



Erasmus for All Policy Recommendations

The future of Erasmus+ relies on our commitment to inclusivity and the belief in the transformative power of mobility amid economic uncertainty.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus For All Policy Recommendations



Title

Erasmus For All Policy Recommendations
October 2024

Authors

Arno Schrooyen, European Students' Union
Duarte Lopes, European Students' Union
Vasiliki Tsaklidou, European Students' Union

Contributors

Erasmus For All Partnership

Funding Entity

European Commission through the Agência Nacional Erasmus+ Educação e Formação

Image Credits

Freepik and Pexels



Table of Contents

FOREWORD	4
An Erasmus mobility experience open to all students	5
1. RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS A MORE SOCIAL AND ECONOMICALLY INCLUSIVE ERASMUS GRANT	5
2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT	7
3. METHODOLOGY	8
Policy Analysis of previous Outcomes	8
Interviews with relevant stakeholders	8
4. ERASMUS FOR ALL: KEY FINDINGS	9
PR1: In-depth Analysis On Mobility Funding In Erasmus And Beyond	9
PR2: Removing the main obstacles to European student mobility: A proposal for better and more inclusive Erasmus grants	9
PR3: Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant: Impact Study	10
A NEW ERASMUS+ GRANT PROPOSAL	10
FOR KA 131 STUDENT LONG-TERM MOBILITY	10
The Erasmus+ 2021-2027 interim evaluation	11
Keeping inclusion, access to opportunities and equity in the policy agenda	11
5. POLICY DISCUSSIONS: RESOURCE ALLOCATION STRATEGIES TO WIDEN PARTICIPATION IN MOBILITY WITH AN EQUITABLE APPROACH	11
REFERENCES	15

FOREWORD

The journey of the Erasmus for All Partnership began in November 2021, along with the new cycle of the Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027. The rationale behind its conceptualisation was the ambition to enhance the capacity to support more international mobility and make it more accessible to more students by tackling one aspect that had been proven time and time again to be a major deterrent - the mobility grants - with the main goal of making mobility access more equitable and inclusive. Simultaneously, the Partnership wished to be ready for the Erasmus+ 2021-27 interim evaluation, the aim of which was to assess whether Erasmus+ is working as intended, including in terms of simplification and inclusion.

The multidisciplinary approach of the Erasmus for All project has been challenging yet very rewarding. Starting from the state of play in international mobility, the Partnership explored other similar initiatives or projects that concerned the topic of mobility funding, along with other scholarship programmes and their funding schemes and combined previous studies concerning the relation between the methodologies adopted under such programmes and the results of the mobility experience. To enhance the volume of the students' voice in how mobility is at this moment, the Partnership relied on Student Social Labs. Literature and participatory research enriched our overview and zoomed into the Erasmus grant, working towards new, bold recommendations for a more inclusive Erasmus scholarship¹. This year the Partnership published a set of comprehensive guidelines for a more inclusive calculation formula and presented the Erasmus for all proposal for a more inclu-

sive grant calculation methodology². During the spring of 2024, an Erasmus 4 All Impact Study titled *Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant*³ was conducted by the university partners to measure the impact of the different methodologies on the student experience within, focusing on the current Erasmus+ mobility scholarship and the revised scholarship methodology proposed by the Erasmus for All project. All this hard work of the past 36 months is now put together in this document to reach stakeholders beyond the partnership and direct the upcoming discussions on the Erasmus mobility programme.

As the cycle of the Erasmus for All project has reached its completion, the message is clear: the time for a more inclusive Erasmus grant is here! These Policy Recommendations serve as our contribution to the future of the Erasmus programme. The name of our Partnership includes our main goal: Erasmus should be for all. In a global geopolitical context where prioritisation of funding to higher education is threatened with significant decline, this paper aims to offer a poised and realistic proposal to the policy discussions for the Erasmus+ Programme.

In this light, we invite you to read this document, which explores the policy recommendations of the Erasmus for All partnership; these recommendations stem from the work and research done throughout the project, which is explained in more detail further in this document.

Sincerely,
The Erasmus for All Partnership

1 Erasmus for all Partnership (2023), In-depth Analysis On Mobility Funding In Erasmus And Beyond.

2 Alves, H., Bacelar, J., Sproge, K. by the European University Foundation (2024), Removing the main obstacles to European student mobility.

3 Kopsaj, V., Biscaia, R. (2024), Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant: Impact Study.



1. RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS A MORE SOCIAL AND ECONOMICALLY INCLUSIVE ERASMUS GRANT

An Erasmus mobility experience open to all students

The benefits of an Erasmus+ mobility are undeniable and go well beyond the academic experience - the experience fosters the sense of European citizenship and improves students' skills, impacting generations of European citizens. The efforts to open the opportunity to every student, regardless of their background, are both ambitious and commendable. However, the Erasmus for All research still highlights considerable limitations to broadening the profile of students joining mobility activities, one (if not the biggest) being the Erasmus+ grant. It is the belief of the Erasmus for All consortium that, by changing the current grant system and making it systemically inclusive, more students will be able to embark on the Erasmus+ mobility journey and their experiences abroad will be better and more impactful. Through the following recommendations, we outline our joint vision of how that can happen and how equal access to an Erasmus+ mobility can be achieved.

1. Change the way mobility grants are calculated to align with students actual needs

The research of the project concluded that the current grant system has considerable limitations, such as limited transparency and clarity to students on how the final grant is calculated. This impacts students with fewer opportunities disproportionately, as they would need additional certainty on the affordability of the mobility experience to even entertain the thought of going on mobility.

It is the conviction of the Erasmus for All consortium that a change in the Erasmus+ grant calculation system could signal to all students

(especially those with fewer opportunities) how much they would receive and why, increasing the transparency aspect and ensuring that students own the needed information and certainty to take an informed and reassured decision to go on mobility. To achieve this, the Erasmus for All consortium proposes an alternative grant calculation methodology that is constituted by two different components, being one of them a European baseline amount: a true European grant that would be awarded to every student undertaking mobility from any Erasmus+ country. This component would increase transparency and ease communication on the bare minimum students would receive, and depending on the amount it could also influence the perception of students on the affordability of the mobility experience.

In addition to this baseline amount, the Erasmus for All proposal includes a city-level cost of living supplement.

2. Increase the overall funding available for Erasmus+ student mobility and increase the budget for education in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

It is urgent that the budget envelope dedicated to Erasmus+ student mobility increases to accompany both the inclusion and diversity priority and the ambitious goals on the number of students undertaking mobility abroad. This is especially true when the expected financial burden is the main reason for students not to go on mobility⁴. Therefore, the Erasmus for All consortium advocates for an increase in budget that allows the achievement of the policy objectives without reducing the quality of students' experience, especially when considering the inflationary pressures experienced in the

⁴ Eurostudent VIII Report Synopsis of Indicators 2021–2024 – Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe: "Financing remains a major obstacle, particularly in earlier decision making phases" (page 265)

past years. Achieving this requires not only higher funding for student mobility but also an overall increase in the education budget in the next MFF.

3. Engage Stakeholders in Decision-Making Processes

The lack of substantive involvement from key stakeholders (i.e. students and universities) has been a longstanding weakness of the Erasmus+ programme. Effective and meaningful co-creation and co-decision could help anticipate problems and improve the quality of decision making substantially, and this is all the more obvious when we consider something as vital to broaden participation as the quality and effectiveness of the student support being made available.

Many of the shortcomings of the current Erasmus+ grants would not be posed if the beneficiaries have had a voice in how they are structured. As the issues becomes ever more pressing it is essential to give priority to a healthier approach to the governance of the Erasmus+ programme, with a view to ensure it will remain relevant and attractive for generations to come .

This can be achieved by establishing mechanisms for the meaningful and systematic engagement of stakeholders at all levels—local, regional, national, and international—in decision-making processes related to mobility policies, including budget allocation. Stakeholders must be involved to ensure the policies reflect diverse perspectives and needs.

4. Consider Living Costs in Grant Calculations

The research of the project clearly highlighted the current system's inadequacy and the strong incoherence in what the grant amounts received by different students is concerned. Grant calculation schemes should take into account the living costs of the host city, enabling more inclusive and targeted financial support for mobile students. This would ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, particularly for students placed in cities with higher living costs. As mentioned in recommendation #1, the Erasmus for All proposal includes two components: a European baseline amount and a city-level cost of living supplement. The city-level cost of living supplement would be awarded to students undertaking mobility in a city with higher costs of living than those of their home city. The relation between the European baseline and the city-level cost of living supplement should

assure students that their grants would be adjusted to their needs.

Grant amounts should be regularly reviewed and adjusted based on macroeconomic factors, such as inflation and local or regional developments, ensuring that students are adequately supported throughout their mobility period.

A cost of living calculator should mandatorily be available for both students and staff, and duly integrated in mobility management systems. This scenario could also impact mobility management, in the sense that the baseline amount could be calculated as a unit cost, potentially reducing administrative work to staff members involved.

5. Collect granular data on students' cost of living

As mentioned before, it is essential that the mobility grant is better adjusted to the cost of living of students to ensure the affordability of the mobility experience. However, the Erasmus for All research concluded that, so far, there isn't any consolidated dataset that collects data from mobility students, even though questions about the costs of living of students were included in the KA131 Participant report forms in the previous programme 2014-2020. The Erasmus for All consortium thus recommends the reinsertion of more specific questions about students' costs of living abroad and their publication in accordance with open data principles.

6. Improve Timing of Grant Disbursement

According to ESN Survey 2022⁵, almost 65% of the students received their grant payment after starting their Erasmus+ mobility. This causes a great deal of financial uncertainty, requiring students to cover the initial mobility costs with their own funds. In the case of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, this can be an insurmountable deterrent to go on mobility. The Erasmus for All consortium thus advocates for a more regular and predictable grant disbursement schedule to be implemented, to ease students' financial planning and reduce the initial burden. The coordination between the European Commission, Erasmus+ National Agencies and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is essential to ensure timely fund transfers. The disbursement of grants before the mobility start date should be a mandatory requirement, without which equitable access to mobility can be impossible.

⁵ Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition.



2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

From this chapter onwards, we will explain in detail the methodology of the project and its findings, taking into account all the Project Results, as well as the Erasmus+ programme's interim evaluation, the Commission's commitments and its impact on Sustainable Development Goals and European Youth Goals

The international physical mobility of students, researchers, and staff stands as the most visible and prominent activity of internationalisation in higher education. Programs like Erasmus+ exemplify this trend by facilitating cross-border exchanges and contributing significantly to multiple facets of personal and academic growth. The Erasmus Programme has earned recognition for enhancing the quality of education, fostering personal development and intercultural competencies among students, and promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Moreover, it plays a pivotal role in advancing both national and global sustainable development goals.

The Erasmus Programme has been favoured by the Bologna Process and the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which have been instrumental in promoting international cooperation in higher education. The EHEA's framework encourages collaboration not just within Europe, but also with institutions worldwide, forming a cornerstone of the internationalisation of higher education. These initiatives have markedly expanded mobility opportunities across European nations. Key features such as the development of easily readable and comparable degree systems, along with stan-

dardised tools for quality assurance and academic recognition, have made studying abroad an attractive and viable option for students seeking short-term international experiences.

With 10% to 13% of students having partaken in student mobility during their studies, going on mobility is still today a privilege most students can't afford for different reasons. In ESU's last Bologna With Student Eyes 2024 publication⁶ (BWSE), 88,57% of its unions said that the financial situation of students was the main obstacle to partake in mobility.

This consortium celebrates the significant wins of the Erasmus Programme over the years of its development. It also remains faithful to its position that international mobility programs should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity and inclusion and should particularly foster participation of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged or under-represented backgrounds.

Making mobility more accessible will not be changed overnight, it's important to see access to mobility as a general issue of access to higher education in general. Indeed we can do everything we want to ensure access to mobility for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or discriminated groups. If we don't reduce the barriers to access higher education in the first place it will not be the most useful. The consortium's commitment to all these goals and values as a first step and embraces these Policy Recommendations.

⁶ European Students' Union (2024), Bologna with Student Eyes 2024



3. METHODOLOGY

Policy Analysis of previous Outcomes

For the purposes of this Policy Recommendations, ESU has gathered all previous project results, together with the whole of the partnership, within the Erasmus for All Partnership and is putting forward the main considerations to be taken into account in the discussions for the future of the programme.

In particular, we are summarising the main take-aways from the following documents:

Project Result 1: In-depth Analysis On Mobility Funding In Erasmus And Beyond

Project Result 2: Removing the main obstacles to European student mobility: a proposal for better and more inclusive Erasmus grants

Project Result 3: Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant: Impact Study

Interviews with relevant stakeholders

During the summer months of 2024, ESU conducted 4 interviews with stakeholders having hands-on experience on the current Erasmus programme and explored their insights into its future course. In particular, ESU interviewed the following people:

◇ Frank Petrikowski, Education attaché from

the Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU in Brussels

- ◇ Bart Stoffels, Vice President of the Conseil supérieur de la mobilité (CSM) - ARES - Belgium
- ◇ Ragnhild Solvi Berg, Head of Brussels office at Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills
- ◇ Ioanna Georgiadou, Institutional Coordinator /Head of the Department of European Educational Programmes, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The purpose of these interviews was to collect information and perspectives from different stakeholders working on Education and International Mobility. The questions and topics discussed with the interviewees were the following:

- ◇ The definition of international learning mobility
- ◇ The set objectives in terms of category of population, targets, etc for the mobile students
- ◇ What should be covered by the Erasmus+ grant, including the top-ups
- ◇ The new proposal for the calculation of the grant by the Erasmus for All Partnership
- ◇ The future of the Erasmus+ programme, taking into consideration the upcoming discussions on the MFF and the current austerity climate



4. ERASMUS FOR ALL: KEY FINDINGS

PR1: In-depth Analysis On Mobility Funding In Erasmus And Beyond

Comprehensive research on similar initiatives and projects has shown that various factors influence both participation in and the decision against mobility programs, with financial burden consistently emerging as the main obstacle. The Erasmus+ Programme, despite its prominent status, is currently falling short of its goal to be sufficiently inclusive. Budget reductions have caused the new 2021–2027 edition of the Programme to experience a shaky start, highlighting the need for additional efforts to lower the barriers to mobility.

The primary reported challenge is economic⁷. In the current climate of a cost-of-living crisis across Europe, many students are struggling to cover their daily expenses both at home and while participating in mobility programs. To address this, a fairer grant calculation methodology is needed to develop a more economically viable scholarship scheme.

Without a substantial increase in funding, both the programme and the individual funds made available for each student mobility, these issues are likely to persist. Students have expressed strong support for a more customisable scholarship system that considers their socio-economic situations and destination-specific conditions. There is a consensus that scholarships with higher rates, better aligned with actual mobility costs, would enable more students to participate and enhance their academic and personal experiences while reducing financial stress.

PR2: Removing the main obstacles to European student mobility: A proposal for better and more inclusive Erasmus grants

The Erasmus for All consortium introduces a significantly enhanced methodology for calculating Erasmus+ grants and addressing current barriers to mobility. By establishing a European baseline grant amount for all students, it aims to improve communication about mobility opportunities and to encourage students who might otherwise overlook them. Additionally, by providing a city-level cost of living supplement, the approach promotes the efficient use of public funds and ensures equitable coverage of costs that can vary significantly within a destination country.

Furthermore, the inclusion of in-kind sustainable travel support aligns Erasmus+ with EU climate targets and resonates with the values and concerns of young adults, fostering a shift toward more environmentally conscious travel practices.

From an administrative perspective, the Erasmus for All methodology could reduce the workload associated with managing mobility grants. Supported by an automatic cost of living calculator, the Erasmus for All methodology will allow the calculation to be easier for IRO's and more efficient, adjusted to student's real needs and thus streamlining reporting processes. Although the necessary tools are not fully available at present, the report includes a detailed analysis of how they could be implemented. This suggests that, with the right commitment from decision-makers, the current situation could improve rapidly.

⁷ According to ESU's Members the financial situation of a student is, for 88,57% of them, the main obstacle to partake in a student mobility - BWSE 2024

PR3: Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant: Impact Study

To conduct the Impact Study, several students from various universities within the consortium participated in a study on mobility during the second semester of 2023/2024 under the proposed and adjusted grant calculation system. To ensure comparability, two groups of students were involved—one group received the standard Erasmus+ grant, while the other received the standard Erasmus+ grant plus a top-up calculated according to the Erasmus for All proposed alternative methodology

In order to control for country-specific variables and facilitate data comparability, the study focused on one single country (Spain) and seven cities with significantly different living costs: Alicante, Barcelona, Granada, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia, and Zaragoza. Data was gathered through various methods, including questionnaires, weekly surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

The general conclusions from the study indicate widespread dissatisfaction with the Erasmus+ grant amount. Even with the additional current Erasmus+ top-ups, students still struggle to cover essential expenses such as accommodation, groceries, and transportation. It was also emphasised that initial costs associated with arriving in a new city (e.g., down payments for ac-

commodation and administrative fees) pose an extra financial burden.

The focus groups provided deeper insights, reaffirming that financial strain persists even with the Erasmus 4 All top-ups. Students emphasised the importance of family support during their mobility. Since one of the goals of the top-ups was to reduce reliance on family income and make mobility accessible to all students, regardless of their financial background, this statement made by many students underlines the elitist nature of the current grant scheme and makes its revision even more urgent.

Despite these challenges, students who received the E4All grant reported an improved quality of experience. The additional financial support allowed them to participate more fully in cultural and social activities and helped ease some financial burdens.

The end-of-semester surveys show a slightly different picture, with many students providing positive financial feedback, and only 2-2.3% of respondents reporting financial difficulties. Definitely, these figures require closer examination due to a notable non-response rate in the survey, which could obscure underlying financial issues.

A NEW ERASMUS+ GRANT PROPOSAL

For KA 131 student long-term mobility

European Baseline Grant	Living cost Top-up	Green travel ticket	Special needs Top-up
<p>Awarded to all exchange students and inflation indexed - a true European Grant.</p> <p>It will radically improve transparency around the Erasmus+ Grant and participation conditions.</p>	<p>Awarded to exchange students that do a mobility in a city/region with higher living costs than their own.</p> <p>A calculator would be available to students and universities, based on high-quality Eurostat data.</p>	<p>Awarded to all students* in a form of a sustainable return ticket (e.g. on inter-rail weekly pass) per semester abroad.</p> <p>Making Green travel the norm.</p> <p><i>*exceptions would apply to some countries and peripheral regions.</i></p>	<p>Building on current practices and inclusion priorities.</p>



5. POLICY DISCUSSIONS: RESOURCE ALLOCATION STRATEGIES TO WIDEN PARTICIPATION IN MOBILITY WITH AN EQUITABLE APPROACH

The Erasmus+ 2021-2027 interim evaluation

With the interim evaluation still on its way, we can have a look at the preliminary implementation report, adopted by the CULT committee in January 2024.

The report underlines that Erasmus+ continues to emphasise individual mobility, which remains a popular aspect of the programme. While mobility actions receive positive feedback, there is a need for clearer funding rules and enhanced programme management, particularly through digital tools. Funding shortfalls continue to limit the full coverage of studying abroad costs.

The programme also prioritises inclusion and diversity, focusing on improving access for underrepresented groups. However, insufficient grant levels remain a barrier, especially for disadvantaged communities, and better IT tools are needed to track socio-economic data. This part of the rapport shows the importance of projects like Erasmus for All that look to improve the scholarships and make the Erasmus+ programme actually more inclusive.

Keeping inclusion, access to opportunities and equity in the policy agenda

The Commission's Commitments

Turning to the European Commission 2024 Annual Work Programme⁸, the Erasmus Programme is seen as “a key instrument for building a European Education Area, supporting the implementation of the European strategic

framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond”. The goal set is to provide accessible, high-quality education for everyone. The European Education Area, with Erasmus+ playing a key role, strives to create a truly unified European learning environment where Member States collaborate closely on a shared vision to prepare Europe for the challenges of the digital and green transitions. The European Education Area has also played a crucial role in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, skills development, and the employment prospects of young people. Inclusion is central to the Erasmus+ programme; as a flagship initiative of the Union, Erasmus+ will increase investment in initiatives that promote educational opportunities for all, advance educational equity, and boost participation rates among those with fewer opportunities. This is expected to be achieved through more flexible and simplified participation formats, enhanced support for participants throughout their Erasmus+ journey, and additional financial aid for those who might believe Erasmus+ is not for them.

ERASMUS+ MAIN PRIORITIES IN 2024:

- ◇ Inclusive Erasmus+
- ◇ Green Erasmus+
- ◇ Digital Erasmus+
- ◇ Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

⁸ Commission work programme 2024. European Commission. (n.d.).

In higher education, the four main priorities for Erasmus+ implementation in 2024 are shaped by the Council Conclusions on a European Strategy for Empowering Higher Education Institutions⁹ for the Future of Europe, the Council Recommendation on enhancing European Higher Education cooperation¹⁰, and the Commission's Communication on a European strategy for Universities¹¹. This strategy aims to deepen and expand transnational cooperation, creating a truly European dimension in higher education based on shared values. It highlights excellence and inclusion as key features of European higher education, exemplifying the unique European way of life and distinguishing it from other parts of the world. The strategy draws on 35 years of Erasmus, 20 years of the Bologna Process, and the experience gained from implementing the European Universities Initiative.

Insights from the field

The interviews conducted by ESU during August 2024 were aimed at addressing the reality of the commitments of the Commission, especially the ones related to an inclusive Erasmus.

To this purpose, we focused on five main topics. Here are the main takeaways from the interesting discussions we had with experts:

What is international mobility?

The respondents provided varied perspectives on international learning mobility. Ragnhild Solvi Berg, Head of Brussels office at Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, highlights the complexities in defining mobility, noting that in Norway, mobility is recognized only for stays over three months, though there's a push to include one-month durations. She also points out disparities in funding availability between students and staff. Frank Petrikowski, Education attaché from the Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU in Brussels, offers a sceptical view about its current relevance, arguing that short-term mobilities are unnecessary and primarily benefit wealthier students. He emphasises the importance of balancing opportunities between well-off and disadvantaged students, calling for more inclusive support systems, such as additional grants and assistance

for students with disabilities, reflecting his experience in Germany. Bart Stoffels, Vice President of the Conseil supérieur de la mobilité (CSM) - ARES - Belgium, focuses on the financial challenges of mobility, explaining how universities in Belgium have stepped in to cover travel costs and provide top-ups to support students. Ioanna Georgiadou, Institutional Coordinator /Head of the Department of European Educational Programmes, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, offers a broad definition, including all Erasmus+ and other institutional agreements for both study and traineeship mobilities. Overall, these definitions emphasise inclusivity, financial challenges, and discrepancies in the recognition of short-term mobility.

What are the national or institutional objectives in terms of category of population and target groups for the mobile students? How are these objectives to be achieved?

Various national and institutional objectives regarding mobile students and target groups were brought into discussion. Ioanna Georgiadou details Greece's objective of ensuring that all full-degree higher education students have opportunities for exchange, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged students and those with disabilities. Her institution provides extra points for students with disabilities during the selection process to encourage their participation and collaborates with ESN to offer support and resources. Overall, the responses reflect a commitment to increasing mobility among diverse student populations while addressing inclusivity and practical challenges. Frank Petrikowski highlights Germany's relaxed approach to targets, focusing on achieving a 23% mobility rate but raising concerns about the challenges of defining disadvantaged groups due to constitutional restrictions. He questions how inclusivity can be effectively measured and warns about the potential bureaucratic hurdles associated with funding top-ups. Bart Stoffels presents UCL's objective to have 50% of graduates experience international exposure, with 27% of students participating in mobility in the 2022-2023 academic year.

⁹ Official Journal of the European Union (2022/C 167/03), Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe

¹⁰ European Commission (2022), Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation

¹¹ European Commission (2022), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European strategy for universities

Ragnhild Solvi Berg emphasises Norway's ambitious goal of achieving 50% mobility, advocating for an opt-out system rather than opt-in, and underlining the importance of recognizing short-term mobility. She notes that the government is addressing practical challenges faced by students during their time abroad.

What should be covered by the Erasmus+ grant, including the top-ups?

The respondents express varied views on what the Erasmus+ grant should cover, highlighting the need for flexibility and additional support mechanisms. Collectively, the responses indicate a consensus on the need for the grant to support actual costs while emphasising the importance of additional funding mechanisms and flexibility to enhance accessibility for diverse student populations. Ioanna Georgiadou argues for the inclusion of not just monthly compensation but also separate coverage for travel expenses (which is already in place) and housing costs, especially given the current European housing crisis. Frank Petrikowski argues that the current grants cannot cover all costs and suggests the necessity of supplementary programs, such as the European Social Fund, to aid those most in need. He underlines the importance of flexibility to ensure greater mobility, while acknowledging concerns about future budget constraints and geopolitical factors that could affect funding. Bart Stoffels points out that while the grant was initially designed to cover extra mobility-related expenses, there is now an expectation for it to cover all costs. He cautions that merely increasing grant amounts without a corresponding budget increase could create tensions and potentially reduce overall mobility, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Ragnhild Solvi Berg reinforces that the Erasmus grant is intended as a contribution rather than a full coverage of expenses, suggesting that some countries have additional national grants to support mobility costs. She notes that for Norway, which has a higher cost of living, the Erasmus grant serves as supplementary support.

For the past years, multiple stakeholders and studies have come to the conclusion that the mobility grants are not enough for students. With the upcoming discussions on the Multi-financial Financial Framework, and the current austerity climate across the EU, how do you see these discussions going and how do you see the future of the Erasmus+ program?

The responses of the experts reflect concerns regarding the future of the Erasmus+ program amid the current austerity climate and limited funding discussions. Frank Petrikowski expresses pessimism about the programme's future, noting that the EU budget remains capped at 1% of GDP, with funding likely shifting towards defence rather than education. He stresses the need for support from net payers to secure additional funding, particularly in light of inflation. He advocates for engaging with the European Parliament to explore potential budget increases for Erasmus, arguing that the program's popularity could garner additional support. Ioanna Georgiadou highlights the impact of the ongoing economic uncertainties on student mobility, indicating that these conditions have already led to a decline in participation. She underscores the importance of addressing these challenges at a high level to prevent long-term damage to the sustainability of the Erasmus+ program. Ragnhild Solvi Berg shares a more cautious outlook, stating that while the program enjoys strong support within the EU, funding increases are unlikely. She acknowledges the popularity of Erasmus and the interest in broadening participation but notes that an influx of new countries could complicate funding distribution. Solvi Berg mentions that mobility remains a crucial element, suggesting that many countries would resist budget cuts. She hopes for a balance between expanding inclusivity and maintaining funding for existing mobility programs. Overall, the responses paint a picture of uncertainty regarding Erasmus+ funding and its future viability, marking as clear the need for strategic discussions and political will to address the program's financial challenges while fostering inclusivity and participation.

The Erasmus programme in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and European Youth Goals (EYG)

The Erasmus+ program is widely recognized as a key initiative of the European Union, fostering academic exchange and mobility across higher education institutions. Beyond the immediate academic benefits, it is worth analysing how the Erasmus+ programme aligns itself with both Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and European Youth Goals (EYGs).

The fact that Erasmus+ mobility programme and mobility in education in general creates opportunities for cross-cultural understanding, improving professional skills, and environmental awareness is in this day and age a given. In this instance we take the opportunity to highlight how it also contributes to both these widely accepted global priorities.

1. Erasmus+ and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹²

On the first hand, when we analyse SDGs, which are a universal call to action for ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity we can point out with ease 3 of the 17 SDGs that are directly impacted by Erasmus+.

◇ SDG 4: Quality Education

Erasmus+ contributes to improving the quality of education by providing students with international learning experiences. The exposure to diverse educational environments enriches students' knowledge, promotes critical thinking, and fosters a sense of tolerance and inclusivity, given the exposure to a wide range of different cultures.

◇ SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Erasmus+ promotes inclusivity by offering scholarships and grants, the very topic that this project is built around, making international education more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This evidently aligns with SDG 10 by working to reduce inequalities, providing equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic status.

◇ SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

One of the core principles of Erasmus+ is fostering partnerships among higher education institutions and also other organisations. These international collaborations create networks that

address global challenges, promote knowledge exchange, and develop innovative solutions which themselves can align with these SDGs or others.

2. Erasmus+ and the European Youth Goals¹³

The European Youth Goals (EYGs) aim to empower young people across Europe, addressing their needs and aspirations, even though it has a smaller scope than SDGs we believe it to still be relevant given the topic at hand and the fact that the Erasmus+ supports several of these goals through its mobility programs.

Goal 3: Inclusive Societies

By facilitating student exchange across borders, Erasmus+ promotes inclusivity and intercultural dialogue, helping to build a more cohesive European society where diversity is valued.

Goal 4: Information and Constructive Dialogue

Erasmus+ encourages constructive dialogue among students from different backgrounds, creating opportunities for these dialogues and equipping them with the communication and critical thinking skills necessary to engage in meaningful societal debates, where the different backgrounds of those engaged in discussion are taken into account, providing a safe space for constructive dialogue. In turn, we see that Erasmus+ has helped foster generations of informed and engaged citizens.

Goal 10: Sustainable Green Europe

The program raises awareness of environmental challenges by integrating sustainability into academic curricula and projects. Participants are often encouraged to adopt eco-friendly practices during their mobility, contributing to the creation of a greener Europe, i.e. using public transportation and substituting plane travel for trains.

With these few examples we hope to demonstrate how the Erasmus+ mobility for higher education goes beyond academic exchange—it is a powerful tool for achieving the SDGs and EYGs. By fostering international collaboration, promoting inclusivity, and raising awareness of global challenges, Erasmus+ contributes to building a more sustainable, equitable, and empowered Europe. Through these efforts, the programme not only equips students with skills for the future but also inspires them to become active participants in shaping a better world.

¹² United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals

¹³ EU Youth Strategy, European Youth Goals



REFERENCES

2024 annual work programme “Erasmus+”: the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/eplus-awp-20240-C-2023-6157_en.pdf

Alves, H., Bacelar, J., Spröge, K. by the European University Foundation (2024), Removing the main obstacles to European student mobility, https://www.up.pt/erasmus-for-all/downloads/E4A_PR2_Report_Removing_the_main_obstacles_to_european_student_mobility.pdf.

Commission work programme 2024. European Commission. (n.d.). https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategy-documents/commission-work-programme/commission-work-programme-2024_en

Erasmus for all Partnership (2024), A Manifesto for equity and inclusion in student mobility, <https://zenodo.org/records/13626578>.

Erasmus for all Partnership (2023), In-depth Analysis On Mobility Funding In Erasmus And Beyond, https://www.up.pt/erasmus-for-all/downloads/Mapping_and_Research_Report_FINAL.pdf?v=7

Erasmus Student Network (2022). Understanding the experience and needs of exchange students in challenging times. ESNsurvey - XIV edition. Retrieved at <https://esn.org/ESNsurvey>

European Commission (2022), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European strategy for universities, <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/communication-european-strategy-for-universities.pdf>.

European Commission (2022), Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/proposal-council-recommendation-bridges-european-higher-education-cooperation.pdf>.

European Students' Union (2024), Bologna with Student Eyes 2024, <https://esu-online.org/publications/bwse-2024/>

European Union, EU Youth Strategy: The European Youth Goals, https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/european-youth-goals_en.

European University Foundation (2022), Erasmus+ isn't for all. How can this change?, <https://uni-foundation.eu/2023/03/02/erasmus-isnt-for-all-how-can-this-change/>

Hauschildt, K. (Ed.), Gwośc, C., Schirmer, H., Mandl, S., Menz, C. (2024), Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe, EUROSTUDENT 8 Synopsis of Indicators 2021–2024, https://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT_8_Synopsis_of_Indicators.pdf

Kopsaj, V., Biscaia, R. (2024), Piloting a more inclusive Erasmus+ grant: Impact Study, <https://zenodo.org/records/13987835>.

Kopsaj, V. (2022), Is Erasmus+ for all? A literature review on the calculation of Erasmus grants, https://www.up.pt/erasmus-for-all/downloads/Literature_Review_Erasmus_Grants_VK.pdf?v=7

Official Journal of the European Union (2022/C 167/03), Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX-%3A52022XG0421%2802%29#:~:text=In%20its%20conclusions%20on%20the,strengthen%20the%20research%20and%20innovation_

United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Erasmus for All Policy Recommendations

The future of Erasmus+ relies on our commitment to inclusivity and the belief in the transformative power of mobility amid economic uncertainty.



Co-funded by
the European Union