



POSITION FOR MID-TERM EVALUATION OF ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

ABOUT THE EUROTCH UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE

The EuroTech Universities Alliance is a strategic partnership of leading European Universities of Science & Technology committed to excellence in research and developing solutions to the grand challenges of society. The members are **Technical University of Denmark (DTU)**, **École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)**, **Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)** and **Technical University of Munich (TUM)**.

Through the EuroTech Universities Alliance, we combine our complementary strengths in education and research and connect our innovation eco-systems across borders, contributing to Europe's leadership in technology. We **seek to inspire society about the opportunities offered by science and technology** – raising awareness among policy makers, industry and the next generation of students.

Facts & Figures

| | Our contribution to the European Higher Education Area |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Masters and bachelors students (2016) | >63,450 |
| Doctoral researchers (2016) | >14,780 |
| Start-ups and spin-offs (2013-2016) | 633 |
| ERASMUS+ grants (2014-2017) | 12,78M EUR |

What the ERASMUS+ programme brings to us

Through our Alliance, we promote in-depth collaboration between our four universities at all levels of education (from bachelor to postdoctoral level) and between our administrative staff. Over the past 30 years, the ERASMUS+ Programme has facilitated a substantial increase in student and staff mobility in Europe and beyond. Through promoting individual mobility for students, young researchers and staff across all sectors and through fostering exchange across borders, the ERASMUS+ programme has supported the EuroTech Universities in educating open-minded, responsible and engaged citizens. At the same time, we welcome the evolution of the programme from a student mobility scheme to an integrated programme promoting collaboration in education, training, youth and sport. This provides incentives to further professionalize internationalization across all sectors. As technical universities with a successful track record in internationalization, we especially welcome the introduction of Key Action 2 initiatives to further promote in-depth collaboration in areas of high priority to developing the European Higher Education Area, notably through instruments such as Strategic Partnerships.

OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: EUROPEAN VENTURE PROGRAMME

Our European Venture Programme (EVP) was initially launched in 2014 as a two-year Strategic Partnership supported by ERASMUS+ funding. Each year, it offers 20 of our entrepreneurial students exclusive access to the entrepreneurship expertise and networking resources available across the four EuroTech Universities. The intensive 12-day programme takes entrepreneurial students on a journey to the four different innovation eco-systems, where a mix of thematic workshops, company visits and public pitching competitions will enable the start-ups to scale up and embrace international markets. The EVP has contributed to the positive development of several of the start-ups involved in the programme, including BitSensor which subsequently raised €400.000 in investments from a venture fund to further develop its security technology. Since the Strategic Partnership ended in 2016 this activity has been integrated within the core activities of the EuroTech Universities Alliance.

The future ERASMUS+ Programme should develop its full potential as a driver for innovation

In a world where demand for high skills and creativity is growing, universities play an ever more crucial role in society. We believe that the powerful relationship between excellent scientific research and education at universities leads to disruptive innovation in their regional ecosystems thanks to the transfer of scientific knowledge to the next generation of researchers, entrepreneurs and skilled employees for the benefit of industry and society. In this regard, we welcome the European Commission's Agenda for the Modernization of Higher Education. We emphasize the need to prioritize the promotion of excellence in skills development and the role of higher education institutions in contributing to regional innovation. It is vital that the future ERASMUS+ programme focuses more investment on these priorities through the development of strong, strategic instruments for collaboration between Europe's universities. Furthermore, better synergies with the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and the European Structural and Investment Funds should be promoted further to tap into the full potential of the knowledge triangle actors in driving innovation.

Our Key Messages

This position paper is based on our experience with the ERASMUS+ programme. In summary, we would like to promote the following:

1. Keep the primary focus of the programme on individual mobility to strengthen its vital contribution to promoting an open society
2. Develop the full potential of the programme as a driver for innovation and modernization of Higher Education through strong, strategic instruments for cooperation by:
 - a. Raising Higher Education participation rates through fair and transparent processes for cooperation projects, particularly in decentralized actions
 - b. Fostering the testing and dissemination of innovative practices through smaller actions with lower funding thresholds which universities can use as test beds
 - c. Increasing the impact of the international dimension of the programme
3. Promote more efficient and lean project implementation



1. Keep the primary focus of the programme on individual mobility to strengthen its vital contribution to promoting an open society

The major success story of ERASMUS+ is in supporting individual mobility over the past 30 years. The increase in mobility numbers and wide geographical reach has been successful in inspiring an entire “ERASMUS generation”. We believe that the future ERASMUS+ programme should build on these achievements by maintaining focus on individual mobility, making it accessible to a broad range of target groups. Furthermore, hurdles should be lowered to encourage wider participation, across all sectors. Implementation guidelines and instruments, such as the learning agreement, should be re-evaluated with this goal in mind. This would enable more flexible administration for beneficiaries. With a view to addressing the ever-growing demand for high-level skills, we welcome that the ERASMUS+ programme has introduced the opportunity for students to both study and work abroad.

2. Develop the full potential of the programme as a driver for innovation and modernization of Higher Education through strong, strategic instruments for cooperation

We welcome the introduction of initiatives under the ERASMUS+ programme to support collaboration among Higher Education stakeholders in Europe and beyond, in order to address EU priorities to modernize and internationalize universities. In order to develop the full potential of the programme as a driver for innovation, the cooperation instruments should be expanded in terms of funding, scope and type. We welcome the greater flexibility introduced in the ERASMUS+ programme to develop bottom-up collaborative initiatives. However, administrative burden and rigidity in the application, implementation and reporting still hinders innovation in project design and represents the biggest hurdle for the Higher Education sector to make use of these instruments. The future ERASMUS+ programme should seek to simplify and introduce a more flexible approach that focuses more on results than on implementation.

We experience that funding for Strategic Partnerships and Capacity building projects is too low in relation to the efforts required for project management and reporting. We therefore advocate that the future ERASMUS+ programme greatly simplifies its reporting requirements. This will not only lead to cost-efficiency, but also more focus on the results of the project.

To develop the full potential of Erasmus+ as a driver for innovation and modernization, the next programme generation should, in particular:

A. RAISE HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION RATES THROUGH FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR COOPERATION PROJECTS, PARTICULARLY IN DECENTRALIZED ACTIONS

We perceive high variation in standards and requirements for cooperation projects. This is especially the case in decentralized actions, where different standards are applied across different member states. Further, different budget sizes in the different participating countries lead to lack of transparency with regards the funding thresholds and evaluations in decentralized actions. We fear this lack of transparency leads to discouraging potential applications and therefore reducing the overall potential impact of the programme.

We note that the Higher Education sector absorbs almost half of the overall budget for cooperation projects. However, actions such as Erasmus Mundus, Capacity Building and Knowledge Alliances require high levels of co-financing, which hinders the wider participation of universities. We regret the low success rates in Strategic Partnerships, and advocate that more funding is allocated to this instrument in the future, in order to drive “Europe’s Modernization Agenda”.



B. FOSTER THE TESTING AND DISSEMINATION OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES THROUGH SMALLER ACTIONS WITH LOWER FUNDING THRESHOLDS WHICH UNIVERSITIES CAN USE AS TEST BEDS

Based on our experience with in-depth collaboration through our Alliance, we believe that best practice exchange among Higher Education and other stakeholders is a catalyst for institutional innovation. In addition to the projects in Key Action 2, we encourage the introduction of smaller actions with lower funding thresholds that give universities the opportunity to quickly develop and test innovative practices in various, flexible formats.

Formats such as the Intensive Programme, which was a decentralized action under the Lifelong Learning Programme, supported the development of short-term study programs in cooperation with international partners. It was a testbed for course modules which in the long run could be developed into joint programmes, thus contributing to the development of the European Higher Education Area. We advocate that Intensive Programmes are reintroduced in the future ERASMUS+ programme.

C. INCREASE THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE PROGRAMME

Universities today compete for talent globally. Innovation in Higher Education requires better access to exchange of best practice beyond the ERASMUS+ programme countries. We experience that bureaucratic requirements for cooperation projects discourage the participation of partner countries. To develop the full potential of the international dimension, the programme should thus facilitate targeted cooperation with partners outside the EU. In particular, we believe that Strategic Partnerships and Knowledge Alliances would benefit greatly from opening up strict restrictions on involvement of universities from non-partner countries, in order to learn from best practices from around the world.

We welcome the introduction of bilateral mobility projects with partner countries as an improvement of the previous mobility consortia in Erasmus Mundus Actions. However, limited resources and short project durations limit the impact of the international dimension in credit mobility. Sustainable relations with strategic partners in specific regions of the world need longer implementation periods (at least 36 months) and substantial funding to make an impact. This should be carried out in a transparent way, with higher levels of funding allocated for popular target countries.

3. Promote more efficient and leaner project implementation

We welcome the simplification efforts of the ERASMUS+ programme with regards to the implementation for Higher Education Institutions. We welcome further attempts to streamline and simplify the processes from application to implementation to reporting. We therefore advocate that the future ERASMUS+ programme continues to promote leaner processes with less administrative burden (e.g. with projects such as ERASMUS+ without paper).