



# Analysis of European Union Erasmus+ Sport Projects and Comparison of Turkey and Other European Countries

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Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.

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Ethical Statement: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.

(Date Of Received): 19/09/2023 (Date of Acceptance): 31.12.2023 (Date of Publication): 31.12.2023

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## Abstract

The Erasmus+ Sport project is a European initiative that aims to support various aspects of sport development and inclusion. It covers a wide range of projects focussing on different areas in the field of sport. This study aims to analyse the Erasmus+ Sport projects funded by the European Union and to compare Turkey with other European countries. In our research, a document analysis research method was used. In the first period of Erasmus+ Sport projects, 874 sports projects between 2014 and 2020 were analysed. The data were obtained from the details and results page of the projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union Commission. As a result of the document analyses, Italy was the coordinator of the most projects with 188 projects. Spain was the coordinator in 60 projects, Croatia 47, Greece 46, Bulgaria and France 45, Slovenia 40 and Romania 35. Turkey, on the other hand, ranked 18th with 18 projects. Among the institutions applying for projects, non-governmental organisations stand out with 407 projects, followed by universities, sports federations and sports clubs. According to the years, the highest number of projects was finalised in 2020 with 465 projects. A budget of 196,936,797 euros was allocated to 874 projects in total. Turkey has received project support worth 2.068.076 euros with 18 projects from this budget.

**Keywords:** Erasmus+ Sport, Sport Projects, European Union, Türkiye.

## Özet

### Avrupa Birliği Erasmus+ Sport Projelerinin Analizi ve Türkiye ile Diğer Avrupa Ülkelerinin Karşılaştırılması

Erasmus+ Spor projesi, spor gelişimi ve kapsayıcılığının çeşitli yönlerini desteklemeyi amaçlayan bir Avrupa girişimidir. Spor alanında farklı alanlara odaklanan geniş bir proje yelpazesini kapsamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Avrupa Birliği tarafından finanse edilen Erasmus+ Sport projelerini analiz edilmesi ve Türkiye ile diğer Avrupa ülkelerinin karşılaştırılmasıdır. Araştırmamızda inceleme (doküman analizi) araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Erasmus+ Sport projelerinin ilk dönemi olan 2014-2020 yılları arasında gerçekleştirilen 874 spor projesi ele alınmıştır. Veriler Avrupa Birliği Komisyonu Erasmus+ programı kapsamında finanse edilen projelerin ayrıntıları ve sonuçları sayfasından elde edilmiştir. Yapılan doküman analizleri sonucunda İtalya 188 proje ile en fazla projede koordinatör olmuştur. İspanya 60, Hırvatistan 47, Yunanistan 46, Bulgaristan ve Fransa 45, Slovenya 40 ve Romanya 35 projede koordinatör olmuştur. Türkiye ise 18 projede koordinatör olarak 18. sırada yer almaktadır. Proje başvurusunda bulunan kurumlar arasında sivil toplum örgütleri 407 proje ile ön plana çıkarken,

üniversiteler, spor federasyonları, spor kulüpleri sivil toplum kuruluşlarını takip etmektedir. Yıllara göre bakıldığında en fazla proje 465 proje ile 2020 yılında sonuçlandırılmıştır. Toplamda gerçekleştirilen 874 projeye 196.936.797 avro bütçe verilmiştir. Türkiye bu bütçeden 18 adet projesinden 2.068.076 avro değerinde proje desteği almıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Erasmus+ Sport, Spor Projeleri, Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye

## INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus+ Programme is described as a flagship initiative of the European Union that supports a variety of education and training opportunities for individuals and organisations across Europe (3). Erasmus is widely recognised and has gained significant visibility across Europe and is often referred to as the "Erasmus generation" (14). The programme aims to promote European integration and develop a sense of European citizenship among young people (14).

According to the programme guide published by the European Commission, three main activities are carried out under the Erasmus programme (1,4);

Key Activity 1: Learning mobility of individuals

Key Activity 2: Innovative cooperation and exchange of good practices

Key Activity 3: Supporting policy reform.

In addition to the three main activities of the Erasmus programme, there are also Jean Monnet and sport action areas (1).

One of the project titles within the Erasmus+ program is Erasmus+ Sport Projects. Erasmus+ sport projects are initiatives funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. These projects aim to promote and support various aspects of sport, including athlete development, education, gender equality, rehabilitation and inclusion. The Erasmus+ programme provides financial support to sport-related institutions and organisations to implement these projects (8). Erasmus+ sport projects are open to national institutions responsible for sport at the local, regional and national levels, sports organisations at local, regional, national and international levels, national Olympic committees, sports federations, organisations representing sport for all movements, organisations active in the promotion of physical activity, institutions involved in education, training and youth activities, sports clubs, municipalities, etc. All legal persons/organisations active in the field of sport can apply (13).

The target group of Erasmus Sport Grants is all kinds of institutions and organisations, especially institutions and organisations engaged in sports activities, aiming to promote sports, exercise and healthy lifestyles. The target group, which constitutes the professional dimension of sport, consists of athletes and coaches.

An example of Erasmus+ sport projects is the project "Ecology of Dual Career - Exploring Dual Career Development Environments across Europe". This project focuses on creating dual career development environments that facilitate athletes to combine their competitive sport career with education or work. The project aims to shift the focus from individual student-athletes to exploring the systems and structures that support their dual careers (11).

Another Erasmus+ sport project is the "Dual Careers for Young Athletes" project. This project specifically targets young athletes aged 15-19 and aims to identify barriers, challenges, resources and skills related to their dual careers. The project also examines the roles and perspectives of the support staff of these student-athletes (7).

The Erasmus+ programme also supports projects addressing social issues in the field of sport. For example, the project "Gender inequality in sport: Perceptions and experiences of Generation Z", also known as the GETZ project, aims to raise awareness, educate and empower the next generation of sports leaders to

promote greater gender balance in sport. This project is an Erasmus+-funded project and focuses on addressing gender inequality in sport (10).

Furthermore, Erasmus+ sport projects contribute to sustainable development goals. The programme recognises the importance of education, training and sport in addressing socioeconomic changes and challenges in Europe. The projects funded by Erasmus+ aim to support the implementation of the European policy agenda for growth, employment, equality and social inclusion, including sustainable development goals (8). Increasing Erasmus+ sport funding to contribute to the different sport-related policies of the European Union and future sport entrepreneurs can also help to train such entrepreneurs (5).

In conclusion, Erasmus+ sport projects are initiatives funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. These projects cover a wide range of topics such as athlete development, education, gender equality, rehabilitation, and inclusion. They aim to create supportive environments for athletes, address social issues in sport and contribute to sustainable development goals. The Erasmus+ programme, through financial support, enables institutions and organisations to implement these projects and create a positive impact in the field of sport.

This study aims to analyse the Erasmus+ Sport projects funded by the European Union and to compare Turkey with other European countries. The importance of this study is to reveal that we are behind other European countries in terms of projects and in this context, to ensure the spread of project culture in our country.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Methodology**

In our research, the examination (document analysis) method was used. It is a method in which researchers collect information by analysing existing sources and documents. This method uses sources such as historical data, reports and articles. "Document analysis is a scientific research method that can be defined as the collection, review, questioning and analysis of various documents as the primary source of research data" (9).

### **Analysing the Data**

The information obtained within the scope of this study was analysed using content analysis. The researcher can describe the material and analyse what is hidden in the data by using content analysis to discover possible facts (2).

Before analysing the data, the targeted years and countries were filtered through the filtering feature on the website where the data were obtained and the necessary data were obtained.

### **Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of our research is Erasmus+ Projects and the sample is Erasmus+ Sport projects. The data were obtained from the details and results page (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>) of the projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union Commission.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

In our research, 874 sports projects within the scope of the European Union Commission Erasmus+ and realised between 2014 and 2020, which is the first period of Erasmus+ Sports projects, were examined.

## FINDINGS

**Table 1. Number of Projects Information of Countries**

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	Italy	Spain	Croatia	Greece	Bulgaria	France	Slovenia	Romania	Türkiye
<b>Number of Projects Coordinated</b>	188	60	45	45	45	45	40	35	18
<b>Number of Partner Projects</b>	466	269	164	-	219	163	195	162	106

The number of projects in the countries is given in Table 1. According to Table 1, Italy has been the coordinator in the highest number of projects with 188 projects. Spain has been the coordinator in 60 projects, Croatia 47, Greece 46, Bulgaria and France 45, Slovenia 40 and Romania 35. Turkey, on the other hand, ranks 18th among all countries as a coordinator in 18 projects.

Again, according to Table 1, the number of projects in which countries are partners is given. In addition to the project coordinator, there are partners from different countries in the projects. There can be more than one partner in a project. Accordingly, Italy is at the top with 466 project partnerships. Spain 269, Bulgaria 219, Slovenia 195, Croatia 164, France 195, Romania 162 and Turkey 106.

<b>Table 2. Coordinator Types of Countries according to Projects</b>									
	Italy	Spain	Croatia	Greece	Bulgaria	France	Slovenia	Romania	Türkiye
<b>Civil Society Establishment</b>	77	21	18	14	22	13	13	27	7
<b>Sports Club</b>	58	8	13	1	14	7	7	1	4
<b>University</b>	9	17	3	15	2	3	3	5	4

Coordinator types of the countries according to the projects are given in Table 2. According to Table 2, it is seen that non-governmental organisations make the highest contribution to the project production of the countries. After non-governmental organisations, the institutions with the highest number of coordinators are sports clubs and universities.

**Table 3. Grant Amounts Received by Countries from Projects (Euro)**

Italy	Spain	Croatia	Greece	Bulgaria	France	Slovenia	Romania	Türkiye
35.947.048,50	15.293.639,55	7.901.636,26	7.523.457,44	7.750.308,56	10.609.263,69	7.023.100,67	3.806.427,88	2.068.076,00

The grant amounts received by the countries from the projects are given in Table 3. A budget of 196.936.797 Euros was given to 874 projects realised in total. Italy received the highest budget from the projects. Italy received 35.947.048 Euro support from the projects. Turkey has received 2.068.076 Euros worth of project support from 18 projects from this budget.

**Table 4.** Number of Projects by Years

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
3	57	117	207	270	359	465	874

The number of projects by year is given in Table 4. According to Table 4, the highest number of projects was finalised in 2020 with 465 projects. 359 projects in 2019, 279 projects in 2018, 207 projects in 2017, 117 projects in 2016, 57 projects in 2015 and 3 projects in 2014.

**Table 5.** Projects Coordinated by Turkey

Year	Project Subject	Coordinating Organisation	Project Budget (Avro)
2014	Fans Against Violence	Turkish Basketball Federation	393.280,00
2016	Strong Kids	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	40.795,00
2017	Sport And Physical Activity Against Children's Technology Addiction	Turkey Federation of Sports for Everyone	41.830,00
2017	Development Of Preschool Physical Activity Program For Strengthening Of Grassroots Sports In Eu	Sports Volunteers Association	263.175,00
2018	Integrating Disabled People Into Social Life With The Hypnotherapy-Hydrotherapy Method	İnönü University	49.140,00
2018	Sport Has the Power To Change The Europe! European Sport Volunteers As A Social Leader And Social Innovator	Sports Volunteers Association	266.260,00
2018	Women Empowerment In Sport	Istanbul Culture and Sport Association	58.270,00
2018	Traditional Games Are Meeting	Karasu Youth, Art and Sports Club Association	56.950,00
2019	Encouraging Students To Pursue Grassroot Sports Activities Outdoor in an Eco-Friendly Manner	Gazi University	388.853,00
2019	Social Inclusion Of Hearing Impaired Youth Through Sport	Esenler Youth and Sports Club Association	54.070,00
2019	Let The Disabled Join The Board	Aktif Youth and Sports Club Association	59.493,00
2019	Darts4Blind	Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University	58.775,00
2019	Sport For All For Sport: Gathering Popularity For Disabled Sport	Pendik Municipality	53.430,00

2019	Integration Of Refugees Through Sport	Sorgun Youth Association	50.880,00
2019	Experiential Learning For Education Through Sports	Experiential Education Centre Association	59.950,00
2019	Three- Points Shot To Health	Karasu Youth, Art and Sports Club Association	58.225,00
2019	Bocce For Everyone Form 7 To 70 Years	Karasu Youth, Art and Sports Club Association	56.925,00
2019	Combating Hazards Through Olympic Values	Turkish Sports Foundation	57.775,00

The projects coordinated by Turkish institutions are given in Table 5. According to Table 5, the projects in which Turkey took part as a coordinator addressed project titles related to children and sports, disabled people and sports, sport for all, refugees and sports, sport and women, traditional sports and physical activity. The most projects were carried out in 2018 and 2019. With 393 thousand Euros, the project with the highest budget is the Fans Against Violence project realised by the Turkish Basketball Federation.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In our research, in which we analysed the content of the projects funded in the first period of Erasmus+ Sport projects within the scope of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union Commission; Turkey was compared with other European countries. The website where the results of the projects are shared and from which we have received the data provides detailed information about the projects carried out within the scope of the Erasmus+ programme. In the study by (6), the same data were analysed and projects related to disability were analysed.

When the findings are analysed, it is seen that we are far behind other European countries in terms of Erasmus sports projects in general. The reason for this can be said to be our inadequacy in project writing, foreign language and project culture.

Turkey has made a financial contribution of 933 million euros to the Erasmus programme to take part in the Erasmus programme, and when we look at the return of this contribution, it was determined that 0.33% was returned within the scope of sports projects (Yazıcı, 2021). As can be understood from this figure, it is seen that we do not even receive 1% of the financial contribution we have given to take part in the programme in terms of sports projects. For this financial contribution to return to our country, sports stakeholders in our country need to write much more and qualified projects.

When we look at the projects carried out in Turkey, only 3 different sports clubs have projects as sports clubs. According to TURKSTAT data, there are 15,828 sports clubs in Turkey and it is seen that these clubs have no initiative on the Erasmus sports project (12). Again, according to YÖK data, there are 208 universities in our country (16). Although many of these universities have Faculties of Sports Sciences and Schools of Physical Education and Sports, it is seen that there are not many initiatives on Erasmus sport projects. According to Table 2, there are 4 universities in our country whose projects are accepted. The course loads of academicians at the university, excessive administrative duties, lack of sufficient human resources may be among the main reasons for the lack of initiatives on the project.

Erasmus sport projects have entered a new period between 2021-2027, and it is necessary to focus on "how we as Turkey can benefit more from the funds in the coming periods". The projects completed through the platform where we access the data should be examined in terms of methodology and form, and targets should be set for successful result-oriented planning in Erasmus sports projects.

As Turkey; the following suggestions can be taken into consideration to get more efficient results from Erasmus sport projects:

- Projects should be designed according to the action titles and priority topics of the European Union Erasmus programme in the new period (2021-2027).

- Project culture should be promoted throughout the country.
- All stakeholders of sport should intensify their cooperation with the National Agency
  - Institutions such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Turkish National Olympic Committee, universities and sports federations should make strategic plans for projects.
  - Institutions related to sports should establish special units for projects and give importance to projects.
  - The Ministry of Youth and Sports should encourage sports clubs to write projects (seminars, project writing training).
  - Project-themed courses should be added to the curriculum to popularise project culture in universities.
  - The administrative workload of academics in the field of sport should be reduced and measures should be taken to allocate time for project writing.
  - Applied project writing training should be given to stakeholders related to sports.
  - Investigating why the countries mentioned in our research have fewer or more projects may be the subject of a different study.

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