

# Adapting Erasmus+ to support Ukrainian students and staff

Universities and students propose concrete measures to ensure support to Ukrainian students and University staff through the Erasmus+ programme

## A joint call by the Erasmus Student Network, European Students' Union, European University Foundation and the Coimbra Group of Universities

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we have seen a historic mobilisation across European society to support the Ukrainian population. The response from the Higher Education sector has also been exemplary, developing all kinds of useful measures to support Ukrainian students and scholars and staff fleeing the war. The [European University Foundation](#), the [Coimbra Group](#) and the [European Students' Union](#) have gathered many of these support initiatives on dedicated web pages. At the EU level, Commissioner Gabriel has already announced [extraordinary measures](#) to support pupils and teachers, and she previously expressed the Commission's commitment to providing maximum support and flexibility in a previous [statement on the 3rd of March](#). On the 23rd of March, the [European Commission](#) reaffirmed its commitment to grant maximum flexibility and support through Erasmus+, as part of a broader package of measures. **This document gathers specific proposals on what that flexibility should entail in order to ensure effective support for students and staff.**

The Erasmus+ programme is currently proving as a useful tool to support Ukrainian students and University faculty and staff, but more can be done. There is significant funding available that could be used if certain extraordinary changes are made. The [measures](#) taken during the COVID 19 pandemic proved how the programme can be adapted to support the higher education community in times of need. It is now time to put in place extraordinary measures to offer help to students, faculty and staff affected by the war. We welcome the Commission's proposal that Erasmus National Agencies apply the "force majeure" clauses and hope to see them activated.

Keeping in mind the complexity of the situation, any proposed measures should consider the brain-drain risk. As the emergency response is needed now, it is equally important to plan accordingly for University community members from Ukraine to enable them to smoothly transit back to their alma maters if and when circumstances allow. Young people and a robust academic community are critical for rebuilding countries after the war.

Tens of Thousands of Ukrainian students and academics have fled the country in the last few weeks. Their education and academic careers have been stopped and many of them find themselves with little financial resources stranded around Europe. Many others might be planning to leave the country soon. The concrete measures that Higher Education Institutions can provide should be complemented by financial support at the national and European levels.

At the moment, **one of the best ways to support the Ukrainian higher education community is through international credit mobilities**, also known as KA107. Ukrainian Universities already have strong links with many Universities of Erasmus+ programme countries. International Credit Mobility scholarships offer substantial financial support that can cover all the basic needs of Ukrainian students and faculty while allowing them to continue with their studies and academic careers.

More European support is needed to help the Ukrainian higher education community affected by the war. **Therefore, we ask the European Commission to consider all the possible ways in which the Erasmus+ programme can be used to support them, starting with the ones laid out in this document.** This document includes measures that can be implemented in the coming weeks and months, making a remarkable impact on the situation of thousands of students and academics complementing national measures.

The Erasmus+ programme can channel funding to Ukrainian students to grant them Erasmus scholarships using external policy funds from heading 6 of the Erasmus+ budget that comes from the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe](#). These changes could apply to the current funding calls of the 2019 and 2020 calls, that are still running and where there is still funding available, but also the 2022 call that closed in February.

Providing EU financial support to the Ukrainian Universities community is a matter of European solidarity. At the moment, neighbouring countries are shouldering most of the humanitarian responsibility towards fleeing Ukrainians. Since solidarity with Ukraine must be a European issue, there is a need to provide tools to all member states so the pressure on these countries is alleviated.

International Credit Mobility with countries non associated with the programme, such as Ukraine, is funded with external policy funds coming from the NDCI instrument. **The necessary adjustments should be made so available funding can be fully used to support Ukrainian students, faculty and staff**, even if it was originally planned for different regions.

## **Maximum flexibility with remaining funds from the 2019 and 2020 KA107 calls**

Universities can still spend the remaining funds from the 2019 KA107 call, but only until the end of July 2022. At the moment, due to the pandemic situation, many Universities still have not been able to use those funds for international credit mobility in some of the different priority countries. The Commission should provide maximum flexibility to Higher Education Institutions to allocate all that unused funding to support Ukrainian students and academics arriving in Erasmus+ programme countries, regardless of whether they were initially allocated for mobilities with Ukraine.

Similar flexibility should be applied to funds from the 2020 call. There, Universities have more room for manoeuvre as the funds can still be spent the next academic year. They should be able to direct those funds to Ukrainian higher education community members. A particular example could be the funds secured for the mobility with HEIs in Ukraine for this semester and the next academic year. In the case that the mobility is not fulfilled due to the war, the flexibility for relocating these funds would be beneficial to support Ukrainian students, faculty and staff arriving in Erasmus+ programme countries.

UK Universities are still implementing Erasmus mobilities until 2023, despite the fact that the UK has withdrawn from Erasmus+. Thus, these measures can be also applied at UK Universities until then.

## **Fast track Nomination processes to allow for an immediate start of new mobilities**

Swift action is needed to ensure that available International credit mobility funds are not left to waste. Maximum flexibility should be given to nominating students and faculty as Erasmus+ grantees as they arrive at their hosting cities, or even before if they communicate that they are planning to arrive - for instance, for family relocation reasons. This can be an effective way to grant them immediate financial support with funding that is already available.

At the moment, Universities are working around the clock to find ways to address these situations, but clear guidance and flexibility from the Commission will give clarity and make sure that available support reaches as many students as possible.

The nomination process can be done in a simple way using the available IT tools. Even if Universities do not have inter-institutional agreements with their Ukrainian counterparts, an exception can be made considering the nature of the circumstances, including some flexibility for signing the mandatory mobility documents. This would allow students and faculty to officially start their mobilities as fast as possible, using funds that are already available in many Universities.

## **Work programme amendment - Expanded fund for Ukrainian students in the 2022 KA107 call**

On the 9th of March, the Commission published the amended text of the Erasmus+ 2022 Work programme. A further amendment can be done swiftly to boost available funding for Ukrainian higher education community members coming to Erasmus+ countries. Along the same line, Member States could ask for a transfer of resources from other funding programmes. Mobilities funded under the 2022 call can start to be used from September 2022 onwards, when it is foreseeable that there will be a considerable number of Ukrainian students and academics in Erasmus+ programme countries.

## **A specific funding call to support students who were completing their degrees in Ukraine when the war started and faculty from Ukrainian universities**

Besides the use of International Credit Mobilities, the creation of a new, temporary, and specific funding line to support Ukrainian students who have fled the conflict should be considered. This specific funding should also be available to international students who were completing their studies in Ukraine. Universities could apply for funding to cover the University fees of the students (if those have not been lifted), and to provide them with a scholarship for the rest of their expenses. Besides this, it should also cover language support to learn the local language and the language of instruction.

Students would be enrolled as full-time students in the hosting Universities, making the procedure easier. A fast track and flexible procedure should be planned to allow for recognition of their current level of studies, allowing them to resume their degrees in the smoothest possible way.

This specific funding line would essentially provide support in the likely event that the current circumstances in Ukraine will not allow for a return of students to Ukraine. We, therefore, recommend asking applicant institutions to outline how they will contribute to preventing a long-term brain drain from Ukraine and use these funds to train future graduates who will be encouraged to return to Ukraine and rebuild the country's infrastructure and society. Hence, the objective would be to both support Ukrainian students to pursue their studies and prepare them to contribute to rebuilding their country.

Specific funding should also address the scholarships to cover the salaries or/and living allowance as well as additional adaptation and reskilling needs for faculty members who worked at the Ukrainian HEIs when the war began and fled the country. Similar to the students' case, a complex approach should be applied, including coverage of language courses when needed and training and conference/research materials allowance.

### **Reinforced access to Erasmus+ opportunities for Ukrainians**

The Ukrainian people have expressed their willingness to become a member of the EU, and EU solidarity is more needed than ever. As a sign of EU commitment to Ukraine's youth, the Commission should start the process to bring the country to the Erasmus+ programme in the near future, and in the meantime, the allocated funds should be boosted. These measures can be considered as a "starting package" that can help students and academics to adapt and grow in a new University environment and become more independent.

This should come with specific support measures that can be included in subsequent work programmes, ensuring that Ukrainian students and faculty receive quality scholarships that can support them in times of need. Strengthened participation in Erasmus+ could provide a framework to ease the relocation of students across Europe, an important point considering the pressure in neighbouring countries. Funding could come directly from the EU budget, as opposed to the association of other third countries in the programme where national contributions of third countries are determined in the negotiations.

Additionally, the scholarship spots for students should be complemented by the traineeship opportunities within the Erasmus+ financial support and/or database of student and campus jobs. These should be considered both - a scheme for complementing the number of available scholarships and an opportunity to continue financing after the scholarship is completed. This way the overall number of opportunities available to Ukrainians can be increased using several tools.

## Access to language learning opportunities through OLS

Already during the 2015 refugee crisis, the EU made efforts to make the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support available to refugees. We recommend building upon this experience and providing Ukrainian students access to online language courses. Higher Education Institutions located in neighbouring countries are confronted with high demand for language courses. We ought to set the path to contribute to this need and at the same time accompany the redistribution of the flow of refugees towards other countries by anticipating the language course requirements in these countries.



The call is supported by the following organisations:

[Erasmus Student Network](#)

[European Students' Union](#)

[European University Foundation](#)

[Coimbra Group of Universities](#)