's €175.002 billion and the European Parliament's call for €177.01 billion.

For ESU, these are not merely technical budget adjustments. They are political choices about who gets opportunities to learn, move and contribute to Europe's future. For students across Europe €47.7 billion is the absolute minimum funding required to keep Erasmus+ going.

Erasmus+ is one of the EU's most visible and valued programmes. Yet demand already exceeds available funding, and too many students face limited places, insufficient grants and financial or other barriers to participation.

The repeated reduction within the negotiating box conflicts with the ambitions attached to the European Education Area and the Union of Skills. The EU cannot credibly commit to widening participation, strengthening European cooperation in higher education, promoting inclusion and increasing mobility while reducing the resources available to deliver those goals.

Horizon Europe matters to students, too. Research and innovation support the quality of higher education, help develop future researchers and innovators, and give students opportunities to engage with the challenges shaping their generation. Europe cannot strengthen its research capacity while cutting the funding intended to support it.

ESU recognises the difficult context of the MFF negotiations. But investment in education, research and mobility is essential to Europe's resilience, competitiveness and democratic future. Proposed cuts to Erasmus+ directly contradict these very goals and undermine our shared future. Students must not be treated as a budgetary afterthought.

ESU calls on EU Member States to reject any budget cuts to Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe and demands that – irrespective of how the next EU budget is ultimately allocated – the Erasmus+ budget must be kept at an absolute minimum of €47.4 billion. Europe cannot claim to invest in its future while asking students to do more with less.