

The EU averts funding crisis for Erasmus

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Current and future Erasmus students can be reassured: Member States and the European Parliament have averted a funding crisis which threatened the popular exchange scheme after a last-ditch agreement which has enabled the EU to plug a shortfall in the 2012 budget and remove uncertainty about funding for 2013. Thanks to the agreement, the Commission will be able to provide around 280 000 Erasmus student grants in the 2013-2014 academic year.

The agreement also avoids problems for other exchange schemes run under the Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo for apprentices, Comenius for schools, Grundtvig for adult education), which enable young people and teaching staff to broaden their skills and career prospects through study or training in a foreign country. The budget deal also lifts uncertainty surrounding the Marie Curie Actions which support the international mobility of researchers. The outcome of the negotiations was welcomed by Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. "I am very happy that the Member States and the parliamentarians reached an agreement which is a big boost for Erasmus students and other beneficiaries of our programmes. It is a positive signal that Europe is committed to investing in education and skills."

The agreement, formally approved today by the European Parliament after a green light from Member States last week, wipes out a €180 million shortfall in the 2012 budget for the Lifelong Learning Programme; the shortage affecting Erasmus amounted to around €90 million out of this total.

The agreement means that the Commission can now transfer necessary funds to the national agencies which are responsible for running Erasmus in the Member States. The agencies will then release funds to beneficiaries of the programme, including the home universities and colleges which pay the monthly grants to students.

The Council and the European Parliament have also reached an agreement on the 2013 EU budget which means around € 500 million for Erasmus and € 1 015 million for the Lifelong Learning Programme as a whole.

Erasmus accounts for more than 40% of the Lifelong Learning programme budget. Nearly 90% of the Erasmus budget is invested in student and staff mobility.

Background

Across all EU programmes, the 2012 budget faced a €9 billion shortfall. Under today's agreement, the European Parliament and the Council have agreed to provide a €6 billion top-up now to pay the most pressing needs, with the rest (€2.9 bn) to be paid in 2013. For most beneficiaries such as Erasmus students, researchers and businesses, this means that everything that should have been paid in 2012 will be paid in 2012. The funding held over until next year will cover bills for structural funds' projects, in particular those subject to payment suspensions.

The European Parliament and the Council also agreed on a total budget of €132.8 billion for 2013. This is €5 billion below the Commission's proposal, which was based on estimates from the 27 Member States themselves. With the extra held over from 2012, the Commission fears that the EU will face another budget shortfall next autumn. The bulk of the EU budget in 2013 will be spent on supporting economic development and competitiveness in Member States (35.5% is allocated to the cohesion policy) and support for farmers (33.1% goes to the Common Agricultural Policy). Funding for Erasmus amounts to around 0.4% of the total budget.

More information

Erasmus hits new record with 8.5% increase in student exchanges ([IP/12/454](#))

The Erasmus programme in 2010-11: the figures explained ([MEMO/12/310](#))

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

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