

THREE DECADES OF EDUCATION EXCELLENCE



The European ERASMUS Mobility Programme celebrates 30 years of quality learning and training



By Gregoris A. Makrides

The ERASMUS mobility programme of ERASMUS+ categorised under KA1 is the oldest programme name since 1987 and its success passed its name to the all Key Actions programme ERASMUS+ in 2014. Besides having multiple importance, its main characteristic is that it allowed the study and internship mobility of university students in Europe and beyond since 2015, by launching ERASMUS International. It also allowed the mobility of university professors and staff for teaching and training.

The experience of students studying abroad goes beyond the study action itself. It is an opportunity to become more international, linguistically skilled, independent, and culturally aware of the histories and societies of neighbouring European countries. It facilitates the development of communication skills, skills for problem-solving, and much more. This should be of obvious benefit to Europe, to European countries and societies, as well as for non-European countries that are now participating. Erasmus students who return home after studying abroad tend to maintain ties to the countries they have vis-

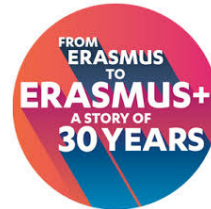
ited or lived for a while. On many occasions, they also become friendly ambassadors.

In the ERASMUS Congress and Exhibition (ERACON 2017) organised by the European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators in Maribor, Slovenia from May 9 to 13 this year, some interesting and useful practices for the ERASMUS mobility programme were presented and discussed, including results from different actions of ERASMUS+. During the event, the European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators together with 300-plus participants celebrated the 30-year anniversary of ERASMUS (1987-2017). Participants had the chance to discover new partners and develop new cooperation prospects. The participation of non-EU institutions started to grow from this year, increasing the number of represented countries to 37.

It should be noted that the ERASMUS+ Programme is financed by the European Union through three main key actions: the KA1, KA2 and KA3.

The KA1 mainly covers the credit learning mobility of students, mobility of teachers and staff, grants for joint Master Programme and the Master Student Loan Guarantee. The KA2 covers projects under the Strategic Partnership with priorities covering the full phase of education and training, the Knowledge and Sector Skills Alliances and some other bilateral programmes. The KA3 covers the Policy Support and different priority areas. Every year, for all these actions, there are calls for proposals that undergo competitive assessment for funding. Every call may have different rules explained in the ERASMUS+ Programme Guidelines. The total budget for the seven years period 2014-2020 for ERASMUS+ programme is more than 15 billion euro.

The number of students who have participated in the ERASMUS mobility programmes



is now over 4.5 million. The culture is different now, as we have many new technologies and social media. Communication has become easier and

faster, and this makes everything easier. Students do not become homesick easily anymore because of these digital communication technologies, and the ERASMUS programme has been the only opportunity for some students to study abroad.

I am sure that the European Commission will continue the ERASMUS programme in the programming period 2021-2027, as I cannot imagine discontinuing this very successful and useful programme. Whatever it is named in the post-2020 period, it does not matter anymore; what matters is the set of actions and funding programmes that it provides and the opportunity for growth and development of the people involved in education. Education is the future of Europe and the future for the world, so any systematic support like what ERASMUS+ provides can only bring good to the societies of the world.

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