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Erasmus: Record numbers of students receive EU funding to study or train abroad

More students than ever went abroad for studies and company placements with EU support through the Erasmus programme in 2008/09. According to new figures released today, almost 200 000 higher education students received grants to study or train abroad. This represents an overall increase of 8.7% on the previous academic year and means that more than two million young Europeans have benefited from Erasmus funding since the programme's launch in 1987. The biggest increase is in the number of students going on company placements – up more than 50% on the previous year. In addition, last year more than 36 000 staff from higher education institutions went abroad to teach or receive training in one of the 31 European countries participating in the Erasmus scheme.

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: "More and more young Europeans are benefitting from a learning experience abroad during their studies. Ask those who have joined the 'Erasmus generation' and they will tell you how it has helped them in their academic and personal development, as well as in finding a job after their studies. With the upcoming 'Youth on the Move' initiative we want to expand this European success story and make it an opportunity for all young people."

In the academic year 2008/09, a total of **198 600 students** went to one of the 31 countries participating in the Erasmus programme (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey).

The record numbers of students benefiting from the Erasmus scheme reflects a 12% increase in the budget available in 2008/09 for Erasmus studies, placements and other mobility actions. This also led to an increase in the average monthly grant - up from € 255 to € 272 - that Erasmus students received from the EU in 2008/2009. Only two countries, Iceland and Liechtenstein, sent fewer Erasmus students abroad than previously.

Lower budget increases in the next few years mean that it will be difficult for the programme to expand at similar rates in the near future without additional resources.

Erasmus studies

168 200 students received Erasmus support to go abroad for studies and spent an average of six months in the host country, which is an increase of 3.4% compared to numbers in the previous year. In two countries (Germany and Poland), the number of students choosing this option did not increase and eight countries recorded a decrease (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom). Factors behind this decrease are believed to include a shift to placements, competition from non-European destination countries, the start of the economic crisis and low grants.

Erasmus company placements

Since 2007, Erasmus has offered students the opportunity to go abroad for placements in businesses or other organisations. This saw an increase of more than 50% on the previous year, to 30 400 students in 2008/09. A desire by students to increase their job prospects through practical work - as shown by a Eurobarometer survey in 2009 - is seen as a main reason behind the increasing popularity of Erasmus company placements.

Highest number of Erasmus students

The countries sending the highest numbers of Erasmus students were France (28 300 students), Germany (27 900) and Spain (27 400). As a share of their student population the top performers were Luxembourg (15.5%), Liechtenstein (3%), Austria (1.9%) and the Czech Republic (1.7%).

The most popular destinations for Erasmus students were Spain (33 200 students), followed by France (24 600) and Germany (22 000).

Staff mobility

During the academic year 2008/2009, Erasmus supported more than 36 000 exchanges of staff from higher education institutions (up 13.6%). In 28 600 cases teachers received grants to teach abroad and in 7 700 cases staff spent time in another country for training in businesses or partner institutions.

Background

Currently, an estimated 4% of European students receive an Erasmus grant at some stage during their studies. Erasmus not only caters for students and university staff, but also supports higher education institutions in working together through networks, multilateral projects and other measures. There is also an increased focus on reaching out to the world of business and society.

With the addition of Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Erasmus programme in 2009, the number of participating countries has risen to 33.

According to independent studies, the Erasmus programme has had a substantial impact on many levels: the participants acquire skills that increase their future employability or, in the case of staff, their career prospects. Higher education institutions internationalise their campuses, introduce new teaching methods and services, build up management capacity, strengthen research activities and create links to business.

The Commission believes the Erasmus programme can contribute to the Union's 'Europe 2020' strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by equipping young people with the adaptable skills needed for a competitive, knowledge-based society.

More information:

Memo with more detailed statistical information including breakdowns of the latest figures by country: "Erasmus programme in 2008/-0: the figures explained" [MEMO/10/267](#), 21 June 2010.

European Commission: [The Erasmus programme](#)