

## **Securing an EU-UK agreement on future participation in the Erasmus+ programme: a reminder that international opportunities for students are at the heart of any association agreement**

As the EU-UK negotiations on a future relationship continue informally, it is now imperative that both the UK and the EU continue to work constructively and in the spirit of compromise to meaningfully advance discussions on the future of UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme. We welcome both the UK's and EU's respective mandates on their mutual desire to foster cooperation in higher, vocational and school education and are pleased to see progress made on the UK's participation in Union programmes during last week's negotiations. We take note of each side's desire to come to an agreement that would allow the UK to participate in the next Erasmus+ programme.

We remind UK and EU officials that Erasmus+ is a respected, time tested and hugely beneficial programme for UK and European students. Its monumental effect on facilitating over 10 million international mobilities has resulted in a generation of international citizens with greater intercultural competencies and innovative skills who have the agility employers need to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market. The evidence is clear that student mobility improves students' outcomes.

An agreement in the interests of students is possible, however it will involve compromises on both UK and EU sides. This is now urgent. Each side should renew their commitment to **continue to work towards a solution that represents students' interests and provides a positive outcome for future generations of learners.**

In higher and vocational education particularly, participation in the Erasmus+ programme is mutually beneficial to both the UK and EU. If the UK was included as a full participating programme country, the EU would avoid losing an important and highly popular country destination for EU and international students. EU and international students would be able to continue to study at UK universities and colleges, some of the world's highest-quality providers of education.

Similarly, UK association to the programme would continue to allow international mobility levels for study and work placements, as well as maintain the strategic partnerships vital for the internationalisation of curricula and campuses. With over half of UK students choosing a mobility destination to a European country, the UK could continue to provide students opportunities to study and work internationally, whilst simultaneously advancing the international scope of the Erasmus+ programme. EU and international Erasmus+ students make very valued economic and social contributions to British society. Compromising on an agreement is clearly mutually beneficial.

**We therefore urge EU and UK negotiators on both sides to not forget the students, young people and educators who lie at the heart of the Erasmus+ education programme.** Any delay to reach a final agreement will therefore be to the detriment to these groups. Young people in the EU, the UK and internationally already face more of an uncertain time than ever as they graduate into an increasingly competitive labour market, fractured by the impact of COVID-19. Now is not the time to limit international, academic or vocational collaboration at the expense of students and learners.



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