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## **Erasmus +**

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Target: Erasmus+ (2014-2020)

### **What is Erasmus+?**

Erasmus+ is the European Union's new programme for education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020.

It replaces several existing EU programmes, covering all sectors of education: the Lifelong Learning Programme - Erasmus (higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education), Comenius (school education), Grundtvig (adult education), Youth in Action, and five international programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries).

For the first time, Erasmus+ will also offer EU support for sport, particularly at grassroots' level.

Erasmus+ significantly increases EU funding (+40%) for the development of knowledge and skills, reflecting the importance of education and training in EU and national policy agendas. It aims to boost people's personal development and job prospects.

### **What will Erasmus+ support?**

Erasmus+ aims to increase the quality and relevance of qualifications and skills. Two-thirds of its funding will provide grants for more than 4 million people to study, train, work or volunteer abroad in 2014-2020 (compared with 2.7 million in 2007-2013). The period abroad can range from a few days up to a year.

### **NEW and IMPORTANT:**

Erasmus+ is open to students, teachers, apprentices, volunteers, youth leaders and people working in grassroots' sport. It will also provide funding for partnerships between educational institutions, youth organisations, enterprises, local and regional authorities and NGOs, as well as support for reforms in Member States to modernise education and training and to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and employability.

There will be greater support for IT platforms such as e-twinning, to connect schools and other learning providers via the internet.

Erasmus+ will contribute to developing the European dimension in sport by helping to address cross-border threats such as match fixing and doping. It will also support transnational projects involving organisations in grassroots sport, promoting, for example good governance, social inclusion, dual careers and physical activity for all ages.

### **How will Erasmus+ differ from the current programmes?**

Erasmus+ will develop synergies between different education sectors and with the world of work.

- The programme has several new features:
- A loan guarantee scheme ( as "pilot project" – Greens' request adopted ) to help Master's students finance a full degree abroad to acquire the skills needed in knowledge intensive jobs.
- Knowledge Alliances: partnerships between higher education institutions and enterprise to promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship by offering new curricula, learning opportunities and qualifications.
- Sector Skills Alliances: partnerships between vocational education and training providers and enterprise to promote employability and address skills gaps by developing sector-specific curricula and innovative forms of vocational teaching.
- It integrates the currently separate programmes dealing with the international dimension of higher education, meaning higher education mobility to and from third countries and capacity building projects with higher education institutions in third countries will become possible.

### **What will change for students under Erasmus+?**

Access to the programme will be increased in several ways. For example, Erasmus+ will offer stronger support to students wishing to improve their language skills before going to their Erasmus University or job placement. In addition, the development of flexible learning, such as distance or part-time learning will be encouraged through improved use of information technologies.

Erasmus+ grants will more strongly target specific needs (such as the living cost in the destination country) and offer strengthened support for students from less privileged backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities or coming from outermost regions. Countries can complement the EU grant with top-up grants

financed by their own national or regional budget.

A new Erasmus Charter will contribute to a high quality learning experience through more rigorous agreements between higher education institutions which will specify the minimum expected level of student language skills and provide detailed information on housing and visa issues.

## **Will the level of student grants be better harmonised across countries under Erasmus+?**

Yes. The objective is to better harmonise the criteria for fixing the level of the EU student grant, while at the same time allowing flexibility to take into account the level of demand for grants and other sources of funding, which vary from country to country. On top of the EU grant, students might also receive other contributions from national, regional or local authorities.

The level of the EU grant will first depend on the destination country.

Countries taking part in Erasmus+ will be divided into three groups, based on their living costs. Any student moving to a country within the same group (i.e. with similar living costs) for study purposes will receive an EU grant within the medium range €200-450/month. The amount of the grant will be defined by the National Agency responsible for managing Erasmus+ grants in their country. The National Agency will take account of the level of demand and other sources of funding. It might, for example, give their higher education institutions a minimum-maximum range for the grants in case co-financing is available in only some regions or institutions.

Students moving to a country with higher living costs will get the medium range plus at least €50/month (but not higher than €500/month). Students moving to a country with lower living costs will get the medium range minus at least €50/month (but not lower than €150/month). Students from outermost regions and outermost programme countries will get a higher EU grant.

The level of the EU grant will also depend on whether the student plans to study abroad or undertake a traineeship. Students on a traineeship will get €100-200/month on top of the EU grant given for studies as they often have no access to cheaper student housing or restaurants etc. The level will be decided by the National Agency or higher education institution in case of regional or local co-financing.

Special arrangements for students from low-income backgrounds are also foreseen: National Authorities may decide, depending on the support already provided at national level for this target group, to give an additional €100-200 per month from the EU budget, on top of the normal EU grant, to those students moving abroad for studies.

Finally, students with special needs can receive a higher EU grant to contribute to their additional costs.

## **Will mobility still be a key aim for Erasmus+?**

Yes: mobility will continue to receive the largest portion (two-thirds) of the Erasmus+ budget.

## **What will happen under the new programme in adult education?**

The individual mobility of adult learners will no longer be supported, other than as part of a strategic

partnership.

Teachers and staff involved in adult education, however, will continue to benefit through individual cross-border learning experiences (both short- and long-term). The three current staff mobility actions (in-service training, assistantships and visits & exchanges) will be amalgamated into one action. Strategic partnerships will contribute to the modernisation of organisations in adult education.

A new Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) will also be launched.

## **What is the new Open Access requirement?**

The Open Access requirement will ensure that all educational materials produced with funding from Erasmus+ are freely accessible to all, based on the principle that anything paid for with public money should benefit the public. Whenever an Erasmus+ beneficiary produces educational materials they will have to make them available to the public through the use of Open Licences and via Open Educational Resources (OER).

## **Which countries can participate in Erasmus+?**

- The EU Member States
- Acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates benefiting from a pre-accession strategy
- European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries that are party to the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement
- Countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, where a bilateral agreement has been concluded.
- EU Member States are automatically Erasmus+ programme countries. The other countries in the list above can become 'programme countries' subject to fulfilling specific administrative conditions and the setting up of a National Agency to manage the programme.
- All other countries in the world are 'partner countries' and may participate in certain actions or according to specific conditions.

## **Warning: The Swiss Confederation**

On 9 February 2014, the popular vote by the people and the cantons in favour of changing Switzerland's system of immigration called into question the principle of free movement of persons between the EU and Switzerland.

While implementing legislation for this popular vote will now have to be enacted by the Swiss Federal Council within three years, the referendum explicitly prevents the government from concluding any new international agreement contrary to this initiative. Hence, as an immediate consequence, the Federal Council is not in a position to sign the Protocol extending the EU-Swiss agreement on the free movement of persons to Croatia, which joined the Union on 1 July 2013 as new Member State, and is analysing the different implications.

The EU has always made clear that there is a close link between Swiss participation in Erasmus+ and the Protocol, as the programme is closely linked to the free movement of persons (exchange of researchers and students). Given the current circumstances, the EU and the Swiss authorities have agreed to suspend

on-going negotiations on Swiss participation in Erasmus+ and took note of the impossibility of signing an agreement in time for the signing of contracts with beneficiaries selected under the 2014 calls for proposals.

Therefore, as foreseen in the Erasmus+ Regulation, until such an agreement is signed, Switzerland will not participate in Erasmus+ on an equal footing with Member States (i.e. as a "Programme Country") as initially envisaged, but will rather enjoy the same status as other third countries (i.e. as a "Partner Country").

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