

Warsaw, 4 December 2020

## **ESN Poland's position on the future of the Erasmus+ programme in light of planned EU budget veto by Polish and Hungarian governments**

In view of the reported threatened future of the Erasmus+ programme<sup>1</sup> and the planned veto of the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework by the Prime Ministers of Poland and Hungary, ESN Poland wishes to take a position on this issue.

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme in the field of education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020 period. Since its beginning in 1989, over 10 million people have benefited from the Programme<sup>2</sup>. Its total budget equals to EUR 14.7 billion. The best-known pillar of the Erasmus+ programme are student exchanges, of which over 235 000 students have benefited since the beginning of the programme in Poland until January 2019. Each year, more than 15 000 students from Polish universities<sup>3</sup> go on the fore-mentioned exchanges.

However, the Erasmus+ programme is not just a student exchange. The Programme pillars also include school education, vocational education and training, youth projects, adult education and sport. Since 2014, 5 200 educational institutions and organisations have benefited from the Erasmus+ programme in Poland<sup>3</sup>.

The long-negotiated new edition of the Erasmus+ programme should start from 2021. Erasmus Student Network has been actively involved in the debate over its shape from the very beginning. Already in 2018, the #ErasmusUpgrade Manifesto - a document containing proposals for the future Programme - was presented<sup>4</sup>. The discussion tackled the issue of expanding the scope of the Programme to include more types of mobility, such as short study visits and more remote learning opportunities. The new proposal for the Programme also contains solutions allowing participation in the exchange for people from disadvantaged communities. ESN, together with other entities, conducted #Erasmus500 campaign, the aim of which was to significantly increase the amount of the scholarship so that Erasmus experience would not be a financial challenge nor burden for Programme participants<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/swiat/news-weto-polski-i-wegier-ke-przygotowuje-zastepczy-koronafundusz.nld.4891603>

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2020). 10 million Erasmus participants and counting. Brussels. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ganda\\_20\\_130](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ganda_20_130)

<sup>3</sup>Foundation for the Development of the Education System (2019). Erasmus+ Programme in Poland. Report 2018. Warsaw <http://czytelnia.frse.org.pl/program-erasmus-w-polsce-raport-2018/>

<sup>4</sup>Erasmus Student Network (2018). #ErasmusUpgrade Manifesto. Vision of the Erasmus Student Network for the future Erasmus+ programme. Brussels: Erasmus Student Network AISBL. [https://esn.org/sites/default/files/news/english\\_eum.pdf](https://esn.org/sites/default/files/news/english_eum.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://erasmus500.eu/>

In July, the European Council agreed on the shape of the next edition of the Erasmus+ programme, to which EUR 21.2 billion was allocated in the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework proposal presented at the time. The new Erasmus+ Programme for 2021-2027 was planned to include more than twice as many participants as the current one. The new Erasmus+ programme was set to not only continue its predecessor's success, but also significantly improve in certain areas by including new types of mobility, with greater emphasis on inclusion and digitalisation, and thus broaden the competences of the Programme participants and make the mobility experience more universal.

**ESN Poland would like to stress that the announcements made by the governments of Poland and Hungary concerning the veto of the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework may have far-reaching negative consequences for the future of the Erasmus+ programme in Poland and all the countries participating in it.**

A potential veto on the EU budget for 2021-2027 may result in the introduction of the so-called provisional budget, under which the European Union's institutions and programmes will operate monthly with resources amounting to 1/12th of the 2020 budget. This state of affairs will continue until an agreement is reached between all of the 27 Member States. If the Multiannual Financial Framework is not adopted, the European Parliament has proposed, among other things, that the Erasmus+ programme be continued for another year under the same conditions as in 2014-2020<sup>6</sup>.

It should be stressed that the activities of the Erasmus+ programme planned for the second semester of the academic and school year 2020-2021 are not at risk, because the funds necessary for their implementation come from the 2014-2020 EU budget.

If the EU budget for 2021-2027 is adopted late, i.e. next year, the administration of the funds of the new Erasmus+ programme may be hindered. It should be noted that any delay in the allocation of funds may have negative consequences for each of the entities involved in redistributing funds, appropriate recruitment schedules and, as a result of information chaos, also for access to reliable information and promotion of the Programme. Certain groups, such as students with a financial disadvantage or a disability, are among the most vulnerable to the effects of complications affecting the Programme.

The Erasmus+ programme aims at improving learning outcomes, career prospects and employability of its beneficiaries. The objectives of this mobility programme also include: increasing one's independence and self-esteem, improving foreign language skills, intercultural competences and entrepreneurial attitudes, as well as increasing one's involvement in social life and gaining motivation for continuing education<sup>7</sup>. Studies confirm that the Erasmus+ programme meets its objectives.

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<sup>6</sup> European Parliament (2020). Press note  
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200512IPR78918/long-term-eu-budget-parliament-wants-safety-net-for-beneficiaries>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2014). Erasmus+. Programme guide.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_pl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_pl.pdf)

Students who have participated in Erasmus+ noticed an increase in their competences in areas of group cooperation, planning, and organising tasks and activities, independent planning and implementation of learning, problem solving<sup>8</sup>, communication, critical thinking, creativity and presentation, responsibility and adaptability<sup>9</sup>. The programme has a positive impact on personal development and maturity of the participants who declare a significant increase in their self-confidence, independence, openness and ability to cope with new situations. Participation in the programme also contributes to the growth of social capital<sup>8,10</sup>.

The beneficiaries of the Programme develop their language competences in English and other foreign languages<sup>11,12</sup>. Students who took part in exchanges under Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes are not only more likely to find employment, but are also, on average, more likely than their peers without any mobility experience to hold managerial positions within 5 to 10 years of graduation<sup>8</sup>.

Former participants of the Programme show greater interest in key decision making processes and are more willing to engage in social activities<sup>13</sup>. Erasmus+ also promotes the participant's country or origin abroad and supports building its positive image. Mobility programmes are also a vital tool in supporting internationalisation of higher education in Poland and increasing its prestige internationally. Erasmus+ Programme also enables scientific cooperation and exchanges for research and teaching staff. Moreover, the programme supports innovation in higher education institutions<sup>10</sup>.

As a non-governmental organisation which has been supporting the development of mobility programmes in Poland for 22 years, we are direct witnesses of the impact the Programme has in forming *the Erasmus Generation* - a generation of conscious and active people who can translate the European perspective gained during the mobility period into their own competences, development on the labour market and involvement in local communities. The Erasmus+ Programme co-creates the identity of a Polish student and, in accordance with its slogan, *changes life, opens the minds* of both those who took part in it themselves and those who have experienced *internationalisation at home* by hosting foreign students during their academic courses and activities.

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<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2018). Commission Staff Working Document. Accompanying the document: Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions. Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020). Brussels.

<https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/eval/swd-e-plus-mte.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2014). The Erasmus Impact Study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94d97f5c-7ae2-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2019). Erasmus+: a turning point in the lives of 5 million European students.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_2548](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2548)

<sup>11</sup> Nigmonov, A., (2012). Relevant labour market skills and flexibility. W: Exchange, employment and added value: Research Report of the ESN Survey 2011. Brussels: Erasmus Student Network AISBL. <https://issuu.com/esnint/docs/esnsurvey2011>

<sup>12</sup> Dąbrowska-Resiak, J. (2017). Erasmus and Erasmus+ student mobility.

Analysis of reports of students leaving between 2007-2015.

<https://www.frse.org.pl/mobilnosci-studentow-w-programach-erasmus-i-erasmus-na-space-years/>

<sup>13</sup> Erasmus Student Network (2019). ESNsurvey 2019 - Active citizenship and student exchange in light of the European elections. Brussels: Erasmus Student Network AISBL. [https://issuu.com/esnint/docs/esnsurvey\\_2019](https://issuu.com/esnint/docs/esnsurvey_2019)

We firmly believe that even the greatest political disputes will not lead to a situation where many young Europeans will be deprived of the development the Programme offers. **As an organisation which works closely with exchange students and students interested in exchange, we see that increasing disinformation about the future of the Erasmus+ programme is leading to growing anxiety among students, who are already struggling with the unpredictable nature of studying in the midst of pandemic.**

Aware of the positive impact of the Erasmus+ programme on Polish education, the labour market and the individual competences of its beneficiaries, as well as its role in the process of internationalisation of Polish higher education institutions and the promotion of a positive image of our country abroad, we call for **budget negotiations which take into account the interests of Erasmus+ beneficiaries: Polish and foreign students, as well as academic staff, students, teachers and non-governmental organisations.**

We encourage all young Poles to follow the course of negotiations and decision-making processes, including at European level, as well as contact with decision makers.

We are also appealing to the media to verify the information provided in a reliable manner. The information chaos and reports of the end of the Erasmus+ programme may have a negative impact on the interest of potential participants in the programme.

We encourage all those concerned, in particular other organisations, to support the appeal.

On behalf of ESN Poland Association  
President  
Pola Plaskota

*Erasmus Student Network Poland is a student association focused on education and academic mobility. Our activity focuses on supporting international student exchanges and promoting mobility programmes. We are a part of ESN International, the biggest student association in Europe.*