

# Universities and the European Neighbourhood

## Key promoters of international contacts and science diplomacy

Universities facilitate and promote person-to-person contacts and establish formal, international ties across the world as part of their daily business. University student and staff mobility is an important way to enhance learning and to empower people. In a changing research landscape dependent on big data, large infrastructure, and international teams, universities build sophisticated global networks that bind countries together and promote international understanding.

The links between the European Union and its neighbourhood\* are no exception. The structures for European collaboration in the university sector present a flexible inclusion of neighbourhood countries in programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, and European Higher Education Area.

### Mobile students

Student mobility is by far the most important way to establish person-to-person contacts between countries. In 2014 alone **259,576 students** from the neighbourhood and accession

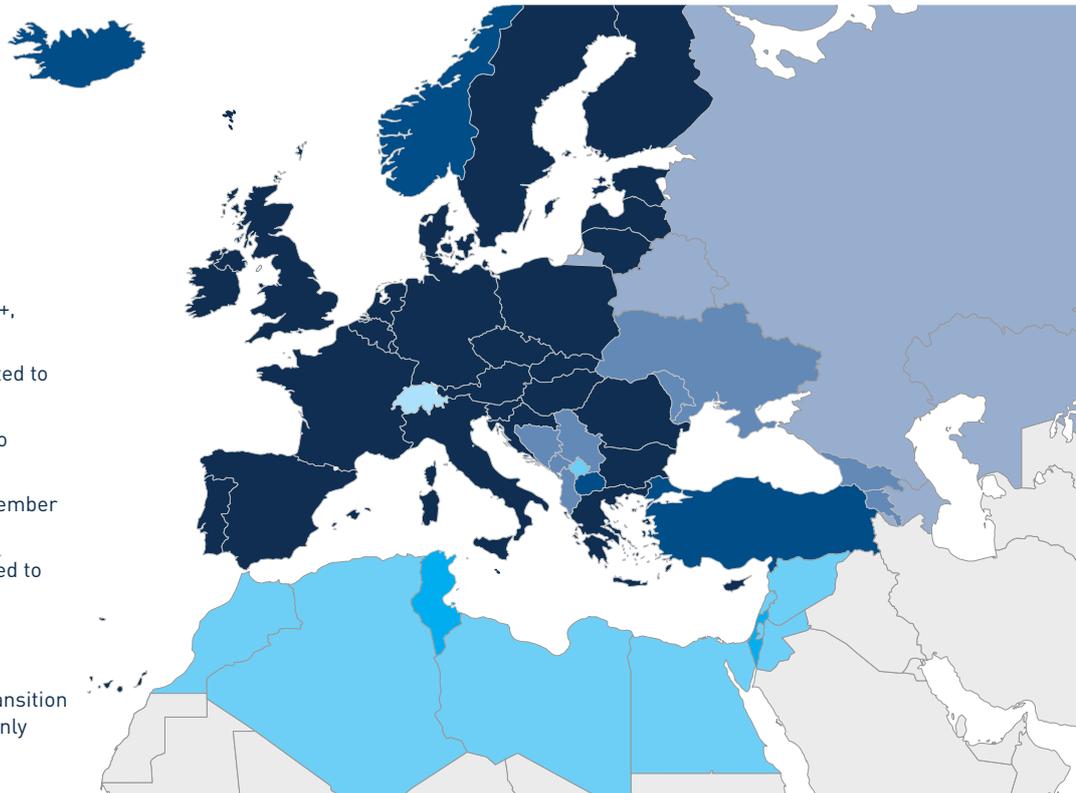
countries studied in the European Economic Area and vice versa (source: UNESCO). These students enrich both their host and their home countries. With their experience from abroad they can be a uniting force between cultures during their studies as well as later in life as actors in business, politics and civil society.

### Building capacity

Universities in the neighbourhood and EU universities engage in numerous capacity-building collaborations to promote durable partnerships and foster the development of universities and higher education systems. In 2007–2013, **922 universities** in the neighbourhood and accession countries took part in capacity building activities under the TEMPUS Programme alone (source: European Commission). Besides building capacity, such programmes bring together thousands of university leaders and managers, researchers, teaching staff and students, thus forming personal and professional ties.

**Map of countries participating in Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and the European Higher Education Area.**

-  EU member state; fully part of E+, H2020 and EHEA
-  E+ programme country; associated to H2020; member of EHEA
-  E+ partner country; associated to H2020; member of EHEA
-  E+ partner country and EHEA member
-  E+ partner country and associated to H2020
-  E+ partner country only
-  H2020 and EHEA with special transition agreement for E+: Switzerland only



\* For the purpose of this document, the word 'neighbourhood' is used in its widest sense as countries close to the European Economic Area: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, FYR Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (1244), Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

## EUA and the neighbourhood

As the voice of universities and a centre of expertise in higher education developments, EUA serves Europe as a whole. Out of its more than 800 **members 159** come from countries surrounding the EU.

Together with its members and partners EUA manages a variety of activities and projects and organises events which facilitate sharing and networking. During the last five years, more than **2100 participants** from countries in the wider neighbourhood of the EU attended EUA events, and **38 universities** from these countries were or are still partners in projects with EUA.



EUA is involved in various initiatives and supports universities in countries surrounding the EU through capacity building projects, and fosters the exchange between them and universities in the EU:



The **SPHERE consortium** (2015–2020) provides training and networking for Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) and National Erasmus Plus Offices (NEOs) in EU neighbourhood countries.



The **MMIR project** (2015–2018) aims to develop innovation and research management capacity in the Arab world, particularly in Morocco and Jordan.



The **ATHENA project** (2012–2015) supported the reform of universities and the higher education system in Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine towards more autonomy and financial sustainability.

The **TRUNAK project** (2017–2020) is promoting university autonomy in Kazakhstan.



The **Institutional Evaluation Programme** supports institutions in developing their strategic leadership and capacity to manage change and regularly collaborates with universities in neighbouring countries.



The **EUREQA project** (2012–2015) supported universities in the Western Balkans in developing their quality assurance systems.



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