



Universities UK
International

ERASMUS+ SUCCESSOR PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

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Contact:

**Anne-May Janssen, Head of European
Engagement**

AnneMay.Janssen@international.ac.uk

Audience:

Directors International, Erasmus+ and Study Abroad Practitioners
and International Office staff with responsibility for Europe

Action:

For information

Overview

This information note has been developed in response to the European Commission proposals for the successor programme to Erasmus+. The paper outlines some of the important changes and new features of the programme, including how the UK might participate in light of the UK's departure from the European Union in March 2019.



INTRODUCTION

The current Erasmus+ programme ends on 31 December 2020, and it will be succeeded by a new iteration of the programme. On the 30 May 2018, the European Commission [released its proposals](#) for the next programme and it included an ambitious budget proposal for €30bn across the seven-year cycle with €8.64bn for higher education. The increased budget will allow the Commission to deliver on one of its main goals for the new programme, namely to make it more inclusive and to reach out more and better to people from diverse cultural, economic and social backgrounds.

The European Commission based its proposal on the Interim Evaluation of Erasmus+, alongside their consultation of the successor programme through their consultation on the multi-annual financial framework (MFF), both of which Universities UK International (UUKi) submitted reports to. The next Erasmus programme will begin on the 1 January 2021, with the first call the following autumn. This paper sets out the key features of the Erasmus proposal, and reflects on what the proposal means for the UK sector in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The new Erasmus programme will remain similar to the current programme, with the Commission describing the proposal as 'evolution not revolution'. This is reflected in the structure of the programme, with the three Key Actions remaining at the heart of the programme. The proposal for the budget, however, does mark a significant change: the Commission proposes to double this to € 30bn. This must be negotiated by the European Parliament and the European Council, which means that it is subject to change. The proposal foresees a substantial increase for education and training, growing from approximately €4.9bn¹ to €8.64bn. However, the proportion of the total budget is down from 43% to 34.6%. Funding will be directed to the Commission's commitment to make the new programme more inclusive and to reach out to a larger target group of potential beneficiaries. The new programme shall, for example, offer more flexible learning mobility formats, such as short-term, group and virtual mobility.

The European Education Area (EEA) features heavily in the Erasmus proposal. One of the main aims of the EEA is to strengthen the European identity. Part of the EEA are the European University Alliances. These European Universities are to be bottom-up networks with the aim of increasing the international competitiveness of European universities by integrating research and teaching. Lastly, the new proposal focusses a great deal on measures that will decrease the administrative burden.

The proposal allows for the UK to negotiate full access to the programme. Article 16 details the requirements for the category of Associated Third Countries which would allow third countries to participate in Erasmus as full programme countries. This is the category the UK would be eligible for. The terms of UK access to the new programme would be part of specific negotiations that address association to Erasmus.

NOTE

1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN> (p.12 – based on calculations on the percentages the European Commission allocated to each sector)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW ERASMUS PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

The majority of the programme, and the way it is run, will largely remain as it was under Erasmus+. Many changes were made to the current programme compared to the previous iteration and, as a result, the Commission made clear throughout the consultation process that it would be a case of "evolution not revolution" for the new programme starting in 2021. This is reflected in the proposal, which sees the Commission reinforce existing actions, with only a limited number of new actions introduced. Any new actions will not only be integrated within the existing architecture but would also use existing delivery mechanisms. This to ensure maximum continuity and stability with the current programme.²

NOTE

2 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.7)



KEY ACTIONS: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The continuity in the programme is also reflected in its structure. The proposal maintains three Key Actions with the same broad themes:

- **Key Action One:** Learning mobility is largely unchanged, the main difference being that the Erasmus proposal includes specific 'language learning opportunities'.
- **Key Action Two:** Cooperation among organisations and institutions will see some slight changes, with a focus on projects that strengthen Europe's innovation capacity and partnerships for excellence. The European Commission envisions the European Universities Alliances as contributing towards these partnerships for excellence.
- **Key Action Three:** Support to policy development and cooperation has been expanded and will now include measures that contribute to the qualitative and inclusive implementation of the Programme; cooperation with other Union instruments; and dissemination and awareness-raising activities about European policy outcomes.

BUDGET

The Commission envisions the Erasmus successor programme having a €30bn budget, which is double what the current programme has enjoyed over its seven-year cycle. With this significantly increased budget the Commission wants to triple the number of participants. The total amount allocated to higher education through the education and training field will be substantially higher, at €8.64bn over the seven-year period³. However, while the total amount has increased, the proportion of total funding being allocated to higher education is lower than in the current programme (from 43% of the education and training budget under Erasmus+⁴ to 34.6% of the €24.94bn available for education and training in the

new proposal. This represents the Commission's commitment to widening and diversifying the programme beyond higher education mobility. The amounts allocated to the education and training sectors are as follows:

- At least €8.64bn for higher education
- At least €5.23bn for vocational education and training
- At least €3.79bn for school education actions
- At least €1.19bn for adult education actions
- €4.5m for Jean Monnet actions

Outside of the field of education and training, the allocations are as follows:

- €3.1bn for actions in the field of youth
- €5.5m for actions in the field of sport
- At least €9.6m as a contribution to the operational costs of the national agencies.

The budget must be negotiated with the European Parliament and European Council, which means that it is still subject to change.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND SHORT-TERM MOBILITY

Widening the diversity of those undertaking periods of mobility abroad has long been a focus for the Commission and now with the successor programme the Commission makes significant steps to further that priority. This is in line with UUKi's [recommendations](#) to the Commission for the new Erasmus programme. In order to do this, the Commission will address the needs of certain target groups by providing more flexible mobility modes, such as short-term, group and virtual mobility.⁵ UUKi also encourages the Commission to allow greater flexibility so funding can be used for any additional administrative support students may require

accessing mobility opportunities, as well as ensuring additional resources are available for universities so they can fully and appropriately support the full spectrum of student needs.

UUKi strongly supports the emphasis on short-term and different forms of mobility as these approaches will significantly benefit disadvantaged and underrepresented students. According to UUKi's research on [Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility](#), students engaging in outward mobility from low-participation neighbourhoods, low socio-economic backgrounds, black and minority ethnic (BME) students and students with a disability are all more likely to choose short-term mobility options than their peers;⁶ however, this research also shows that students who experience one shorter period of mobility are more likely to want to take up subsequent opportunities.⁷ In addition, short-term mobility may help ensure that students from a broader range of academic disciplines can benefit from international experiences through a period of mobility. For example, students on health-related, education and architecture courses often have less flexibility in deviating from the prescribed curriculum; thus, opportunities for short-term mobility will support greater diversity of subjects as well.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The new proposal focusses a great deal on measures that will decrease the administrative burden. There is a clear focus on streamlining the administration of the programme and making it more flexible. However, there is little detail on specific reforms in the proposal. The high administrative burden has long been a sector wide concern and this was raised with the Commission in UUKi's [Interim Evaluation Report on the Erasmus+ programme](#). To help address these concerns, the new programme will avoid

unnecessary surveys and data collection, and will have a 'light and proportionate procedure...for the re-designation of national agencies' which will free up resources at a national level.⁸ In addition, the Commission recognises that the implementation of the programme's international actions need to be simplified, and aims to do this by reducing the number of external cooperation instruments.

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA

The objective to create a European Education Area by 2025 (which the European Commission launched in November 2017) is heavily integrated within the Commission's proposal for Erasmus. A main aim of the European Education Area is to widen mobility opportunities and to strengthen the European identity of EU citizens. As such, the Erasmus programme will be a key component for the Commission in delivering the European Education Area.⁹ A key feature of the European Education Area is the creation of European University Alliances, which are to be bottom-up networks established with the aim of increasing the international competitiveness of European universities, integrating both research and teaching. The Commission will launch the pilot phase in autumn 2018 as part of the Erasmus+ programme, meaning funding will be provided through the current programme. Since the UK is still a Member State during the launch of the pilot, UK universities are eligible to participate in the pilot. It bears repeating that the Erasmus+ programme until the end on 31 December 2020. When the full initiative launches as part of the next Erasmus programme, however, the proposed funding will not only come from Erasmus, but also from Horizon Europe, Structural Funds and national contributions. Whilst the new proposals do not provide a great amount of detail on the Erasmus action of the

NOTE

3 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.33)

4 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/erasmus-plus-in-detail_en.pdf

5 <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Documents/UUKi%20Erasmus%2B%20successor%20programme%20position%20paper.pdf> (p.3)

NOTE

6 <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/widening-participation-in-uk-outwardstudent-mobility.pdf> (p.5)

7 https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/iu_bc_outwd_mblty_student_perception_sept_15.pdf (p.27)

8 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.12)

9 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.2)

European Universities, they do indicate that there will be new joint and integrated long term and sustainable strategies on education, research and innovation which will be strongly linked to the new Horizon Europe programme.¹⁰

ASSOCIATION TO THE PROGRAMME

The Commission has created a pathway for the UK to fully participate in the next Erasmus programme. Article 16 details the requirements for the category of Associated Third Countries which would allow third countries to participate in Erasmus as full programme countries, and this is the category in which the UK would be eligible. However, association is subject to the EU and the third country in question coming to an agreement that:

- Ensures a fair balance as regards the contributions and benefits of the third country participation in the Union programmes;
- Lays down the conditions of participation, including calculation of financial contributions [...] and administrative costs...;
- Does not provide the third country any decision-making powers;
- Guarantees the rights of the EU to ensure sound financial management and to protect its financial interests and
- Fulfils all the obligations which the Erasmus regulation imposes on Member States¹¹

The full association of third countries has not been an option in previous programmes. In the current Erasmus+ programme participation is open for Member States, acceding countries, candidate countries, potential candidate countries and members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The proposal for Erasmus goes further by also including countries falling under the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Encouragingly, the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Sam Gyimah MP, told the House of Commons on the 21 June 2018 that the government would be discussing the UK's 'options for future participation as a third country...on the basis of a fair and ongoing contribution' and that the UK had 'accepted...we must pay into the programme'. Mr. Gyimah even went further to state that 'we have made the EU aware of our desire to participate in the programme' and that 'there is a lot to welcome in the framework proposals'¹².

There are not any further details on what the financial contribution may be, and this is likely to be part of any negotiations that specifically tackle the association to the programme. The final point regarding the need to fulfil 'all the obligations which the Erasmus regulation imposes on Member States' may, however, be linked to the negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU. One of the provisions in the regulations requires participating countries to endeavour to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the functioning of Erasmus, which includes making visas and residence permits for third-country nationals as readily available as possible. There is even the suggestion that fast-track admissions procedures are put in place. Whilst these features may not be binding, we do not yet know what the UK's immigration regime will look like and how short-term study visas will feature in the system. However, in order to associate to the successor programme of Erasmus, there may be a need for allowances to be made which enhance the compatibility between the immigration system and the Erasmus programme.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The proposal for the successor programme to Erasmus outlines some important innovations that would make the programme more accessible to a more diverse community of learners and beneficiaries. It also suggests that some of the concerns regarding administrative burden will be addressed. Most importantly, the new programme features a pathway for participation for third countries, which would include the UK once we leave the EU on the 29 March 2019. It is important to note that [UK will remain in the current Erasmus+ programme](#) until its end on 31 December 2020. UUK is in regular contact with the UK Government, EU officials and European stakeholders to stress the importance of the programme to the sector and our strong desire to associate to Erasmus, and we will continue to work towards this goal on behalf of the UK sector.



NOTE

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.19)

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf (p.35)

¹² <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-21/debates/CDF5E729-8AC7-4CCD-99DB-092D91AEA725/ErasmusPlusProgramme>