



BRIEFING PAPER

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The Erasmus Programme

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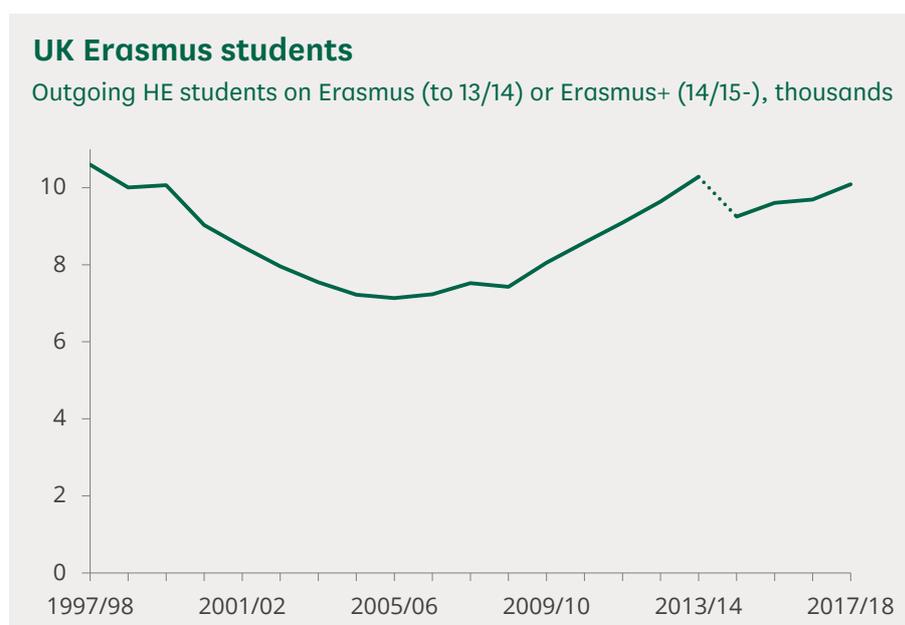
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Summary

The Erasmus+ scheme provides funding for education, training and sport, with a particular focus on youth work, but it also provides funding for activities aimed at all ages. The EU sees these programmes as a means of addressing socio-economic issues that Europe may face like unemployment and social cohesion.

The Erasmus Programme, known officially as 'Erasmus+', began its current incarnation in 2014. Erasmus+ continues a range of European Union (EU) funding streams that have existed since 2007, such as the Socrates Programme and the Lifelong Learning Programme.

10,133 students in higher education in the UK participated in the 2018 'call' (application period) for study placements abroad through the Erasmus+ scheme. Trends by academic year are shown below. A further **8,172** students participated through traineeships (work placements).



In 2017/18, the most popular host countries for UK students on study placements were **Spain** (2,220), **France** (2,049), **Germany** (1,302), **Netherlands** (812), and **Italy** (711).

The total value of all Erasmus+ projects funded in the UK has increased in each year from **€112million** in the 2014 'call' to **€145million** in 2018.¹

The UK was the 6th highest participating country in the programme in the 2018 'call'.

29,797 students came to the UK (all study and work placements) in the 2018 'call'.

Which countries take part in Erasmus+?

HE students on study placements, call 2018

1	Spain	34,276
2	Germany	33,282
3	Italy	30,876
4	France	30,505
5	Turkey	13,131
6	United Kingdom	9,993
7	Netherlands	9,852
8	Poland	9,729
9	Portugal	7,487
10	Belgium	6,269

¹ [Erasmus+ statistics](#)

4 The Erasmus Programme

In the UK the Department for Education oversees Erasmus+ and the programme is managed by the UK National Agency which is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

Information on the programme is available on the UK [Erasmus+](#) website.

The UK Government promised to underwrite funding that was due to continue after Brexit and any funding agreed will be honoured even if the placements take place after the end of the transition period.

The Erasmus+ programme is **run on seven yearly cycles and the current cycle will end in 2020.**

On 30 May 2018 the EU Commission [announced](#) that it is proposing to double funding for the Erasmus programme and for the next cycle starting in 2021 any country in the world will be able to participate if they meet set requirements.

Who sends Erasmus+ students to the UK?

HE students, Erasmus+ call 2018

1	France	7,155
2	Germany	4,866
3	Spain	4,480
4	Italy	3,330
5	Netherlands	2,356
6	Belgium	804
7	Denmark	646
8	Sweden	607
9	Finland	582
10	Czechia	555

Box 1: Short overview of the Erasmus programme

Erasmus was launched in **1987 with 11 members**, including the UK. Since then, the scheme has enabled more than four million students to study in another European country by funding their grants and waiving their tuition fees.

In 2014, the scheme became Erasmus+ and expanded to include apprentices, volunteers, staff and youth exchanges and jobseekers. The number of countries involved has tripled over the years. Today, **Erasmus has 34 full members**, including several non-EU nations such as Norway and Iceland. It also has more than **160 partner countries**.

On 24 December 2020 the Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the UK would not continue to participate in the Erasmus scheme after the end of the current programme and that the UK would develop a new replacement scheme – the Turing scheme. A DfE [press release](#) on 26 December gave details of the scheme. UK institutions will be asked to bid to join the Turing scheme in the new year.

This briefing focuses on the Erasmus+ programme from a higher education perspective.

1. History of the Erasmus Programme

The Erasmus programme began in 1987-88. The programme launched with the first exchange of just over **3,000 students** between **eleven Member States** (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom). An overview of the history and development of the Erasmus programme is available in a European Commission document, [Erasmus changing lives opening minds for 25 years](#), 2012:

The Erasmus programme has flourished throughout its development, evolving through different phases.

- Originally it was a stand-alone project for 11 Member States. In its first year 3,244 students went abroad, providing for many their first insight into different cultures and ways of life.
- During the 1990s, the programme became part of a much wider higher education programme called Socrates.
- In 2003, the Erasmus University Charter was introduced, underpinning the quality assurance of student and staff exchanges.
- From 2007 onwards Erasmus has been part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and new activities, such as students going abroad for a traineeship, have been added to the programme.

33 countries currently take part in the programme and almost all higher education institutions in Europe are involved.

The European Commission website states that the Erasmus+ Programme builds on 25 years of European programmes

Erasmus+ is the result of the integration of the following European programmes implemented by the Commission during the period 2007-2013:

- [The Lifelong Learning Programme](#)
- [The Youth in Action Programme](#)
- [The Erasmus Mundus Programme](#)
- [Tempus](#)
- [Alfa](#)
- [Edulink](#)

Programmes of cooperation with industrialised countries in the field of higher education²

The European Commission has compiled a guide to [Erasmus+ predecessor programmes](#), which goes into more detail.

² [Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2014-2020](#), European Commission, 20 January 2017, p.6.

6 The Erasmus Programme

The incorporation of other streams into Erasmus+, means that the programme now provides funding for education, training, youth and sport for individuals of all ages.

A timeline showing the expansion and development of the programme is given in the European Commission document, [*Erasmus changing lives opening minds for 25 years*](#), 2012 on pages 6-8.

An interview on the Erasmus+ website, [*Origins of the Erasmus programme – interview with Hywel Ceri Jones*](#), gives an insight into the political negotiations around the establishment of the programme.

2. Aims of the Erasmus Programme

The European Commission has ultimate authority over the Erasmus+ programme.

The Erasmus guide, [Learning together: An introduction to Erasmus+ for the UK](#), provides an overview of the programme's purpose:

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It runs for seven years, from 2014 to 2020, with organisations invited to apply for funding each year to undertake creative and worthwhile activities.

Erasmus+ aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe. It is open to education, training, youth and sport organisations across all sectors of lifelong learning including school education, further and higher education, adult education and the youth sector.³

A more detailed description can be found in the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2014-2020](#), on pages 5 to 10. The document states that the European Commission wants to use Erasmus+ to help tackle '**socio-economic issues**' that Europe will face in the future, including unemployment, developing 'cohesive and inclusive societies', youth participation in society and the problems associated with physical inactivity.⁴

"This investment in knowledge, skills and competences will benefit individuals, institutions, organisations and society as a whole by contributing to growth and ensuring equity, prosperity and social inclusion in Europe and beyond".

European Commission,
[Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#),
October 2017

³ Erasmus+ UK National Agency and the Department of Education, [Learning together: An introduction to Erasmus+ for the UK](#), December 2017

⁴ European Commission, [Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2014-2020](#), 20 January 2017

3. Structure and funding streams

Although Erasmus+ is funded via the EU, each country involved manages most of the funding decisions via a **National Agency**. In the UK the Erasmus+ programme is delivered by the UK National Agency, a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK. The National Agency reports to the Department for Education (DfE).⁵

The funding provided by Erasmus+ is organised into four categories known as Key Actions. The first three categories (**Mobility, Strategic Partnerships** and **Policy Development**) are decentralised and managed by the National Agency. The Education, Audio-Visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels retains control over the fourth category of funding which includes sport, the Jean Monnet higher education programme, and joint Master's Degrees

The total value of all Erasmus+ projects funded in the UK has increased in each year from **€112million** in the 2014 'call' to **€122million** in 2015, **€129million** in 2016 and **€145million** in the 2017 'call'.⁶

Funding for Mobility is perhaps the best known element of the Erasmus programme. In the 2017 'call' grants for mobility projects totalled **€104million**. It offers people the chance to go to another European country, either to work, volunteer, get vocational training, study, teach, or participate in a youth exchange:

Funding for Mobility

Erasmus+ provides funding for organisations to offer opportunities to young people and students, teachers and trainers, learners and providers, apprentices, volunteers, youth leaders and those working in grassroots sport. This activity is known as Mobility and is Key Action 1 of the programme.⁷

Information about the other categories of funding is given on pages 7-8 of [Learning together, December 2017](#):

Funding for Strategic Partnerships

The programme will also support organisations from across the fields of education, training, youth and sport to develop partnerships, share best practice and work collaboratively to help improve provision, boost growth and create jobs. This Strategic Partnership activity is **Key Action 2 of the programme**.

Funding for policy development

Under Key Action 3 of the programme, organisations can get involved in policy development, including bringing young people and decision-makers together to improve youth policy.

[...]

⁵ Erasmus+ UK National Agency and the Department of Education, [Learning together: An introduction to Erasmus+ for the UK](#), December 2017

⁶ [Erasmus+ statistics](#) (projects funded -data tables 18-09-2018)

⁷ Erasmus+ UK National Agency and the Department of Education [Learning together: An introduction to Erasmus+ for the UK](#), December 2017

Centralised funding

Some funding is centralised, which means it is managed directly by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels, an executive branch of the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture.

Centralised activities include Sport, the Jean Monnet higher education programme, and Joint Master's Degrees. The UK National Agency is not involved in promoting or managing centralised parts of the Erasmus+ programme, and so enquiries and applications must be made directly to EACEA.⁸

Educational institutions and youth groups as well as voluntary and sporting organisations can apply for funding. Any public or private organisation which is "active in the field of education, training, youth or sport" may also be eligible to apply.⁹ If awarded a grant, these organisations can make this money available to their respective members.

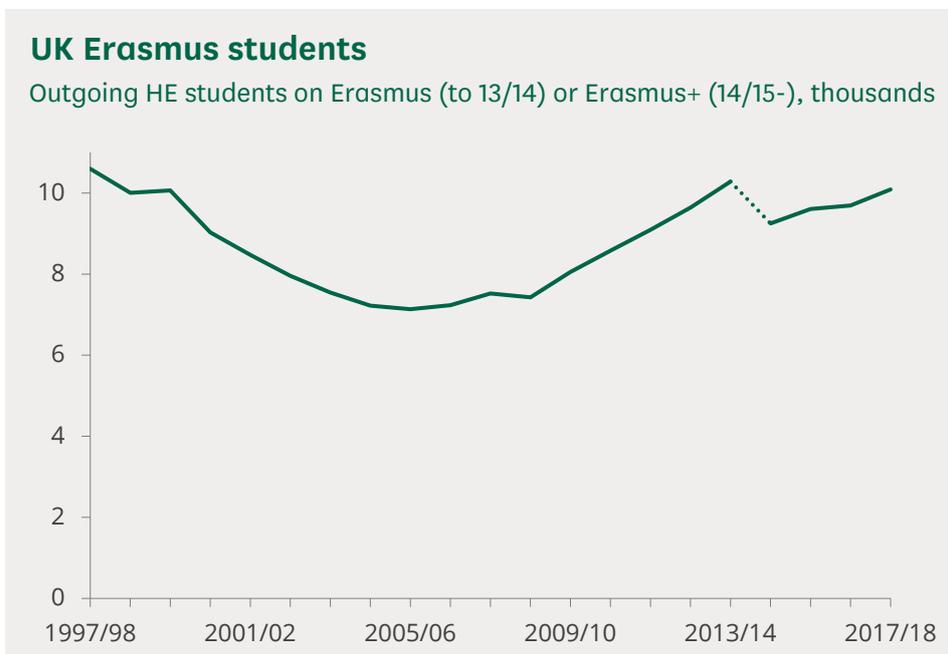
⁸ Erasmus+ UK National Agency and the Department of Education [Learning together: An introduction to Erasmus+ for the UK](#), December 2017

⁹ *Ibid* p9

4. UK higher education student participation in Erasmus+

10,133 students in higher education in the UK participated in the 2018 'call' (application period) for study placements abroad through Erasmus+. This was higher than the **9,720** for the 2017 'call'. A further 8,172 students participated in the 2018 call for work placements.¹⁰

The chart below gives trends in the actual uptake of Erasmus/Erasmus+ places by academic year. Numbers fell from above 10,000 in the late 1990s to almost 7,000 in the middle of the last decade. Since then this trend has been reversed. Erasmus+ numbers in 2014/15 were below the earlier figures for the previous scheme. This may, in part, reflect the introduction of the new scheme.



Source: [Erasmus+ statistics](#) (2014-18 Higher education mobility statistics)

In 2017/18 73% of UK students on Erasmus+ were from England, 20% from Scotland, 5% from Wales and 3% from Northern Ireland. UK students from across 138 different institutions participated in 2017/18. The highest number were from the **University of Edinburgh** (405) and **University College London** (339).¹¹ Data from 2007 onwards on the number UK Erasmus+ students by institution and home (UK) country can be found at: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/statistics>

¹⁰ [Erasmus+ annual report 2019 – statistical annex](#), EC (annex 15)

¹¹ [Erasmus+ statistics](#) (2014-18 Higher education mobility statistics)

A report by Universities UK, [Gone International: Expanding Opportunities, Report on the 2015-16 graduating cohort](#) showed that **more than half of student mobilities in 2014-15 were facilitated through the Erasmus+ programme.**¹²

“The UK remains reliant on this scheme to deliver mobility for students”.

Universities UK,
[Gone International](#),
May 2018 p5

4.1 Destination of UK students

In 2017/18 the most popular host countries for study placements were **Spain** (2,220), **France** (2,049), **Germany** (1,302), **Netherlands** (812), and **Italy** (711). The same countries made up the four most popular destinations in 2007/08. Overall UK Erasmus+ students went to **59 different host countries** in 2017/18 including 25 which were outside Europe.¹³

Data on total study and work placements taken up by UK higher education students in ‘call’ 2018 had the same top five destinations with 4,301 going to Spain, 4,235 to France, 2,451 to Germany, 1,338 to Italy and 1,266 to the Netherlands.¹⁴

4.2 Participation by disadvantaged students

So far the only data on participation by disadvantaged groups of students is up to 2013/14. This can be found at: [Statistics and results for Erasmus](#). When compared to the general student population 2013/14 Erasmus participants from the UK were:

- More likely to be white
- Around half as likely to be Black and around one-third as likely to be Asian
- Slightly less likely to have a physical or mental disability
- More likely to be from ‘higher’ socio-economic backgrounds

4.3 Funding received by UK students in Erasmus support grants

Erasmus grants awarded to individual higher education institutions in 2013-14 are given in a document [Erasmus Mobility final grants by UK institution 2013/14](#). These grant figures include all funding received, including that for student mobility, staff mobility and the organisation of mobility.

The 2019 Erasmus+ ‘call’ resulted in 157 successful projects or bids for higher education from the UK. This includes student and staff placements. Total grant funding for these was **€75.0 million**. The majority was grant funding for students which totalled €62.5 million or around **€3,100 per student.**¹⁵

¹² Universities UK, [Gone International: Expanding Opportunities, Report on the 2015-16 graduating cohort](#), 10 May 2018, p5

¹³ [Erasmus+ statistics](#) (Higher education mobility statistics)

¹⁴ [Erasmus+ annual report 2019 –statistical annex](#), EC (annex 18)

¹⁵ [Erasmus+ annual report 2019 –statistical annex](#), Annex 17 KA103 Higher Education student and staff mobility projects only.

5. Participation compared to other EU countries

Data from the Erasmus+ call 2018 showed that the UK was the **6th highest participating country** in the programme. The data covers study placements taken up by higher education students. The UK had less than one third of the number of student on Erasmus+ than the highest ranked countries.¹⁶

29,797 students came to the UK through the 2018 'call' including study and work placements. This was 64% more than UK participants in the scheme.¹⁷

France sent the most students to the UK in 2018 with **7,155**, followed by Germany, Spain and Italy.

Which countries take part in Erasmus+?

HE students on study placements, call 2018

1	Spain	34,276
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¹⁶ [Erasmus+ annual report 2019 –statistical annex](#), EC (annex 15)

¹⁷ *ibid.* Annex 18

6. Erasmus+ post Brexit

It is possible that the UK will be able to participate in Erasmus+ in some way even if it leaves the EU - numerous non-EU countries are currently involved in the programme in some way.

Programme Countries are eligible for **all the benefits** of the Erasmus+ programme. Currently, this category contains all full member states of the EU and Norway, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Partner Countries are eligible for **some parts** of Erasmus+ subject to specific criteria or conditions being met. Applicant countries also have to be in line with the overall EU values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. This category includes non-EU states on the European continent, such as Albania, and many other countries across the world including Australia, Japan, India, China, Brazil and Nigeria. There are currently 160 partner countries.

The criteria for country participation in Erasmus+, are set out in [Regulation \(EU\) 1288/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.](#)

Art. 24 sets out who can participate in Erasmus+ as programme countries and partner countries. The criteria are set out as follows:

1. The Programme shall be open to the participation of the following countries (the 'Programme countries'):
 - (a) the Member States;
 - (b) the acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates benefiting from a pre-accession strategy, in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in Union programmes established in the respective framework agreements, Association Council decisions or similar agreements;
 - (c) those EFTA [European Free Trade Area] countries that are party to the EEA [European Economic Area] Agreement, in accordance with the provisions of that agreement;
 - (d) the Swiss Confederation, on the basis of a bilateral agreement to be concluded with that country;
 - (e) those countries covered by the European neighbourhood policy which have concluded agreements with the Union providing for the possibility of their participation in the Union's programmes, subject to the conclusion of a bilateral agreement with the Union on the conditions of their participation in the Programme.
2. The Programme countries shall be subject to all the obligations, and shall fulfil all the tasks set out in this Regulation in relation to Member States.
3. The Programme shall support cooperation with partner countries, in particular neighbourhood countries, in actions and activities as referred to in Articles 6, 10 and 12.

Information on the countries involved can be found on pages 21-22 of the [Programme Guide 2014-2020](#). In later chapters, the descriptions of available funding streams explain exactly which groups of countries are eligible for particular support: these groups have different agreements with the EU.

Box 2: The Swiss situation

In 2014 a referendum in Switzerland voted in favour of limits to immigration. As a result negotiations for their full entry into Erasmus+ were suspended. As an [interim](#) measure the Swiss government paid for its own version of Erasmus+, the cost is estimated as [\\$115 million](#) to cover the 2018-2020 period. It has been suggested that there are specific challenges to creating a bespoke mobility model, such as negotiating complex bilateral agreements in order to maintain European programmes, and being excluded from the development of the EU Programme for Education.

6.1 Erasmus+ participation during the transition period

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. Under the [Withdrawal Agreement](#) there is a post-Brexit transition (or implementation) period starting from the date of Brexit and ending on 31 December 2020. During the transition period the details of the UK's future relationship with the EU will be negotiated.

During the transition period arrangements between the UK and the EU will continue as planned, this includes participation in Erasmus+. Funding for programmes in 2019/20 and the funding round for Erasmus+ programmes that closed in February 2020 will continue. Any funding agreed will be honoured even if the placements take place after the end of the transition period.¹⁸

Universities UK's guidance states that: "staff and students can complete mobility periods and receive funding up until the end of the 2021-22 academic year."

After the transition period

The [Political Declaration](#) which set out the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK made reference to participation in EU programmes, in paragraph 11:

Noting the intended breadth and depth of the future relationship and the close bond between their citizens, the Parties will establish general principles, terms and conditions for the United Kingdom's participation in Union programmes, subject to the conditions set out in the corresponding Union instruments, in areas such as science and innovation, youth, culture and education, overseas development and external action, defence capabilities, civil protection and space. These should include a fair and appropriate financial contribution, provisions allowing for sound financial management by both Parties, fair treatment of

¹⁸ [PO 108312](#) [Erasmus+ Programme] 25 October 2017

participants, and management and consultation appropriate to the nature of the cooperation between the Parties.¹⁹

6.2 The UK to leave the Erasmus+ programme

On 24 December 2020 the Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the UK **would not continue to participate** in the Erasmus programme and that the **UK would develop a new replacement scheme – the Turing scheme**:

leaving Erasmus had been a "tough decision" but that under the new scheme, students would "have the opportunity... not just to go to European universities, but to go to the best universities in the world".

The EU's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said he regretted the decision.²⁰

In a House of Lords [debate](#) on the Turing Scheme on 5 January 2021. – Lord Parkinson suggested that the main reason for leaving the scheme was the future cost of participation:

We would have been paying in nearly £2 billion more than we got back, and we did not think that would represent value for money.²¹

Students at universities in Northern Ireland will continue to participate in Erasmus, as part of an arrangement with the Irish government.

¹⁹ HM Government, [Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom](#), 19 October 2019 p4-5

²⁰ "[Erasmus: What could happen to the scheme after Brexit?](#)" *BBC News*, 25 December 2020

²¹ HL Deb, [Education: Turing Scheme](#), 5 January c14

7. Parliamentary debate on participation in Erasmus+

A debate the Future of the Erasmus+ Scheme after 2020 took place in the House of Commons on Thursday 21st June 2018.

On 8 January 2020 Layla Moran moved [new clause 10](#)²² to the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill which would have compelled the Government to negotiate continuing full membership of Erasmus+ after the transition period. James Duddridge responded for the Government saying that **the Government valued international exchanges and that they would look for available opportunities**:

The Government secured agreement to participate in all elements of the Erasmus+ programme during the implementation period, and that will be done in the future relationship. We made it clear that we are open to maintaining and expanding co-operation in education. We strongly believe, as she does, in the value of international exchange, not just European exchange, and it is very much part of our vision for global Britain to extend that concept, rather than simply looking at the narrow area of the United Kingdom. We believe that the UK and European countries should continue to give young people and students opportunities around the world in universities and elsewhere—through other elements of Erasmus and support—post-Brexit. The political declaration envisages the possibility of UK participation in EU programmes, and we will negotiate the general terms of participation, where appropriate, throughout the implementation period. Ultimately, decisions about our participation will be a matter for wider negotiations, but we will look at all the available opportunities.²³

The new clause was lost by 344 votes to 254. The result of the vote raised concern about the Government's commitment to membership of the Erasmus+ scheme post Brexit.²⁴

Following the debate a Department for Education spokesperson said that the Government was **committed to continuing an academic relationship with the EU**:

A Department for Education official told BBC News: "The government is committed to continuing the academic relationship between the UK and the EU, including through the next Erasmus programme if it is in our interests to do so. The vote last night does not change that.

"As we enter negotiations with the EU, we want to ensure that UK and European students can continue to benefit from each other's world-leading education systems."²⁵

The debate was discussed in a *BBC News* article, "[Erasmus: What could happen to scheme after Brexit?](#)" 9 January 2020.

²² [European Union \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Bill](#), 8 January 2020 c515

²³ [European Union \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Bill](#), 8 January 2020 c530

²⁴ "[Government 'committed' to Erasmus+ scheme despite commons vote outcome](#)", *FE Week*, 9 January 2020

²⁵ "[Erasmus: What could happen to scheme after Brexit?](#)", *BBC News*, 9 January 2020

On 14 January 2020 the Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson raised the issue of participation in Erasmus+ during a [debate on the Queen's speech](#) and said that the UK was "**open to participation in the next Erasmus+ programme**":

As we prepare to forge a new place on the international stage we want our young people to have the opportunity to study abroad through exchange programmes. The United Kingdom is open to participation in the next Erasmus+ programme, and this will be a question for future negotiations with the European Union. We do truly understand the value that such exchange programmes bring all students right across the United Kingdom, but to ensure that we are able to continue to offer that we will also develop our own alternative arrangements should they be needed.²⁶

7.1 Issues around continued participation in Erasmus+

Issues like **free movement and paying into EU programmes** will be significant in deciding the UK's participation in Erasmus+ and other EU programmes post Brexit. It is likely that the UK would have to contribute financially towards the programme should it want to retain ties to Erasmus+; and it might also be the case that the UK would need to make other concessions on the freedom of movement.

An Education Committee report, [Exiting the EU: challenges and opportunities for higher education](#), 19 April 2017²⁷ discussed the possibility of the UK becoming a partner country of the programme:

Another option instead of full membership is participation as a partner country, who can take part in some elements of Erasmus+ but not all. This was suggested by several universities, including Coventry University and the University of Liverpool. Others told us that partner countries have fewer places and less funding to offer, causing students and staff to face more mobility obstacles. Rosie Birchard, Director of External Relations for the UK Erasmus Student Network, criticised the idea of the UK being a partner country:

It is constraining. I have spoken to the version of me—education officer—in ESN countries that are partner members, and they have told us that this limits people's opportunities, so we need to pursue maintaining our programme membership at all costs.²⁸

It has been suggested that if the government decided that it wanted to participate in Erasmus after 2021, it **may not be able to negotiate that in time for the start of the cycle**, so there could be a period when such programmes are not available for UK participants.²⁹

²⁶ HC Deb [\[Education and Local Government\]](#) 14 January 2020 c912

²⁷ Education Committee, [Exiting the EU: challenges and opportunities for higher education](#), 19 April 2017 HC 683

²⁸ *ibid* p22

²⁹ "[Erasmus: What could happen to the scheme after Brexit?](#)" *BBC News*, 25 December 2020

8. A new UK mobility programme

The Education Committee report [Exiting the EU: challenges and opportunities for higher education](#), 19 April 2017 considered the possibility of creating a new alternative programme to Erasmus+:

We asked several witnesses whether Erasmus+ was replaceable if membership post-Brexit was unattainable. The response was mixed. Professor Alistair Fitt said that if we had to sacrifice something, Erasmus+ could be replaced with “Erasmus++” which could reach further around the world.¹²⁰ Others expressed concern about how long it would take to rebuild a well-established programme, including setting up bilateral relationships with individual countries and ensuring widening participation.¹²¹ Estimating the cost of replacing Erasmus+ is not simple. The UK receives around €71 million a year for outward mobility.¹²² When the Swiss government set up the Swiss-European Mobility Programme to replace the loss of Erasmus+ membership, it spent around €23 million to fund 6,000 outward placements and close to 5,000 inward placements.¹²³ A basic analysis is that UK higher education mobility is around four times bigger, so a UK equivalent might cost around €100 million a year. This would be higher if it were to target countries further afield.³⁰

Box 3: Recommendation of Education Committee on Erasmus+ membership

The Education Committee report, [Exiting the EU: challenges and opportunities for higher education](#) made the following recommendation on membership of Erasmus+:

Continued membership of Erasmus+ would be the best outcome for the UK and the Government should consider this as a priority programme in its negotiations with the EU. If this proves impossible, it is vital that the mobility of students and staff is not impeded. The Government should guarantee it will underwrite any Erasmus+ placements potentially under threat in 2019. A replacement mobility programme will need to be drawn up at an early stage so it is ready to begin for the 2019/20 academic year. This replacement could focus on a wider net of countries around the world as long as it safeguards support for disadvantaged groups. (p30 para 10)

8.1 Government announces the Turing scheme

On 24 December 2020 the Prime Minister announced a UK programme to replace the Erasmus scheme – the **Turing scheme**. A DfE press release on 26 December 2020, “[New Turing scheme to support thousands of students to study and work abroad](#)”, contains all the currently available information on the scheme.

According to the DfE press release the Turing scheme will provide funding for about **35,000 students to go on placements around the world from September 2021**. The scheme will cost **£100m in 2021-22** but funding for subsequent academic years will be set out in future

³⁰ Education Committee [Exiting the EU: challenges and opportunities for higher education](#), 25 April 2017 HC 683 p22 para 57

spending reviews.³¹ The DfE also said the new scheme will be targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Education Secretary Gavin Williamson made the following comment on the scheme:

We now have the chance to expand opportunities to study abroad and see more students from all backgrounds benefit from the experience.

We have designed a truly international scheme which is focused on our priorities, delivers real value for money and forms an important part of our promise to level up the United Kingdom.

These opportunities will benefit both our students and our employers, as well as strengthening our ties with partners across the world.

UK organisations will be invited to bid into the scheme in early 2021. Successful applications will receive funding for administering the scheme and students taking part will receive grants to help them with the costs of their international experience.³²

UK institutions will be asked to bid to join the Turing scheme in the new year 2021. Successful applicants **will receive funding for administering the scheme and students will receive grants to help cover the costs of studying abroad.**

Universities UK commented on the new scheme:

Vivienne Stern, Director, Universities UK International, said:

“While we are obviously disappointed that the UK will no longer be part of the Erasmus scheme, it is significant that the government has committed to a generously funded scheme despite current economic pressures.

“The new Turing scheme is a fantastic development and will provide global opportunities for up to 35,000 UK students to study and work abroad. It is a good investment in the future of students - not only those in universities but in schools and colleges who will also benefit

“A priority will be working with international counterparts on the funding of inbound students, who won’t be covered by the scheme. Inbound exchange students contributed £440 million to the UK economy in 2018 and there are real concerns about whether the UK will see a decrease outside of the Erasmus scheme.

“Take up of mobility opportunities by UK students is low by international standards, so we have a lot of work to do to ensure that students and universities make the most of the new scheme. Evidence shows that students who have international experience tend to do better academically and in employment, and the benefits are greatest for those who are least advantaged.”³³

³¹ [“UK to pay more than £100m a year to fund study abroad after Brexit”](#), *The Guardian*, 26 December 2020

³² DfE, [“New Turing scheme to support thousands of students to study and work abroad”](#), 26 December 2020

³³ Universities UK, [“UUK response on Turing Scheme for students to work and study abroad”](#), 26 December 2020

An article in the *Guardian* states that “the new scheme is **not expected to fund students coming to the UK**, as Erasmus does now, which suggests British universities will miss out on a source of income. A report earlier this year said [ending Erasmus membership](#) would cost the UK more than £200m a year”.³⁴

The **Scottish Government has expressed concern** about the impact of the new scheme in Scotland:

Universities minister Richard Lochhead said the UK's alternative Turing scheme was a “watered down” version that did not support visits to Scotland.

He said the UK government's decision was “simply unacceptable” and that the Scottish government had only found out about the Turing programme from media reports.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson previously announced that the UK would not continue to participate in Erasmus and would replace it with a cheaper scheme, named after the mathematician Alan Turing, which would include countries outside Europe.

According to the Scottish government, more than 2,000 students and staff from Scotland use the Erasmus Plus exchange programme each year.

It said Scotland proportionally sent more students and attracted more Erasmus participants from Europe than any other country in the UK.

The government estimates the scheme delivers at least £7 in value for every £1 it costs in public cash, and its value to the economy has been estimated to be worth nearly £340m annually since 2014.³⁵

The House of Lords held a [debate](#) on the Turing Scheme on 5 January 2021.

³⁴ “[UK students lose Erasmus membership in Brexit deal](#)”, 24 December 2020

³⁵ “[Brexit: Erasmus withdrawal 'huge blow' for Scotland](#)”, *BBCNews*, 28 December 2020

9. European Commission proposal 2021-27 cycle

On 30 May 2018 the EU Commission [announced](#)³⁶ that it was proposing to double funding for the Erasmus programme and for the next funding cycle starting in 2021 **any country in the world will be able to participate if they meet set requirements**. An [article](#) in the *Times Higher Education*³⁷ discussed the proposal:

The European Union's next student exchange programme is set to be opened to any country in the world, paving the way for UK universities and students to take part in Erasmus+ post-Brexit.

In its proposal for the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2021-27, published on 30 May, the European Commission said that countries outside the EU and the European Economic Area would be able to participate fully as long as they do not have a "decisional power" on the programme and agree to a "fair balance" of contributions and benefits.

Any agreement with "third countries" would include "the calculation of financial contributions to individual programmes and their administrative costs", it added.

Erasmus+ is currently fully open only to EU countries, plus some countries that are in the process of joining the bloc, and those in the European Free Trade Association. Nations neighbouring the EU may take part in some parts of the programme.

Thomas Jørgensen, senior policy coordinator at the European University Association, said that the new rules "allow the UK to join [Erasmus+] as a third country" after the country leaves the EU.

"It is no surprise as we know that the [chief EU negotiator Michel] Barnier team has association to EU programmes as a part of the plans for the Future Partnership [with the UK]. What is surprising is that Erasmus opens up for the rest of the world for association at the same time," he said.

[...]

The commission's proposal document also confirms plans to double the budget for Erasmus+ to €30 billion (£26 billion) and to allow about 12 million students to travel abroad in the period 2021-27, up from 4 million during the current programme, as announced earlier this month.

However even if it becomes easier for countries to participate in the scheme it has been suggested that the UK may not be ready to join in time for the start of the new cycle:

But even if the government decides it wants to participate in Erasmus after 2021, it may not be able to negotiate that in time for the start of the cycle, so there could be a period when such programmes are not available for UK participants.³⁸

³⁶ European Commission, [EU budget: Commission proposes to double funding for Erasmus programme](#), 30 May 2018

³⁷ ["Erasmus+ exchange programme set to open to all countries in 2021"](#), *Times Higher Education*, 31 May 2018

³⁸ ["Erasmus: What could happen to scheme after Brexit?"](#) *BBC News*, 9 January 2020

10. Further reading

To keep up to date with Brexit debate, including Erasmus+, the Library will continue to update its papers. The Library has published a number of papers that consider EU funding, EU programmes the UK is involved in, and the impact on the Education sector, including:

- [International and EU students in higher education in the UK FAQs](#) (see section 6.1 for the Erasmus+ programme)
- [The UK's contribution to the EU Budget](#) (the Erasmus+ programme is considered in chapters 1.2 and 3.2)
- [Brexit: UK Funding from the EU](#) (Erasmus+ is mentioned in chapter 4)

The European parliamentary Research Service has published a [guide to EU funding 2014-20](#), which considers the Erasmus+ scheme on pages 52-59.

Erasmus+ also updates a [Brexit update website](#) which aims to keep interested parties up to date with the latest implications of Brexit.

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