

# **Development of Erasmus+ in the second half of the programme period and the design of the subsequent programme generation (2021–2027)**

**Position paper of the National Erasmus+ Agency for EU  
Higher Education Cooperation within DAAD**

**30 May 2017**

**The NA DAAD is firmly committed to the continuation of Erasmus+ in the proven programme architecture and, while retaining the overarching objectives and including current thematic priorities, with an increased budget tailored to need. The current Erasmus+ Programme is to be optimised taking into consideration essential consistency. The transition to a robust successor programme should be characterised by consolidation and stability.<sup>1</sup>**

**In order to increase the impact of the programme and the public perception of it, NA DAAD also recommends the following additional measures for the new programme generation:**

### **1. Strengthen the impact of Erasmus+ using virtual formats**

The education, science and research sector is taking advantage of the ongoing digitalisation and is actively helping to shape these processes. It is therefore essential that digitalisation also plays a key role in Erasmus+, a programme involving real-world European and global interaction.

By integrating additional digital components into the overall programme portfolio, the universities' internationalisation processes will be expanded further and the education sector will be modernised. Universities contribute their creative potential in terms of design, and promote European and international cooperation and networking in the education sector through digital innovations and the development and expansion of their own digital resources. This helps to strengthen the intercultural and employment-related skills of young Europeans and convey European values. By reducing inhibitions, digital formats reach additional potential participants and thus enhance the widespread impact of Erasmus+.

#### Desiderata:

- More blended learning formats can ensure better preparation, follow-up and support for stays abroad in terms of language, content and cultural issues. For example, incorporating digital components into blended learning enables less mobile participants to prepare over a longer period by taking part in introductory courses and buddy programmes.
- Using digital media to stay in touch with the home university during a study visit or internship abroad can reduce fears about leaving. In this way, digitalisation contributes towards the achievement of mobility targets.
- For the target group of students who, for various reasons, are not able to undertake longer trips abroad, the NA DAAD is also in favour of introducing specially designed, actual stays abroad for short periods of time, such as summer schools, excursions, blended learning work placements etc.
- Students who are not mobile also benefit from the opportunities offered by (digital) internationalisation@home. The inclusion of digital components in Erasmus+ thus leads to overall greater visibility and wider public engagement with the programme.

<sup>1</sup> The NA DAAD supports the position paper of the directors of European NAs in the sectors of general and vocational education and training, 15 March 2017

## **2. Support universities in their societal role at a local and regional level**

The higher education sector is a driver of innovation and dialogue. In this role, it has the mission of acting for society; specifically, using its internationality to influence society and make a contribution to the European idea. In this context, it is not only economic and scientific innovations that should be seen as the core mission.

In fact, it is about fulfilling an education mandate for society as a whole: an open, democratic, inclusive, high-performing and future-oriented knowledge society needs strong and responsible universities.

In addition to research and teaching, universities also have broader obligations to society. These are often referred to as third mission activities and involve cooperation with industry and the region/local community. Strengthening these third mission activities with regard to the dissemination of the European idea via universities is to be pursued.

By means of their international contacts and networks, universities are able to bring the added value of a European dimension to local debates and challenges. Conversely, they can also convey local phenomena at a European level. As called for in the updated modernisation agenda for higher education institutions, in future, more emphasis must be placed on the systematic involvement of higher education institutions in the development of integrated local and regional development plans. In this way, the population's interest in Europe and its benefits can be brought from an abstract level to a practical and tangible level.

### **Desiderata:**

- In order to promote a strong role within a European society at local and regional level, universities must be given additional structural support and have to be equipped with additional programme resources.
- Separate project funding for short-term measures such as summer schools, international staff weeks and staff mobility within a local and regional environment should be integrated into the new programme generation. This will ensure a more flexible response to emerging (socio-)political events throughout the seven-year cycle. Universities (and other educational providers) will thus be given the opportunity to plan and implement targeted and effective initiatives (e.g. projects for refugees, projects to promote the European idea).
- To enhance this effect at national level, the NA DAAD advocates the decentralised administration of some Jean Monnet Activities (e.g. modules and projects) for integrating the European idea at a local and regional level.
- Universities are to be provided with financial resources so that they can approach independent groups of students or graduates and further strengthen them in their local commitment to societal issues, including Europe (or the funding will be awarded by the NA directly to the groups at grassroots level).

## **3. Exploit the potential of alumni**

The potential of alumni has not been fully exploited, even after 30 years of Erasmus. Although educational institutions usually take care of their own graduates, much more could be done to include the large number of foreign guests, who come with the aid of Erasmus+, in the universities' internationalisation activities.

For former Erasmus participants, it is also extremely appealing to be re-invited to their former host university after completing their course. In this way, a productive discourse on

subject-related and socio-political/European issues can be established together with other alumni in extended weekend seminars or summer schools. This will ensure that alumni continue to identify strongly with the Erasmus+ Programme and the European idea.

In addition, opportunities for long-term, professional networking are opened up between Erasmus participants, from which the universities and other educational sectors are also able to benefit. These alumni activities also have the potential to promote cross-sectoral cooperation.

Here, the universities are offered another important tool for internationalisation@home and the perception of their role in society at a local and regional level.

#### Desiderata:

- The NA DAAD proposes supplementing existing programme lines with regulatory and budgetary options for Erasmus alumni support.
- Universities must be given structural assistance and programme resources in order to provide this.

#### **4. Make approaches appropriate to the target group and simplify access**

Achieving the objectives of Erasmus+ depends primarily on reaching potential participants. There is clearly scope to improve awareness and understanding of the programme and acceptance of it among potential beneficiaries.

All educational sectors and target groups have been brought together under one roof in Erasmus+. The programme has succeeded in integrating these sectors and groups at programme architecture level but not in terms of making the necessary differentiated approaches to the various target groups. Erasmus+ focuses on young people, school pupils, apprentices, students, teachers, lecturers and adults interested in further education. From the perspective of the European Union educational programme, they are not selectively targeted, but are approached in a technical sense as “the final beneficiaries”. This means that, from the point of view of the target groups, potential mobility options are not specifically centred on their desired personal development, their prospects or their needs.

#### Desiderata:

- For the next generation of European education programmes it will be crucial to put the target groups at the centre of communication and reach out to them individually in their own personal environments, but without relinquishing the collective value of Erasmus+. From the point of view of individuals and educational institutions, Erasmus+ and its successor programme need to be perceived as more appropriately focused on the various target groups.
- The opportunities offered by the programme need to be presented in ways that are better tailored to the different target groups, without deviating from the essential uniformity of the

process. This will be achieved if communication is understandable, access is facilitated and thus active membership of a European community of values is conveyed. For example, websites, manuals, guidelines, databases, communication channels and processes need to be completely redesigned from the perspective of the user.

## 5. Expand and improve the flexibility of support measures

The points mentioned above call for new and adapted rules and, combined with this, in particular **better flexibility** of existing options in the key actions. **Further financial resources** are needed in order to attain this.

The National Agency also calls for the following modifications and enhancements:

### A. **Strategic Partnerships**

The Strategic Partnerships shall **continue to be administered on a decentralised basis** by the National Agencies, and thus close to the target groups. This kind of support has clear advantages: access is facilitated for smaller and new organisations. Advice and assistance can be organised with a focus on specific target groups, and national priorities or thematic aspects are addressed more effectively.

The Strategic Partnerships must be **further expanded in terms of their financial resources and number**. They have proven to be a very flexible and effective tool for the internationalisation of universities. Because of the limited budget, support was available for only 41 Strategic Partnerships in the higher education sector in Germany in 2014–2016 (out of 25,000 across Europe in all sectors). Five of these could only be realised thanks to the provision of additional national funding by the BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research).

Due to the limited budget, **the Knowledge Alliances** should not be continued as a separate funding line; instead, they could be integrated into the Strategic Partnerships funding line. Integration into the Strategic Partnerships (in the field of university-business) will reduce the amount of administrative work for the NA and the universities without depriving the universities of the budget and the possibilities associated with the Knowledge Alliances.

### B. **Discontinuation of the Master Loan Scheme**

To date, there has been little take-up of the Master Loan Scheme which was introduced for the first time as part of Erasmus+. It is unlikely that demand will increase in the future. The financial resources allocated to the scheme can be used productively to boost the budget of the decentralized administered **mobility projects** and the **Strategic Partnerships**. To date, only 1.5 % of all German students have benefited from a mobility experience with Erasmus+. In 2017, the volume of applications from German universities for Erasmus mobility in Europe is once again twice the amount of the available budget. Very good projects that had to be rejected up to now can only be accepted for support with increased resources. Higher scholarship payments are increasing the incentive for students who were not previously interested in a stay abroad. Interested participants from disadvantaged groups will also be better supported.

### C. **Strengthening the international dimension in the higher education sector:**

The international dimension of Erasmus+ (international credit mobility, capacity building in higher education, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees, Jean Monnet Activities) has been established as an important and useful instrument in the programme. This is particularly necessary against the backdrop of a necessary stabilisation of structures in the education sector and support for modernisation

efforts in partner countries.

In particular, the **international credit mobility budgets are to be significantly increased** in order to meet the great demand for all regions of the world. Regions that are especially appealing are extremely oversubscribed and the intense competition is hindering the continuity in support that is expected by the cooperating universities. The **short funding periods** in international credit mobility are also at odds with the sustainability demanded by the programme.

**D. Integration of “Europa macht Schule – Europe Meets School” into the Erasmus+ successor programme**

Due to its objectives and effectiveness with regard to voluntary commitment, the practical options for experiencing Europe and its bridging function between school and university, the NA DAAD advocates integrating the national Europa macht Schule (Europe Meets School) programme into the Erasmus+ successor programme.

**In order to meet its goals, the current Erasmus+ Programme needs the increases in funding previously announced and, from 2021, adequate financing that significantly exceeds the volume of the existing programme generation<sup>2</sup>.**

<sup>2</sup> Position paper of the directors of European NAs in the sectors of general and vocational education and training, 15 March 2017