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DRAFT STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S REASONS

Subject: Position of the Council at first reading in a view to the adoption of a
REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE
COUNCIL establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and
training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013
- Draft Statement of the Council's reasons

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 30 May 2018, the Commission adopted a proposal for the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) 1288/2013¹.
2. The European Parliament adopted its first reading position on 28 March 2019.
3. The European Economic and Social Committee adopted its opinion on 17 October 2018. The European Committee of the Regions adopted its opinion at its 6-7 February 2019 session.
4. At its meeting on 26 November 2018 the Council agreed on a Partial General Approach² on the Commission proposal, providing the Presidency with the mandate to pursue negotiations with the European Parliament. Five trilogues were held and a provisional agreement was reached at the last trilogue on 11 December 2020.
5. On 18 December 2020 the Permanent Representatives Committee endorsed the final compromise resulting from the trilogues.
6. On 11 January 2021, the CULT Committee of the European Parliament gave its endorsement to the text.

¹ 9574/18 + ADD 1.

² 14797/18.

II. OBJECTIVE

7. The general objective of the proposal is to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in the fields of education and training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship. The Programme shall be a key instrument for building a European Education Area, supporting the implementation of European strategic cooperation in the field of education and training, including its underlying sectoral agendas, advancing youth policy cooperation under the 2019-2027 European Union Youth Strategy and developing the European dimension in sport.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION AT FIRST READING

8. The Council's position at first reading contains the following key elements, on which an agreement between co-legislators has been found in the trilogues:

Main issues

9. The European Parliament had raised concerns regarding the governance of the programme and EP's restricted role in decision-making, in case new initiatives would be introduced during the programming period. The co-legislators agreed to add a new Annex to the Regulation, with more detailed description of actions supported by the programme. The Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts to amend the Annex by adding to the description of the actions, where necessary, in order to adapt to developments in the relevant fields. This solution takes into consideration both the Council's priority to maintain a lean Regulation that leaves enough flexibility for the implementation, as well as the Parliament's claim to be involved in politically relevant decisions taken during the implementation phase of the programme.
10. The budget distribution between the various programme areas and the scope of the programme has been an important issue for both co-legislators following their respective priorities. In the overall compromise package the co-legislators agreed to include all three 'new initiatives' proposed by the Commission (European Universities, Centres of vocational excellence and DiscoverEU) into the new programme. The Council emphasised the need to increase the budget allocation for the directly managed actions, especially to ensure appropriate financing for the European Universities and the Centres of vocational excellence. This increase is reflected in the Council's position.

11. Following the proposal by the EP, the Council agreed to widen the scope of the programme to cover the learning mobility of adult learners, as well as to increase the budget allocation for activities in the field of vocational education and training (VET). Furthermore, as part of the agreement, the Commission will issue a statement regarding an indicative amount of EUR 400 million to support platforms of Centres of vocational excellence. In addition, a slight increase in the budget allocation for activities in the field of sport has been agreed.
12. Given the increased activities in VET and adult education, which will lead to an increased administrative burden for the national agencies, the budget allocation to these agencies has been slightly increased.
13. All the agreed increases in the above budget allocations are to be covered from the flexibility margin that has been reduced accordingly.

Other issues

14. The co-legislators agreed to maintain the name of the current programme Erasmus+, which, in their view, better reflects the broad scope of the programme going far beyond the field of higher education.
15. The Council agreed to the Parliament's wish to give inclusion much greater prominence, through creating a stand-alone chapter on inclusion within the Regulation.
16. The Council also agreed to adding a new article on the European added value, in line with the previous Erasmus+ programme.
17. While the Commission in its proposal had proposed a limited set of indicators, the Council and the EP agreed to complete the Annex with more detailed indicators.

18. Several provisions have been changed following Council's horizontal approach to all MFF-related files. These concern in particular adding the duration of the programme in Article 1, to be in line with the time frame of the MFF 2021-2027, the provisions regarding third country participation, the provisions for cumulative and alternative financing and the provisions for retroactivity.

IV. CONCLUSION

19. The Council's position at first reading fully reflects the compromise reached in the negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, facilitated by the Commission. This compromise is confirmed by the letter of the Chair of the European Parliament's CULT Committee to the Chair of the Permanent Representatives Committee (15 January 2021). In this letter, the Chair of the CULT Committee indicates that, should the Council transmit formally to the Parliament its position as agreed, she would recommend to the Plenary that the Council's position be accepted without amendment, subject to legal-linguistic verification, at Parliament's second reading.
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