

The CPU's position on the ERASMUS FOR ALL programme September 2012

A. Summary

The French Conference of University Presidents (CPU), based on its March 2011 position and discussions since then, is taking the following position on the development of the European Higher Education programme.

1. The CPU strongly supports a substantial increase in the budget proposed by the Commission.
2. The CPU does not support introducing a mobility loan scheme at the Master's level; it considers a mobility grant system to be better suited to the goal of developing international mobility in Europe.
3. The CPU recommends:
 - a. programmes for structuring doctoral schools either through a new ERASMUS FOR ALL initiative or through MARIE CURIE Actions' ITN projects.
 - b. the development of a mobility programme with the EU's neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean (Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus).
 - c. greater complementarity and harmonisation between national/European agencies.
4. The CPU has reservations about the label procedure.

B. Development

1. For a budget that is more focused on Higher Education

The CPU welcomes the budget increase proposed by the European Commission for the ERASMUS FOR ALL programme that would provide a budget of 19 billion compared to 7 for the 2007 - 2013 programme. It would also like to point out the impact of the Bologna Process in facilitating trade and the construction of a European Higher Education Area.

The CPU would like a balanced ERASMUS FOR ALL programme budget, in particular for the higher education component.

At this stage, the proposed budget requires additional clarification, in particular with regard to the distribution of the budget between "Education & Training" and "Youth" so as to define the share allocated to the education and training sectors.

Within ERASMUS FOR ALL, the "higher education" sector would have to receive a budget at least equal to the sum of all the programmes it currently covers (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and cooperation programmes with industrialised countries).

2. A non relevant Loan Guarantee scheme

The CPU analyses unfavorably the principle of loans that do not contribute to the European goal of social cohesion and equity.

The culture of student loans does not exist in any comparable manner throughout Europe and there is a fear that those who are most disadvantaged will be most reluctant to utilise this financing instrument.

In addition, the proposed "Loan Guarantee Scheme" creates risks at both the individual and macroeconomic levels, in particular with regard to reimbursement in the event of a prolonged job search after graduation. As a reminder, student loans in the United States are estimated at \$1,000 billion and are considered by some to be a time bomb that could cause a financial crisis similar to the subprime crisis.

3. The CPU recommends:

a. strengthening of cooperation structures among doctoral schools in Europe

The CPU notes the disappearance of ERASMUS MUNDUS for doctoral students. However, it regrets the loss of the structuring effect that this initiative had for networking European doctoral schools. The CPU recommends that the structuring effect of the ERASMUS MUNDUS Doctorate be preserved, either within the Erasmus for All programme or the Marie Curie Actions' ITN projects. They would systematically incorporate the networking of doctoral schools into the evaluation criteria.

b. a Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus programme

The CPU feels that this is the right time to restart the Euro-Mediterranean dynamic of higher education. With the support of the European Union, it therefore recommends the creation of an institutional support programme for higher education institutions in Mediterranean countries with student mobility and teacher mobility forming the backbone.

c. complementarity between national and European agencies.

The Commission's proposal lists 3 levels of intervention: the Commission / the Executive Agency / National Agencies

- While national agencies manage student mobility, financing the construction and structuring of partnerships ("Cooperation for innovation and good practices" actions, namely networks between higher education institutions) should continue to be managed by the European Executive Agency.
- National agencies can be more responsive and serve as useful interfaces with regard to monitoring actions under the key action of "Learning mobility for individuals" and

harmonizing methods across national agencies seems essential to us. If their missions were to then increase, the harmonization of practices would be a prerequisite.

4. A label of uncertain interest

The CPU wonders about the added value of the "ERASMUS" label since, in the traditional framework of communication activities and dissemination of information, the beneficiaries of European grants are required to mention the source of funding and often the name of the relevant programme (FP7, ERDF or other); mentioning ERASMUS FOR ALL would therefore appear in the same way.

- To boost ERASMUS FOR ALL's visibility, strengthening the dissemination of European projects would be more useful, in particular improving communication among the various European funds (ERDF, ESF, etc.).
- The CPU would like more information about the meaning of this label, its award criteria and evaluation methods. The CPU reaffirms the principle that these labels cannot challenge national laws (diplomas under the competence of well-defined actors, legislative framework of mobility, etc.).