

# Association to Erasmus: Challenges and Opportunities

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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Erasmus<sup>2</sup> programme was established in 1987 as an exchange programme for higher education students. It has gradually evolved, merging several other programmes, and now serves as the EU's programme supporting mobility in education, training, youth and sport in Europe to allow for the circulation of ideas and talent within Europe and beyond.

The programme plays a key complementary role to the EU's Framework Programmes for research and innovation by providing a holistic framework for students and staff mobility, offering opportunities for UK universities to increase their connections and competitiveness. Erasmus will see further synergies with Horizon Europe, in particular with regards to Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA), which provide grants for all stages of researchers' careers and encourages transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility. The programme is an established and recognised mobility scheme. It is the preferred mobility scheme for UK-based students going abroad during their studies with one in two students doing so to through this scheme.<sup>3</sup>

The Erasmus programme benefits from a strong brand, trusted reputation, common rulebook and an established network of potential partners that would be difficult to replicate domestically. It also provides significant financial support and flexibility to allow students from lower income backgrounds, and those with medical needs or disabilities, to take part in a mobility programme.<sup>4</sup>

Outgoing mobility through the Erasmus programme provides critical opportunities for UK-based students and staff to study and work across different cultures and to enhance their language skills. The Erasmus+ programme provides opportunities to study, train and work in 34 EU and associated countries, which are full participants of the programme, and up to 156 countries elsewhere in the world.<sup>5</sup> The Erasmus programme strengthens the linguistic capacity of UK-based students beyond those completing modern languages degrees in the UK. It allows students from across disciplines to enhance their ability to manage interactions with people of different cultures who speak other languages. As a result of the time spent abroad, UK-based students and staff show improved levels of self-confidence, cultural awareness and a greater ability to work in multi-lingual and international teams. The enhanced language skills are critical to strengthening the UK's capacity for research and innovation, improving social mobility and building social cohesion.<sup>6</sup>

Incoming students and staff through the Erasmus programme provide important economic benefits to the UK and an invaluable contribution to the academic, intellectual and cultural vibrancy of UK universities and research life. They champion language learning, raise students and staff awareness of the benefits of outward

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1 This briefing has benefitted from a series of discussions with counterparts in Associated and Third Countries. The Academy is grateful to them for their time and reflection. The authors would also like to thank those who provided comments and review on earlier versions of the briefing.

2 For the purpose of this briefing, the "Erasmus programme" refers to the Erasmus programme in general and to the future Erasmus programme (2021-2027). The "Erasmus+ programme" refers specifically to the current Erasmus Programme (2014-2020).

3 Universities UK, *International Facts and Figures, Higher Education 2018*, July 2018 [https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/International%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018\\_web.pdf](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/International%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018_web.pdf)

4 House of Lords, *European Union Committee, Brexit: the Erasmus and Horizon programmes*, February 2019, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/lducom/283/283.pdf>

5 European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020*, February 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2020\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2020_en)

6 The British Academy, *Languages in the UK, A call for action*, February 2019, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/languages-uk-academies-statement>

mobility and strengthen interpersonal skills and cultural awareness on UK campuses. They provide UK-based students and staff with a greater cultural and educational enrichment through exposure to and connections with non-UK students and staff. They help strengthen and develop the UK's research talent pool and enrich research capacities of the UK during their studies and career and contribute to enhancing the UK's international research reputation. Incoming staff and students also establish an affective link which helps enhance the profile of the UK across the world and create a catalytic effect on attracting other students and academic staff members to the UK.

The UK's experience so far is as a full participant in the Erasmus programme eligible to take part in the programme in its entirety. The UK Government is committed to seeking association to the next Erasmus programme (2021-2027).<sup>7</sup> Following its withdrawal from the EU, the options the UK government needs to consider in order to take part in the next Erasmus programme are either to negotiate associated country status to the programme or to become a non-associated country. The terms and conditions of both options are detailed in this briefing.

The briefing underlines the value of the UK's membership of the Erasmus programme for the UK and for the partner countries involved and outlines the past patterns and potential future for associating to the Erasmus programme, as well as drawing out some lessons learned and implications for the UK.

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7 See: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-11/debates/039A404C-7079-46D0-B5EC-8927CA0E477D/OralAnswersToQuestions>

# What is Erasmus?

The Erasmus programme supports education and professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and elsewhere in the world. It aims to contribute to sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion as well as strengthen European identity.

The Erasmus programme's objectives are pursued through the following activities:

- **Mobility of Individuals** (Key Action 1): Key Action 1 covers the five fields of higher education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education and youth by providing individuals with the means to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness. Under Key Action 1 organisations can apply for funding to run mobility projects to offer structured study, work experience, job shadowing, training and teaching opportunities to staff and learners.
- **Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices** (Key Action 2): Key Action 2 covers the five fields of higher education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education and youth by allowing organisations to work together in order to improve their provision for learners and share innovative practices. Key Action 2 includes the action 'European Universities', which aims to allow students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several countries and contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities.
- **Support for Policy Reform** (Key Action 3): Key Action 3 covers the field of higher education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education and youth by supporting and facilitating the modernisation of education and training systems.
- **Jean Monnet activities** exclusively cover the field of higher education and provide support and funding to academic institutions to promote excellence in European integration studies in higher education. They aim to encourage dialogue between the academic world and policymakers in order to enhance EU policies for higher education.
- **Sport.** The programme aims to promote good governance and tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport by supporting actions that result in the development, transfer, and implementation of innovative ideas and practices in sport at a European, national, regional and local level.

Students may take part in an exchange abroad through the Erasmus+ programme multiple times throughout their studies, either as a student or as a trainee. The total time abroad (study abroad periods included) may not exceed 12 months within one cycle (e.g. undergraduate degree, Master's degree, PhD).

The European Commission published its proposal for the next Erasmus programme on 30 May 2018 in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) covering the period 2021-2027. It originally proposed a budget of €30 billion, a doubling of the previous programme budget. As part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, the European Commission proposed new figures for the Multiannual Financial Framework on 27 May 2020. It proposed that Erasmus is allocated €24.6 billion which constitutes a cut on the 2018 original proposal. On 10 July 2020, the European Council President

put forward a revised budget of €21.2 billion.<sup>8</sup> The adoption of this future Erasmus programme is still in discussion and is tied to the adoption of the MFF.<sup>9</sup> An important ambition of the future Erasmus programme will be its international ambition, which aims to strengthen the EU's relationships with the rest of the world as well as increase mobility and cooperation with third countries.

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8 See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/07/10/president-charles-michel-presents-his-proposal-for-the-mff-and-the-recovery-package/>

9 See: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-new-boost-for-jobs-growth-and-investment/file-mff-erasmus>

# UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme

The Erasmus+ programme is managed in the UK by the UK Erasmus+ National Agency, which brings together the British Council and Ecorys UK. The Department of Education is the UK National Authority for the Erasmus+ programme and is responsible for overseeing the operation of the programme in the UK to ensure the UK National Agency complies with programme rules and manages the programme in an effective and efficient way. The Department for Education also oversees the alignment of the programme's delivery with UK policies, including those in the Devolved Administrations.

The Erasmus programme plays a key complementary role to the Framework Programmes for research and innovation in supporting higher education in the UK, in particular by providing a wider framework for student and staff mobility. The Erasmus+ programme is the most popular mobility programme for UK students with an estimated 53% of all UK students who go abroad during their studies doing so through the programme.<sup>10</sup>

Between 2014 and 2018, 4,846 UK projects were awarded a total of €679.7 million in Erasmus+ funding and 167,000 UK-based participants have taken part in activities under Key Actions 1, 2 and 3 combined. University staff and student mobility is a key component of the Erasmus programme for the UK. The majority of Erasmus+ funding in the UK to date has been awarded under Key Action 1 Learning mobility (€492.1 million). Over half (€307.3 million) of the sum has supported mobility in higher education. Erasmus+ funding in the UK has also supported exchanges for other groups, including €114.3 million for vocational education and training (VET), €45.4 million for youth, €19.8 million for schools, and €5.2 million for adult education.<sup>11</sup>

Between 2018-2019, 16,868 UK-based students undertook a traineeship or studied in another programme country through the Erasmus programme.<sup>12</sup> The UK is also the third most popular destination for incoming students with 31,396 students.

Table A: European Commission data on outgoing students to programme countries in 2018-2019

| Country/Region | Study  | Traineeship | Total  |
|----------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| France         | 30,408 | 17,181      | 47,589 |
| Germany        | 33,104 | 8,867       | 41,971 |
| Spain          | 31,090 | 8,849       | 39,939 |
| Italy          | 29,527 | 8,849       | 38,376 |
| Turkey         | 13,834 | 4,017       | 17,851 |
| UK             | 9,540  | 7,328       | 16,868 |
| Poland         | 10,006 | 5,103       | 15,109 |
| Netherlands    | 9,862  | 4,461       | 14,323 |
| Portugal       | 7,057  | 2,572       | 9,629  |
| Belgium        | 6,705  | 2,815       | 9,520  |

<sup>10</sup> Universities UK, *International Facts and Figures, Higher Education 2018*, July 2018 [https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/International%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018\\_web.pdf](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/International%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018_web.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Erasmus+ UK National Agency, *Statistics for Erasmus+ 2014-2018*, October 2019, <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/file/27313/download>

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus + annual report 2018 - Statistical annex*, January 2020, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ae35558f-41b8-11ea-9099-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Table B: European Commission data on incoming students to programme countries in 2018-2019

| Country/Region | Study  | Traineeship | Total  |
|----------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| Spain          | 34,775 | 14,917      | 49,692 |
| Germany        | 21,678 | 11,015      | 32,693 |
| UK             | 18,389 | 13,007      | 31,396 |
| France         | 21,691 | 6,785       | 28,476 |
| Italy          | 20,625 | 6,079       | 26,704 |
| Poland         | 14,421 | 2,192       | 16,613 |
| Portugal       | 11,698 | 3,236       | 14,934 |
| Netherlands    | 9,990  | 4,647       | 14,637 |
| Belgium        | 6,574  | 5,162       | 11,736 |
| Czech Republic | 8,252  | 2,591       | 10,843 |

Incoming staff and students provide an important economic contribution to the UK through spending on a wide range of goods, services and activities.<sup>13</sup> They also attract overseas visitors during their time studying in the UK and the expenditure of friends and relatives make a significant contribution to the economy. Furthermore, students coming to the UK through the Erasmus programme to complete a traineeship provide vital support to the private and public sectors by bringing distinctive perspectives and skills and create economic opportunities and support collaboration across countries.

Incoming students and staff members account for important proportions of the UK higher education research community. They champion language learning, raise student's awareness of the benefits of outward mobility and widen opportunities to study, train and work. Incoming students, as well as incoming academic staff, have significant lasting impacts on the networks of institutions and collaborations, including a catalytic effect on attracting other students and academic staff members as well as encouraging them to pursue further studies or activities in the UK.

The Erasmus programme provides a critical pathway for language degrees and the promotion of languages<sup>14</sup> in the UK, in a context of continuing decline in the number of students studying languages at secondary school and consequently at university. The programme helps enhance language skills and ensure that UK-based students across disciplines and academic staff can work across different cultures and within a diverse workforce as well as establish critical international partnerships.<sup>15</sup>

The Erasmus programme is also central to certain degree programmes beyond modern languages in the UK and universities have redesigned courses to enable students across disciplines to complete a semester or year abroad programme.<sup>16</sup>

13 The British Academy, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Association of School and College Leaders, British Council and Universities UK, *Towards a national languages strategy: education and skills*, July 2020, [https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2597/Towards-a-national-languages-strategy-July-2020\\_ROFHmzB.pdf](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2597/Towards-a-national-languages-strategy-July-2020_ROFHmzB.pdf)

14 The British Academy, *Languages in the UK, A call for action*, February 2019, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/languages-uk-academies-statement>

15 Russell Group, *Why Erasmus is important for students*, February 2018, <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/news/the-importance-of-student-exchange/>

16 House of Lords, European Union Committee, *Brexit: the Erasmus and Horizon programmes*, February 2019, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/lducom/283/283.pdf>

The Erasmus programme benefits from a strong brand, trusted reputation, common rulebook and an established network of potential partners that would be difficult to replicate domestically. There is no guarantee that a UK alternative scheme would be recognised by universities across Europe. Setting up individual arrangements with institutions elsewhere in Europe and beyond to replace Erasmus partnership agreements could entail administrative and financial burdens that could fail to guarantee the financial support provided by the Erasmus programme.<sup>17</sup> The Erasmus programme also offers significant financial support and flexibility to enable students from lower income backgrounds, and those with medical needs or disabilities, to participate in these educational exchanges.<sup>18</sup>

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17 House of Lords, *European Union Committee, Brexit: the Erasmus and Horizon programmes*, February 2019, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/lducom/283/283.pdf>

18 See: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/additional-support>

# Who can take part in the programme?

The Erasmus programme is open to individuals and organisations that are based in eligible countries. These eligible countries are divided into two categories: Programme/Associated countries and Partner/Non-Associated countries. The distinction between “Programme” and “Partner” countries refers specifically to the Erasmus+ programme.<sup>19</sup>

Associated countries in the Erasmus+ programme include EU countries as well as non-EU Countries, as follows:<sup>20</sup>

- European Economic Area – European Free Trade Association (EEA-EFTA) members (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein)<sup>21</sup>
- Acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidate countries (Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia)
- The United Kingdom (as a participating country during the transition period, until 31 December 2020)

The 2018 European Commission proposal for the new Erasmus programme also mentions that the following countries could be considered third countries associated to the next Erasmus programme.<sup>22</sup>

- Countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).<sup>23</sup>
- Other countries, such as Switzerland, meeting certain conditions. This includes a fair balance regarding the contributions and benefits of the third country participating.

The European Commission’s proposal stipulates that third country association to the programme should be subject to the conditions laid down in specific agreements covering the participation of the third country concerned in the programme. Third country association also requires the designation of a National Agency,<sup>24</sup> as well as the capability to manage some of the actions of the programme at a decentralised level.

Associated countries that are not EU member states have a restricted ability to influence the development and implementation of the programme. They sit on programme committees as observers but do not have voting rights.

Non-associated countries’ participation to the Erasmus programme is restricted to selected calls, in particular concerning higher education and youth. Projects with organisations from non-associated countries are only approved for selected actions if their participation brings “essential added value” to the project.<sup>25</sup>

19 European Commission, *Proposal for a 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*, 30/05/2018, May 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf)

20 See: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part_en)

21 The EEA consists of the EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. EFTA consists of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

22 European Commission, *Proposal for a 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*, 30/05/2018, May 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-establishing-erasmus-regulation_en.pdf)

23 See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/european-neighbourhood-policy\\_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Neighbourhood%20Policy%20\(ENP,%2C%20Georgia%2C%20Moldova%20and%20Ukraine.](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/european-neighbourhood-policy_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Neighbourhood%20Policy%20(ENP,%2C%20Georgia%2C%20Moldova%20and%20Ukraine.)

24 The UK’s National Agency is the UK National Agency for Erasmus+.

25 European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020*, February 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2020\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-programme-guide-2020_en)

# Associating to the Erasmus programme

As previously mentioned, associated countries include countries that are not members of the EU (EEA countries, acceding countries, candidate countries and some potential candidate countries). In order for the UK to associate to Erasmus in the future, it is important to examine pathways to association as well as the terms and conditions this might entail.

Similarly to the association process for Framework Programmes, an Association Agreement can only be formally negotiated once the regulation establishing the Erasmus programme has been adopted. This means that there can be a gap between the Erasmus programme beginning and an Association Agreement coming into effect.

## EEA countries

- EEA countries associate to the Erasmus programme on the basis of the EEA Agreement, which sets out the modalities for the association to the EU programmes. Once the Association Agreement is negotiated, the regulation establishing the Erasmus programme is incorporated into the EEA Agreement. The Regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme was incorporated into the EEA Agreement on 16 May 2014, foreseeing participation from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the Erasmus+ programme. The incorporation in the EEA Agreement ensures that EEA countries are full participants of the Erasmus programme.
- EEA countries provide input at the early stages of preparing a legislative proposal, via expert groups and committees of the European Commission, the EEA Joint Committee, programme committees and other committees in specific areas, such as the Erasmus+ Programme Committee of the European Commission.<sup>26</sup>
- EEA countries participate as observers with no voting rights in the Erasmus+ Programme Committee of the European Commission in the preparatory legislative stages where the relevant Ministry is represented (and equally the Ministry representing the Youth part of the programme). They also participate in shaping EU policies and legislation by submitting comments on important policy issues.<sup>27</sup>
- The annual EEA financial contribution is adopted within the Multiannual Financial Framework and allows its contributors (the EU and the EEA countries) to carry out common policies. The modalities for the EEA financial contribution are set down in Article 82 of the EEA Agreement. The financial contribution takes the form of a seven-year commitment by the EEA States to make annual payments towards the programmes in which they participate. Each payment is established as a proportion of the EU's annual budget towards the specific EEA programmes.<sup>28</sup> The proportionality factor varies from year to year and is based on the relative size of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the EEA country compared to the total GDP of the European Economic Area.

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26 British Council, *Third countries' participation within Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Erasmus Post-2020*, August 2019, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third\\_countries\\_participation\\_within\\_creative\\_europe\\_horizon\\_europe\\_and\\_erasmus\\_post-2020.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third_countries_participation_within_creative_europe_horizon_europe_and_erasmus_post-2020.pdf)

27 See: <https://www.efta.int/eea/eea-efta-comments>

28 See: <https://www.efta.int/eea/eu-programmes>

## Switzerland

- Switzerland is a member of EFTA. Its relationship with the EU has so far been governed by a series of bilateral agreements.
- Switzerland's associated status with Erasmus+ was suspended in 2014 following the Swiss referendum on restricting immigration to Switzerland and its integration into the Swiss Federal Constitution. In April 2014, the Swiss Federal Council approved an interim solution for Erasmus+ financed with Swiss funds for Erasmus+ for 2015–2018 along the lines of Switzerland's earlier indirect participation (so-called Swiss-European Mobility Programme).<sup>29</sup> The interim solution has been extended until 2020.
- A recent report published in January 2020 by the national agency for the promotion of exchanges and mobility in the education system, Movetia, examined the effects of the country's suspension from full membership as well as the replacement scheme it set-up.
- The report shows that the replacement scheme did not cover the entire spectrum of activities and services carried out as part of the Erasmus+ programme. In particular, the replacement scheme did not provide support for work placements and cooperation projects. Since 2014, Swiss institutions have also required more agreements to maintain its mobility figures.
- Swiss organisations are eligible to participate in selected parts of the programme (e.g. strategic partnerships in the field of education, training, youth, knowledge alliances, sector skills alliance, capacity building) either as full partners or as affiliated partners.
- Switzerland's capacity to influence the Erasmus programme is limited. It is carried out via its presence in a wide network of working groups, advisory boards and other satellite entities.<sup>30</sup>

## Turkey

- Turkey's involvement with European integration dates back to 1959 and includes the Ankara Association Agreement (1963) for the progressive establishment of a Customs Union (set up in 1995). The 1997 agreement reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility to be a candidate for membership.<sup>31</sup>
- The principle of participation for candidate countries in EU programmes, agencies and committees was agreed in 1997 to help enlargement countries familiarise themselves with EU policies and instruments, and to strengthen research cooperation prior to accession.<sup>32</sup>
- Turkey has been an associated member of Erasmus+ since 2003 and takes part in the programme in its entirety. Turkey takes part in the Erasmus+ Programme Committee of the European Commission as well as expert groups without voting rights.

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29 See: <https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/mobilitaet/eu-education--training-and-youth-programmes.html>

30 British Council, *Third countries' participation within Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Erasmus Post-2020*, August 2019, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third\\_countries\\_participation\\_within\\_creative\\_europe\\_horizon\\_europe\\_and\\_erasmus\\_post-2020.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third_countries_participation_within_creative_europe_horizon_europe_and_erasmus_post-2020.pdf)

31 See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/turkey\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/turkey_en)

32 See: [ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/participation-pac\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/participation-pac_en)

## **Israel**

- Israel takes part in the Erasmus programme as an ENP country (as it does for Framework programmes) and takes part in specific parts of the programme, including higher education and youth.<sup>33</sup>
- Israeli organisations cannot act as project coordinators.
- Israel hosts a national Erasmus Office and participates in discussions related to the development of the programme through its engagement with EU institutions.

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<sup>33</sup> British Council, *Third countries' participation within Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Erasmus Post-2020*, August 2019, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third\\_countries\\_participation\\_within\\_creative\\_europe\\_horizon\\_europe\\_and\\_erasmus\\_post-2020.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/third_countries_participation_within_creative_europe_horizon_europe_and_erasmus_post-2020.pdf)

# How can the UK move towards Association?

While the participation of the UK in the next Erasmus programme has not yet been decided, initial positions of important stakeholders have already been outlined. In February 2020, the UK Government stated that: ‘the UK will consider options for participation in elements of Erasmus+ on a time-limited basis, provided the terms are in the UK’s interests.’<sup>34</sup> In June 2020, Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, told MPs: ‘We know how important Erasmus is to many, and we will continue to seek membership of those programmes across the United Kingdom.’<sup>35</sup>

The European Commission proposal for the new Erasmus programme offers the possibility for countries such as the UK to participate in the next Erasmus+ programme either as an Associated or non-associated country.

Following the first round of EU-UK negotiations, the European Commission published a draft legal text for the EU-UK Future Partnership.<sup>36</sup> This included that UK participation in EU programmes would be conditional on a series of criteria, including the mobility of students, researchers, trainees and volunteers. UK representatives or experts would be allowed to take part, as observers for the points which concern the UK, in the committees, expert group meetings or other similar meetings where representatives or experts designated by member states take part that are responsible for assisting the European Commission in the implementation and management of the programme, the part of the programme or the activities in which the UK participates. The proposed budget mechanism would include a participation fee and a contribution towards the operation of the programme.

The UK Government will need to consider and address the following points in order to associate to the Erasmus programme:

- While the formal negotiations can only take place once the Multiannual Financial Framework and the Erasmus Regulation have been adopted, it is important that constructive shaping discussions on participation in EU Programmes take place before then. There is expressed support for the UK and the EU to work together on Erasmus and building on that support will be key to allow for a swift transition from the current negotiations to the formal association negotiations.
- The UK Government needs to reflect on how to address, in its revised immigration system, the issue of mobility of students, researchers, trainees and volunteers. Those engaging in Erasmus will either be based in the UK or wishing to come to the UK. The Government and the higher education sector therefore need to give consideration for how to ensure the UK maintains a welcoming environment for study and research, and ensure that students, researchers, trainees and volunteers can come to the UK for the entirety of their Erasmus planned mobility. The recently announced R&D Roadmap is a helpful starting point, however, the UK’s planned points-based immigration system will necessitate Erasmus students obtain a visa if they stay for longer than 6 months in the UK.

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34 HM Government, *The Future Relationship with the EU – The UK’s Approach to Negotiations*, February 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/868874/The\\_Future\\_Relationship\\_with\\_the\\_EU.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/868874/The_Future_Relationship_with_the_EU.pdf)

35 See: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-11/debates/039A404C-7079-46D0-B5EC-8927CA0E477D/OralAnswersToQuestions>

36 European Commission, *Draft text of the Agreement on the New Partnership with the United Kingdom*, March 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/200318-draft-agreement-gen.pdf>

- To fully associate the UK will need to commit to a potential financial contribution to the Erasmus programme. This would help signal to the student and research community nationally and internationally the seriousness of the UK's determination to associate.
- The UK should continue to reflect on its existing structures and resources to associate to the Erasmus programme and engage with relevant stakeholders through the life of the programme. This can include sharpening and expanding its presence in Brussels both through the UK's mission to the EU and the UK Research Office in order to gather information and conduct critical relationship building. UK Embassies in the EU and the UK Science & Innovation network should also play a critical role.

## About the Academy

The British Academy is the voice of the humanities and social sciences. The Academy is an independent fellowship of world-leading scholars and researchers; a funding body for research, nationally and internationally; and a forum for debate and engagement.

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