



Erasmus+ goes global

by Androulla Vassiliou*

Erasmus+ is the new European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It aims at boosting people's skills and employability and to support the modernisation of education and training in Europe and beyond. The programme has a budget of nearly €15 billion - 40% higher than earlier programmes – over the next seven years.

Thanks to Erasmus+, more than 4 million people across Europe will receive support in order to study, train, work or volunteer abroad, in a new culture, in a new language, with new friends. Erasmus+ grants will be offered to 2 million higher education students, 650 000 vocational students and apprentices, 800 000 school teachers, lecturers, trainers, education staff and youth workers, as well as more than 500 000 young people volunteering or going on youth exchanges.

Compared to its predecessors, Erasmus+ is **more global** and more integrated. In the past EU Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) wishing to co-operate with partners around the world had to choose between a vast and sometime confusing array of programmes. We had **ALFA** for cooperation with Latin America, **EduLink** for Africa, **TEMPUS** for neighbouring countries, **ERASMUS MUNDUS** for excellent joint degrees, bilateral programmes for the USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, and this diverse range of schemes had slightly different objectives depending on the region and slightly different rules and calendars depending on the programme. All of which made it difficult for HEIs to find their way through the maze. And the oldest and best known of all, the Erasmus programme, was restricted to mobility and cooperation inside Europe's borders.

From January 2014, all of this has changed. With Erasmus+ the European Union has streamlined the architecture of its international higher education programmes, merging all existing initiatives in a single programme. On the international front, **Key Action 1** of Erasmus+ is devoted to learning mobility of individuals and has two complementary strands. The first strand is "**credit mobility**", i.e. mobility to obtain credits abroad that are then recognised at the home institution, through an inter-institutional agreement. The innovation in Erasmus+ is that it will be open, for the first time since its creation in 1987, to cooperation with countries around the world. European HEIs will apply to their national agencies for funding to exchange students and staff with their partners around the world. Over and above the €14.7 Billion already agreed for Erasmus+ at the

end of 2013, around 600 million more will be made available to open up Erasmus "credit mobility" to the world until 2020. So, with Erasmus+ we have opened up the Erasmus type of mobility to countries around the world.

The second international strand within Key Action 1 is "degree mobility". Here, the very successful **Erasmus Mundus joint Masters courses** are being expanded under Erasmus+. In the last decade around 16,000 scholarships and fellowships were awarded to the best candidates from around the world. Erasmus+ will double that, funding 30,000 new scholarships to attend joint Master programmes. The aim is to keep the programme as international as possible and to use the lure of excellent courses to attract talent from around the world to Europe. The joint Masters consortia will remain largely European, but with the possibility to add excellent institutions from around the world to the partnership, just as they do currently. The only major change to the Erasmus Mundus joint degree programme is the move of the joint doctoral courses from Erasmus Mundus to the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie** programme where they will join a raft of innovative doctoral training actions with significant amounts of money available from Horizon 2020.

Key Action 2 in **Erasmus+** provides funding for cooperation projects between institutions, both between HEIs and with other organisations/enterprises. It opens up cooperation with a range of partners outside Europe, building on the success of programmes like Tempus and ALFA. The action will finance joint projects and promote exchange of knowledge between European HEIs and their counterparts in **Asia, Latin America, South Africa and ACP** (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific). These joint projects will fund curriculum development and modernisation, joint or double degrees, modern teaching and learning practices, upgrading of facilities and equipment, improving university governance and creating better links between higher education and the world of work. This action will also finance projects that aim to have an impact on national systems, by involving national authorities alongside HEIs. Such projects could for example address the introduction of Bologna reforms and the reform of governance structures and systems (qualification frameworks, quality assurance, accreditation, evaluation systems, etc.).

Credit mobility, joint degrees and capacity building actions are all aimed at encouraging European HEIs to develop their partnerships around the world, support partner countries in developing their capacities and attract the best and brightest to Europe. But it goes without saying that the other actions in Erasmus+ such as the **Strategic Partnerships** and the **Knowledge Alliances** in Key Action 2 do not exclude partners

from outside Europe. The difference is that these two actions have a strong focus on fostering cross-border cooperation and innovation in higher education within Europe. Consortia will be judged on their European added value so non-European partners will have to work hard to demonstrate that they bring concrete benefits to Europe within the projects.

The next **Erasmus+ call for proposals** will be launched in October and will offer for the first time the three international actions described above. Over the next seven years, **Erasmus+** will provide funding for more outgoing mobility as well as international partnerships for capacity building and staff development in the less developed parts of the world. There will be credit mobility opportunities for at least 135,000 students and staff to and from non-EU countries; joint degree scholarships for 30,000 Masters students and up to a 1000 capacity building projects around the world.

During the long negotiations of the new programme for Erasmus+ with the Member States and the European Parliament, I followed a key objective: to make Europe an attractive place to study and do research while giving our European students more opportunities to compete on the global stage. Erasmus+ is precisely about this. If you want to know more about Erasmus+, I am encouraging you to look at: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

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