

# ERASMUS+ 2021-27

## Position Paper Survey

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by the

European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators

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### Introduction

The new Erasmus programme is being prepared by the Commission as an evolution to the current Erasmus+ programme. With a doubled budget, the new programme will be a key opportunity for all stakeholders to advance the area of Education, Youth and Sport in Europe guiding European citizens to contribute and to be proud of a safe, fair, sustainable and forward-looking Europe.

With a practical view on the subject, the European Association of Erasmus Coordinators (EAEC) promoted a survey inquiring its members and associated networks about the desired improvements related to mobility (Erasmus+ KA1) and development projects (Erasmus+ KA2).

This survey was based on an online questionnaire performed in June 2019. A total of 155 validated responses, ranging 140 institutions from 43 countries, were accounted for. The participants in the survey come from a broad range of European countries. A few (7%) come from outside EU borders. The majority of the validated responses are from institutional Erasmus Coordinators (53%) and directors of International Relations Offices (21%). The remaining come from academics (17%) and institutional board members (9%).

The questionnaire is focused on five practical issues related to mobility, KA1, and three related to development projects, KA2. For each of these topics a set of claims was presented and participants were asked to rate each of the statements in a five points scale from *Fully Disagree*, corresponding to 1, to *Fully Agree*, corresponding to 5.

The following discussion presents the main outcomes of this survey that reflect the general view of the participants. EAEC communicated these results to the Commission.

## **Mobility (KA1)**

- **Barriers to mobility**

Lack of financial resources, family matters and work and professional career are identified as the top three barriers to mobility from a list of nine. The required amount of paperwork is also ranked high by the participants as a cause preventing mobility. After these four reasons, problems related to the recognition of credits and the lack of awareness of Erasmus+ mobility procedures and logistics are very close together, ranked fifth and sixth. The length of the mobility is not considered a significant barrier. Despite the low number of disabled students engaging in Erasmus mobility, health conditions and diseases and lack of accessibility are not considered relevant barriers to mobility.

Other barriers to mobility were explicitly pointed out. These are mainly related to personal issues, course interchangeability, language barriers, visa issues. Other reasons marginally mentioned include accommodation issues, late awareness and short term alternatives, like summer schools, that are seen as equivalent and more convenient options.

- **Mobility and the new program**

The digitalization of the Erasmus procedures and supporting documentation together with simpler administrative requirements are deemed crucial to promote mobility and engage more students and staff. Immediately after, having mobility grants taking into consideration not only the cost of living in the host country but also the difference between the cost of living in the home and the host countries as well as the automatic recognition of the mobility are considered significant steps forward. Improved support on language learning and effective support to blended mobility – combining short period of physical mobility with online activities – are the last two features ranked by the participants in the survey from the six options available. Nevertheless, at least 65% of the participants either agree or strongly agree that these features will have a positive impact in mobility.

Apart from the predefined features, the most representative matters mentioned by the participants are related to financial issues, promoting short term mobilities and simplification of the process for all stakeholders.

- **Institutions' role**

Providing clear information on available courses and building trust among institutions, coordinators and students are the most crucial aspects contributing to a sustainable growth in international mobility. Having host institutions supporting incoming students to find accommodation, mainly for short period mobility, is also considered relevant.

In general, the institutions' role should be directed to provide the tools, the information, but let the students take the lead as it is part of the process and develops competences in students.

Other concerns identified by participants relate mainly to the need to increase resources in the International Relations Offices to cope with an increased number of mobilities.

- **Students' role**

The most relevant responsibility of students relates to the integration of the incoming students in the local communities. The involvement of alumni is perceived as very important but difficult to assure due to generally weak links between alumni and their university.

A few interesting activities are mentioned to promote the integration of incoming students, such as, creating a student buddy system at the university or involving students in their mother language teaching.

- **New features for the new Erasmus programme wrt mobility**

Increasing the students' grants for short-term mobility and expanding the opportunities for international mobility are popular initiatives among the participants in this study who would like to see them implemented in the new Erasmus programme. Having ad-hoc funding actions to implement specific activities is seen as positive by more than 77% of participants.

Funding issues, mainly related to increased grants (particularly for short term mobility), and issues related to the mobility duration and scope are referred. The simplification of all the mobility process is also stressed.

## **Development projects (KA2)**

- **KA2 application process**

The most critical concerns linked to KA2 applications relate to the simplification of the progress and final reports that should be focused on the contributions of the project and on a fairer calculation of travel costs that should consider real flight distance rather than linear direct map distance or the distance calculator. At a second level, participants consider that timesheets should be eliminated since they add no evidence on the quality of the outputs and that establishing some funding programmes on the basis of output delivery only would promote innovation. Having KA2 applications assessed centrally or at each National Agency does not seem to be a key concern.

Simplification, the relevance of monitoring visits by the central agency and salaries harmonization are mentioned by a few participants.

- **Application e-form**

In relation to the e/form for KA2 grant applications, 82% of the participants agree or strongly agree that a more efficient filling-in process, mainly when inputting budget and project experience, would be a significant improvement. 70% are in favor of having one single E-form for all type of applications.

Other aspects mentioned by participants include using a database to store the applications in order to facilitate retrieval of pre-stored data, eliminate redundancy in the template sections and provide more space to describe the experience of team members.

- **Partner countries, international mobility**

Regarding international mobility, participants claim for more support to develop initiatives in this area, mainly by funding preparatory networking meetings and promoting more awareness campaigns for International Mobility, Erasmus Placements, Erasmus Staff Training. At a second level, open participation for institutions from partner countries without special reasoning and reducing the minimum duration of international mobility activities to five days would improve the internationalization of the Erasmus programme.

Networking and online cooperation, flexibility in budget execution and supporting international students to find accommodation are explicitly mentioned.

## **Final remarks**

Besides a few concrete concerns focused on particular, individualized issues, this study identifies a set of transversal concerns.

Simplification of procedures and documentation, both in the KA1 and KA2 spheres, seem to be a general concern. This simplification might come with the digitalization of Erasmus but also by other means.

Innovative solutions for financing, reviewing costs calculation for travel, staff costs and mobility grants are also generally mentioned.

Developing innovative mobility schemes that do not force students to be long periods abroad and tear down barriers to mobility are required to increase mobility flows.

Coping with increasing mobility flows will demand for more resourceful International Relations Offices. Students' accommodation, mainly for international students, will also require further developments.