

ERASMUS+

IMPACT

REPORT

2023

DEAR READERS,

Erasmus+ makes a difference! We want to show you how in our Impact Report 2023, which follows on from our previous annual reports. This year, for the first time, we are providing an abridged and adapted English translation of the report. Alongside the *DAADeuroletter*, our magazine about Erasmus+ higher education cooperation, also available online in German and English since last year, this annual review is our key communication tool. It plays an important role in raising awareness about the programme and the opportunities it offers within Germany's higher education sector. Its target audiences are financial sponsors, German universities, other academic organisations and multipliers in politics, business and society as well as members of the general public interested in learning more about Erasmus+.

In this English version, we offer you an insight into our work as the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education. The overarching theme is impact, as reflected in the new name of the report. What did we want to achieve? What have we achieved? And how did we achieve these results? We answer these questions by taking a closer look at 4 thematic areas that were particularly important to us in 2023: inclusion and diversity, sustainability, (student) engagement and (democratic) participation and Erasmus+ at my university. This translation contains slightly adapted introductions to these topics, while the German Impact Report features supplementary articles that showcase best practice examples.

These 4 focuses are preceded by an overview of Erasmus+ in the higher education sector for 2023, in which we outline the basic principles of the programme's implementation and current trends. With the help of more than 400 project coordinators at universities across Germany, around 55,000 scholarship holders were able to explore Europe and the world in the 2021–2023 funding cycle. At the end of this report, you will find a chronological list of selected events.



Although we are only showcasing a small selection of activities here, one thing is very clear: Erasmus+ is an important instrument for the strategic internationalisation of German universities. It influences us in our everyday lives and has a profound, long-lasting impact. Its actions facilitate the mobility of individuals and promote partnerships and cooperation projects which extend beyond the borders of Europe, in-person, online or as a combination of both. These actions complement each other and collectively strengthen the European idea, which thrives on (peer-to-peer) exchange and personal encounters. This is the essence of the European Union's flagship education programme, and this is what the NA DAAD is committed to supporting.

I hope you enjoy reading these thought-provoking articles!

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephan Geifes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Stephan Geifes

Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education at DAAD

SPECTRUM

2 Editorial

4 Spectrum

5 Erasmus+ Higher Education Cooperation in Germany

Erasmus+ is the European Union's largest education and mobility programme. It stands for exchange and understanding within a united and cosmopolitan Europe on the global stage. To ensure the successful implementation of the programme, the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education at DAAD is in regular contact with over 400 project coordinators at universities across Germany. Together, we have enabled around 55,000 scholarship holders to spend time abroad with the 2021–2023 calls.

12 Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion and diversity have become increasingly important in the generation of Erasmus+ programme that has been running since 2021. As one of the 4 horizontal priorities, this important thematic area has become a cornerstone of the European Union's flagship programme in the field of education.

14 Engagement and Participation

A strong European identity and the active participation of citizens and civil society in democratic processes are crucial for the future of the European Union. The 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme generation aims to make a significant contribution to this goal, as reflected in its horizontal priority «Participation in democratic life». A key focus of this priority is to engage young people.

16 Sustainability

The term «sustainability» has two quite distinct meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the ability to achieve a long-lasting impact, on the other, it emphasises the principle of using existing resources responsibly and sparingly. Both aspects are equally relevant to Erasmus+ and our mission, with the ecological aspect gaining prominence since the start of the current programme.

18 Erasmus+ at My University

Since its launch as a student exchange programme in 1987, Erasmus+ has undergone continuous development. Through various phases, it has become an important instrument for the strategic internationalisation of German universities. The generation launched in 2021 has introduced additional opportunities, and not only because the budget has almost doubled compared to the 2014–2020 period.

20 Events in 2023

A summary of key events we participated in or organised independently or in collaboration with other National Agencies (NAs) in 2023.

22 Statistic

26 Publication details

The *Erasmus+ Impact Report 2023* primarily uses short URLs with the IP address «t1p». t1p.de is a service operated from Germany that prioritises data protection and data security. The copyright details for the images used are listed in the publication details with page references.

ERASMUS+ HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION IN GERMANY

Erasmus+ is the European Union's largest education and mobility programme. It stands for exchange and understanding within a united and cosmopolitan Europe on the global stage. Since its launch in 1987 – when it was still a mobility programme purely for students – over 14 million mostly young people have taken part, one million from German universities alone. We are responsible for this as the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education at DAAD (NA DAAD).

To ensure the successful implementation of Erasmus+, we are in regular contact with over 400 project coordinators at universities across Germany. Together, we enabled around 55,000 students and university staff to spend time abroad during the 2021–2023 period, which was still partially affected by the coronavirus pandemic. In the Cooperation Partnerships, which we also administer, 33 new projects have been accepted for funding, bringing the total number of projects supported to 131.

The Erasmus+ programme

Over its 37-year history spanning 7 programme generations, Erasmus+ has become an important instrument for the sustainable internationalisation of German universities. In 2021, with the start of the current programme phase, its activities were expanded once again. Today, Erasmus+ facilitates mobilities for university members – students, educators and administrative staff – in Europe and beyond, in physical, virtual and mixed formats. It also offers no fewer than 9 actions for partnerships and cooperations, facilitating a whole range of projects between different stakeholders and in different areas at European and international level.

The entire programme is based on 4 priorities – «Inclusion and diversity», «Digital transformation», «Environment and fight against climate change» and «Participation in democratic life» – which are central to the future of Europe and the European Union. A number of additional measures have been introduced to achieve these goals. For example, people with fewer opportunities, including first-generation academics and working students, receive additional money and support. To promote sustainability, students can now complete their Erasmus+ period as a short-term format and so-called blended mobility. Additionally, the use of environment-friendly modes of transport for travel

to and from the destination is financially supported.

To implement the various actions and measures, the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, which is responsible for Erasmus+, has allocated a budget of 28.4 billion euros for the years 2021–2027, almost double the funding for the previous programme (2014–2020). This includes around 2.2 billion euros from the EU's external cooperation and neighbourhood instruments. 70% of the budget is earmarked to promote mobility, the remaining 30% for cooperation projects and policy measures. The declared aim is to facilitate a further 10 million mobility activities by the end

of the programme phase. The NA DAAD supports this with its work for and with German universities.

The National Agency at DAAD

Since the start of Erasmus, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been responsible for the higher education sector. As the National Agency within the world's largest funding organisation for the international exchange of students and academics, we implement the programme in this area on behalf of the EU Commission and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). We do so by working closely with Erasmus coordinators at the universities. We also act as an informa-

tion and advice centre for the higher education programmes administered in Brussels as well as for the Bologna Process, which aims to create a common European Higher Education Area (t1p.de/tuccl [German]), and the ASEM education process, which seeks to strengthen relations between Europe and Asia at various levels through informal policy dialogue (t1p.de/i950a [German]).

With regard to the Erasmus+ programme, which is central to us and our work, we cooperate closely with the National Agencies in the other 32 EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme (Programme countries) as well as the 3 German NAs responsible for the other areas of

education, with which we form an effective network. We also maintain close contact with the DAAD office in Brussels, which helps us ensure the appropriate representation of German universities in EU programmes at the European Commission's headquarters and highlight synergies with complementary national funding programmes. Finally, we regularly liaise with representatives of the EU Commission itself in order to put forward the interests and concerns of German universities.

All of these tasks are based on multi-layered processes and interaction with various stakeholders at both national and international level. To consolidate and improve the quality of our work in this complex

The «+» sign was introduced in 2014, when the European Commission brought together its mobility programmes in all areas of education under one umbrella. Since then, Erasmus+ has been the EU's programme that supports education, training, youth and sport. In Germany, it is implemented by 4 National Agencies (www.erasmusplus.de [German]).

In addition to the NA DAAD Higher Education, these are the NA Erasmus+ School Education (NA at the Pedagogical Exchange Service), the NA Education for Europe at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB) for vocational and adult education as well as JUGEND für Europa, the NA for Youth, Sport and the European Solidarity Corps. They are all based in Bonn.

The **Programme countries** include all Member states of the European Union – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden as well as 6 non-EU countries, namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye. The United Kingdom, which was listed as a Programme country in the old 2014–2020 programme generation but which left Erasmus+ at the end of 2020, has been a Partner country since 2021 – with the start of the new programme phase. Further information on mobility within the EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme can be found at t1p.de/5g0jr (German).

environment, we introduced a quality management system (t1p.de/o1n3i [German]) in 2006. Since then, we have been certified according to the ISO 9001 standard. Regular recertifications and audits have validated the high quality of our work. More importantly, our customers have expressed satisfaction both with us and with our team of around 100 employees, as our annual customer survey shows. In terms of overall satisfaction, 87% of respondents rated us as «very good» or «good», which is 7% more than in 2022 (t1p.de/k492e [German]).

Facts and figures on mobility: funding in 2023

For the mobility of individuals, the traditional core of Erasmus+, there are 2 actions in the higher education sector: firstly, «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by internal policy funds» (KA131), which focuses on a study period or traineeship in an EU Member State and third country associated to the Programme (Programme country); and secondly «Mobility of high-

er education students and staff supported by external funds» (KA171) (Partner country), thanks to which international students and university staff, in particular, have been able to come to German universities since 2015. The funds for both actions are managed by us at the National Agency, with the «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by internal policy funds» playing by far the more important role.

As part of this action, we were able to provide around 166 million euros to 344 German universities – traditional «full universities» (where the study of the principle scientific disciplines is possible), art and music universities as well as universities of applied sciences – in 2023 to implement the mobility programmes and priorities described above. This amounts to around 9 million euros more than in 2022. It is expected that round 53,000 people will be able to complete a study period, internship or teaching or further education period abroad, primarily in one of the other 32 EU Member

States and third countries associated to the Programme.

However, up to 20% of the total budget provided under this action can also be used (since 2021) for student and university staff mobilities to countries outside the Erasmus+ area, in other words to third countries not associated to the Programme. In addition to all non-EU countries, this includes Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which left the EU and Erasmus+ on 31 December 2020.

The «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by external policy funds», on the other hand, supports mainly, although not exclusively, international students and university employees in Germany. Incoming mobility aims to strengthen universities' on-site internationalisation efforts. Since autumn 2023, around 32 million euros have been allocated for contract periods of up to 3 years. Altogether 137 German universities, including all types of higher education institutions, are participating in

Third countries not associated to the Programme (Partner countries) are divided into 14 regions: Western Balkans (1), Neighbourhood East (2), South-Mediterranean countries (3), Russian Federation (4), Asia (5), Central Asia (6), Middle East (7), Pacific (8), Sub-Saharan Africa (9), Latin America (10), Caribbean (11), USA and Canada (12) as well as the small European states of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican City State (13) and the Faroe Islands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (14).

The EU Commission has prioritised a number of regions with which it wants to intensify academic cooperation. More funding is available for these regions than for others. Further information on mobility with third countries not associated to the Programme can be found at t1p.de/b08sd (German).

the programme. The approved funds will facilitate a total of around 6,800 mobilities.

The exact number of mobilities carried out under the two actions will only be determined after the contract periods have expired. For the «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by internal policy funds» action, this can be expected at the end of 2025. For «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by external funds», the final number will likely be available at the end of 2026.

Facts and figures on mobility: results of the 2021 call

We can already present these figures for the mobility of individuals to EU Member States

and third countries associated to the Programme for the 2020 (from the previous generation) and 2021 (from the current programme phase) calls. Around 55,000 people from Germany completed a period in one of the EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme. Spain, France and the United Kingdom, which is included in the period under review due to extended (COVID-related) approvals from the 2020 call, are the 3 most popular countries for students. Spain and France are also among the top 3 most popular countries for internships, taking first and third place respectively, with Austria in second place.

The United Kingdom proved to be the top destination country

for outgoing mobilities to third countries not associated to the Programme, which was possible for the first time in this 2021 call. 35% of all mobilities went to the former EU country. This was followed by Switzerland (15%), the United States (8%), South Africa and Israel (3%). In total, a very encouraging 1,400 mobilities (just under 3%) were coordinated by 192 universities in almost all regions of the world.

We can also report for the first time on the implementation of the horizontal priorities: 7% of participants received additional funding as part of our inclusion approach. 30% of all participants travelled abroad using sustainable modes of transport. Around 9% prepared for or followed up on their experience

The establishment and implementation of joint **partnerships** and international **cooperation projects** are key components of the internationalisation strategies of universities. Funding is provided across various action lines for European projects that support innovation and the exchange of good practices (Cooperation Partnerships), the reform and modernisation of universities and university systems in third countries not associated to the Programme (Capacity Building in the field of higher education), the structured cooperation of universities and companies in Europe (Alliances for Innovation), the implementation of prestigious joint Master's degree programmes in a university consortium of at least 3 European universities (Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters) as well as chairs, centres of excellence, networks and projects on European studies and political dialogue (Jean Monnet Actions). Further information on higher education cooperations can be found at t1p.de/iq70c (German).

Social media channels are part of the NA DAAD's extended information services. The X account (twitter.com/Erasmus_DAAD [German]) keeps university representatives, students and interested members of the public informed about the latest developments and news relating to the Erasmus+ programme and European higher education landscape. Instagram (www.instagram.com/erasmus_daad/ [German]) updates students with posts, stories and reels about Erasmus+ and Europe. Finally, short videos on YouTube (www.youtube.com/erasmusdaad [German]) demonstrate the many opportunities offered by the programme. The videos are also available with German and English subtitles.

abroad in a «blended» way, i.e. combining virtual and physical components. In addition, more than 1,000 Ukrainian participants (mainly students) were supported at German universities through Erasmus+ as part of measures to fund participants with fewer opportunities.

Finally, the «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by external policy funds» action (KA107 in the previous programme phase, now KA171) from the 2020 call for the years 2020 to 2023 was also evaluated for this report. Approximately 5,100 people were funded, including 3,800 incoming and 1,300 outgoing mobilities. The most popular destination countries were Israel, Jordan and Georgia. However, most students and university staff came from Ukraine, followed by Israel and Albania.

Facts and figures on projects

As is the case with the mobility projects, the NA is also responsible for allocating, managing and administering funds for the Cooperation Partnerships, which are used to form innovative, thematically or regionally orientated networks. In this respect, they are the exception among the partnerships, as they are otherwise administered by the European Commission or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels, as are the actions to support policy development and cooperation.

The number of newly funded Cooperation Partnerships in 2023 – out of 83 applications received – is 33. These projects are being funded with a total of 12.3 million euros. This means that in 2023, the NA DAAD was supporting a total of 131 pro-

jects in parallel from 3 calls. The top 5 third countries not associated to the Programme for the newly added projects are Ukraine, Germany (as an additional partner), Spain, Greece and the Netherlands.

Advising universities

Apart from supporting activities financially, we also offer universities comprehensive advice, in particular, the units and employees responsible for internationalisation. We provide advice on the numerous options the Erasmus+ programme has to offer – including the mobility of individuals and thematic project funding – but also on strategies to enhance internationalisation concepts. The tools for this can also be found in the Erasmus+ programme and the associated reform processes of European higher education policy.

In the context of Erasmus+ **support to policy development and cooperation**, funding is aimed specifically at projects that advance European reform processes and implement European education policy priorities. To achieve these goals, the project consortia responsible for this key action often collaborate across sectors, thus helping to connect universities and political actors. The overarching goal is to strengthen European education systems. Further information on support to policy development and cooperation can be found at t1p.de/v2ix5 (German).

The **Europa macht Schule** (EmS) programme promotes international exchanges organised on a voluntary basis by local student teams. Coordinated by the NA DAAD in close cooperation with the supporting organisation Europa macht Schule e. V. (registered association), the programme enables international students from all over the world to conduct interactive projects about their home countries. These projects are developed in consultation with a teacher and implemented with a school class in Germany. Further information can be found at www.europamachtschule.de/en (English).

Direct enquiries continue to be an important tool in this area. In 2023, for example, the National Agency unit responsible for the mobility of individuals processed around 8,100 enquiries, mainly by email (ticket system). Online consultations, which were introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, are also becoming increasingly popular. They allow important issues to be systematically addressed and stimulate engaged dialogue among university coordinators.

One focus of our advisory activities in 2023 was university employees tasked with organising and implementing Erasmus+ projects for the first time. Simultaneously, we had to explain new or adapted funding opportunities to stabilise processes and review project management in order to address the needs of target groups for social inclusion. We also advised partners at universities about handling various data-

bases, which involved defining and organising new rules and procedures.

Information and communication

In our information and communication work, we employ various formats to engage the public, policymakers and all relevant organisations. This also includes companies, which are important cooperation partners for universities and a future area of activity for students.

We publish reports on our activities on our website eu.daad.de (German) and our social media channels. Key components of our public relations and external communications are studies, specialist publications, the monthly online Erasmus+ newsletter (t1p.de/a7ei [German]) and the *DAADeuroletter*, which is published twice a year and went online in 2023, in

German (www.daadeuroletter.de) and in English (www.daadeuroletter.de/en).

Simultaneously, we organise meetings and conferences throughout the year, including in-person and online formats, but also hybrid events. The programmes generate a satisfyingly high level of interest. A key factor in their success is the commitment shown by the Erasmus+ experts, who are now organised into 7 profile groups (digitalisation, higher education cooperation, inclusion and diversity, internationalisation of teacher education, policy support and sustainability) (t1p.de/9dwbp [German]). The events feature panel discussions, workshops and exchange sessions. Most importantly, however, they showcase best practices from and for universities.

The most important event for us every year is the Erasmus+ Annual Conference, which in

Back to School (BtS) is an action organised as part of the «Europa macht Schule» programme that enables students from German universities to visit schools in Germany and share their experiences of their semester or internship abroad as part of a short, interactive project. They can return to one of their own schools, for example. Further information can be found at www.europamachtschule.de/bts (German).

Local Erasmus+ Initiatives (LEI) are groups of university students who inform, advise and motivate students at German universities about Erasmus+ opportunities abroad. Working on a voluntary basis, the members of the initiatives are typically Erasmus+ alumni who continue to engage with the programme after completing their studies or internships abroad. They act as contact persons, helping outgoing students plan periods abroad and providing orientation support for incoming international students. Further information on the programme can be found at eu.daad.de/lei (German).

2023 was held at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg. Titled «Erasmus+ at My University – State of Play, Opportunities and Challenges», the event gave over 300 university representatives the opportunity to discuss the status of the Erasmus+ programme, gather information and exchange ideas with us and colleagues in the capital of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt. Together with project managers from the universities, we also shared best practices in 14 different thematic sessions over the two days, providing participants with plenty of inspiration for their own work – an offer that was very well received.

Positive impact of Erasmus+

The overarching goal of Erasmus funding is to enable young people to experience Europe and the world and thus empower them to shape the future. And we succeed. Former Erasmus+ participants, for example, are far more likely to vote in the European Parliament elections than their peers who have not broadened their horizons by participating in the programme. Erasmus mobilities, therefore, positively impact students and foster a stronger European identity. This is regularly confirmed by various (European) studies, such as the *Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity* survey presented by the European Student Network in

2013, and the European Commission's *Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact Study* from 2019.

This is further supported by the NA DAAD's study on «Erasmus+: The impact of student mobility». Over 19,000 individuals who received Erasmus+ funding between 2014 and 2019 participated in the survey in the fourth quarter of 2023. 85% of respondents confirmed their intention to vote in the 2024 European elections. (The detailed results will be published in mid-2024.) Participating in an Erasmus programme is an effective way to spark young people's interest in Europe and promote political engagement.

National support measures

Erasmus+ has a positive impact on younger people, especially in these crisis-ridden times. Many current and former Erasmus+ students are eager to share their experiences and pass on what they have learnt. This is what drives their involvement in national and European student organisations. As a National Agency, we support this voluntary commitment to Europe with funds from the BMBF through two national Erasmus+ support programmes: the Local Erasmus+ Initiatives (LEI) and the student association *Europa macht Schule* (Europe meets School, EmS).

For over 30 years, programme alumni have been involved in LEI to motivate students to take part in Erasmus+. EmS, on the other hand, has been organising exchanges between current Erasmus and international guest students in Germany for over 15 years, bringing Europe closer to the next generation through events hosted by German schools. In autumn 2022, we launched «Back to School», an EmS initiative offering students from German universities the opportunity to share their experiences in schools after their period abroad. The initial projects and reactions have been very promising, indicating that we are on the right track and that the young generation has a keen interest in Europe and its future. mk ■

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Inclusion and diversity have gained importance in the 2021–2027 generation of the Erasmus+ programme. Already an important focus prior to this, it has become a cornerstone of the programme as one of the 4 priorities – alongside «Digital transformation», «Environment and fight against climate change» and «Participation in democratic life».

Erasmus+ for all

The declared aim is to promote equal participation in education, equal opportunities, diversity and fairness in all programme activities and areas of education. According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the programme provides «mechanisms and resources» to make Erasmus+ projects and activities «accessible to a diverse range of participants». It focuses on supporting organisations and people with fewer opportunities, potential barriers being disabilities and health problems as well as geographical, social and economic challenges and cultural differences.

For the NA DAAD, this comprehensive understanding of inclusion – meaning the participation of all people in social life, regardless of their individual and socio-economic backgrounds – is of fundamental importance. We aim to offer as many people as possible the

opportunity to experience academic life abroad and increasingly support inclusion-related projects at and by universities. At the NA DAAD, we are committed to achieving these goals across all our activities.

To support our mission, we have also developed an *Erasmus+ Inclusion Strategy* (t1p.de/65xho [German]). This 46-page document outlines programme requirements, implemented and planned measures and political contexts. Additionally, we have prepared 2 infosheets for students (t1p.de/oi7df [German]) and university management (t1p.de/yshro [German]) about the opportunities offered by the programme.

Mobility of individuals

The mobility of individuals is a key area of activity. In consultation with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), we have increased the general funding rates for students and signifi-

cantly expanded the groups of less mobile individuals who are eligible for supplementary support to achieve greater equality of opportunity in this area - one that is particularly important for Erasmus+.

Students from non-academic backgrounds, working students, students and university staff with children as well as students and university staff with a disability or chronic illness benefit from targeted financial support. In addition to the regular country-specific Erasmus+ grant, students from these groups receive a monthly top-up of 250 euros. Students and university staff in the latter two groups can also be reimbursed for costs actually incurred. This is facilitated in part thanks to the allocation of 57 million euros from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) to Erasmus+ for the years 2022 to 2027. More flexible and shorter mobility formats also enable a broader range of students to gain experience abroad.

Partnerships and cooperation projects

Unlike mobilities for individuals, where target groups and funding are precisely defined, cooperation projects only specify which aspects of inclusion should be considered in which actions and how they should be addressed. The National Agencies therefore have greater responsibility to communicate funding opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and outcomes of inclusive projects more effectively.

For the NA DAAD, this means helping universities implement inclusive measures through target group-specific information and advisory services such as publications and events as well as training and professional development opportunities. When recruiting reviewers, efforts are made to address a diverse range of experts with relevant expertise. The selected persons are then encouraged to prioritise projects focused on inclusion in the selection process.

International exchange

Inclusion and diversity cover a broad field, presenting the NA DAAD with extensive tasks and challenges. The new emphasis on inclusion and diversity in the current programme phase has given rise to additional requirements. In response to this, we launched the 3-year Long-Term Activity «Social Inclusion in Higher Education» in 2021.

Involved in this activity are NAs from 13 countries as well as the Brussels-based Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), an international think tank specialising in international cooperation in higher education, which works in thematic peer groups to advance inclusion in international higher education. Together, we collect information and solutions across Europe and make them available to other National Agencies, universities and organisations.

mk ■



Long-Term Activities (LTAs) are one of the possible measures that can be implemented in the area of Training and Education Activities (TCAs), which are funded by the European Commission. Running for several years, they focus on one of the horizontal priorities of the current Erasmus+ programme generation (2021–2027): «Inclusion and diversity», «Environment and fight against climate change», «Digital transformation» or «Participation in democratic life». By concentrating on a transversal EU issue, the National Agencies play a crucial role in advancing the Erasmus+ programme and shaping policy development.

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

A strong European identity and the active participation of citizens and civil society in democratic processes are crucial for the future of the European Union. The goal of the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme generation is to make a significant contribution to this vision, as illustrated by «Participation in democratic life», one of its 4 priorities. It aims to raise awareness of common European values, history and culture, bring together young people and decision-makers at all levels – local, national and European – and promote European integration.

The contribution of Erasmus+

As is the case in the programme as a whole, the mobility of individuals plays a key role in promoting and strengthening civic engagement and democratic participation, not least of all because of the sheer number of participants. During their period abroad, they gain new cultural, social and political experiences, enhancing their awareness and understanding of their own country and their own cultural and political contexts and enabling them to discover similarities and differences. Ideally, a mobility improves participants' knowledge of their host country, fosters a reflective approach towards their home country and strengthens their sense of belonging to the EU.

In addition to mobility projects, higher education cooperation programmes offer students and young people numerous opportunities to engage in activities themselves and learn about democratic participation in a European context. Many of the cooperation projects focus on various aspects of participation in democratic life, such as dialogue and integration, as well as specifically political topics such as elections and social justice. Students and teachers are encouraged to reflect on the contribution they can make to a democratic society and the role they (can) play in democratic processes.

Equally important for promoting participation in democratic life are the Jean Monnet Actions, which are designed to have an impact across all levels of the Erasmus+ programme. They support teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide, stimulating and strengthening active European citizenship and shared values. This is achieved, for example, by facilitating people-to-people dialogue.

The **4 transversal priorities** «Inclusion and diversity», «Digital transformation», «Environment and fight against climate change» and «Participation in democratic life» are fundamental components of the programme, which has been running since 2021.

The initiatives and voluntary activities of the NA DAAD

Following on from the individual mobilities, the National Agency uses funds from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to promote voluntary student engagement for Europe through two national Erasmus+ support programmes: the Local Erasmus+ Initiatives (LEI) and the student association Europa macht Schule (EmS). These programmes support exchanges between young Europeans – from involvement at universities (LEI) to initiatives where international students act as mini-ambassadors at German schools (EmS).

Finally, at the NA DAAD, we advocate the fundamental values of academic integrity in our initiatives and statements. This topic also plays a central role in the activities of the Bologna Hub, which helps German universities implement key elements of the Bologna Reform for their internationalisation strategies and promotes consolidation of the European Higher Education Area.

The Bologna Hub offers stakeholders from the German and wider European higher education landscape theme-based platforms to share experiences and engage in peer-learning and peer-support measures. One example is the EU and BMBF-funded project «Bologna Hub Peer Support II» (t1p.de/2f8z [English]), which runs from 2022 to 2024. In 2023, a special focus was placed on advising Ukrainian universities, an initiative facilitated by DAAD and the BMBF. *mk* ■



The Federal President visits the «Europa macht Schule» stand at the Citizens' Festival

SUSTAINABILITY

The term «sustainability» has two – quite different – meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the ability to achieve a long-lasting impact, on the other, it denotes the principle of using existing resources responsibly and sparingly. Both meanings are equally relevant for Erasmus+, even if the ecological aspect has undoubtedly taken centre stage since the start of the current programme. This emphasis is highlighted by the inclusion of «Environment and fight against climate change» as one of the 4 transversal priorities.

The ecological dimension

This priority focuses on raising awareness among all Erasmus+ participants about the issue of «sustainability» and the challenges posed by climate change and environmental protection. In particular, this concerns the ecological footprint resulting from mobilities: between 2021 and 2027, more people than ever before in the history of the education programme – around 10 million – are expected to participate in mobilities.

Rising CO2 emissions caused by increased individual mobilities in connection with partnerships and cooperation projects conflict with the European Green Deal introduced in December 2019 and the environmental priority itself. To address this, the European Commission wants to increase the number of mobilities that use more environment-friendly modes of transport through awareness-raising campaigns, and more importantly, by providing financial incentives for

green travel and additional travel days. It supports transport options such as buses, trains, bicycles and carpooling. The impact is evident: around a third of those funded in the 2021 call have chosen sustainable travel options!

Additionally, cooperation projects on «green» issues will promote competences that are important in a sustainable and resource-efficient society and economy, so-called green skills. Accordingly, the programme guidelines state that «Priority will be given to projects aimed at developing competences in various green sectors, including those within the framework of the contribution from education and culture to sustainable development goals, developing green sectorial skills strategies and methodologies, future-oriented curricula, as well as initiatives that support the planned approaches of the participating organisations regarding environmental sustainability.»

Measures to guarantee effectiveness

Sustainability in the Erasmus+ programme and in our work at the NA DAAD, however, extends beyond ecological concerns. Another relevant dimension, particularly for partnerships and cooperation projects, is sustainability in the sense of «impact» and «dissemination». It is essential that these factors are considered in all Erasmus+ applications.

On the one hand, this includes disseminating and publicising (initial) results to the interested (professional) and general public during the project lifetime. On the other, final outcomes should be utilised more widely, not just by organisations and individuals directly involved in the programme. Projects should inspire ideas and serve as examples. To achieve this, findings and insights must be readily and freely available after the project period, and this should be supported by a consistent and comprehensive information strategy.

A final assessment

With regard to our work, we can say that the ecological aspect took on a prominent role in 2023, as was expected given its focus within the programme. Special consultations and workshops were offered on the subject, and special attention was paid to selecting candidates in the sustainability profile group in the call for Erasmus+ experts. In addition, an official position for a sustainability officer was set up (in the EU02 section) – just as a position was established for inclusion and digitalisation.

mk ■



ERASMUS+ AT MY UNIVERSITY

Since its launch as a student exchange programme in 1987, Erasmus+ has undergone continuous development. Through various phases, it has become an important instrument for the strategic internationalisation of German universities. The current generation of the education programme, which was launched in 2021, has opened up new opportunities, not only because the budget has almost doubled in the past seven years. It also offers new options to systematically advance the international orientation of universities. This requires the support of all stakeholders in the universities.

Significant changes since 2021

One key change is that universities can now spend up to 20% of funds approved through the «Mobility of higher education students and staff supported by internal policy funds» action, which support mobilities in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme, on student and university staff mobilities outside the Erasmus+ area. Doctoral students can also be supported to an even greater extent than before 2020, namely for up to 12 months and for stays all over the world. Finally, blended intensive programmes (BIPs) facilitate collaboration on common areas of interest, for example in seminars with in-person meetings and online preparation and follow-up sessions. This format is also available globally, albeit with restrictions.

Opportunities and challenges for universities

These new and partially expanded initiatives offer universities fresh opportunities for their internationalisation strategies, but they also necessitate collaboration among the various stakeholders. University coordinators must raise awareness about these new opportunities within their institutions and among potential target groups, and demonstrate their benefits and applications. This is essential for the acceptance and effective implementation of funding programmes and, consequently, for the development of their strategic benefits. Not least of all, this means intensified cooperation with institutions and committees within the universities themselves.

... and what this means for us

The NA supports the university coordinators in this task by systematically introducing the new opportunities and their strategic strengths into discussions with the heads of the universities and International Offices. This was also the rationale behind the title of the Erasmus+ Annual Conference 2023, held at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg: «Erasmus+ at My University – State of Play, Opportunities and Challenges». An important annual event for the NA, we worked with project managers to identify new implementation methods, suggest ways to create synergies and promote internal university networking activities – breaking down barriers and sparking new ideas.

The Erasmus+ Annual Conference 2023, held at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg.



To achieve this goal, we also developed a range of tools and initiatives which we can implement in our day-to-day work. These are traditional face-to-face events and the online formats introduced during the coronavirus pandemic, which are organised individually and in cooperation with other National Agencies, both in Germany and in other countries. They include consultations and advisory services via phone and video tools, for individuals and groups, field reports published on our website eu.daad.de (German) and in the printed and online *DAADeuroletter*, and finally, we provide content on social media, including explanatory videos, for example about studying abroad with Erasmus+ or the central actions of the programme.

A new service introduced at the beginning of 2023 is a central advice portal (tip.de/lammu [German]) for cooperation projects (partnerships and collaborations, support to policy development and cooperation and Jean Monnet Actions). Users can inquire about general and administrative matters and obtain detailed advice on applications and project outlines. The hub allows us at the NA DAAD to better address suggestions and requests from universities and provide our clients with customised guidance in line with the «from idea to project» concept. mk ■

EVENTS

Throughout the year Face-to-face and online consultations

Throughout the year, numerous face-to-face and online consultations took place on various university-related topics that concerned both newcomers and experienced university coordinators. Sessions covering such topics as application submissions, final reports and blended intensive programmes met with great interest and the response was consistently positive. The guiding principle was: «Experience creates knowledge». The goal of these exchanges was to inspire ideas for other activities at the respective universities.

3 to 5 May Erasmus+ conference in Bergen (Norway) showcases innovative outcomes of European University Alliances

The European University Alliances funded under Erasmus+ test a variety of innovative teaching and learning methods, develop joint infrastructures and research activities and encourage interaction with society – all as intensive transnational collaborations.

In addition to their transformative impact on the participating universities, they should «serve as inspiration for the entire higher education sector» according to the Erasmus+ Call 2023. To achieve this goal, forums and spaces are needed. One such forum was the TCA conference «Spreading innovative results from European University Alliances to other higher education institutions». Organised by the NA Norway together with the NA DAAD and the NAs from Austria and Hungary, the conference attracted considerable attention and was attended by around 140 participants from 19 countries.

15 and 16 May Theme-based seminar: Erasmus+ staff mobility – doctoral mobility – international mobility

This seminar focused on exchanging information about the safe and practical management of staff and doctoral mobilities, as well as international mobilities. The current generation of Erasmus+ programmes offers an expanded range services compared to previous mobilities. Presentations as well as discussion and working groups offered participants the opportunity to share ideas, deepen existing knowledge and gain new insights and perspectives. Around

100 participants attended the event. Further information can be found at t1p.de/ruewy (German).

22 and 23 May Erasmus+ Forum for Partnerships and Cooperation Projects

The new 2024 call for Erasmus+ cooperation project introduces another wide range of funding opportunities. The NA DAAD hosted this exchange and networking event to help scientific and academic staff at German universities and other higher education institutions develop their project ideas.

30 June Fundamental Academic Values Award

DAAD presented the Fundamental Academic Values Award, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), for the first time. The prize recognised the outstanding academic contributions of three young female researchers from Germany, Lithuania and Austria to promoting fundamental academic values in the European Higher Education Area. The ceremony took place at the DAAD Scholarship Holders' Meeting in Berlin on 30

June 2023 before an audience of around 500 international scholarship holders. The award was presented by high-profile representatives of the BMBF and DAAD. Further information at t1p.de/x3shf (English).

8 and 9 September The Federal President's Citizens' Festival

The volunteer-run association Europa macht Schule, which supports the programme of the same name, was one of 60 initiatives invited by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the Citizens' Festival in the park of Bellevue Palace in Berlin. The event was an opportunity for the current director to meet Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in person and discuss the work of the association. Steinmeier is the patron of «Europa macht Schule». You can read the full report on the Citizens' Festival on the EmS website at t1p.de/x2wb5 (German).

19 and 20 September Erasmus+ Annual Conference

From 19 to 20 September 2023, more than 300 university representatives met at the Erasmus+ Annual Conference 2023 of the National Agency at DAAD at

Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg to discuss «Erasmus+ at My University – State of Play, Opportunities and Challenges». After two days of intensive discussions about the programme's opportunities and challenges, it became clear that the support of all university stakeholders is crucial. The key to the success of the programme lies with the Erasmus coordinators, who demonstrate exceptional personal dedication within their universities' International Offices. Further information can be found at t1p.de/nrv2n (German).

19 and 20 October Bologna Hub Conference in the Western Balkans: Sharing Knowledge – Building Networks

The Bologna Hub Conference in the Western Balkans took place in Belgrade on 19 and 20 October 2023. Organised by the NA DAAD, the event brought together university representatives from Serbia and the wider region with their counterparts from Germany and other countries in the European Higher Education Area. Further information can be found at t1p.de/noyiy (English).

8 to 10 November International networking ac- tivity as part of the LTA «Social Inclusion in Higher Education»

From 8 to 10 November 2023, the NA DAAD organised a training and cooperation activity entitled «Moving closer to inclusive internationalisation in Higher Education» as part of the Long-Term Activity «Social Inclusion in Higher Education», in which 13 National Agencies and representatives of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) are involved. Further information can be found at t1p.de/axidk (English).

22 and 23 November Kick-off event for Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships 2023 and thematic monitoring of ongoing projects

The project managers of the Cooperation Partnerships from the 2023 call organised an on-site kick-off event in Bonn in November. The event offered participants plenty of opportunities to network and exchange ideas with representatives of the projects from the 2022 call.

Further information

ErasmusDays: t1p.de/ml4rg (German)

Events: t1p.de/014pd (German)

STATISTICS

ERASMUS+ KEY ACTION 1 – SELECTED FACTS AND FIGURES AT A GLANCE

GENERAL OVERVIEW

► Mobility of individuals in the Erasmus programme in the first projects of the 2021–2027 generation

- ▷ Around 55,000 students and university staff received funding for mobilities abroad
- ▷ Over 1,000 students and university staff from Ukraine received funding
- ▷ Over 100 lecturers from companies took part
- ▷ Figures almost as high as pre-pandemic levels, confirming the commitment of German universities

► New activities introduced in the 2021–2027 programme generation¹ (2021 call)

- ▷ Already very well received in initial projects despite complex specifications
- ▷ Individual periods abroad that contribute to horizontal programme objectives supported by funding instruments

	Inclusion and participation		Green travel		Blended mobilities	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
26 month	2,662	7.2 %	11,346	30.8 %	3,216	8.7 %

▷ KA131 International/outgoing mobility

- Around 1,400 periods abroad (almost 3%)
- 192 coordinating German universities
- Visits to almost all regions of the world were already funded in the first call.

▷ The 5 most popular destination countries for KA131 mobilities with Partner countries

Destination country	Number	Anteil
United Kingdom	494	35 %
Switzerland	214	15 %
USA	111	8 %
South Africa	56	4 %
Israel	45	3 %

1) Only mobilities from the 2021 call are shown in the special evaluation.

- ▷ Sustainable travel to the host country
 - 30% of participants travelled by train, bicycle or even on foot.
- ▷ Virtual activities
 - Individual «short-term blended mobility»
 - Blended intensive programmes (BIPs)
 - German universities coordinated 174 BIPs² in the 2021 call
 - 149 on-site phases in Germany
 - 25 on-site phases in the Partner country
 - After the structural introduction of the funding instrument, more than 3,200 mobilities were carried out as blended mobilities
 - Around 91.5% of these were study visits
 - More than three-quarters (around 2,400) of funded individuals from Germany took part in a blended intensive programme in another country.
 - Almost 2,000 funded individuals from other Programme countries took part in 174 blended intensive programmes organised/coordinated by German universities in the first implementation period.
- ▷ Target group inclusion and social participation
 - Expansion of the «fewer opportunities» target group from people with disabilities or individuals who go abroad with children, as was previously the case, to
 - first-generation academics and
 - working students did not take place until the 2022 call (not shown here).

The evaluation presented here only includes this target group to a limited extent, as funding has only recently become available.

7.2% of those receiving top-up support as participants with «fewer opportunities» are thanks to the improved visibility and focus on the topics of «inclusion» and «participation».
- ▷ Individual mobility of doctoral students³
 - 324 periods abroad with funding modules for student mobilities
 - 295 periods as staff mobilities
- ▷ Individual mobility of graduates
 - 342 internships abroad completed by graduates, of whom
 - around 50% were funded after completing a Bachelor's degree
 - 42% were funded after completing a Master's degree
 - around 5% were funded after completing other degrees (diploma, state examination or doctorate)

2) This is based on mobility data used in evaluations from previous annual reports (as of beginning of February 2024).

3) The status of the participants is not always clear in the submitted data, so the figures are based on information provided by the universities.

CALLS INCLUDED

► Data basis

- ▷ First completed call in the current programme generation (Call 2021) and
- ▷ Activities in the 12 additional months for the 2020 call projects (these were extended due to the coronavirus pandemic)

► Funding of mobilities

- ▷ In the 2021 call: from 1 September 2021 (due to the delayed start of the programme)
- ▷ In countries where the semester starts earlier: in extended projects from the 2020 call
- ▷ Completed projects from the 2020 call for Mobility with Partner Countries (KA107)

► Funding rates in the 2021 call

- ▷ were continued from from the 2020 call to give the administration greater flexibility
- ▷ satisfied post-pandemic backlog with a lower overall budget
- ▷ The 2021 call did not include mobility projects with Partner countries (KA171); applications for these were possible again for the first time in 2022.

► United Kingdom

- ▷ UK becomes a Partner country with the start of the programme generation
- ▷ The number of stays abroad in the period under review is attributable to the extended projects from the 2020 call (UK participated as a regular Programme country at this time).

CLASSIFICATION OF MOBILITIES

► **Outgoing students by destination countries (project 2020 and 2021*)**

- a) Student mobility has remained at a consistently high level compared to the previous period. Given that the funding period was severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the budget for the first call in 2021 was smaller than in previous years, an 8% decline in expected student mobility has been recorded.
- b) Internships were in particularly high demand, with a 64% increase compared to the previous period following the coronavirus pandemic. In the previous period and during the pandemic, internships saw less demand as the added value of being abroad is especially important in internship experiences, whereas study visits were also conducted virtually.

► **Outgoing university staff by destination country**

During the pandemic, and therefore in the previous period, far fewer staff mobilities took place compared to average rates in past years, partly due to precautionary measures taken by the sending universities. However, a very positive trend is now in evidence here: compared to the previous period, staff visits have increased by almost 280%. This catch-up effect is particularly noticeable for university staff visits for further training and professional development, which saw an increase of around 360%.

► **Incoming students by country of origin**

Incoming mobility to Germany – funded by the participating countries – has increased by 50%. With around 44,000 individuals receiving funding (student mobility/SM and staff mobility/ST), these numbers now exceed pre-pandemic levels.

► **Mobility with Partner countries**

With 5,126 funded visits to Germany and other countries, almost 27% more people benefited from Erasmus+ in the KA171 in the projects from the 2020 call than in projects from the previous call. The NA DAAD supported this positive trend by adjusting the approval model, reallocating funds and adapting procedures to address the challenges of the pandemic. ■

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Published by

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst e.V.
German Academic Exchange Service
Kennedyallee 50, D-53175 Bonn
Phone: +49 228 882-0, postmaster@daad.de
www.daad.de

DAAD is an association of German universities and their student bodies. Institutionally, it is supported by the German Federal Foreign Office.

Authorised Representative of the Executive Committee

President Prof. Dr Joybrato Mukherjee
District Court of Bonn
Register of associations, number VR 2107
Sales tax number: DE122276332
Person responsible according to § 18 Abs. 2 MStV (Medienstaatsvertrag, Interstate Media Treaty):
Dr Kai Sicks
Kennedyallee 50, 53175 Bonn
Nationale Agentur für Erasmus+ Hochschulzusammenarbeit im DAAD
Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education
Kennedyallee 50, D-53175 Bonn
Phone: +49 228 882-0
<https://eu.daad.de>
<https://eu.daad.de/euroletter>
<https://daadeuroletter.de>
<https://eu.daad.de/newsletter>
<http://www.erasmusplus.de>
http://twitter.com/Erasmus_DAAD

Project coordination and editing

Responsible according to German press law: Dr Stephan Geifes, DAAD; Lena von Eichborn, David Akrami Flores, Beate Körner, Dr Hans Leifgen, Ann-Kristin Matthé, Agnes Schulze-von Laszewski, Julia Vitz (all DAAD); BG cleevesmedia/Faktor E: Marcus Klein, PhD (Head), Lutz Cleeves, Dr Dagmar Giersberg

Translation

Sue Pickett

Design

BG cleevesmedia/Faktor E, Meckenheim/Bonn
Date of publication: 07/2024;
Editorial deadline: 20 April 2024
DAAD

Picture credits

Eva Corbella/KI/Adobe Stock, cleevesmedia-grafik (p. 13); NA DAAD/EmS (p. 15); Susanne Reich/NA DAAD, cleevesmedia-grafik (p. 17); Hannah Theile/Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg (p. 19)

This publication was funded by the European Commission and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It reflects the opinions of the authors. Neither the European Commission nor the BMBF nor DAAD is responsible if any further use is made of the information contained herein. All information has been carefully researched. However, no guarantee is given for the accuracy and completeness of this information.

Please send any suggestions, comments or questions you may have to erasmus+news@daad.de.