



#### About [Erasmus+](#)

With a budget of 14,7 billion euros for the period 2014-2020, **Erasmus+ aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport.**

The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports also organisations to work in transnational partnership, to modernise and improve their education systems. Erasmus+ includes a strong international dimension (i.e. cooperation with non-EU countries) notably in the field of higher education and youth, which opens the programme to institutional cooperation and mobility of young people and staff worldwide. The Sport action supports grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

Please note that EURAXESS Brazil will publish a Focus on Erasmus+ and What's in it for Brazilian students, researchers and higher education institutions in its second quarterly newsletter to be released by the end of June 2016. To receive it automatically by email, register in the mailing list at [brazil@euraxess.net](mailto:brazil@euraxess.net).

# Interview with Brian Holmes, Director, European Commission Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

**You are the director of the European Commission Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA). Could you please tell us about the agency's main activities?**

The Agency's mission is to support European projects that connect people and cultures, reach out to the world and make a difference.

We implement EU programmes in the fields of education, culture, audiovisual, sport, citizenship and volunteering while ensuring high quality service to beneficiaries, efficiency and financial transparency. Under the current mandate, the Agency is responsible for the whole lifecycle of project management, from contributing to calls for proposals, to ensuring selection processes and contracting, and later on, providing administrative and financial management support to grant beneficiaries. The Agency operates in close collaboration with the European Commission, providing crucial information on the major outcomes from the implementation of the programme that is in turn exploited for programme design.

**Students' mobility is not a goal in itself. What is to be achieved from students' mobility? Which important skills are you expecting students to gain?**

The Erasmus+ programme is our flagship of mobility for education and training. The ambition is that by 2020 the programme will have provided support to 2 million higher education students, 650,000 vocational training students and apprentices, and funded more than 500,000 youth exchanges or volunteering abroad.

But, as you say, mobility is not a goal in itself. Experience shows that this programme is working and that it really makes a difference both for students and higher education institutions. Today, universities are expected to prepare students for the complexities of modern life, aligning in particular their skills to the specific needs of the labour market. Learning abroad brings with it the chance to engage with scholars from other parts of the world, to live in another culture, and to reap the benefits, both at personal and professional level. In this respect, various studies indicate that employers tend to value the additional 'soft' skills, which graduates gain through international mobility. These include intercultural and communication skills, foreign language skills but also curiosity, problem-solving skills, tolerance and confidence. Mobility also gives indication of the student's ability and willingness to deal with new situations, to be open to new experiences.



“Erasmus+ really makes a difference both for students and higher education institutions“

At the universities level, mobility still represents the core element around which most internationalisation strategies are built. The effects of internationalisation have a strong, positive impact on universities, where the cross borders cooperation between academic and staff often favours the development of new curricula and ways of working

### **What are the benefits of mobility (study/research in Europe) on a career?**

**Mobility is a booster for career development.** The results of the [2015 Erasmus Mundus Graduate Impact Survey](#) show for instance that Erasmus Mundus graduates have **higher employment rates** than other graduates. At the time of the survey two-thirds of graduates had found a job, and of those almost 60% had found their job within less than two months from graduation.

Similarly, the [Erasmus Impact Study](#) shows that Erasmus students have a **23% lower unemployment rate** five years after graduation; their risk of long-term unemployment is half or less when compared to non-mobile students. Almost two thirds of employers think that international experience is important for recruitment, compared to 37% in 2006. Furthermore, young people who have been mobile during their studies have a greater chance of having a management position ten years after graduation compared to non-mobile students.

### **Does the nationality matter or is it where the student/researcher is based at the time of applying to one of your programmes that counts?**

Erasmus+ offers to students at Bachelor and Master level and Doctoral candidates opportunities to study abroad, supporting exchanges within Erasmus+ Programme countries and to and from Partner countries (non EU-countries).

To benefit of these opportunities students have to apply through an organisation taking part in the programme. Although the exact eligibility conditions may vary from one action to another, the eligibility of students depends both upon their nationality but in some cases also the country in which they are based.

For instance, **within the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) programme, 75 % of scholarships offered are earmarked for candidates who are nationals of non-EU countries (Partner Countries)**. However, partner country students are considered as such only if they are not residents nor have carried out their main professional activity in a Programme Country for more than 12 months in the five years preceding the relevant call deadline. To give you an example, a Morocco national who has studied in France in the two years immediately before the call deadline would be assimilated to a French national for eligibility purposes.

### **What does Erasmus have to offer to students and HEI outside Europe, namely in Brazil?**

Erasmus+ offers a large array of possibilities to engage in cross-border learning and exchange. A core element of the programme is indeed its international dimension, which aims to support the development and modernisation of higher



education, to enhance the expertise of university staff, and improve the skills and employability of students in third countries, while enhancing the attractiveness of EU higher education.

A detailed list of opportunities for Brazilian students, researchers and higher education institutions will be published in EURAXESS Brazil forthcoming Focus on Erasmus+.

Erasmus+ continues to support excellent students through joint Master degrees, which are offered by consortia of EU and non-EU universities. Again, a minimum of 75 % of EMJMD scholarships are earmarked for candidates from non-EU countries – Partner Countries. Additional scholarships are also offered for one or more specific regions of Partner Countries of the world and financed by different EU external funding instruments.

Within credit mobility, the Erasmus+ programme is now open also to non-EU universities, students and staff.

Capacity building supports joint projects based on multilateral partnerships to fund curriculum development and modernisation, joint or double degrees, improving university governance and creating better links between higher education and the world of work.

The Jean Monnet action promotes excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide. It focuses on mutual understanding and is set to provide important elements of critical knowledge about regional integration processes.

**Researchers and staff mobility is sometimes funded in Erasmus Mundus BR-EU supported projects. Will they continue under Erasmus+? Are there other opportunities for young researchers?**

**The academic cooperation and mobility between the EU and Brazil has deep roots.** It started already twenty years ago with the ALFA and ALBAN programmes, and was later strengthened with the Erasmus Mundus programme.

In the past decade, for instance, Erasmus Mundus has supported over 8 000 exchanges of students and staff from Latin America; and over 3 000 Latin American researchers have received funding to do research in Europe under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The ALFA programme (“America Latina Formación Académica”) has supported cooperation between universities in Latin America and cooperation between universities in Latin America and Europe, contributing to improving the quality, relevance and accessibility of higher education. Erasmus Mundus and ALFA have now been integrated into Erasmus+, which will continue to support Latin America to boost mobility and to support partnerships between higher education institutions to strengthen their capacity. Similarly, the Brazilian Federal Government has developed programmes such as 'Science without Borders', with the aim to provide mobility opportunities for Brazilians students in top universities worldwide. A large number of these international mobility opportunities take place in Europe, since there are bilateral agreements with 15 EU Member States to take part in the programme, principally as host destinations.

In Erasmus+, we have opened also the short-term mobility of students and staff worldwide. Each year we have around 5,5 million euros to pay for exchange of



staff (including researchers) and learners (including PhD researchers) with Latin America. In 2015 alone, more than 300 participants were funded for exchanges between Europe and Brazil.

In addition, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions continue to be a popular choice for Brazilian researchers to take part in PhD or postdoctoral research exchanges with a wide variety of European countries. One of my colleagues from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions was recently in Brazil at [the EURAXESS Conference promoting these possibilities](#).

### **In your opinion, what could be done to further enhance the mobility of international students between Europe and Brazil?**

The tertiary student population has grown exponentially in recent years. Overall, the number of higher education students in the world is expected to reach 400 million in 2030, particularly in the developing and emerging economies, such as Asia and Latin America. Europe has been an attractive destination for students and scholars worldwide; however, more and more countries are expanding and raising the quality of their higher education. Competition for the best students, researchers and staff is therefore intensifying. Higher education institutions must invest to increase their attractiveness and actively promote international mobility of students and staff, by providing innovative curricula together with excellence in teaching and research opportunities. In this, Erasmus+ and in particular the actions covering the international dimension can strongly contribute to creating the right conditions to further enhance students and staff mobility.

A number of **limiting factors** have also been exposed, with academic recognition on qualifications topping the list.

Looking at the European landscape, recognition of qualifications from universities of different countries remains a priority for Europe. The Bologna Process and transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) have helped EU national higher education systems to support the transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences, making it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe. Yet the process is far from being completed, and internationalisation has now taken a global dimension.

The EU is therefore committed to support initiatives that will facilitate transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications, as well as the transfer of credits, foster quality assurance, support skills management and guidance.

Since the beginning of the cooperation between the EU and Brazil, academic recognition has always been given high consideration in the educational policy dialogues. Improving the situation of students facing difficulties with the academic recognition of their qualifications remains therefore a top priority.