

Mobility must be a reality for all

ESN International and ESN Hungary call for continuous access to Erasmus+ for Hungarian students

The Erasmus Student Network urges action from the EU Institutions in the ongoing negotiations concerning Hungary's access to EU funds and their potential impact on the availability of Erasmus+ opportunities for Hungarian students.

We express deep concern over the decisions made by the European Commission regarding Hungarian universities' access to Erasmus+ funds and the [current freeze of cohesion funds](#), which threatens thousands of students in the country to participate in the Erasmus+ programme. **ESN emphasises the significance of separating the concerns about the rule of law from the participation in learning mobility opportunities within the broader context of EU-HU political negotiations.**

Erasmus+ plays a crucial role in the journey of Hungarian students, enriching them with unparalleled experiences and contributing to their personal, professional and educational development. According to the [Preliminary Results of XV ESNsurvey](#), **the primary driving force behind participating in mobility is engaging with people from different backgrounds, gaining knowledge of another culture, and learning/improving a foreign language.** Furthermore, the results demonstrate significant improvement in students' language skills, cultural awareness, and social and communication skills, both during and after mobility. According to the [2022 Hungarian census](#), the number of English Hungarian speakers has increased by 1 million compared to the 2011 census, showing that fostering European opportunities, such as Erasmus+, plays a decisive role in the development of young Hungarians. On top of that, engagement in mobility programmes acts as a catalyst for strengthening European identity, as **half of the respondents strongly identify as European citizens following their mobility.**

The ongoing access of Hungary to the Erasmus+ programme is crucial for the mutual benefit of both Hungary and the EU. **The Programme contributes significantly to the increase in the number of students, staff, and cooperation projects, enhancing the overall quality of these initiatives.** According to [Erasmus+ factsheets](#), from 2017 to 2021, more than 61,000 international students participated in the Erasmus+ programme in Hungary. During the same period, over 52,000 Hungarian students were involved in Erasmus+ exchanges outside their home country, and in **2021 alone, 8,752 students had the chance to embark on a mobility journey.**

We welcome the [petition](#) launched by the National Youth Council in Hungary (NIT), which requests that “students from Hungarian universities should not be the victims of the dispute between the EU and Hungarian government” and stands in alignment with Commissioner Iliana Ivanova’s [statement](#) on the **importance of finding a resolution between Hungary and the European Commission “to ensure that students do not suffer as a result of political conflicts.”** On the 20th of September, 2023, the results of the signature collection by NIT were presented to the [European Union’s Committee on Petitions](#). **The petition received unanimous approval by all political groups present at the hearing.** The Committee's positive response and appeal for more action reinforced the critical importance of EU programmes and the necessity of finding common ground before Hungarian Higher Education Institutions lose the ability to fund mobility through Erasmus+ opportunities.

Inclusivity and equal opportunities constitute a cornerstone of the Erasmus+ programme. Hence, **no one should be left behind. We urge both parties to create a pathway for continuous funding of Erasmus+ opportunities in Hungary.** As per the proposed amendment by MEP Andrea Bocskor into the [Implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027](#), *education should not come within the scope of measures for the protection of the EU budget.* The primary focus should be on prioritising the societal objectives of Erasmus+ over political considerations, as both Hungary and the EU stand to gain from the participation of Hungarian students in the programme.

As a bridge to achieve this and to reinforce the commitment to student mobility, we call for a reinforced commitment to the [Erasmus Charter for Higher Education](#) principles. ECHE provides essential guidelines for higher education institutions participating in the Erasmus+ programme, and it is imperative that these principles are not only acknowledged but rigorously adhered to. **To ensure that the spirit of the programme is kept, we urge increased monitoring by the Hungarian National Agency, without the interference of any other governmental actors.** This increasing oversight is crucial to guarantee that the principles enshrined in the Erasmus Charter are actively

and effectively practised, ensuring that Erasmus+ funds contribute optimally to the advancement of higher education in Hungary.

As the main organisation supporting mobile students, ESN will continue advocating for finding a favourable resolution. Strong reactions from civil society actors, both within Hungary and throughout the EU, serve as an unequivocal reminder of the high stakes involved and the paramount significance of these programmes in the facilitation of higher education's internationalisation and cross-cultural understanding.

