



Erasmus and Brexit

The provision of cross-border educational exchanges is a key achievement of the European Union. Despite this, Erasmus and the Erasmus+ programme have not featured as big ticket items in the Brexit discussion. Michael Abiodun Olatokun considered five key international education questions in 2017. This is available as a podcast interview here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-918926390/erasmus-and-brexit-michael-olatokun>

Q: What was the Erasmus programme?

A: The Erasmus programme was a European Union (EU) initiative designed to increase interaction between higher education learners in different EU countries. It commenced in 1987 and finished in 2013. Erasmus is acknowledged as the first major multilateral residential cooperation between European universities. It typically sees a university student spend 3 months to a year undertaking a programme of study at the host institution which is equivalent to a credit-bearing period of their registered course at their home university

Q: What is the Erasmus+ programme?

A: Erasmus+ is the successor to the Erasmus and other Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes. Erasmus+ provides UK residents with opportunities to learn, work, study, train, volunteer or teach in other countries. You can read more about it here. It began in 2014 and is scheduled to run in its current form until 2020. It reaches beyond higher education and is open to students and teachers in a wide range of circumstances and occupations. These include trainees, undergraduates, apprentices, volunteers, schoolteachers and professors, as well as youth workers and others that work in 'non-traditional' education and training environments. The scope of Erasmus+ even extends to sports programmes.

Q: Who is responsible for the delivery of the programme?

A: Erasmus+ in the UK is run by the UK National Agency, a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

Q: Is Erasmus+ only available to residents of EU member states?

A: No. Besides residents of EU member states, Erasmus+ is also fully open to those in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Norway and Turkey. Other states (including several in Africa) are able to take part in programmes subject to fulfilment of specific criteria and conditions.

Q: Can organisations benefit from Erasmus+?

A: Organisations that offer training and education in the broadest sense can apply for funding to provide Erasmus+ opportunities. Individuals within those organisations (both paid employees and other forms of participants) can then apply for specific development opportunities.

Q: Where do most UK citizens participate in an Erasmus+ exchange?

A: Most British participants study, volunteer or train in Spain, with 5,885 Britons travelling in 2015.

Q: Which EU country is most likely to send Erasmus+ participants to the UK?

A: France is the most likely country of origin for a British Erasmus+ participant. 6,215 French residents travelled as part of the programme in 2015.

Q: How many UK residents have participated in the Erasmus or Erasmus+ programmes?

A: Around 600,000 in its thirty year history. Approximately half of these have been students in higher education.

A: The UK remains a member state of the EU and all of its obligations under EU law will continue to apply until the country ceases to be a member state. These continued obligations apply to projects funded through the Erasmus+ programme. At present, the response of relevant ministers has been to maintain the status quo in terms of current commitments and obligations. The Minister of State for Universities and Science has affirmed the government's commitment to fund EU students with public student loans until they finish their courses. This has been echoed by several universities. There has been a similar commitment to Erasmus+, where incoming and outgoing students will have their confirmed offers honoured. 3

Q: How do young people in the United Kingdom perceive the Erasmus+ Programme?

A: 74% of 18-24 year olds in a recent Populus poll suggested that intercultural exchanges that give young people an opportunity to learn new languages must be maintained. Asked amongst a number of questions that equate with the goals of Erasmus+, this is clearly a vote of confidence in the programme

Q: What has been the impact of the "Leave" result on the Erasmus+ programme?

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Q: What will be the likely impact of Brexit on the Erasmus+ programme in the future?

A: Much of the discussion during the 2016 referendum focused on an absolute binary comparison of Britain's position with and without all EU institutions. As outlined above, the Erasmus situation is more complex; a number of non-EU member states participate through direct payments by their governments and universities. It does not necessarily follow that Erasmus+ will be subsumed into the broader exit process, and could indeed be retained as a collaboration with EU institutions. Clarity will emerge after the government's pending negotiations. What is clear is that without British participation in the Erasmus+ programme, several of Europe's most popular universities will not be part of the process. Britain is the third most popular destination for EU-based students (taking 10% of all Erasmus+ students in 2015) and the most popular workplace for educational professionals undertaking Erasmus mobility programmes (accounting for 11% of all teachers in 2015).

Q: How have organisations responded to developments in this area?

A: The British Council have called for the retention of the free mobility of students and academics to continue pan-European collaborations in science and research. Their Broadening Horizons research provides an evaluation of the Erasmus programmes attributing increased employability, political literacy and empathy to the experiences of returning British students. In their view, the positive benefits of these more well-rounded students diffuse throughout the British education system upon their return, and provide an awareness of other cultures for British graduates that will benefit the wider workforce.

Q: If we remain a member of Erasmus+, what other areas of the negotiation process could affect mobility in education?

A: Aside from the decision to continue to participate in the programme, the fundamental freedoms of the EU facilitate Erasmus mobility, and are significant for the administration of a post-Brexit UK Erasmus programme. A Brexit process without a reciprocal freedom of movement arrangement with the EU will reduce the ability of EU citizens to undertake exchanges to British universities (as visa requirements will result in EU member states becoming easier destinations for travelling students) and vice-versa.

URL: <https://binghamcentre.biicL.org/comments/54/erasmus-and-brexit>