

Proposal for an Erasmus+ grant to welcome international talent

Potential names: “Save International Talent”, “Talent Everywhere”, “EU-STARS: EU Support for Threatened Academics, Researchers & Students”

1. Introduction

EUA invites its members and partners to support its proposal to the European Commission to establish a specific Erasmus+ grant which would support qualified scholars and students who are persecuted and face threats to careers and even lives due to their academic activity, their political opinions, or religious convictions, ethnicity, gender etc., and have to leave their countries due to war or warlike circumstances.

- Similar measures are existent in some European member states and also in other countries around the world, such as e.g. the [Students at Risk](#) in Norway, the [UAF](#) in the Netherlands, the [Philipp Schwarz Initiative](#) of the Humboldt Foundation in Germany, [CARA](#) in the UK, [Scholars at Risk](#) and the [Scholars Rescue Fund](#) in the US.
- [Data collected by EUA](#) proves that universities all over Europe already support refugees¹. Apart from legal status and language issues, what prevents more institutions from hosting more refugee students and scholars is the lack of financial support - usually European universities have to rely on their own resources, and there is no Europe-wide initiative.
- The grant would allow universities to increase their solidarity with and support to refugee scholars and students at European HEI (and research institutions), by providing funding for placements.
- Applicants would be the universities, which would identify scholars and students directly, or in collaboration with national or international organisations. Selection would consider both, merit and the need of protection, taking into the consideration urgency of the individual case.
- The programme could be modelled after existing EU higher education programmes (e.g. Marie Curie, Erasmus Mundus) and on good practice approaches for the integration of refugees in higher education identified by Erasmus+ KA2 and KA3 projects. It should be flexible, with low administrative burden for both the HEIs and the EACEA, respectively National Agencies.

2. Benefits and impact

- The European Union would set a clear signal, and demonstrate its support to academic freedom, fundamental values and civic and human rights.
- The aspiration of this measure is not to provide for all qualified refugee students and researchers: it would be a relatively small and targeted measure, not to replace, but to complement other measures and activities in the EU and in third countries to improve the situation of refugees. It would demonstrate how Europe develops diverse and differentiated responses to issues where there is not one solution.
- Universities could also further enhance their internationalisation, and welcome international staff and students with diverse experiences, and would receive additional support for their activities in integrating international talent under protection.

¹ For editorial reasons, throughout this paper the term “refugee” is used to cover all individuals that are seeking, or that currently are under any type of protection status, such as asylum seekers, subsidiary protected, and refugees, as well as those in a refugee like situation, or in displacement.

- Scholars and students, while in refuge, would stay at a host university, could pursue their careers, have an international work and study experience, and expand their academic and professional networks, and enhance their economic, professional and social prospects. They would be in a better position to return to their home institutions, once the situation has changed.
- The initiative would also raise awareness in the university community, and generally in society, in Europe and internationally, and promote solidarity and support to people in difficult circumstances. It would be an example, and inspire others to follow suit.

3. Scenarios for the programme

The following proposes potential, non-exclusive scenarios for an Erasmus+ grant programme for refugee students and scholars.

3.1 Eligibility

Students and scholars who

- are refugees and third country nationals (TCNs)
- have been excluded from study or work at the university due to political opinions, religious convictions, ethnicity, gender etc.
- have to leave or left due to persecution, or war and warlike situations
- have the status of refugee/subsidiary protected, or are seeking to get it
- are currently residing in
 - an EU/Erasmus+ country to be hosted by a HEI in the same or another other EU/Erasmus+ country (via relocation²)
 - in a third country (non-EU/non-Erasmus+) to be hosted by a HEI in EU/Erasmus+ countries (via resettlement³)

3.2 Scholars

- 12 month fellowships, with an option of prolongation
- at a higher education institution or research institute in Europe
- grants comprise: a provision for a salary or top-up to a salary, insurance, housing allowance, language/bridging/integration courses, visa and travel support, support for spouses/family
- co-financed support to the institution on all administrative costs (e.g. for implementation, selection procedure etc.)
- could also be modelled on e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action– with a clear link to the inviting institution

3.3 Students

- scholarship grant for full degree programmes (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), or the completion of degree programmes they had to abolish when leaving their countries

² “**Relocation** refers to *the movement of refugees from one EU Member State to another*. It is an *intra-EU* process, in which Member States help another Member State to cope with the pressure of hosting a relatively large refugee population by agreeing to receive a number of them. Relocation is an expression of internal EU solidarity and burden-sharing, particularly with those countries at the borders of Europe that receive a high number of refugees.” ([European Resettlement Network ERN](#))

³ “**Refugee resettlement** is defined by UNHCR as *'the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third country that admits them – as refugees – with a permanent residence status'*. (...) In the EU, resettlement means the movement of refugees from a country outside of the EU to an EU Member State.” ([European Resettlement Network ERN](#))

- including language/bridging courses, and other integration measures, if necessary, to enhance language and study skills
- grants comprise: a provision for costs of living, tuition, insurance, housing allowance, visa and travel support
- support to the institution on all administrative costs (e.g. for implementation, selection procedure etc.)
- could be modelled e.g. on the former Erasmus Mundus Action 2, Target Group 3 ‘vulnerable groups’ – but without the requirement to establish university consortia, also as the study would take place only at one institution.

3.4 HEI & research institutions

- eligibility for all higher education institutions that award Bologna degrees, and are situated in the European Union or Erasmus+ countries, and comply with the ESG
- in the case of scholars, also research institutions in EU/ Erasmus+ countries
- selection of candidates by the HEIs, subject to final approval by the EC and official tested mechanisms of identifying protection needs, as HEIs can only assess eligibility in academic terms
- funding for scholarships/grants awarded by Erasmus+ to the institution
- overheads/ additional co-funding for the HEI, e.g. to finance (temporary) individual support (e.g. for administrative work, exchanges with authorities, offering bridging and language courses, a study buddy system etc).

3.5 Implementation

While the needs of the target group have been assessed by a number of initiatives, including KA2 and KA3 projects, it is difficult to assess the concrete demands. EUA proposes to commence with a small pilot programme, to test the feasibility, demand and impact.

- HEI / research institution or a network/ association of institutions applies for Erasmus+ funding
 - On a concrete case – award for the individual candidate
 - On one or several grants to awarded to candidates still to be identified – conditional award subject to submission of documentation for the individual candidate
- in collaboration with established and trusted organisations
- funding potentially from a range of sources, other than the Erasmus+ budget, such as in the case of e.g. E+ ICM (international credit mobility)⁴

⁴ The funding for ICM comes from several different budget sources which prescribe the eligibility of third country nationalities and mobility destinations, including ENI (European Neighbourhood Instrument), DCI (Development Cooperation Instrument), IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession - Western Balkans), PI (Partnership Instrument for Industrialised Countries) and EDF (European Development Fund) for ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

4. Erasmus+ and the Midterm Review

4.1 Demonstrating Erasmus+ capacity and versatility

- As of 2015, the Erasmus+ Programme guide explicitly mentions refugees as a priority group.
- The grant would complement other EC funded measures for refugees, such as the Madad Fund for refugees located in third countries, and could upscale the findings on good practices in integrating refugees in higher education of dedicated projects currently funded under Erasmus+ KA2 and KA3.
- It would also align with several of the goals that the EC has proposed the future programme beyond 2020: “Allow[ing] its participants and beneficiaries to be better equipped to tackle the most pressing societal challenges”, “Do more to promote civic engagement, active citizenship and share common values”, “Be even more inclusive”, “Have a stronger and wider global dimension”, and last but not least “Be easier to participate in and simpler in its processes”.
- The importance of educational programmes in supporting member states efforts to integrate refugees and migrants into host societies is also recognized by the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education. In line with EUA’s proposal, it “calls for long-term and coordinated investments through [the] current and future Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens programmes⁵.”
- The programme would contribute to several EU policy agendas related to higher education. [The Renewed EU agenda for higher education](#) prioritizes “Building inclusive and connected higher education systems” so to ensure “that higher education is inclusive, open to talent from all backgrounds”, and also makes a clear commitment to international cooperation, exchange and mobility, as means to create knowledge and ideas, but also to enhance tolerance and mutual understanding. The EC made also a clear commitment to the 2015 [Paris Declaration](#) on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

4.2 Background: EUA’s recommendation for the Erasmus+ mid-term review

As a contribution to the midterm review of the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020) EUA has drawn up a detailed report on how Erasmus+ is received at the institutions ([EUA member consultation: A contribution to the Erasmus+ mid-term review](#)), and proposed several specific [recommendations](#), developed in close collaboration with its members and partners, on how to improve the programme beyond 2020. Recommendation 8 refers to increasing the programme’s “flexibility to respond to emerging challenges, such as the support for refugee students and staff.”

It proposes “to establish a specific support action for refugee students and academics, not only in third countries, but also in the programme countries,” and concludes: “Taking part in Erasmus+ mobility would turn refugees into international students and academics, giving them better prospects for integration and careers in their country of origin, as well as in Europe. It would also allow better dissemination among different member states and universities and enhance their international cooperation and networking, as well as create long-term social and economic benefits. In addition, these measures would set an example and raise awareness for the situation of refugees, both in Europe and internationally.”

⁵ [Draft opinion](#) in preparation of the Parliament’s position on the next MFF