



Erasmus+ for Ukraine: flexibility is not enough, we need fresh funds!

Russia's war in Ukraine has claimed many victims, including students, and the destruction of facilities of higher education institutions. The European Union has been able to assist the country and its people since the beginning of the war. Today, the effort must also focus on the future of students who have arrived in EU member states linked to Erasmus.

The start of the academic year and the month of September are now just a few weeks away and it is more than ever time for the European Commission to take its responsibilities by allocating Erasmus sufficient funds to support higher education institutions in welcoming all Ukrainian students. The urgency today is to cope with the preparation for the start of the academic year.

Following up on the joint call from our organisations and the Coimbra Group from the 23rd of March "[Adapting Erasmus+ to support Ukrainian students and staff](#)", the Commission indicated that students fleeing Ukraine can be enrolled as Erasmus+ students in European Higher Education Institutions without the involvement of the Ukrainian institutions. However, we believe it is fundamental to endow the programme with the appropriate financial resources to match the ambitions of the legal changes. In fact, the delay in the approval of the Multiannual Financial Framework and of the Erasmus provisions for the academic year 2021-2022 has caused an immense loss for many higher education institutions at the start of the 2021/2022 academic year, as explained in the statement by the [Erasmus+ Coalition from December 2021](#). This has led to incoherent levels of resources that can be allocated to students from Ukraine, and there have already been reports of Higher Education Institutions not accepting students from Ukraine as they already had spent all the Erasmus funds available for the current period. On the other hand, the Commission is rightly supporting the researchers that fled the war with a [new dedicated fellowship scheme](#) under the name [MSCA4Ukraine](#).

For a comprehensive action for students, ESU, ESN and EUF call on the European Commission to increase the funds for the Erasmus+ programme for the academic year 2022/2023 in order to accommodate the request for scholarships from students fleeing Ukraine - this can easily be done by allocating additional funding to the Erasmus+ annual work programme, as described in Article 4 of the Erasmus+ Work programme for 2022, which allows the European Commission to increase fund allocation to a certain action up to 20% of the amount originally allocated without further need for a revision of the work programme. Furthermore, ESU, ESN and EUF call all EU governments to invest alongside the European Commission in scholarships for students fleeing the war in Ukraine, regardless of their nationality. State action is essential to enable the provision of support, including scholarships and access to decent housing.

More efforts are also needed to make sure that students coming from Ukraine have access to the right information on how to access Erasmus+ opportunities. A [survey from Ukrainian student organisations](#) led by ESN Ukraine shows that students fleeing the conflict are not fully aware of whether they have access to scholarship opportunities abroad, even if more than 70% of the respondents reported not being able to fully afford to study abroad without complementary resources. Along the same lines, clear guidelines should be created to clarify that Ukrainian students and recent graduates could access Erasmus+ traineeship opportunities.

Ukraine's status as a candidate country to be part of the European Union also puts full access to Erasmus at the forefront. Including Ukraine in the programme will create a stronger link with the European Union through the country's youth. Using the Erasmus+ programme to support Ukrainian students will also prevent brain drain from Ukrainian higher education institutions by formally maintaining the enrolment of Ukrainian students at their home institution and using Erasmus+ as a mobility scholarship for the time of their forced stay abroad.

Caring about the future of these students is preparing the future of Ukraine. It is already helping Ukraine to rebuild itself. EU and Erasmus must be there.