

Impact of the Erasmus+ programme

SUMMARY

The European Union (EU) Erasmus+ programme for education and training has a total budget of €16.45 billion for 2014-2020. It provides opportunities for learners and practitioners to gain skills and undergo personal, socio-educational and professional development through study, training, work experience or volunteering abroad. Erasmus+ actively builds positive attitudes towards the EU and contributes to the development of a European identity across all funded activities.

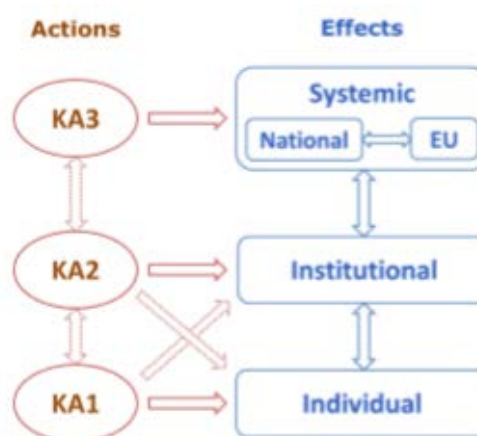
Member States would not be able to achieve such effects acting alone. No other programme, funding mobility or cross-border cooperation offers comparable scale and scope in the EU.

This briefing considers the mid- and long-term effects of the budget invested in Erasmus+ actions to increase social mobility in the European Union. It considers the effects of the programme during the budgetary period now coming to a conclusion, and therefore refers to the EU-28 prior to United Kingdom withdrawal from the EU.

Different actions under the Erasmus+ programme are expected to deliver results at more than one level. For instance, the mobility of learners and practitioners (KA1 – See Figure 1) can, in addition to individual-level results, improve the performance of educational organisations, especially in terms of outcome recognition (KA2 and KA3). Figure 1 shows the intervention logic and spill-over effects.¹

Erasmus+ contributes to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy,² and more specifically to the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

Figure 1 – Intervention Logic



Source: [European Commission](#) 2015.

Financing Erasmus+ in the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) provides common strategic objectives for EU Member States. For 2020, for higher education (HE) mobility the benchmark defined³ is that at least 20 % of higher education graduates should have experienced a period of higher education related study or training (including work placements) abroad. Member States also set a benchmark for learning mobility in vocational education and training (VET), whereby, by 2020, at least 6 % of VET graduates should have undertaken VET related study or a training period abroad (including work placements).

	Benchmark for 2020	Graduates in 2016	Erasmus+ participants in 2016	Benchmark reached in 2016
Higher education	20 %	4 500 000	320 000	7 %
Vocational education and training	6 %	2 800 000	140 000	5 %

Source: European Commission, ([Eurostat](#)) and author's own calculation

Erasmus+ delivers the most relevant systematic and financial support to reach these benchmarks in the EU.

- HE: In 2016, there were 4.5 million graduates with tertiary education in the EU-28. The number of HE-participants in KA1 awarded projects was approximately 320 000. Erasmus+ mobility accounts for about 7.1 % of the HE graduates in the EU;
- VET: In 2016, there were 2.8 million upper secondary vocational graduates across the EU-28. The number of VET-participants in KA1 VET awarded projects was approximately 140 000. Erasmus+ mobility accounts for about 5 % of the VET learners in the EU.

The Youth programme has proved its ability to reach particular participants with special needs and fewer opportunities including young people with fewer opportunities, reaching out to more than 30 % of beneficiaries by applying inclusive, non-formal learning approaches, i.e. targeted groups under-represented in Erasmus+ could significantly profit from increased support.

Mobility for school students was no longer possible under KA1 in the 2014-2020 programming period, but is envisaged for the 2021-2027 multiannual period. However, this will require an additional budget allocation.⁴

European added value of Erasmus+

Cost-effectiveness

According to [Erasmus+ statistics](#), grants per student (HE) in 2017 were €1 715 on average, with a wide differentiation in amounts granted between programme countries.

- Grants ranged from €1 161 in France, €1 307 in the Netherlands, €3 138 in Estonia, to €3 657 in Cyprus. On average, support is higher for students from southern and eastern Europe, which can be seen as a contribution to social and territorial cohesion;
- Erasmus+ students are exempted from tuition fees, which can amount to more than €3 000 per year.⁵

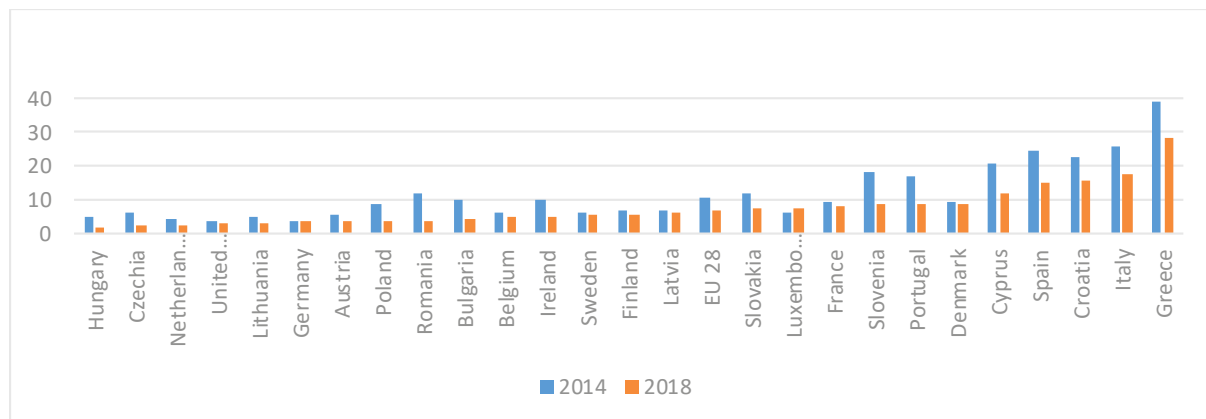
However, grants are relatively small in relation to the substantial impact of the programme on individual educational progress.

Impact on unemployment

- In eastern Europe, Erasmus+ students are more than five times (83 %) less likely to experience long-term unemployment than those not participating in the programme;
- In southern Europe, former Erasmus+ students are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared to those who have not benefited from the programme. Erasmus+ students in southern Europe are employed much more frequently even 5-10 years after graduation, with 56 % less unemployment.

From 2014 to 2018, the unemployment rates for young adults (25-29 years) with tertiary education decreased by more than 30 % in the EU-28. This decrease was moreover significantly above average in eastern and southern Europe. While the Erasmus+ programme benefits regions with the greatest needs, it is important to mention that the lower unemployment rate for Erasmus+ students did not lead to higher unemployment for non-Erasmus+ participants: the unemployment rate decreased for young adults (25-29 years) with tertiary education overall.

Figure 2 – Unemployment rates for young adults (25-29 years) with tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8), 2014-2018

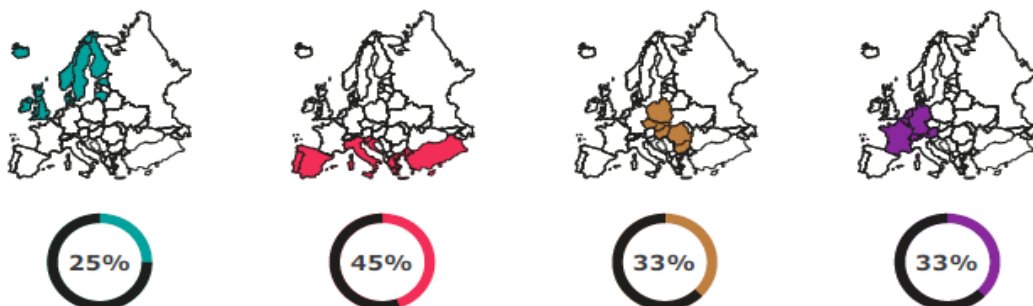


Source: Eurostat and author's own calculations.

Impact on employment

Work placements seem to have a particularly direct and positive impact on finding a job, with one in three Erasmus+ students on average offered a position by their host company. In southern Europe, this share even increases to almost one in two students, with Italy (51%) and Portugal (47%) leading.

Figure 3 – Job offers through a work placement abroad, Erasmus alumni



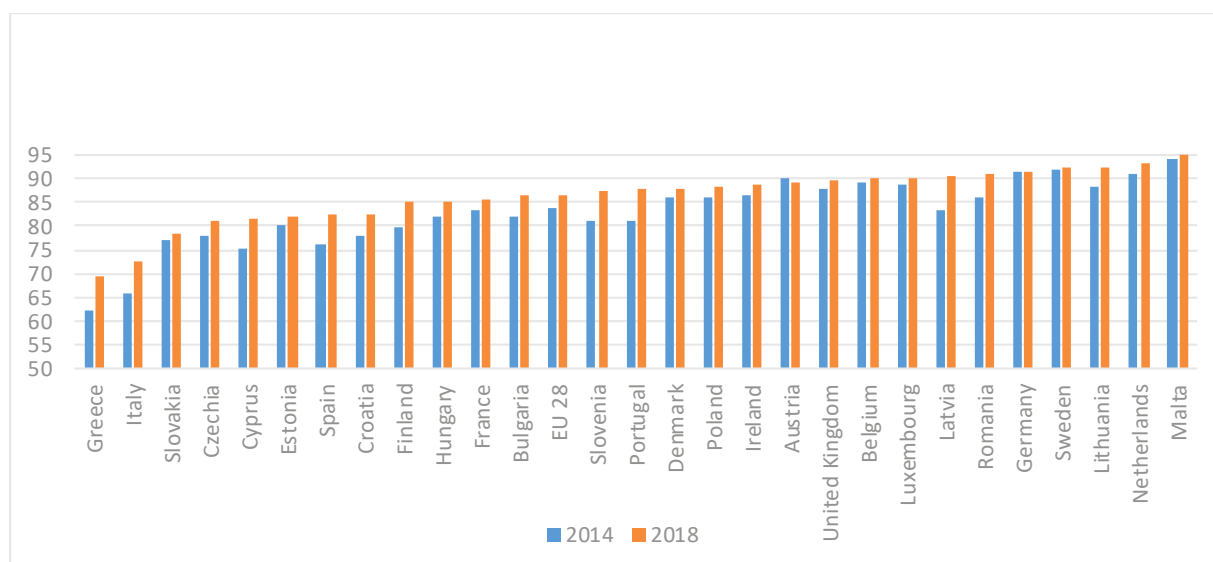
Source: European Commission, [Erasmus impact study: regional analysis](#), 2016.

Beneficiaries of VET and HE opportunities experience a **shorter transition to employment** than others. According to a combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes from 2017,⁶ the percentage of participants in Erasmus+ who took less than three months to find a job was 68.5%, while the overall percentage (Erasmus+ and non-Erasmus+) was 59.2%.

Students with a higher education are also more likely to secure **management positions**. On average, 64% of Erasmus+ students, compared to 55% of their non-programme peers, hold such positions within 5-10 years of graduation. This is particularly the case for Erasmus+ students from central and eastern Europe, where around 70% obtain managerial positions.⁷

Since 2014, the employment situation for young adults with tertiary education has improved significantly. The rate is lower than 80% in only three Member States. In 10 Member States, employment is equal to 90% or above, with an above-average increase in southern Europe.

Figure 4 – Employment rates for young adults 20-34 years with tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8)



Source: Eurostat and author's own calculations.

Compared to the total cost of HE study, the amount invested (around €1 700 on average in 2017), represents a decisive, rather than a high, share. The multiplier effect of this investment is €10 (lowest estimation) for each €1 invested within 5 years.

According to various (impact) evaluations,⁸ Erasmus+ students experience significantly less (long-term) unemployment, with shorter transition periods from education to employment, higher employment rates, and are more likely to secure management positions.

Potential for further Erasmus+ projects

An important indicator for assessing the potential for further Erasmus+ projects⁹ is the success rate: the relationship between project applications/proposals on the one hand and the share of projects granted on the other. There is a clear gap in success rates between programmes, from 97 % (HE), to 51 % (VET), 39 % (Adult), 35 % (Youth) and 32 % (School staff). In other words, when applying for a HE project, the success rate is close to 100 %. In the 'Youth' and 'School staff' fields, however, only one in three applications is successful, demonstrating at the same time that there is a great deal of potential for future absorption capacities for these programmes.

Success rates remain an important indicator for greater potential and a higher absorption capacity, and should therefore continue to be taken into account.

	Project applications/proposals	Projects granted	Success rate
KA101 School staff	9 114	2 914	32 %
KA102 VET learners and staff	7 101	3 620	51 %
KA103 Higher Education	4 070	3 968	97 % (EAC = 73 %)*
KA107 Higher Education partner countries	1 305	911	70 %
KA104 Adult Education	1 291	505	39 %
KA105 Youth	17 185	6 091	35 %

* In the European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) 2017 annual report, DG EAC calculated a significantly lower success rate of 73 % for this programme, based on the number of participants in submitted projects, which was not the case for the other programmes.

Source: EAC and author's own calculations.

Of the total Erasmus+ budget, 17 % is dedicated to VET, representing a smaller proportion of the budget compared to the number of pupils in VET. An increasing VET share and higher success rates brings Erasmus+ closer to a greater variety of citizens, dealing with a wider range of less academic domains. The systemic impact is that VET student exchanges help to render the VET institutions – and VET itself – more attractive.

Actions in the youth field under Erasmus+ have been the most successful in including young people with fewer opportunities, reaching out to 31 % of beneficiaries by applying inclusive, non-formal learning approaches.¹⁰

However, there is room for improvement in the participation of disadvantaged groups in KA1:

- There should be greater effort to engage educational organisations that host the most disadvantaged;
- Additional funding per participant will be necessary.

Language training should be strengthened, given that the lack of foreign language skills is an important factor that limits access to transnational activities in general and especially for hard-to-reach groups.

It is also necessary to respond to criticism, most notably in the field of higher education, that Erasmus+ is an elite programme.

Priorities for additional funding

The priorities for actions deserving of additional funding, compared to the European Commission's initial proposals, include aligning EU benchmarks for mobility for higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET). For both HE and VET, 20 % of the students should experience a period of study or training (including work placements) abroad. For school students, a similar benchmark should be set.

Furthermore, the Commission wants to double the total budget for Erasmus+ and 'to triple the number of participants while at the same time introducing qualitative measures and incentives that would allow to improve outreach to learners with fewer opportunities'. Tripling the budget for Erasmus+ to match the ambition in terms of numbers would lead to a 3.5 % share of the total budget.

- The European Commission target to triple the number of participants in Erasmus+ mobility actions, but only to double the available budget for the next multiannual period is unconvincing;
- Tripling the number of participants but only doubling the budget would reduce the support per participant (around €1 700 on average for HE and VET in 2017) by a third (to less than €1 200). This would create new obstacles for students, who depend on the financial support, and contradicts the Commission's intention 'to improve outreach to learners with fewer opportunities';
- Support per participant should increase to at least take the cost of living in the coming period into account, plus additional support for students with fewer opportunities;
- As far as the total Erasmus+ budget is concerned, tripling the number of mobility actions within KA1 makes it necessary to increase the budget for KA1 by at least €20 billion;
- If support for the other programmes (KA2 – KA3) is doubled, a total budget of €46 billion would be the necessary minimum funding. According to the intervention logic, KA2 and KA3 should also increase, at least to a certain extent.

MAIN REFERENCES

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Rubio E., [The 'added value' in EU budgetary debates: one concept, four meanings](#), Notre Europe, 2010.

ENDNOTES

- 1 European Commission Evaluation Roadmap, [Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+](#), 2018.
- 2 [European Semester](#), European Commission.
- 3 [Education and training 2020](#), EU benchmarks, Eurostat.
- 4 Moreover, it is anomalous that students of the same age can participate in VET mobility, but not as students of secondary education under KA1.
- 5 EACEA/Eurydice: between €1 000 and €3 000 in Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland and more than €3 000 in England and Wales.
- 6 European Commission, [Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes](#), 2017.
- 7 Follow-up to the 2014 Erasmus impact study focusing on a [regional analysis](#) of the benefits of Erasmus, 2016.
- 8 [Erasmus impact study: regional analysis](#), 2016, European Commission and [Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme \(2014-2020\) SWD/2018/040 final](#), European Commission, 2018.
- 9 'The proposal (...) will reinforce the tried-and-tested actions the impact of which has been evidenced by the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation', regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, page 7, 2013.
- 10 [Erasmus+ annual report 2017](#), European Commission.

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