

## **Briefing on the impact of the EU-UK Agreement on Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe**

### **Erasmus+**

#### Participation in the programme

The UK government decided not to participate in the new Erasmus+ programme. The EU was offering access to the entire programme for 7 years, based on GDP contribution to the Erasmus+ budget, whilst the UK was more interested in time limited access to the mobility parts of the programme, and looking carefully at the value for money. In the end, the association fee was deemed too high by the UK government for the UK to join the programme.

The Irish government has announced it will provide Erasmus+ grants for Northern Irish students (around €2 million per year), so that they can continue to benefit from Erasmus+. This means that students from Northern Ireland will need to temporarily register with Irish higher education institutions to take part in the scheme. Interestingly, at least 145 Members of the European Parliament signed a letter sent to Commission President von der Leyen and Commissioner Gabriel to explore options for continued participation of Scottish and Welsh students in the Erasmus+ scheme.

All projects successfully bid for during the previous Erasmus+ will continue to receive EU funding for the full duration of the project lifetime. This covers UK participants going abroad, as well as international participants coming to the UK. The Erasmus Charter will continue to apply for projects under the current programme. Due to Covid-19, the European Commission has already extended Inter-Institutional Agreements and they will be applicable for the duration of the current projects.

In the new Erasmus+ programme, the UK as a non-associated Partner country will be able to participate in Jean Monnet and Erasmus Mundus calls. In addition, under Key Action 1 (former KA103) universities will be able to use part of their budget (15-120%) to fund mobility of students and staff with Partner countries. However, the budget flexibility will not be enough for the expectations to fund mobilities to the UK.

On the positive side, the UK has announced a domestic replacement scheme: the Turing scheme. The UK government has committed to fund 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools to work or study abroad starting from September 2021. It is expected that between 15,000 and 20,000 outgoing higher education students would benefit from the scheme with an overall budget of £100 million (one-year funding commitment). This would run in parallel with the ongoing Erasmus+ projects.

The Turing scheme will cover costs of outgoing student mobility only, meaning that UK universities would have to agree bilateral deals with other universities interested in funding their own students to go to the UK. Also, staff mobility and cooperation projects such as Strategic Partnerships or the European University initiative are not covered. The scheme will extend beyond universities in Europe

and offer possibilities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study abroad. More information about the Turing scheme is expected in the upcoming weeks. Universities UK (the umbrella organisation representing 140 UK universities) will organise a webinar dedicated to the Turing scheme upon the UK government's further release of details on the scheme.

UK universities which are taking part in the European University alliances can continue to receive funding till the project end date. At the moment further clarifications are needed concerning their continued participation in the initiative beyond the pilot phase. The Guild has continuously advocated for third countries' participation (such as the UK or Switzerland) as Associated Partners to the alliances.

### Immigration rules and tuition fees

Although the UK and EU have agreed visa-free travel for tourist visits of up to 90 days, there might be additional requirements/documents needed even if travelling for work or study for a shorter period.

As of January 2021, EU/EEA/Swiss students will need to apply for a visa through the **Student route** to enter the UK within the new [points-based immigration system](#). Under the student visa, students will require a total of 70 points to be granted leave. They will achieve the required points if they can demonstrate a) an offer from an approved education institution, b) English language requirements and c) the ability to support themselves during their studies in the UK. A Student visa will cost £348 and students will also need to pay the discounted Immigration Health Surcharge of £470 a year.

Short-term study for **up to 6 months** is possible without applying for a visa. Students wanting to come to the UK for short-term study will be able to apply under the **Visitor route**, provided it is at an accredited institution. This arrangement will replace the current short-term study visa. Those from the EU and Switzerland will not require a visa and can enter the UK just using e-passports. At the moment, it is not clear how the new immigration system will facilitate students who want to come to the UK on work placements. As a short-term solution for mobility students who want to come to the UK on a work placement with funds from Erasmus+ (2014–2020), UK universities are pressing the UK government to use Tier 5 temporary work route. This would provide stability and certainty for incoming students and enable them to still apply for a Tier 5 visa.

At the moment, students coming to the UK for **longer than 6 months** would be required to apply through the Student route. UK universities are discussing with the UK government if any exceptions can be made for those students coming for between 6 and 12 months. A dedicated immigration route covering study and work placements lasting less than a year would be beneficial to avoid visa and health surcharge costs for incoming students (and possibly dropping the language requirement). More information on the immigration rules is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>.

Additionally, the UK will launch the **Graduate route** in summer 2021, which will allow those who have completed a degree at a UK higher education institution to stay in the UK for two years (or three years for PhD graduates) to work or look for a job after graduation.

Students starting their degree in the UK in 2021/2022 and the following years, will no longer be eligible for home fee status and tuition fee loans. International tuition fees at UK universities vary from around £12,000 to £25,000. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-eligibility-2021-to-2022-academic-year>.

The UK will no longer issue the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), but UK nationals with an EHIC can continue to use them in the EU until they expire. However, these EHICs can no longer be used in Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. EHICs will be replaced by a free UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This card covers some medical care but is not a replacement for travel insurance.

## Horizon Europe

### Participation in the programme

The UK government decided to associate to the Horizon Europe programme. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement ([Part V](#)) describes the cross-cutting arrangements for participation in EU's programmes, whilst the [draft Protocol](#) (p. 15-23) includes details of UK's association. The Protocol can be finalised as soon as the Horizon Europe Regulation is formally adopted (expected in Spring 2021), allowing UK participation without the need for further negotiations. A joint UK-EU Specialised Committee is meeting on a regular basis to look at matters that might have not been foreseen.

According to the draft Protocol the UK will participate as an associated country in most parts of Horizon Europe (including the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, European Partnerships, Joint Research Centre (JRC) activities, European Research Infrastructure Consortium). The UK government has separately confirmed that the UK will retain full membership in the COST programme. Also, the UK will be able to influence the programme through participation in Programme Committees and the European Research Area Committee, but with an observer status. UK researchers can also continue to be experts and evaluators.

The UK decided not to participate in the European Innovation Council Accelerator that provides investment through equity or other repayable form, but UK organisations will be able to benefit from grant-based EIC funding.

The Commission has confirmed that UK organisations are eligible for participation in the first Horizon Europe calls which are expected in April (ERC and EIC calls possibly earlier). The only condition is that the Protocol is adopted before the signature of first grant agreements. Similarly, we expect the same to apply for Switzerland as if the association agreement has been ratified.

The UK's financial contribution was highly debated during the negotiations since Horizon Europe introduced the automatic correction mechanism for the first time. The contribution will amount to around €2 billion per year. The financial formula considers previous success rates, so it should not be considered as a template for all third countries wishing to associate to Horizon Europe. Associated countries' contribution is an addition to the Horizon Europe budget of €95,5 billion and should be distributed according to the country's success in the programme. For example, if the UK is really successful in the ERC, the ERC budget should benefit from the UK's contribution.

The financial contribution will include:

- a) an **operational contribution** calculated in proportion to the UK's GDP. It can be adjusted upwards or downwards annually to account for any positive or negative difference in total programme commitments in the preceding year compared with initial budget. The UK may object to increases in its operational contribution where the programme budget was more than 5% greater than the initial budget. The UK can raise a case of 'quasi-discrimination' in the three months following the deadline of any calls in which the participation rate (based on the number

- of UK applications) is 25% or more lower than either the UK participation rate in ‘similar’ calls in the preceding three years, or the UK participation rate in all calls if there are no ‘similar’ calls.
- b) **participation fee** (administrative costs) which is set as a percentage of the UK’s operational contribution. It starts at 0.5% in 2021 and increases to 4% by the end of the programme.
  - c) the UK must top up its contribution if its benefits exceed its contribution (excluding the participation fee) by 8% or more for two consecutive years. There is no automatic mechanism in the UK’s favour if its receipts fall below its contribution. However, the UK does have the right to trigger its ‘performance review’ mechanism if its receipts fall by more than 12% compared with its contribution, which could lead to measures to address underperformance.

The agreement includes a number of suspension and termination clauses. On the EU side, these cover changes to conditions for entry and residence for researchers and students coming to the UK, or if there are changes in financial charges, including fees. This will apply, in particular, if the UK introduces changes which discriminate between Member States. The UK can terminate its participation in case of changes to the programme’s objectives; or if its contribution increases by more than 15% compared with the initial financial envelope; or if the UK is excluded from certain activities on justified grounds which account for more than 10% of the programme budget.

The agreement also includes a reciprocity article which should ensure that EU researchers have access to equivalent UK programmes. Concerning data flows, personal data may continue to be transferred freely between the EU and the UK till 1 July 2021 and until the European Commission adopts an adequacy decision in respect of the UK, which would permit transfers of personal data from the EU to the UK.

In the upcoming month the UK government will publish the Global Britain policy document defining the role of the UK in the world in the areas of defense, security, development and foreign policy. Research and innovation should play an important role in this new strategy. Also, in 2021 the UK will lead the G7 and COP26 which provides an opportunity to highlight research excellence in addressing global challenges. Now that Horizon Europe association has been secured, plans for a domestic alternative Discovery Fund have been put on hold, although a Discovery Fund at a smaller scale in the future cannot be excluded (possibly to attract talent outside of Europe).

#### Immigration rules

On the mobility of researchers, both sides agree to “make every effort, to facilitate the entry and residence of persons involved in the implementation of these programmes and activities, or parts thereof, including students, researchers, trainees or volunteers.”

In February 2020, the UK introduced the **Global Talent visa**, aimed at talented and promising individuals in specific sectors wishing to work in the UK, and replacing the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa. It allows academics and researchers four routes to obtain endorsement for a Global Talent visa: Academic and research appointments, Individual fellowships, Endorsed funders, and Peer review. It offers an opportunity to work in the UK on a flexible basis without employer sponsorship and other conditions that apply to the UK’s **Skilled Worker visa**. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/global-talent-researcher-academic>.