

Agreement on Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ allows universities to look to the future

The Guild welcomes the EU institutions' agreement on Horizon Europe and Erasmus+

The Guild universities congratulate the Council of the EU, European Parliament and European Commission for the conclusions reached in the negotiations for establishing Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes for 2021-2027.

The negotiations resulted in a budget of €95.5bn in current prices for Horizon Europe, which included a small but meaningful addition to its resources besides the additional top-up from the Next Generation EU recovery fund. The Guild is especially grateful to all of those who advocated for increased investments for fundamental research in the negotiations and managed to achieve a €1,5bn addition to the Excellent Science pillar of the programme. This has been a consistent concern for The Guild, and it is a much needed gesture to acknowledge the irreplaceable role that programmes such as ERC and MSCA have in the scientific competitiveness of Europe and in the success of the Framework Programmes. We also thank the EU institutions for achieving consensus over a mechanism allowing the regular correction of any significant imbalances in the associated countries' financial contributions to the programme, and for ensuring that the allocation of their contributions will be based on their level of participation in the different parts of Horizon Europe.

As Horizon Europe will launch its first calls in the coming months, our universities are committed to contributing to its implementation through the participation of our best research talent. We also urge that the role of fundamental research in contributing to Europe's recovery from the pandemic will be acknowledged in the implementation of the recovery funds at the level of EU Member States. Likewise, The Guild impresses upon policy-makers that the commitment for increasing national R&I investments towards the 3% goal of GDP must be a priority in the coming years, as the need for public investments in research will continue to be demonstrated by the current pandemic and its aftermath.

On 11 December, the EU institutions also reached an agreement on the next Erasmus+ programme. With a total budget of €26bn in current prices, Erasmus+ will be crucial in supporting the education sector in the next seven years. This welcome budget increase must ensure that the high expectations for the programme, which has been entrusted with a multitude of missions, can be met.

In particular, Erasmus+ should support mobilities of over 10 million people, but this time in a more inclusive and greener way whilst taking full advantage of digital tools. The higher education sector, which has been leading the Erasmus success story since 1987, will benefit from around 35% of the budget, with an additional budget reserved for the European Universities initiative.

Erasmus+ will be the main funding instrument behind the ambitious goals of the European Education Area, by providing incentives for universities to work towards the EU's policy priorities of green and



digital transition, skills enhancement and lifelong learning, and cross-border cooperation. Although certain directionality is needed to maximise the impact of investment, Erasmus+ should ensure room for innovative approaches across all disciplines by respecting the institutions' specialisation and national realities. The Guild member universities welcome the timely start of the programme and look forward to engaging in the discussions on an ambitious but realistic framework for the higher education transformation agenda.