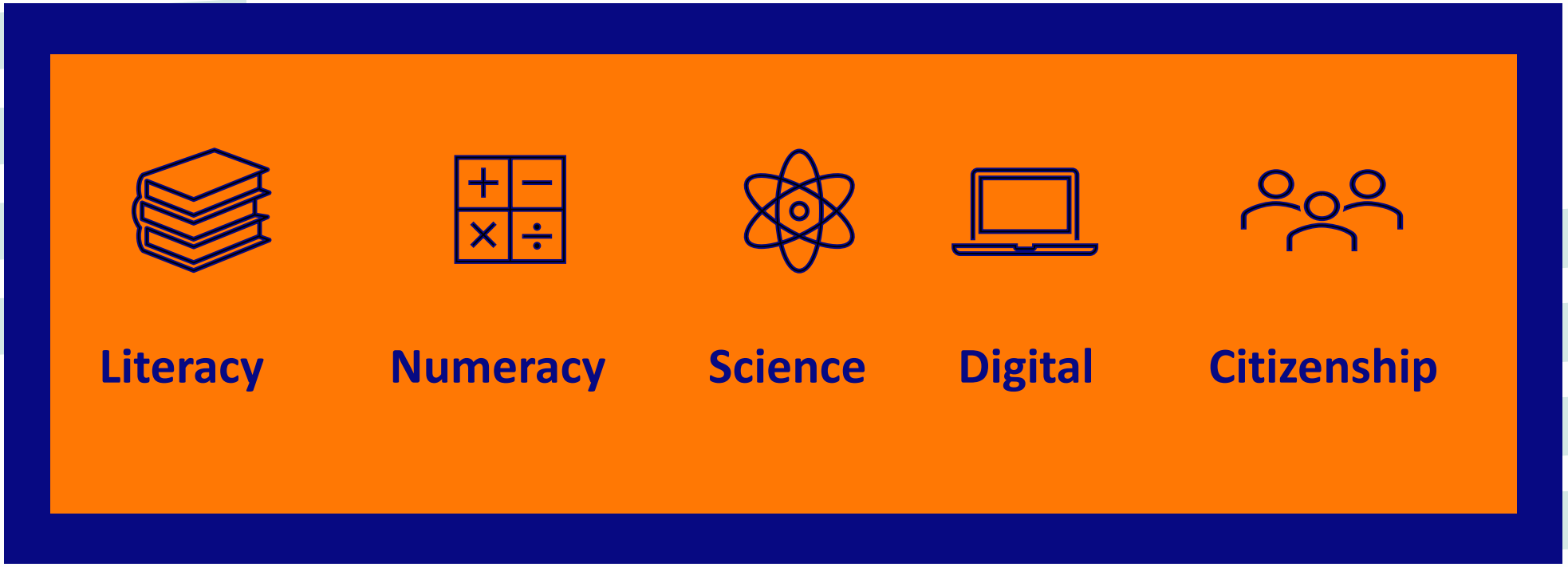
# Erasmus+ promotes skills and strengthens Europe

**Alessandro SENESI**
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European Commission

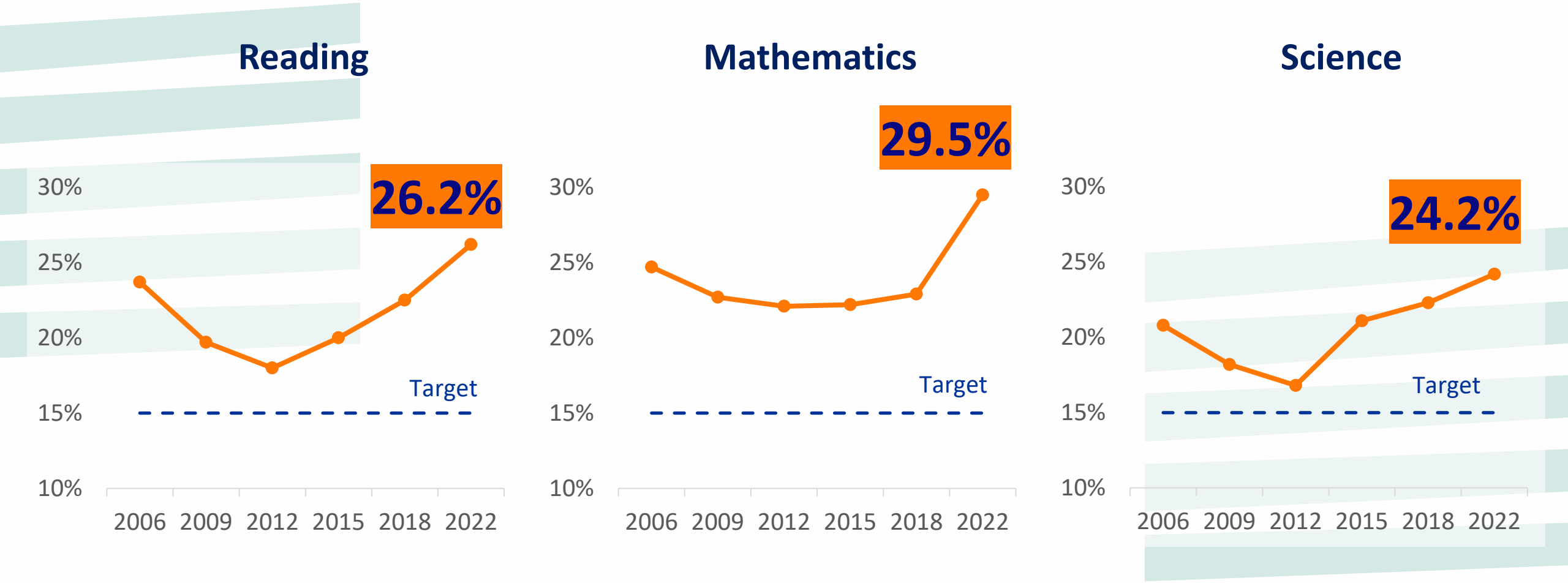
Copenhagen, 20 November 2025



# What are **basic skills**?



# **Where do we stand now**? 15-year-olds' underachievement in reading, mathematics and science is at an all-time high in the EU




**(PISA, OECD)**

# What are the main challenges?
# **Drivers of basic skills decline**



## Socioeconomic background

**Socio-economic background is a major determinant of all five basic skills.** For instance, disadvantaged learners are at a 6.1 times higher risk of combined underachievement in reading, mathematics and science when compared to their advantaged peers.



## Teacher shortages

**Acute teacher shortages have a negative impact on learning outcomes.** The teaching workforce is ageing and fewer teachers enter the profession. There are issues with attractiveness, societal appreciation, working conditions and career prospects.



## Parental involvement

**Declining parental involvement poses a risk to student success.** Supportive home environments, with caregivers engaged with the school and the teacher, go hand in hand with better performance.



## Digital distraction

**Digital distraction has a strong association with learning outcomes.** Students who reported being distracted by other students using digital devices scored 15 points lower in PISA mathematics tests (the equivalent of three-quarters of a year’s worth of education).

# **Erasmus+** and **skills**

**Erasmus+** has been supporting the **acquisition and development of skills since** it was established in **1987.** Now, it can continue doing so in a **more comprehensive and strategic framework** set out by **the Union of Skills.**

Out of participants having started a mobility activity in 2024 only,
**99%** consider they have benefited from their participation in learning mobility
**78%** report to have increased their key competences

# The **Union of Skills** - Goals

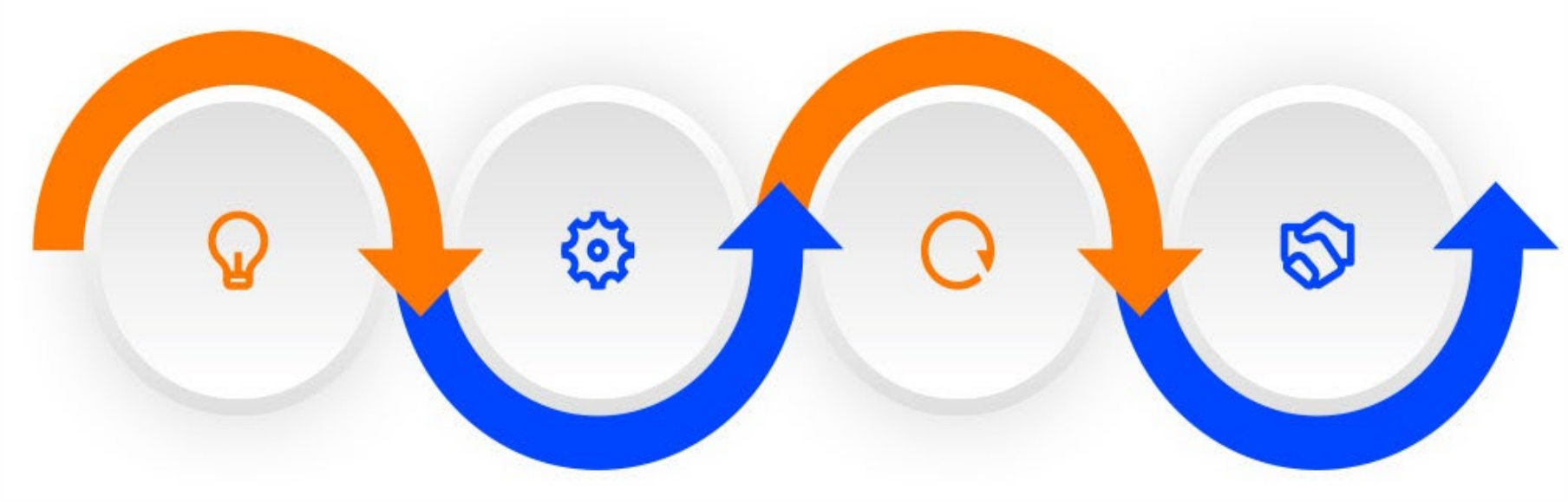
Against this background, the **Union of Skills** will help to:

- **deliver higher levels of basic skills**
- **provide lifelong opportunities for adults to regularly upskill and reskill**
- **facilitate recruitment by businesses across the EU**
- **attract and retain the skills and talents** needed in the European economy

The Union of Skills is accompanied by a **Basic Skills Action Plan** and a **STEM Education Action Plan**, aiming to:

- **improve skills in** science, technology, engineering, and maths (**STEM**)
- **promote STEM careers**
- **attract more girls and women**
- **boost preparedness in the face of digital and clean-tech transitions**

# The **Union of Skills** – Accompanying Action Plans



**Build skills**
for quality lives and jobs

**Upskill and reskills**
for the digital & green transition

**Circulate skills**
across the EU for competitiveness

**Attract, develop and retain talent**
for Europe's future

**STEM EDUCATION ACTION PLAN**

**BASIC SKILLS ACTION PLAN**

# **Basic Skills Action Plan** – Main actions

**KEY ACTION 1**



## Preparing for the Basic Skills Support Scheme

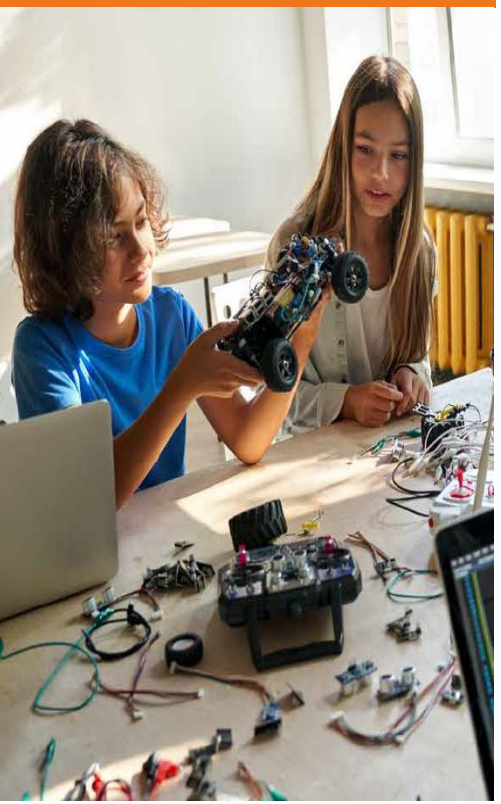
The Basic Skills Support Scheme is still being developed. Current actions on basic skills include:

- **Guidelines for policymakers**: based on the roadmap for ensuring school success for all
- **Mapping ESF+, Recovery and Resilience Facility and Technical Support Instrument:** drawing lessons from EU-level support mechanisms
- A new **peer counselling cluster** on basic skills
- **Erasmus+ projects**: EUR 3 million for forward-looking projects (2025) & EUR 10 million for policy experimentation projects (2026)

Next steps: Designing the final Basic Skills Support Scheme built on similar funding schemes across other policy fields, and taking into account lessons emanating from actions in 2025-26

# **Basic Skills Action Plan** – Main actions

**KEY ACTION 2**



## Preparing for the first European School Alliances

- Partnerships between national, regional and local **school authorities** and **schools** as the key actors to test, transfer and scale-up innovative practices
- An essential link connecting the groundwork in schools to the **EU policy level**
- Budget: **EUR 20 million** for around 50 “European Partnerships for School Development”

Next steps: Technical preparation for call launch and implementation of "European Partnerships for School Development" under Erasmus+ call 2026

# **Basic Skills Action Plan** – Main actions

**KEY ACTION 3**

## EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda

A new European agenda for teachers and trainers in 2026 including actions addressing the:

- **employment** perspective
- **economic** perspective
- **democracy** perspective
- **digital** perspective

*Instruments under discussion*

Next steps: set up interservice group; call for evidence (Q4 2025); Technical Support Instrument call 2026 (Q3 2025)

# Erasmus+ for **Higher education**



- **European Universities alliances**, currently 65 alliances gathering more than 500 universities and with an Erasmus+ indicative budget totalling EUR 1.1 billion for 2021-2027.

- Higher education institutions, accreditation and quality assurance agencies and other authorities to progress work towards a joint **European degree label** and a possible European degree and more fit for purpose quality assurance and recognition systems.

- Transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, fostering the Union's innovation capacity and contributing to progressing the work on **micro-credentials, quality assurance and automatic recognition**.

- A policy experimentation call as of 2026 to award **scholarships in strategic educational fields**, including in joint study programmes, to address the growing demand for skilled talent.

# Erasmus+ for **VET** (Vocational Education and Training)



- **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**
  - 700 pledges
  - Focus on adult apprenticeships and support for people outside the labour market
  - Toolkit on apprenticeships for adults end 2025 with a webinar on 20 November 2025
- **Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs)**
  - Aiming to drive reforms and exchange of good practice in the VET sector
  - More ambitious objective (100 centres supported by 2027, overall budget EUR 400+ million), based on a report being produced by the end of 2025
- **Initiating work on a possible European VET diploma / label**
  - Possibly covering initial VET at upper-secondary and post-secondary level. A pilot will engage Member States and VET providers to test such a European VET diploma/label in 2025-2026

# Erasmus+ for **Schools**



- More than **1 million pupils and school staff have participated in an Erasmus+ learning mobility** since 2021 and had the chance to improve their skills and competences. And **almost 700 Partnerships for Cooperation** address learning disadvantage, early school leaving and low proficiency in basic skills.

- A recent study conducted in Germany with pupils participating in Erasmus+ shows that, while all of them report increased skills and competences, the **impact was most pronounced among pupils with fewer opportunities**, especially those coming from weaker socio-economic backgrounds.

- A study in France found **77% of projects reporting reduced difficulties** in school among their pupils through participation in Erasmus+, and **82% found reduced behavioural difficulties**, even reaching **90% in both cases** among schools where combatting early school leaving was among the project priorities.

# Erasmus+ for **Youth**



- Erasmus+ helps young people (aged 13 to 30) to develop and improve a wide range of skills such as **digital and media literacy, critical thinking, civic engagement, democratic values and citizenship learning**. These skills are essential to understand and navigate a rapidly evolving world and to adapt with confidence.

- Such skills are developed through **non-formal and informal learning** in youth activities, youth work and volunteering.

- In addition, youth participation mechanisms like the **EU Youth Dialogue, Youth Policy Dialogues with European Commissioners, and the President's Youth Advisory Board** also enable young people to develop citizenship skills.

# Erasmus+ for **Adults**



- Erasmus+ promotes adult education opportunities, knowledge and competences, particularly for **adults with a low level of basic skills**, through both mobility and cooperation projects.
- The programme empowers individuals' participation in inclusive education and training notably through **support for non-formal, lifelong learning and local/community learning, social fairness reaching out to people of all backgrounds, including older adults**.
- Instrument under discussion:
  - **Skills Guarantee pilot**, focusing on the skills of workers in sectors undergoing restructuring or at risk of unemployment, which will be launched as part of an Employment and Social Innovation (part of ESF+) call
- Existing instruments that will be brought forward and reinforced:
  - **Pact for Skills**, supporting skills development in strategic sectors and improving linkages with European Alliance for Apprenticeships, COVEs and European Universities alliances
  - **Individual Learning Accounts (ILA)** to empower all adults, workers or not, to develop their skills

# The Erasmus+ 2021-2027 **Evaluation** – Main results




The programme yielded **significant benefits to individuals supporting skills development**, — such as ability to learn, critical thinking or resilience —, and **enhancing academic performance**, with the programme participants achieving better results than those who had not taken part in learning mobility.

# **The future Erasmus+** (1) – 2028-2034

## Political background

***"Erasmus+ is not only an investment in our young people's education and personal growth, but also in Europe's competitiveness and future success. By connecting people, cultures, and ideas, it strengthens our shared values and prepares a generation of citizens ready to tackle the challenges ahead."*** European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

***"Erasmus+ is a key instrument for fostering European values and strengthening our youth's skills and competencies. It promotes mobility, cultural exchange, and innovation, contributing to the growth and competitiveness of our countries and the European Union as a whole."*** Former President of the European Central Bank and former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi

# The **future Erasmus+** (2) – 2028-2034

## Commission proposal for post-2027

- A programme built on two legs, **skills development and EU values**.'
- Aim to **foster a strong foundation of basic skills**, high quality VET and higher education, including in STEM, digital and AI.
- Support for projects that promote **more effective ways of teaching and learning basic skills**, including digital skills, with **specific focus on preventing underachievement in basic skills and fostering inclusion**, excellence and wellbeing from early years through all stages of school education and adult learning.
- Overall **budget of EUR 40.8 billion**, integration of the European Solidarity Corps to remove duplications, lower barriers and widen access.

# Thank you!

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