

Investing in education is one of the best options against exclusion, inequality and poverty.

The European Union (EU) promotes a whole sector approach to education in its partner countries, reaching from early childhood education through primary and secondary education, and leading to lifelong learning strategies in order to successfully enter the “world of work”. Higher education (HE) plays a crucial role in the economic and social development of any country by delivering the knowledge requirements for sustainable development: through job creation, better governance, stronger civil society, increased entrepreneurship and intergenerational mobility, and the training of high quality professionals necessary for economic, civic and social development.

The EU Development policy Agenda for Change (2011) underlines the necessity to enhance EU support for quality education to give young people the knowledge and skills to be active members of an evolving society. In 2014-2020 the EU supports higher education in the partner countries mainly by funding higher education programmes, such as Erasmus+, that support capacity building and modernisation of HE institutions and systems through inter-university mobility.

In addition, higher education is also a proposed component in several bilateral education programmes,

such as Angola, Mauritius and South Africa. In line with our focus on conflict-affected countries, the EU is currently designing a programme on providing access to higher education for Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons. **Erasmus+** (2014-2020) has brought the activities of previous higher education programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Edulink and ALFA, together under one roof. Higher education support under Erasmus+ addresses individuals, institutions and higher education systems. The two main components, concerning the international dimension and partner countries, are the capacity building of higher education institutions and mobility of students, academics and staff. The support to Erasmus+ from development cooperation instruments¹ is € 1.45 billion.

Erasmus+ mobility component continues the work of the previous international mobility programme Erasmus Mundus (2009-2013, projects on-going until 2017). Under Erasmus Mundus by the end of 2014 over 38,000 mobilities had already taken place at all different academic levels, with a further 7,000 in progress. In addition, some 2/3 of the 15,000 scholarships for existing Erasmus Mundus Master Degrees went to students from developing countries. These scholarships will continue and new master programmes will be selected, under [Erasmus+](#).

The EU supports higher education in Africa through several initiatives under the Pan-African Programme (apprx. 40M€ for 2014-2017). The Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme (20M€ over 2014-2017) aims at contributing to the production and retention of high-level African human resources by offering mobility scholarships for Masters and PhD degrees in key areas relevant to Africa's social and economic development. The Pan African Programme also supports the Pan African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation (€4.7M, 2015-2019) to supply the African market with highly qualified translators and interpreters; Harmonisation of Higher Education in Africa (€5M, 2015-2018) to enhance intra-African collaboration through the Tuning and Harmonisation initiative and support to Harmonisation, Quality and Accreditation and the Pan-African University.

ERASMUS+: 3 main types of Key Action

Degree mobility: excellence joint Master degrees will be offered by consortia of EU and non EU universities. The Commission will provide scholarships to excellent students and staff worldwide to participate in the joint degrees and be mobile in at least two different European countries.

ERASMUS+: 3 main types of Key Action

Credit mobility: The Erasmus programme is for the first time open to non EU universities, students and staff, Erasmus funds credit mobility i.e. student mobility between 3 and 12 months (in both directions) to obtain credits in a host institution, which are then recognized by the home institution. This action also funds staff mobility in both directions, which is essential as university staff are agents of change in their home institutions. Credit mobility has an impact not only on the development and the employability of individuals, but also on institutions which need to develop better services to send and receive foreign students, compare and upgrade curricula, improve teaching and strengthen their institutional leadership and management.

Capacity building will finance joint projects based on multilateral partnerships to fund curriculum development and modernization, joint or double degrees, new diploma, 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 aiming to have an impact on national systems, through the involvement of national authorities, alongside universities.

Example of a capacity building project under the ALFA programme

ALFA III (2007-2013) is a higher education programme in Latin America. It financed 51 projects fostering academic cooperation and networking involving 494 different participating institutions: 341 from Latin America and 153 from the EU.

The ALFA III EURECA Network (European and Central American Network for the Improvement of Quality and Sustainability of MSMEs) initiated the creation of a micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) management graduate programme, which is the first one in Central America supporting the development of this economic sector. More than 90% of the businesses in Central America are MSMEs. They constitute a basic source of employment. The Network brings together nine universities (six from Central America and three from Europe) and three supporting institutions. The business sector participates actively in the design of the programme providing an emphasis on practical matters. The beneficiaries acquire knowledge within the socio-economic reality of the region.

Example of an Erasmus Mundus Masters course with a development focus

Mundus Urbano is an Erasmus Mundus Masters course specialising in International Cooperation in Urban Development, jointly offered by four European higher education institutions in Germany, France Italy and Spain. Each year it brings together some 20-25 students from a range of countries throughout the world, and offers EU-funded scholarships. The course has a focus on the Global South. It explains European approaches and philosophy regarding urban planning, and then considers how hi-tech solutions can be applied in low-tech environments, and social settings in the developing world.

Read more on the EYD site: <https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/european-union/stories/mundus-urbano>

Resources

- **Presentation of ERASMUS+** https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en;
- **Facebook page of ERASMUS+:** <https://www.facebook.com/EUErasmusPlusProgramme>;
- **FAQ on International Credit Mobility for Higher Education Institutions :** <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/restricted/common-docs/030215/doc-1-faq-on-international-credit-mobility-for-heis.pdf>;
- **FAQ for Higher Education Students and Staff :** <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/restricted/common-docs/030215/doc-2-faq-for-higher-education-students-and-staff.pdf>;
- **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA):** http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture
- **European Commission Development and Cooperation (DEVCO):** <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid>
- **Information for current and next calls for proposals:** http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding_en

Would you like to learn more about HE, share your experience, best practices or ask questions on how to apply for next call of proposals in your region?

The Education team of the [Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development \(DEVCO\)](#) has launched the HE group on capacity4dev.eu, which aims to be a platform for exchange among delegations and also for dissemination of best practices. See: <https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/higher-education>