



## **Towards a well-funded Erasmus+ programme for the years to come**

### *European Students Union & Erasmus Student Network “Joint Position Paper on the Future of ERASMUS+”*

Erasmus+ is an EU programme supporting opportunities for education, training, young people and sport in Europe. It started as a student exchange programme in 1987, but since 2014 it also offers opportunities for teachers, trainees and volunteers of all ages.

More than nine million people have taken part in the Erasmus+ programme over the last 30 years and nearly 800,000 people benefited from the programme in 2017 alone. The programme currently covers 34 countries (all 28 EU countries as well as Turkey, North Macedonia, Norway, Iceland, Serbia and Liechtenstein) and is open to partner countries across the world.

### **ERASMUS+ 2021-2027**

On March 28, the regulation for Erasmus+ 2021-2027 has been passed by the European Parliament. While the European Parliament and by now also the European Commission have asked to triple the budget for the next program cycle, the Council of Ministers insists on doubling the funding. In order to resolve this conflict, the trilogues started in October 2019. Finland is currently leading the negotiations in the scope of its presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The European Students Union and the Erasmus Student Network urge the Council of Ministers to align with the proposal of tripling the funding as put forward by the European Parliament and Commission. More than ever it is a political responsibility to take the European project forward by investing in one of the most remarkable success stories in the history of Europe, benefiting many more generations to come.

### **Why does Erasmus+ need more funding?**

Tripling the funding is crucial to ensure more equal access for a larger group of beneficiaries from all ages and different educational purposes in order to respond to the high demand of smaller organisations and individual citizens, especially those from disadvantaged groups who still struggle to access and be successful in the current programme.



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As the voice of all European students in higher education and within the Erasmus+ programme, ESU and ESN would like to stress that continued investment in the Erasmus+ programme is needed in order to reach the European wide target of 20% mobile students (ET 2020). According to the Education and Training Monitor, this target is not met, as in 2017, only 11.6% of higher education graduates were mobile. On average in Europe, 8% of them had a temporary experience abroad (so called 'credit mobility'), and 3.6% of them graduated in a country which wasn't the one where they received their upper secondary diploma ('degree mobility'). In more than 20 countries, the Erasmus+ programme accounted for more than 50% of the international student mobility. The Erasmus+ programme thus plays a crucial role in international student mobility in Higher Education. In 2016 more than 19 million people enrolled in European HEIs and a total of 4.7 million students graduated that year. In comparison; in 2016 and 2017, respectively 300.018 and 324.769 higher education students studied or completed a traineeship abroad. ESN and ESU call for the European Commission and the member states to continue to strive to reach the target of 20%.

ESU and ESN support the European Commission's intention to continue focusing on making the Erasmus+ programme more inclusive. Out of those going on mobility, approximately 21.000 participants received additional financial support available for students from a disadvantaged background. This amounts to only 7% of the students that went on mobility. According to the Erasmus+ higher education impact study, financial concerns and personal reasons remain the most frequent barriers for students not to spend parts of their studies abroad. Around two thirds of the non-mobile students reported some type of financial concern and around one in two reported family reasons and personal relationships as main obstacles to mobility. These figures were confirmed by the ESNsurvey 2019 where approximately 70% of respondents considered financial conditions as the main reason not to go abroad. ESU's triannual Bologna with Students Eyes Study consistently shows the same results.

An increased investment in the Erasmus+ programme will contribute to societal progress by promoting shared civic values and active citizenship through mobility, volunteering and cooperation projects. According to ESNsurvey 2019, 52.7% of those who have participated in student exchange volunteer in organised volunteering activities, compared to 30.7% of those who never went on exchange. Furthermore, 76.7% of exchange students identify as their own nationality and as European citizens, which is above the European average of 67% recorded in the Eurobarometer.

Students who participated in an EU funded exchange programme (Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) give higher importance to the European elections (60.7%), had higher intention of voting in the European elections 2019 (76.2%) and had a higher election turnout (71.2%) when compared to the European average of the younger population (18-39 years old), as presented by the Eurobarometer surveys. This showcases the importance of the Erasmus+ programme to instigate political participation in European elections.



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A strong and well-funded Erasmus+ will reinforce the global dimension of the programme and the internationalisation of education institutions and different learning environments in order to build bridges with societies and economies across the globe.

### **Policy Considerations**

The Erasmus+ programme needs to benefit the many, not only the few. Increased accessibility and a focus on creating an inclusive program need to be at the heart of all policy considerations.

#### **Gathering data to analyse if targets are met with a special emphasis on information linked to widening participation of underrepresented groups**

A major barrier for removing the obstacles some groups face in accessing learning mobility is the lack of comparable information about the hurdles. It would be helpful to have a joint effort across Europe to gather information on locally defined minorities in each education system as well as their barriers to participation in education generally and in mobility specifically. GDPR and anonymization of data must be respected but producing comparable aggregated data must be possible. For the participants of Erasmus+ we encourage gathering data in a way that allows individuals to self-define which underrepresented groups they belong to as well as to give feedback on the barriers they faced. When creating statistics on the diversity of the student body participating in different Erasmus+ activities, it is crucial to keep disaggregated data for the different types of participation.

#### **Online platform for information on accessibility, students support and health services**

Students with disabilities or chronic health problems have to conduct way more research before going on exchange than other students. It would decrease the barriers for students if there was a one-stop platform online to easily find out how accessible higher education institutions are, what kind of support services are being offered and what the health care system is like in the respective potential host country. The platform should make it possible for students to easily get answers to questions like “Does this university have wheelchair-friendly facilities?” or “How can I access my monthly shot of medication for my chronic illness, and will it be expensive in this country?” It should furthermore provide clear information on what kind of financial support students can get to cover their needs. We suggest that such a platform should be managed and funded centrally, with national agencies being responsible for gathering the necessary national information.



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## Standards and Guidelines for Inclusive Mobility

It would be helpful to have standards and guidelines for the accessibility of those educational institutions who wish to take part in Erasmus exchanges. As a soft tool for helping institutions to improve accessibility and in the longer perspective as a harder tool aimed at making mobility under the Erasmus+ framework more inclusive. It is therefore necessary to create:

- A self-assessment tool for national authorities and higher education institutions to monitor policies on inclusive mobility around Europe and compare their own policies, knowing easily where they stand.
- Introduce standards and guidelines on Inclusive Mobility that will stimulate higher education institutions to implement a sustainable inclusive mobility strategy at institutional level.
- These standards and guidelines should furthermore be used to provide support, training, and peer learning between institutions.

## Global Citizenship Education in order to tackle upcoming needs in society.

One of the main priorities of the Erasmus+ programme is fostering stronger social cohesion and intercultural understanding. In order to do so, the programme should (continue to) focus on global citizenship education as well as on ensuring that Erasmus+ beneficiaries reach out to their home and host communities in order to instigate interaction and intercultural dialogue. The Erasmus+ programme should facilitate an active dialogue linked to the major global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By raising awareness and supporting the implementation of the SDGs in Europe through education as the proven and most powerful vehicle for sustainable development by making lifelong learning a reality for all. We furthermore believe that it is necessary to research alternative ways of supporting the travel for Erasmus+ participants in order to decrease the ecological footprint of the Erasmus+ generation.

*Brussels, October 18<sup>th</sup> 2019*

1. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary\\_education\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics)
2. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94d97f5c-7ae2-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
3. <https://esn.org/ESNsurvey>
4. <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2019-education-and-training-monitor.pdf>

