

# Position Paper

7 July 2025

## Erasmus+ for a globally connected Europe

The Guild & ARUA's recommendations

We want to thank all the members of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and all the members of The Guild's Erasmus and North-South working groups.

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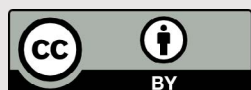
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# Erasmus+ for a globally connected Europe

## Introduction

European citizens need to be well-connected with the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to thrive despite the uncertainty of a dynamically changing society. The international dimension of Erasmus+ plays a key role in building societies that are more resilient and based on mutual trust and intercultural understanding.

As EU institutions consider the objectives, the rules of participation and the budget allocations for its post-2027 EU programmes, The Guild reaffirms that universities, researchers, institutional staff and students can provide the foundation for sustainable, prosperous knowledge-based economies. This will be crucial for tackling the common challenges that Europe faces alongside other regions around the globe. Indeed, the risk of isolation is highlighted as a concern in the [Heitor expert group report](#): “In a changed and complex world, European companies and researchers need to operate in key markets and cooperate with the best scientists even when they are in countries with which the EU competes politically, economically, technologically or militarily. They need to do so precisely to avoid isolation and marginalization, and to ensure Europe’s future security, prosperity and competitiveness.”

The Guild has consistently emphasised the added value of the international dimension of European programmes, alongside a variety of stakeholders in the research, innovation and education sectors. Recently, we co-signed statements calling for [investment in research, innovation and higher education to fully realise the potential of Europe’s Global Gateway](#) and [Reinforcing global partnerships in higher education and research](#). We called for funding instruments that enable international cooperation of different types, including for joint education, mobility and capacity building, between European organisations and their colleagues in third countries.

Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe were described as ‘forces for good’ by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Annual EU Budget Conference 2025. The benefits they create in Europe and beyond must be recognised and supported on a long-term basis. This aligns with high-level policy frameworks such as the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#) which cites Erasmus+ as a resource for short-, medium- and long-term actions that can make an impact in areas that have been prioritised by

policymakers on both continents. The relevance of these programme benefits also extends to the progress made towards Swiss association to Erasmus+ for 2027 and the recent announcement from the EU-UK Summit on working towards the UK association to Erasmus+.

Europe has a competitive advantage as a model for integrating diverse higher education systems. Erasmus+ plays an important role in implementing the commitments of the Bologna Process by offering opportunities which do not have equivalent funding at national and/or regional levels. This know-how makes multi-level partnerships with Europe attractive to regions that are integrating transnationally; most notably Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America & the Caribbean, under the auspices of the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States respectively. Supporting this advantage will strengthen Europe's international cooperation and standing. Although other regions have different circumstances and approaches to integration, Europe's unique experiences and structures are well-proven and open enough to foster two-way exchanges of knowledge and practices for mutual interests and building trust.

As work progresses towards designing and simplifying the post-2027 EU budget, we urge the EU to strengthen strategic commitments with Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMICs). Erasmus+, supported by EU's external action instruments<sup>1</sup>, has shown it can serve both Europe's internal needs and its external interests – from our economic security to climate change. Simplification should not create new silos which unnecessarily separates internal and external priorities in ways that risk undermining the unique added value of the integrated mutual benefit that Erasmus+ produces.

## **Towards the next Erasmus+ programme**

In April 2025, The Guild carried out a survey and consultation with our 23 member universities and the 23 member universities of our close partner network, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). Based on this evidence we make recommendations for the international dimension of the next Erasmus+ programme, which is also informed by our input to the [Union of Skills](#), the [European Degree](#), and the [European Universities alliances](#).

African universities have clearly stated objectives to better integrate their sector on the continent. The [African Research Universities Alliance](#) was established for this purpose as a network of universities from different countries and different historical backgrounds, but with a common vision. This network has committed considerable resources and expertise for benchmarking with colleagues transnationally to improve coordination, intra-Africa mobility and quality. As shown in the findings of this paper, ARUA universities see the value of collaborating with the support of European programmes because it enhances their existing goals and activities on the African

continent while also connecting them to colleagues in Europe.

ARUA members emphasise that international cooperation activities supported by the Erasmus+ programme have helped to galvanise staff to promote institutional reform (curriculum modernisation, digitisation, sustainability, needs assessment, forming teams and administrative innovation through structured partnerships). The motivation is there for improving institutional capacity in terms of knowledge, infrastructure, and know-how for managing mobility projects. However, this benefit can at times be less sustainable because it requires considerable work to coordinate and mobilise action with limited numbers of administrative staff. When funding is not secured, the institution's investment of resources is not rewarded, which can in turn undermine reforms. The EU can learn from third countries, not least because geopolitical flux and increasing fragmentation of long-standing global orders often require new thinking and adaptation, which third countries may have needed to address sooner. Therefore, cooperation should not be limited to a one-way transfer of knowledge. Instead, it should be based on equal opportunities for academic collaboration, fostering diverse perspectives, intercultural understanding, mutual respect and innovation, addressing global challenges, knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices.

For the next Erasmus+ programme, collaborations should primarily be driven by expertise and the potential for meaningful and long-term cooperation. We should not shift focus away from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), where talented people can use educational support for great added value. Maintaining this focus can co-exist with a demand for increased collaboration with high-income countries. We should not lose sight of the greater needs of underrepresented groups of students, who often face more barriers to mobility than students in high-income countries and resource disparities that can lead to high-income countries dominating participation in the programme. Similarly to Horizon Europe, the next Erasmus+ could benefit from enhanced collaborations with high-income countries and LMICs to access valuable expertise and greater research opportunities. For example, this is the case for Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships, where innovation in education is a key feature. Also, the option of association to Erasmus+ could be explored, whereby interested countries pay for their participation.

# Key Recommendations

## International Credit Mobility

International Credit Mobility (ICM) has been essential for initiating collaboration with partners worldwide, based on bottom-up faculty-led initiatives. It has enabled universities to engage in different fields of study and involve new participants. ICM facilitates exchange with partners who otherwise might not have the opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing. For example, many PhD students were welcomed to Europe, for whom this mobility was their first experience abroad. ICM has also allowed various double degree programmes to have better mobility reciprocity. In addition, participation in Erasmus+ has strengthened university cooperation in education mainly but also has real potential to strengthen research collaboration and student training in the field of development cooperation.

ICM allows long-term collaboration with countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern Neighbourhood, where the higher education systems and the tools promoted by the Bologna Process have been widely adopted by partner universities. In these regional contexts ICM enables universities to shape their international dimension in a way that actively supports their EU accession process and neighbourhood cooperation.

Participation in ICM, together with Erasmus+ Capacity Building, is contributing to the design of new curricula of partner universities, capacity building and more broadly, to the development of higher education systems in countries where dialogue with European partners represents a unique opportunity for educational innovation.

Furthermore, ICM is often used to complement projects that do not include mobility funds and to strengthen existing collaborations. Through reciprocal mobility of teaching staff in particular, there is an exchange of the best practices and teaching methods, which in the long run adds value to the higher education systems of each country involved in the project.

For ARUA universities, Erasmus+ is an opportunity for benchmarking best practices abroad. Erasmus+ mobility allows universities to enhance and deepen bilateral activities with organisations and countries from pre-established collaborations. They also target new collaborations with specific partners in Europe and collaborate with Europeans to enable their collaboration across African regions which they often list as their higher priority. African institutions are also positive about triangulating their Africa-Europe cooperation with existing or potential cooperation with other high-income regions such as North America. Europe's programmes are attractive to both types of collaborators and could enhance their capacity to act as a gateway to and between other regions. A consistent and significant point raised in the survey was that visa processes are a barrier to mobility activities that are of high value, described

as 'tedious and unpredictable', especially for travel to Europe and North America, but even within Africa.

The Guild members wish to use the experience of managing international outgoing mobility with internal policy funds in the current programme (20% of the budget) to align the intra-European and the international dimension of Erasmus+ in the future. Simplification of ICM, in line with the application process and the implementation rules of intra-European mobility, would be welcomed: for example, to use intra-European mobility funds for outgoing mobility towards third countries, and external policy funds for incoming international mobility.

However, for simplification to become reality, we suggest the following:

- The budget for intra-European mobility must be increased. Otherwise, it will become even more difficult to decide whether to prioritise international mobility (including the UK), mobility within the European Universities alliances, student or staff mobility, Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) etc.
- There is an imbalance between the effort invested (at the application stage and during implementation) and the benefits received. The imbalance is further reinforced by the lack of guaranteed continuity of ICM projects – cooperation laboriously established through an internal selection process may not be funded in the next call.
- At the application stage, the focus should be on existing or intended cooperation in the specific region. All other necessary information to ensure the quality of mobility is covered in the bilateral agreement. Therefore, the application process should be aligned with intra-European mobility.
- The duration of mobility activities should be aligned with intra-European, for example, staff mobility should be possible from two days onwards. The mobility duration tends to regulate itself: mobilities to distant countries naturally require more days, while shorter visits are more efficient for neighbouring countries.
- Opportunities should be introduced for combining study visits within a region — for example, visiting multiple partners in the same region within a single mobility activity. This is especially relevant for teaching and staff training.
- Possibility to include a broader set of activities: some national funders offer combinations of different areas of action in one project, which can include e.g. the field of teaching/studies but also research and capacity building at the same time. Abiding by the strict separation between education and research might leave out important impact areas. More flexibility in the current eligibility rules for mobility of academics and staff members in Erasmus+ would be welcomed.
- It is important to remove restrictions related to outgoing study levels. For example, in some regions, only PhD-level mobility is eligible, while universities have seen firsthand the value that students at both Bachelor and Master levels gain through international mobility. These experiences contribute significantly to their academic development

and career readiness, and the internationalisation of partner universities as their hosts.

- Regions prioritised for international mobility by the EU should also receive structural support, such as simplified visa arrangements for Erasmus+ students and staff in order to facilitate meaningful collaboration, and not just financial support.
- Recognition of study abroad remains an issue with global partners compared to EHEA-level cooperation. For instance, the lack of credit systems that support mobility in Africa discourages some students from undertaking degree programmes in foreign African or European countries. Erasmus+ should find more synergies with the roadmap for advancing African Credit Transfer System (ACTS) under the [HAQAA3](#) initiative and support links between ACTS and ECTS when possible.
- Since it is difficult to assess the needs for top-up grants for participants with fewer opportunities during the application stage, we suggest moving this requirement to the implementation stage. The major obstacle for partners in non-associated countries is providing supporting documentation in time, so the selection of students is usually done on the basis of their academic performance.
- Participation in international mobility could be complemented with national funding. For instance, a percentage of the Erasmus+ budget could be required as a national co-financing contribution. This approach would increase ownership but also enable the redistribution of additional funds to regions or countries where demand exceeds the available funding.



- A regional online platform like 'Study and Research in Africa' would be helpful – especially for students, with information on administrative procedures. However, key information about the host institution should firstly be offered through institutional websites. A platform addressing a whole and diverse continent can be a first landing platform or unique repository of the national higher education systems, including information about scholarship opportunities, visa, enrolment procedures at country level, internships, research or cooperation opportunities offered or called by actors other than universities (industries, private companies, start-ups, civil society, local authorities, etc.).
- Erasmus+ should continue to support a diverse portfolio of activities. ARUA members suggested funding smaller-scale projects that allow students to spend a week or two at the host university or short-term EU-Africa practitioner exchanges embedded into academic programmes. On the other hand, they also highlighted the value of longer-term exchanges making the mobility period on the other continent more meaningful.
- Participation in ICM activities by academics from non-associated countries is challenged by the lack of recognition and incentives for their career development. Teaching and staff training activities should award credits for university staff.
- First-time participants should receive better support for travel planning, insurance, and accommodation.
- The decision-making structures of African institutions need to be better understood, included in the planning and respected.

The University of Bologna integrated ICM into ongoing projects within the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme in [laser-based manufacturing engineering](#) and [space sciences](#). Since European universities have a supporting role in the scheme, and do not participate in mobility flows, ICM was instrumental in boosting cooperation with the project lead, Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) through exchanges of students and teaching staff.

Cooperation continued through two Capacity Building projects focusing on the modernisation of postgraduate programmes by updating curricula for [future manufacturing engineers](#) and [strengthening of STEM in African higher education](#). The two universities deepened their collaboration in a [Marie Curie innovative training network](#) which aims to coach a new generation of doctoral candidates focused on laser material processing, artificial intelligence for quality control, advanced process simulation and predictive lifecycle and sustainability analysis for e-vehicles manufacturing.

These projects demonstrate the value of ICM and ways in which Erasmus+ international actions could be better combined with the common goal to enhance institutional cooperation with international partners.

## Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus (EM) is a flagship example of supporting Europe's attractiveness and interconnection on the global stage. With the current policy focus on delivering (more) joint programmes, and initiatives such as Choose Europe, EM provides the added value of being suitable for brain circulation and capacity building of partner countries. It goes beyond talent attraction by also supporting talent interaction. The recent study on the 20 years of Erasmus Mundus<sup>2</sup> notes that the future of this action will depend on budgetary realities, and on the ability to secure member states' support for higher education as a strategic field.

Guild members appreciate the opportunity to develop a top-level, joint programme together with their European and international partners. EM allows them to train future generations to face global challenges, while attracting talent from around the world thanks to scholarships. Ghent University, University of Groningen, University of Glasgow and University of Bologna were recognised by the European Commission as top EM performers.

EM has significantly broadened collaborative networks by promoting diversity in project applications and encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations. This foundation was useful to engage with other programmes such as Horizon Europe, MSCA, and has positively impacted universities' human resource practices. The presence of EM students has also incentivised greater mobility among domestic students to third countries.

EM consortia have the potential for a wider geographical scope, including partners from both low- and high-income countries, thus fostering a truly global academic community.

Although EM aims to combine the European and international dimensions, there is a question whether its design fits the higher education environment beyond Europe. The required level of programme-level integration across education systems makes it difficult for universities outside the Bologna Process to participate, so the international dimension is mostly reflected in attracting the best non-EU students who make more than 80% of scholarship holders. This is a result of the condition to award scholarships among candidates from all over the world. Some of these students continue their studies at doctoral level and thus further raise the international profile of the host institution.

Greater participation of universities from LMICs in the delivery of the joint study programme is further hampered by financial constraints and administrative burden. There is also limited return of investment: mobility/scholarship rules may limit the possible number/length of international students attending periods of study outside the EU, including at the institution in their country of origin. In turn, international students are attracted by the prospect of studying in Europe, not by spending study time in another third country, though this may certainly vary from e.g. the perspective of EU students. ARUA members responding to our survey highlighted the need for university management to commit funding to these programmes. This is difficult as universities have limited funds, which need to be allocated to a number of competing priorities so the benefits of participation in EM need to be more clear to the management. Deeper participation and better impact of the programme at

LMIC institutions is hampered, for example, when the financial incentives and structures of the programme in practice mean that their role cannot expand beyond that of mobility partners rather than full degree awarding partners.

Another key issue for EM is the sustainability of the programmes once the EU funding ends, in particular to support the management and scholarship scheme. Although there are successful examples of third-party funding, these remain strongly dependent on the study field of the programme. Private and public funders should be encouraged by the potential visibility of their contribution to an excellent programme in the EM catalogue, and the opportunity to train future leaders for their market and ecosystem challenges. Some examples of fundable activities include scholarships for students' mobility, excellent scholars' fees and mobility, promotional events to share results and societal impact achieved by the course.

In view of extending the joint programmes to the Bachelor and PhD levels, in line with the joint European degree label, we welcome these developments as complementary to EM. The EM brand could be used for a scholarship scheme allowing for participation in joint European degree labelled programmes, alongside a possible separate funding stream for the development/implementation of joint programmes. However, the ability to award the joint European degree should not become an exclusion criterion for participation in EM, since the award process of the label is yet to be developed.

Against this background, we propose the following recommendations:

- To improve the quality of submissions (and resubmissions), better descriptions and guidance should be attached to notifications of proposal ineligibility. Staff members applying for funding for the first time build capacity more efficiently and are better enabled to contribute their expertise if the application processes use clear language that does not depend on familiarity with the European Commission's systems.
- Additional financial assistance to partners from LMICs would be critical to ensure equity among partners, e.g. through financing a local part-time coordinator or assistance in student recruitment.
- Keeping the EM programme bottom-up is a necessity. The sector should be able to define in which fields the greatest societal needs are. It also allows funding for SSAH for which there is otherwise relatively little funding available. By learning about approaches from partners who face similar challenges, Europe can become more resilient.
- It would be very difficult for EM programmes to be as attractive as they are without the EU funding, so we would welcome if the EU continued to fund some of its most successful EM programmes.
- In view of sustainability, it is crucial that successful EM programmes are allowed some form of EU level recognition beyond the funding period. Mechanisms for partners from LMICs need to be carefully considered if we wish to support their participation.

- While EU funding for scholarships may not be guaranteed indefinitely, it remains key in the early stages to raise the programme's visibility.
- The European degree label could complement EM by encouraging further integration of joint programmes, focusing on elements such as joint management, accreditation, and degree award.
- To strengthen intra-European academic collaboration and impact, the participation of EU students should be incentivised by providing financial support for all their mobility periods when participating in EM without a scholarship.
- At least one of the two mandatory mobility periods outside of the country of residence could be replaced by virtual mobility.
- EM programmes should be able to exploit specific BIPs for their winter and summer schools.

#### Erasmus Mundus Joint Master - UCLouvain

At UCLouvain, the key extension of Erasmus Mundus programmes has been at the doctoral level. For example, the [Models and Methods of Quantitative Economics](#) (QEM) is an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master (EMJM) that has been running since 2006. The programme is offered by the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France), the coordinating institution, Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Italy), Warsaw School of Economics (Poland), and the University of Kansas (USA). Based on the EM experience, an extended consortia implemented a joint PhD funded by Erasmus Mundus until 2018, which subsequently became self-funded. The cooperation has also continued through two Innovative Training Networks (ITNs) funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). The ExSIDE ITN trained 15 doctoral students from 2017 to 2021 in the field of Expectations and Dynamics of Social Influence in Economics. The ITN EPOC trained 15 doctoral students on the theme of Economic Policy in Complex Environments during 2021-2025 period.

## Capacity Building in Higher Education

Capacity Building projects have a genuine potential for educational co-creation between European and non-European universities, including local and industry partners. The activities and outcomes of CBHE projects are designed to benefit the higher education systems of eligible third countries and broader policy objectives agreed between the EU and regions around the world. However, in doing so, it would be beneficial if CBHE could support mutual learning about best practices from third countries, for example to identify the practices which could be used as sources of inspiration for European universities. Currently, the predominant focus of CBHE is on non-European institutions learning from the EU higher education sector. Arguments can be formulated against the use of the name 'Capacity Building', which implies relationships based on inequality rather than common values and interests.

In general, due to the varying contexts in the world, beyond Europe and countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme, the CBHE action should avoid being too prescriptive, allowing for adequate flexibility in terms of the topics that can be addressed, the consortium requirements, as well as how the projects are administered once approved.

Our members argue that Strand 2 CBHE projects (Partnerships for Transformation in Higher Education) have had financial limitations even though they find they have significant societal impact, at times even more significant impact than more directive Strand 3 (Structural Reform Projects). However, a project's maximum budget is lower despite generally having higher costs associated with such projects' travel budget. It was also noted that the success rate for Strand 2 calls is lower due to its popularity.

We have encountered instances where academics in LMICs applying for Erasmus+ funding for the first time have encountered unnecessary barriers to participation in the application and evaluation process. First-time applicants must invest additional time to build capacity and understanding of the programme and its online platforms. In Europe, it is common for participation to improve through experience, particularly when resubmission supports improved quality. However, in some cases, unsuccessful applicants did not find the evaluation/ineligibility outcome notification clear enough to act upon and make improvements. Instead, they had to go through a lengthy redress process which overshadowed their redrafting work with uncertainty. The digital platforms and user experience should be reviewed to better accommodate new participants who are unfamiliar with brief codes and jargon, particular because participants in LMICs will have circumstances which make this more challenging, such as unreliable internet access or having staff managing a multitude of international funding systems for an array of opportunities rather than the specialised teams which are more common in Europe.

## Global Gateway priority topics and targeted consortia requirements

Some of the Erasmus+ actions have developed synergies with the Global Gateway Strategy whereby they specify eligible topic areas for funding applications. These topic lists vary according to the country in which a project will be implemented. The national government develops priority areas in dialogue with EU delegations to fit local needs while also cohering with the overall Global Gateway Strategy priorities. This means that applicants must address these 'top-down' priorities in their applications, whereas other types of projects under Erasmus+ have tended to leave the choice of topic areas up to the applicant or 'bottom-up'. This system of topics per country also adds to explicit funding call parameters which restrict the shape and geographical spread of consortia. In particular, the survey drew attention to the Global Gateway priorities to ARUA institutions and their societal needs which was added as a required criteria in the 2025 CBHE Strand 3 call<sup>3</sup>.

ARUA members were positive about the relevance of priorities and consortium composition. These are considered timely and necessary to enable peer learning and resource/expertise sharing. In some responses, the priority aspect was described as a useful tool to foster mutual learning and mobility exchanges. The consortium parameters were described as enablers of links between different countries/regions on the African continent. However, at times aligning priorities, consortium composition and the universities own priorities can be a challenge. Guild members endorsed this finding, commenting that alignment between the Global Gateway and national/regional priorities is not always consistent. This would suggest that universities may have suboptimal incentives to changing their own priorities to fit a fragmented scheme or may choose to seek better fitting funding elsewhere.

Other institutions presented a mixed picture of alignment whereby their institutional strategy and/or capacity fit with some but not all of the topic areas. Another perspective on alignment found in the response was a lack of transversal priorities to complement specific topics. For example, capacity building for emerging scholars in any discipline are strategically important, but this risks not being fully served and/or fragmented if left to topic-specific priorities.

University reforms and improvements at governance and service level are often central, but then usually, the most successful projects were the ones where EU and partner universities worked together to answer specific challenges not arising principally from academic debates, but rather from local needs and challenges. Better alignment with national employability needs and cost-sharing models were suggested. For example, Erasmus+ could cover international mobility while national funds might support local training, follow-up actions, or infrastructure. Therefore, Erasmus+ could be framed as pilots for national-scale reform and policy actions.

If universities are expected to propose projects with demonstrable pathways to make an impact that addresses policy priorities (for example, from the Global Gateway

strategy), they need clearer instructions to that effect and confidence that evaluators will recognise quality in this regard. Beyond the challenges in articulating and evaluating quality and feasibility of impact aligned with priorities, there will always be a risk that priorities listed will not cover some relevant and valuable impact for society, the economy and the environment. Where directional top-down priorities leave gaps, bottom-up calls can mitigate this risk, whereby institutions and experts justify the relevance of their chosen topics. This creates a more agile set of projects which can make an impact, using an evaluation process focused on the merits of a proposal that complements the additional governance needed to identify topics and set them as viable funding call conditions. References to Global Gateway and/or national priorities can still be valuable for justifying impact for such opportunities but need not be essential criteria.

The Guild's member universities also drew attention to challenges when addressing funding opportunities tied to Global Gateway priorities. The topics in the Strand 3 2025 calls did not always have direct reference to higher education and how a structural reform of higher education can directly and effectively contribute to a broader societal priority, above all when descriptions only refer to specific major infrastructures' projects.

ARUA members recognise the Global Gateway topics' alignment with African policies, including acknowledgements of their relevance to the [African Union's Agenda 2063](#), and national government strategies such as [Uganda Vision 2040](#). The survey highlighted the importance of navigating various sets of priorities of different countries for the sake of intra-African collaboration. At this early stage of including Global Gateway topics in CBHE calls, the general response was positive about the choice of topics and transnational role that universities could play. An understanding of how these parameters work in practice for project selection and implementation will need more time to gather experiences.

There were criticisms from ARUA respondents that the ambition of the topics may not be feasible in their local context. For example, "most of the programme priorities are being gradually included in the [government's] strategic plans, but there's still a long way to go until the necessary conditions are put in place". Another institution responded that they avoid Strand 3 because it chooses to not collaborate with their government ministry. Guild respondents also highlighted that the impact of CBHE is largely dependent on the political realities in the partner countries where the national authorities have more capability for reform action than universities coordinating the CBHE project. Ministry involvement in projects is often found to be weak and discontinuous due to issues such as a low sense of ownership on their part and turnover of personnel. Also, when there are criteria distinctions between CBHE Strand 2 and 3, these do not always align with the need for national authorities' involvement in the project even though these calls differ in their consortium requirements in this regard.

In response to these findings, we suggest the following recommendations:

- Introduce funding mechanisms that allow successful projects to continue or scale up. This could follow-up or “start-up” calls for proposal in synergy with NDICI and the Africa Investment Package with eligibility conditions and evaluation criteria to select well-performing CBHE projects.
- To improve international participation in Erasmus+, the quality of submissions (and resubmissions), unsuccessful or ineligible applicants should receive better descriptions and guidance.
- Global Gateway priorities are welcomed but the importance of alignment and flexibility is stressed. Funding with top-down priorities needs to be complementary to bottom-up funding that allow universities to identify and address challenges strategically because overreliance on top-down priorities will create an overly-complex programme governance process.
- For some disciplinary groups it is difficult to match proposals with the priorities which are set out in broad terms and which often make no direct connection to their discipline even if some contribution to the enabling environment is possible. If priorities were set based on challenges connected to national or regional needs and to local development trajectories, cooperation at disciplines’ level and across disciplines can serve the call through the different focuses: curriculum development, teaching/learning methodology, research capacity, societal engagement, etc. It would also be beneficial to combine more than one priority if relevant.
- Ambitious funding to allow for regional, intra-regional and interregional mobility that can support mutual benefits.
- A detailed step-by-step lump-sum guide for the Erasmus+ programme, similar to the one created for Horizon Europe beneficiaries, would be welcomed, alongside more support for applicants of centralised actions.
- Training for newcomers/less experienced institutions on EU project management, the Funding and Tenders Portal, and responsibilities as Coordinator. Basic knowledge could be promoted at EACEA level or by introducing the concept of ‘co-coordination’ by a more experienced partner and providing a corresponding budget for this role.

## Enhancing Doctoral Education - University of Ljubljana

Enhancing Doctoral Education (EDE) is a recently kicked off Erasmus+ CBHE project with the participation of Guild member University of Ljubljana, ARUA member Rhodes University and other institutions based around different regions of Europe and Africa. The EDE project aims to contribute to goals in the national plans of Kenya and South Africa by engaging competent national authorities responsible for Higher Education and those involved in providing doctoral education in universities in Kenya, South Africa, Slovenia and the Netherlands. More information [available here](#). The capacity-building impact and relevance of this project is indicated by long-term continuity and broad policy alignment. EDE builds on two preceding CBHE projects which both focused on postgraduate activities at universities. The topic of doctoral education can be aligned with a key cross-cutting objective expressed in continental and national policies, including the African Union 2063 Agenda, the AU-EU Innovation Agenda, Human Resources for STI priorities in the South African Decadal Plan and Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030. The R&I sector in Africa has also prioritised capacity-building for doctoral education on the continent, for example ARUA's report [Towards African Collaborative Doctoral Programs](#) and the community and best practices built since 2008 by the [Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa \(CARTA\)](#).



## Long-term, multilateral international cooperation

The Guild and ARUA members express the need for long-term multilateral international cooperation which goes beyond the current Erasmus+ offer.

As we argue above in the introduction, Europe's transnational integration of diverse R&I and Higher Education for collective endeavour is one of its outstanding strengths on the global stage. This aligns with the recognition of promoting multilateralism in the Recommendations of the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups<sup>4</sup>:

"European science diplomacy should aim at preserving spaces for exchange and fostering a shared responsibility for addressing common challenges and protecting global public goods, thereby supporting effective multilateralism, while at the same time defending Europe's strategic interests."

There are already various vehicles for multilateral cooperation with a long-term perspective to maximise impact. Partnerships such as the Africa-Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoRE)<sup>5</sup>, the EDCTP<sup>6</sup>, Water4All<sup>7</sup> or the EUREKA Network<sup>8</sup> operate at different levels and with different types of actors, creating potential for scaling up and consolidating. Another vehicle is the European Universities alliances where an additional budget could be used in order to establish activities and mobilities between the universities of an alliance and their international partners. To maximise impact, value-for-money, and avoid limited funding being spread over many networks, top-up budget should be available on a competitive basis to those partnerships that can demonstrate meaningful collaboration – partnerships encompassing European Universities alliances as well as other stable networks demonstrably aligned to the EU's global ambitions.

The rationale put forward for joint activities, mobility schemes and strategic planning that can make transnational collaboration more sustainable through the following recommendations:

- Criteria allowing bottom-up, subject-area-specific cooperation to frame the scope of work and increase the likelihood of socio-economic and planetary impact.
- Targeted use of funds on broadly defined prioritised topic areas which can direct academics and institutions while allowing space for them to contribute creativity and expertise.
- Equal funding conditions across all members regardless of location to reinforce inclusiveness and shared responsibility.
- Flexibility in the link between eligible costs and action plans that allowed an existing consortium to adapt to new opportunities and circumstances within the same funding envelope.
- Cohesive integration of different types of activities in collaborative action plans

has greater potential for making systemic impact with built in incentives for actors to align their activities collectively and over time (research, innovation, higher education, capacity intersectoral exchange, capacity building for individuals and institutions, mobility etc.)

## Jean Monnet

The Jean Monnet actions support teaching and research in EU studies. They generate knowledge relevant for EU policymakers and society at large, strengthen the European profile of Social Sciences programmes, and have the potential to become a European diplomacy tool. Given the overall objective of Jean Monnet actions to spread knowledge about EU integration, this action is mostly considered by specific fields of study, such as politics, law, economics. However, Jean Monnet actions are relevant to any topic that is relevant within the EU and should be promoted as such.

Although not all actions require international partners, they contribute to the development of (in)formal networks, as well as to broader EU policy and strategic objectives. In countries with limited public understanding of the EU or low media coverage of EU matters, these actions can play a crucial role. For international partners, the relevance of Jean Monnet actions lies in the opportunity to engage in structured dialogue about EU policies, values, and governance. This can strengthen mutual understanding, especially in countries where the EU is viewed as a model for regional cooperation or democratic development.

In this context, the Jean Monnet Policy Debate can be particularly relevant. These Policy Debate Networks focus on either EU internal or external policy and therefore have a broad reach and relevance for both European and international partners. However, since the topics of the Networks are predetermined every year, the concrete relevance of the specific calls is rather unpredictable. It does not allow for the creation of consortia before the launch of the annual calls, nor does it enable the improvement and/or resubmission of otherwise valuable project proposals. While the approach to fund one Network per topic is appropriate to ensure a focused Policy Debate and to avoid multiple Networks operating independently from each other, it may limit the debate to core partners and existing networks in the selected consortia.

The future Jean Monnet actions would benefit from the following recommendations:

- Modules, Chairs, and Centres of Excellence could become multilateral actions to support institutional collaboration rather than involvement of individual experts.
- Networking activities among Chairs and Module holders should be planned to allow exchange of good practices in the different countries and institutions.

- The Jean Monnet Policy Debate should include a broader set of potential topics in the annual calls or provide more predictability in terms of future topics. Also, one topic could be identified bottom-up to enable Europe to become more responsive to societal challenges as they happen, and be inspired by issues that have already been identified in other parts of the world.

#### Academy4UA - Ghent University

The Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module [Academy4UA](#), hosted by Ghent University, seeks to promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of EU Law and Policy in Ukrainian universities. Each year, 25 Ukrainian lecturers and researchers specialised in EU studies are selected through an open call. The selected candidates are offered an intensive 3-month programme (April-June), taught by a team of expert lecturers, during which they strengthen their knowledge in the various fields of EU Law and Policy as well as transferable skills such as grant writing. Through the Module, a solid international network between participants and universities has been built, opening up the dialogue between Ukrainian and EU specialists on research and teaching in EU law.

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3. ERASMUS+ Capacity Building in Higher Education – priorities are listed here: [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-capacity-building-higher-education-priorities\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-capacity-building-higher-education-priorities_en)
4. European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Gjedssø Bertelsen, R., Bochereau, L., Chelioti, E., Dávid, Á. et al., A European framework for science diplomacy – Recommendations of the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9235330>
5. [Africa Europe CoRE](#) is a bottom-up, academic-led initiative led by The Guild and ARUA. These long-term collaborations were established by academics and universities to enable excellent and equitable Africa-Europe collaboration in [recognised](#) alignment with the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#).
6. [The Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking](#) is a European partnership started in 2000 that has evolved across different Framework Programmes to become an inspiration for and cornerstone of the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#).
7. [Water4All](#) is a Horizon Europe co-funded partnership with participants from 33 countries in across Europe with Brazil, South Africa, MENA. More information [here](#).
8. The [Eureka Network](#) is co-funded by the [European Partnership on Innovative SMEs](#) and co-funded partners from 37 countries in Europe and beyond, including Canada, Singapore, South Korea, South Africa and the MENA region.

