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NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE ERASMUS+ NA DIRECTORS

**Subject: MANAGING INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY IN ERASMUS+
UPDATE OCTOBER 2015**

INTRODUCTION

This note updates the information note sent to National Agencies (NAs) and National Erasmus Offices (NEOs) in December 2014 with further information about how international credit mobility will be organised with Partner Countries. The original information is retained so that the current note is self-standing but clarifications are added on the responsibilities to ensure geographical balance at the level of the European Commission, NAs and individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Programme Countries. There is a new, one-page summary in **Annex 2** of this note, laying down the geographical rules applicable to each budget envelope, at which level the rule must be enforced (EC, NA, HEI), and over what timescale (each year or multi-annual planning).

The current note is accompanied by an information note, entitled "*Erasmus+ International credit mobility for students and staff: What are the EU's priorities*?" which you are free to use when communicating to your stakeholder HEIs, in order that the latter can tailor their funding applications.

DIFFERENT BUDGETS HAVE DIFFERENT RULES

In the 2016 call for international credit mobility, 5 different EU funding instruments provide the available budget. These are the:

- Instrument for Pre-accession (**IPA**)
- European Neighbourhood Instrument (**ENI**)
- Development Co-operation Instrument (**DCI**)
- Partnership Instrument (**PI**)
- European Development Fund (**EDF)**

Please see **Annex 1** for a list of the different budget envelopes under each funding instrument, as well as an exhaustive list of Partner Countries within each budget envelope.

For the **ENI** budget, a minimum of 90% of the available budget must be used for **incoming** student or staff mobility **from the Partner Country**. This limitation applies to the Eastern Partnership and South Mediterranean budget envelopes, **but NOT to Russia**, where there is no limitation on incoming vs. outgoing mobility.

For the **DCI** and **EDF** budgets, Programme Country HEIs can receive incoming students and staff without any restrictions, but are not permitted to send outgoing Programme Country students at short, first (Bachelors) or second (Masters) cycle. Outgoing **third cycle** (PhD candidates) or **staff** are **eligible** to be sent to DCI and EDF Partner Countries.

Due to the restrictions on **outgoing mobility from Programme Countries** under the DCI and EDF funding instrument, National Agencies are authorised to use their intra-European funding to fund **outgoing short cycle**, **first** and **second** cycle students to Partner HEIs. If the National Agencies exercise this choice, they are allowed to use up to 20% of the total **combined** DCI and EDF budget envelopes. To give an example: in 2016 Finland has a total DCI budget of 533,814 EUR and an EDF budget of 94,700 EUR. If Finland decides to authorise outgoing short cycle, first or second cycle students to DCI or EDF countries, the maximum it may spend from the intra-European budget is 125,703 EUR. This budget will be used as a common pot for both DCI and EDF countries giving NAs maximum flexibility on its use.

National Agencies choosing to use intra-European funds to overcome the **DCI** and **EDF** budget restrictions must advertise this possibility on their website and inform their stakeholders of the possibility, in addition to informing the European Commission as soon as possible.

There are **no restrictions on incoming/outgoing mobility** in either the **IPA** or the **PI** funding instruments.

Unlike intra-European credit mobility, there are no quotas for student vs staff mobility with Partner Countries. In other words, Programme Country HEIs are free to apply for 100% staff mobility or 100% student mobility or anything in between.

In terms of budgetary flexibility, each year Programme Countries are free to deviate by up to 10% of the budget envelopes inside a given financial instrument (3 envelopes within ENI, 4 envelopes within DCI or 2 envelopes within PI[1]). This does not apply to the IPA and EDF instrument which operate as unitary budget envelopes. There is **no flexibility** whatsoever to transfer funds **between** funding instruments (e.g. from ENI envelopes to DCI envelopes).

At the end of the first, 3 year planning period (calls in 2015, 2016 and 2017), each Programme Country must be as close as possible to the 3 year total for the individual budget

[1] The budget envelope for Russia is made up of contributions from ENI (81% of the total) and PI (19% of the total), but for purposes of budgetary flexibility, Programme Countries should count Russia as being within the ENI family.

envelopes. In practical terms this means that if a Programme Country decides to 'borrow' money from the DCI Asia budget in 2014 to supplement the DCI South Africa budget in order to fund a rounded number of mobilities, this 'borrowed' budget will have to be paid back before the end of the 3 year period, and the 3 year totals for DCI Asia and DCI South Africa must be respected.

SECONDARY CRITERIA (SMALL BUDGETS)

Understanding that Programme Countries will have particular problems with very small budgets, National Agencies are entitled to apply one or more of the following secondary criteria if a particular budget envelope is less than 60,000 EUR.

1. Degree level, e.g. limiting applications to 1 or 2 cycles: BA, MA or PhD
2. Staff or student, e.g. limiting applications to staff mobility only
3. Duration of mobility periods, e.g. limiting student mobility to 6 months, or limiting staff mobility to 10 days.

National Agencies choosing to invoke the use of secondary criteria must advertise this on their website and inform their stakeholders in addition to informing the European Commission as soon as possible.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MOBILITIES PER BUDGET ENVELOPE

National Agencies are strongly encouraged to publish the available budgets for each of the 10 budget envelopes and corresponding, approximate numbers of mobilities that these numbers represent. Given that HEIs can apply for staff mobility periods of only 5 days, or student mobility periods of up to 12 months, the numbers provided are necessarily a rough approximation. The budgets per envelope per country were sent to NAs in October 2015, together with the calculation method used to approximate the numbers of mobilities.

GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE

The Commission must demonstrate at the end of each planning period (2014-2017; 2018-2020), that the funds used from the various funding instruments (IPA, ENI, DCI, PI, EDF), were used in a **geographically balanced** way. In the simplest terms this means that Programme Country HEIs should be encouraged by their NAs to work with partners in the poorest and least developed Partner Countries in addition to the large emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil, Mexico etc. Geographical balance must be achieved at the level of the whole Erasmus+ programme, but individual NAs will have flexibility during the evaluation process to promote geographical balance and HEIs should be informed that this balancing process will take place.

Two budget envelopes have a constraint (at the level of Erasmus+, **not at the level of individual Programme Countries)**, to try to ensure that cooperation with large Partner Countries within particular regions does not distort the budget and to ensure that the poorest countries in those envelopes achieve adequate representation. These constraints are:

DCI Asia.

1. at least 25% for low-income countries and less developed countries (Afghanistan Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar);
2. maximum 30% for India and China combined;
3. 45% for the rest of Asia (DPR Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam).

DCI Latin America

1. at least 25% for Lower Middle Income Countries (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay);
2. maximum 35%. for Brazil and Mexico combined;
3. 40% for the rest of Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela).

While the Commission is not expecting Programme Countries to comply with these percentages rules on an annual basis, the NAs are expected to promote diversity of Partner Country choice among their HEIs and where possible, balance the geographic distribution of funding. This will be done at the end of the evaluation procedure. Clearly, the larger the NA budget, the easier it is to achieve geographical balance.

The Commission will examine the distribution of funds in these budget envelopes after each annual call to examine geographical distribution and reserves the right to withdraw particularly popular Partner Countries from future calls if the NAs are not able to geographically balance participation at their level. Obviously, this is not a step that will be taken lightly, because it will introduce an unwelcome discontinuity into the international credit mobility action.

Francesca PAGNOSSIN

Head of Unit

Annexes 1&2: - ERASMUS+ Eligible Countries for International Credit Mobility in 2015

- Rules linked to Heading 5 budgets in 2016 call for ERASMUS+ International Credit Mobility

Annexe 3: Erasmus+ International credit mobility for students and staff