

# Million of Erasmus Grants

## PR3 Policy Recommendations and stakeholder matrix

December 2024

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## Glossary

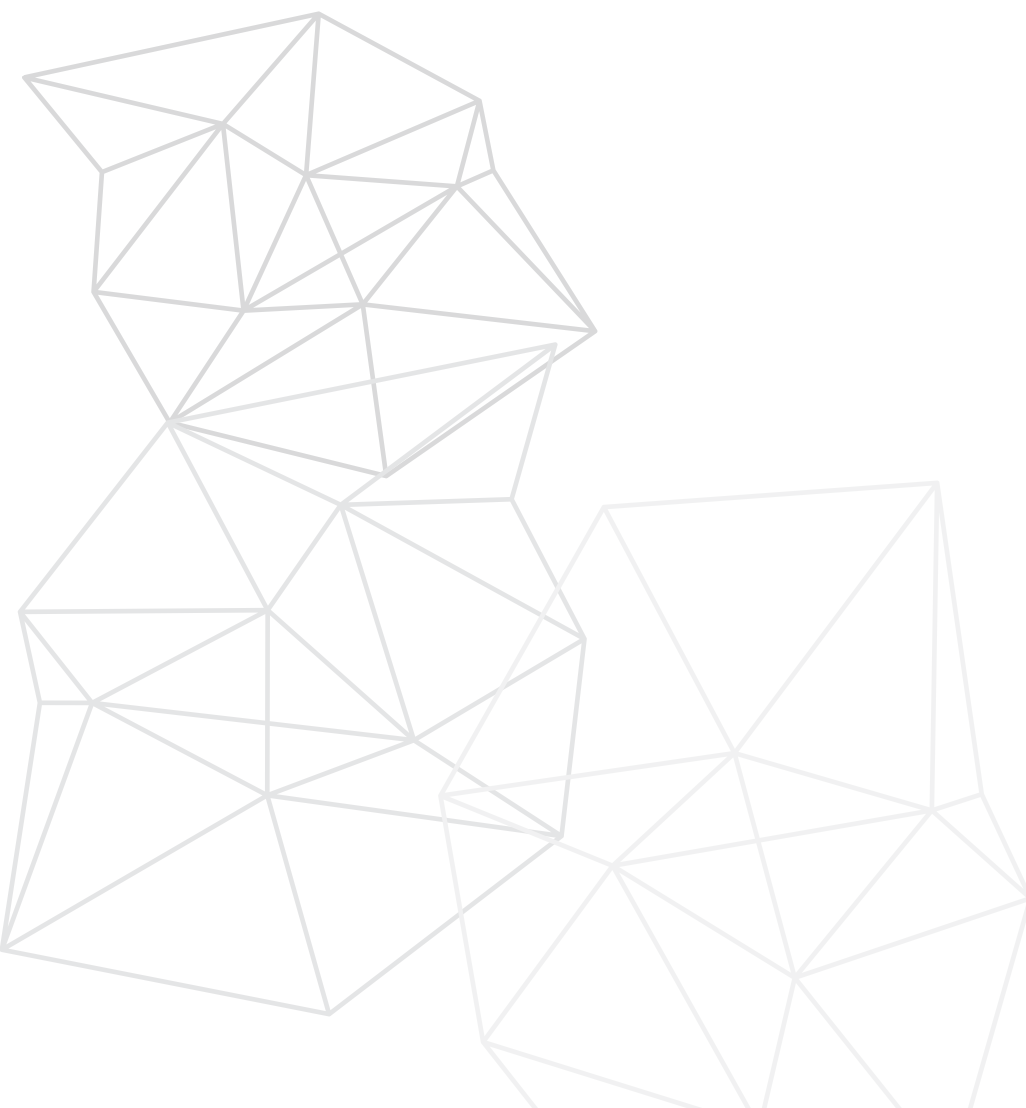
MEGA	Million of Erasmus Grants
PR	Project Result
PoC	Proof of Concept
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IRO	International Relations Officer
NA	National Agency
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency

The financial challenges associated with participating in the Erasmus+ programme are well documented. Many students struggle to cover the expenses of studying abroad despite receiving scholarships. These challenges include insufficient grant amounts, delayed payments, and cumbersome administrative processes.

The Million of Erasmus Grants (MEGA) project decided to focus on this second aspect, related to the questions of “Why is it important to receive the scholarship in time?” and “How would it be possible to make sure that:

1. The scholarship is transferred to the students in time; and
2. That the students are well aware of the timeline of the scholarship transfer”.

According to our [survey data](#), over 54% of the student respondents reported receiving their first grant instalment only after their mobility had begun, resulting in financial difficulties during the initial period. Additionally, 42% believed their home university was responsible for late payments. To address these issues, a series of policy recommendations are proposed, aimed at improving the Erasmus+ grant management system, streamlining disbursement processes, and increasing the overall accessibility of the programme.



These recommendations aim to address the financial and administrative challenges that Erasmus+ students and administrators face, particularly concerning grant disbursement and timelines. By creating **more efficient, transparent, and student-centred systems** at the EU, national, and institutional levels, the Erasmus+ programme can better serve its participants and promote wider access to mobility opportunities. The data from the MEGA project underscores the urgency of these changes, reflecting the widespread dissatisfaction and delays in the current system.

### a. EU-Level Recommendations

#### 1. Streamline the grant payment processes by setting one early trigger point

- Implement a standardised grant payment timeline between HEIs to ensure that Erasmus+ participants receive their first instalment before their mobility begins, ideally at least one month in advance. The trigger point for releasing the first instalment should be the signing of the Grant Agreement. Consequently, financial stress related to handling mobility expenses can be alleviated and last-minute cancellations avoided.
- Data Insight: 54.98% of students received their first grant instalment in the second week or later after starting their mobility abroad, indicating significant financial challenges during the initial period.

#### 2. Simplify the KA131 final beneficiary report to focus on quality data

- In order to increase the relevance and quality of the results, the questions should be more clearly structured, be removed from jargon and avoid repetitiveness. This can lead to quicker aggregation and analysis of the answers, thus making it easier for administrators to assess compliance and outcomes. Another positive outcome can be the reduced need for follow-up clarifications or corrections due to misunderstandings, which can sometimes delay future payment processes.

## 2. Policy Recommendations

### 3. Align payment of project funds to the HEIs with the academic year's timeline

- It is vital to ensure that funds are transferred on time to the NAs, and the HEIs, allowing the latter to trigger prompt student payments. Considering the existing scheduling disparities among institutions and countries, as well as the slow handling of applications at the EU level, there should be a better alignment of the payment of Erasmus+ funds to HEIs with their academic year's timeline and the mobility lifecycle of the students. In many cases, universities receive their funds too late and are therefore faced with the choice to either cover their outgoing students' grants with their own funds or delay the payments; the former can cause unnecessary audit risks and the latter financial strain for the students. Moreover, an earlier award of project funds to HEIs can lessen the impact of potential errors in the beneficiary module calculation.

### 4. Simplify administration and enhance transparency

- It is possible to minimise delays and ease the challenges faced by students, allowing for smoother and more efficient grant disbursements. Some universities already distribute grants on a semester (rather than a daily) basis, which can accelerate the disbursement of the second instalment, given that it is not linked to the departure date of the outgoing student. Even more so, it would be beneficial to remove the option for universities to set their own start day of the mobility period (see article 5.1 in the 2024 Grant Agreement).
- Data Insight: 41.89% of IRO respondents agreed that there should be a reduction in administrative processes before mobility, indicating a significant perception of unnecessary bureaucracy.

**Support the development of digital tools, such as the MEGA Proof of Concept, to oversee grant disbursement processes, which can instantly connect IROs with financial officers, ensuring clear and real-time tracking and accountability.**

### 5. Promote awareness and outreach

- Enhance outreach efforts to better inform students about the available Erasmus+ programme opportunities, the advantages for personal, academic and professional growth, as well as available financial support through transparent communication and accessible resources. This can help reduce confusion, resolve misconceptions, and encourage more students to participate in future mobility activities.
- Data Insight: 23.87% of student respondents indicated they could not identify what discouraged them from participating in an Erasmus+ mobility, suggesting a lack of information about the programme's benefits and clarity in the application process.

### b. National-Level Recommendations

#### 1. Align national grant disbursement with the EU mobility calendar

- National authorities should synchronise the disbursement of Erasmus+ funds to HEIs with the earlier EU academic years (i.e. beginning of August), ensuring that funds are available well in advance of the student's mobility. This would support timely grant payments to students. Incoming students to Norway, for example, start in mid-August regardless of their home academic calendar.

#### 2. Conduct assessments on disparities

- National Agencies should conduct regular assessments to identify any inequities in the Erasmus+ programme, including disparities in payment schedules. This data-driven approach has the potential to improve transparency and address discrepancies in the system.
- Data Insight: 42.77% of student respondents believe their home university is responsible for late grant payments, with many students reporting diverse reasons for delays, indicating disparities that need to be addressed.

#### 3. Incentivise digital transformation

- National authorities should incentivise the development of digital platforms at the EU level to manage Erasmus+ grant disbursement more efficiently, connecting financial departments with IROs and providing students with easy access to their grant information. The MEGA blueprint spells out the strategy for the digital transformation to integrate a digital solution at the university, such as the MEGA PoC.

#### 4. Promote partnerships for shared best practices

- Foster collaboration among national higher education bodies and National Agencies to share effective practices related to Erasmus+ administration and funding. This should include regular workshops, roundtables or conferences to disseminate successful strategies for handling grant distribution.

### c. Institutional-Level Recommendations

#### 1. Prioritise the timely disbursement to students

- Institutions should respect the official Erasmus+ guide rules and ensure that the first instalment is paid to students before their arrival, ideally 2 or more weeks prior. This could be achieved by improving the coordination between university finance offices and IROs. In some cases, a delayed first instalment can lead to the cancellation of the mobility altogether due to the high upfront costs. The MEGA blueprint and PoC can facilitate the communication between IROs and financial offices.

#### 2. Simplify application and payment processes

- Universities should work to streamline their internal application processes, reducing administrative burden on students and ensuring transparency. This includes cutting unnecessary paperwork and providing clearer instructions on, and information about the disbursement process.

#### 3. Support digital tools for payment tracking

- Institutions should adopt digital solutions that allow students, IROs, and financial officers to track Erasmus+ disbursements in real-time, ensuring that students can receive support promptly and effectively. The experimental software of the MEGA project should be considered as one of the options in this regard.

#### 4. Strengthen feedback mechanisms

- Establish regular feedback loops where students can share their experiences and suggestions regarding grant disbursement. This can help universities continuously improve their process and address students' concerns.
- Data Insight: 30.80% of students felt the first instalment was not sufficient to bear early expenses, highlighting a significant gap between that grant amount and what it can realistically cover.

#### 5. Create clear communication channels

- Develop transparent communication pathways between the institutions' financial offices – international offices and students to ensure that students receive up-to-date information regarding their scholarship status, disbursement schedules, and any changes to the payment process. The MEGA PoC provides a detailed payment timeline that would be accessible to mobile students.

### 3. Stakeholder Matrix of Decision and Policy Makers

To effectively implement the proposed policy recommendations for improving Erasmus+ grant disbursement and enhancing the student mobility experience, it is essential to recognise the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in the process. The stakeholder matrix provides a clear overview of key actors, their interests, and the specific actions they can take to contribute to the success of the proposed changes. By aligning the actions and objectives of these stakeholders, **the Erasmus+ programme can become more efficient, transparent, and accessible**, ultimately ensuring a more equitable and supportive experience for all participants. The matrix outlines the impact that each stakeholder can have on the recommendations, from EU institutions to individual universities and students themselves. This collaborative approach is critical for addressing the financial and administrative challenges that students face and ensuring the long-term success of the Erasmus+ programme.

The stakeholder matrix below identifies the key actors involved in improving the Erasmus+ grant disbursement system and student mobility experience. By aligning the interests and actions of these stakeholders, we can create a more efficient, transparent, and student-centred Erasmus+ programme that addresses the financial challenges and administrative hurdles currently faced by students. Each stakeholder plays a critical role in the successful implementation of the proposed policy recommendations.

**Table 1: MEGA stakeholders matrix**

Stakeholder	Interest	Recommended Actions	Potential Impact
<b>EU Institutions (European Commission, EACEA)</b>	Ensuring efficient and equitable Erasmus+ implementation across the EU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Streamline the grant payment processes by setting one early trigger point.</li> <li>- Simplify the KA131 final beneficiary report to focus on quality data.</li> <li>- Align payment of project funds to the HEIs with the academic year’s timeline.</li> <li>- Simplify administration and enhance transparency.</li> <li>- Promote awareness and outreach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved efficiency and transparency of Erasmus+ payments.</li> </ul>
<b>National Authorities (Ministries of Education, Erasmus+ National Agencies)</b>	Ensuring national compliance with EU policies and improving Erasmus+ programme implementation in their country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Align national funding disbursement with the EU mobility timeline.</li> <li>- Regularly assess disparities in payment schedules.</li> <li>- Incentivise digital transformation.</li> <li>- Promote collaborations to foster partnerships and share best practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Streamlined grant disbursement at a national level.</li> <li>- Improved access to mobility opportunities for disadvantaged students.</li> </ul>



### 3. Stakeholder Matrix of Decision and Policy Makers

Stakeholder	Interest	Recommended Actions	Potential Impact
<b>Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)</b>	Ensuring timely and transparent disbursement of Erasmus+ funds to students, and minimising administrative burden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritise the timely disbursement to students.</li> <li>- Simplify internal application and payment processes.</li> <li>- Adopt digital tools for payment disbursement tracking (such as the MEGA PoC).</li> <li>- Establish feedback mechanisms for students to share their experiences.</li> <li>- Create clear communication channels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faster and more efficient grant payments.</li> <li>- Reduced bureaucracy and increased student satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<b>International Relations Officers</b>	Ensuring that students receive timely, clear, and accurate information about Erasmus+ funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Act as intermediaries between financial offices and students.</li> <li>- Provide students with timely updates on their grant payment status.</li> <li>- Support digital platforms for easier tracking (such as the MEGA PoC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved communication and transparency regarding payment status.</li> <li>- Increased trust from students in the process.</li> </ul>
<b>University Financial Officers</b>	Ensuring smooth, accurate processing of Erasmus+ funds and compliance with EU guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinate with IROs and national agencies to ensure timely payment to students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faster disbursement of funds to students.</li> <li>- Reduced administrative delays.</li> </ul>
<b>Erasmus+ Students</b>	Receiving timely, adequate financial support to cover study abroad costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide feedback on their experiences with the grant payment process.</li> <li>- Use digital tools to track their payment status.</li> <li>- Engage with IROs to resolve any issues regarding payments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timely access to funds, reducing financial stress.</li> <li>- Continuous updates on the status of their grant.</li> <li>- Improved mobility experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Makers (National &amp; EU level)</b>	Shaping policies that enhance the accessibility and efficiency of the Erasmus+ programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate and implement recommendations at the national and EU level.</li> <li>- Ensure that the system is equitable and transparent, with consistent evaluation mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved policy outcomes.</li> <li>- Higher quality Erasmus+ programme administration.</li> </ul>

## 4. Conclusions

During its long and successful existence, the Erasmus+ programme has proven its unique potential to transform lives, bridge cultural divides, and foster a united Europe. However, its success relies on creating systems that prioritise students' needs, embrace innovation, promote collaboration, and prove flexible to adapt to emerging trends.

By addressing such systemic and chronic inefficiencies at the EU, national, and institutional levels, these recommendations aim to promote a clear pathway towards a more equitable and student-centred Erasmus+ system. Leveraging digital tools, fostering intra- and interinstitutional collaboration, and securing timely disbursement can significantly reduce financial barriers that thousands of students face repeatedly; this will ultimately **enhance the programme's accessibility and impact**, as well as significantly improve the student mobility experience. The data analysis from the MEGA project highlights the urgency of these changes, emphasising the need for **streamlined, transparent, and responsive grant management processes**.



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**Acknowledgements:**

Université de Lorraine: Donato Lorubio, Vanessa Deweer

Politecnico de Coimbra: Dulce Caetano, Catarina Marques, Ana Cascão

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences: Marit Schulstad Wasa, Halvard Ones

Mendel University: Lukáš Kala, Lenka Vivas

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos: Esperanza Marcos

