

Erasmus programme in 2008/09: the figures explained

The European Commission today published new figures on the number of students, teachers and other staff in higher education who participated in the EU's Erasmus programme in the academic year 2008/2009. The data shows that 198 600 European students and 36 000 staff in higher education received Erasmus funding to go abroad for studies, placements, teaching or training. This memo contains more information about Erasmus in this period, including a breakdown of the figures by country.

Erasmus studies and placements abroad

Erasmus allows students in higher education to spend between 3 and 12 months in another European country – either for studies or for a placement in a company or other organisation. Any student enrolled at a higher education institution (university or other) in one of the 33 participating countries can benefit. Students in short-cycle higher vocational education can also take advantage of support from the programme to spend at least two weeks abroad for placements (increased to two months in 2010).

In the academic year 2008/09, 198 600 Erasmus students went abroad to study or train in one of the 31 countries then participating in the Erasmus programme (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey). This represents an annual increase of 8.7% compared with the previous year (the equivalent year-on-year increase in 2007/2008 was 5.9%).

The number of students increased in all countries with the exception of Iceland and Liechtenstein. The countries sending out most Erasmus students were France (28 300 students), Germany (27 900) and Spain (27 400), while Spain ranked first as a host country for 33 200 students, followed by France (24 600) and Germany (22 000).

The average grant students received from the EU per month rose from €255 in 2007/2008 to €272 in 2008/2009.

63% of the Erasmus students in the 2008/2009 academic year were female. In the same year, 213 students with special needs (disabilities) took part in Erasmus exchanges: a year-on-year increase of 29%.

Studies abroad

In the academic year 2008/2009, 168 200 students went abroad for studies, an increase of 3.4% compared to the previous year. The number of students going abroad for studies stagnated in Germany and Poland, while a decline was recorded in eight countries: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom. In terms of study exchanges, Spain sent most students (24 400), followed by France (23 600) and Germany (23 400). Spain also remained the most popular destination for studies abroad, receiving 28 200 Erasmus students through the year, followed by France (21 000), and Germany (17 700).

Social sciences, business studies and law were the most popular subject areas for Erasmus students, followed by the humanities and arts in second place and engineering, manufacturing and construction in third place. On average, students went abroad for just over 6 months.

Placements (traineeships) abroad

Since 2007, Erasmus has offered students the opportunity to go abroad for placements in businesses or other organisations. In 2008/2009, a total of 30 400 students undertook placements abroad, which is an increase of more than 50% on the previous year. France was the country sending out most students for placements (4 700), followed by Germany (4 500) and the United Kingdom (3 400). Spain was the most popular destination for Erasmus placements, receiving 5 000 students, followed by the UK (4 800) and Germany (4 200). The most popular sector for Erasmus student trainees was the education sector, followed by the professional, scientific and technical sector. The average duration of an Erasmus placement was around 4.5 months and students received a monthly EU grant of €432 (up from €409 in 2007/2008).

Erasmus intensive language courses

Erasmus offers specialised courses in the EU's less widely used and less frequently taught languages to help students prepare for their studies or placements abroad. Courses are organised in the countries where these languages are used as teaching languages at higher education institutions. They are not offered for the most widely taught languages of English, German, French and Spanish (Castilian).

In 2008/2009, 326 courses (up from 303 in the previous year) were organised in 23 countries for a total of 5 200 Erasmus students (up 6.4%). The countries in most demand were Italy, Belgium (the Flemish Community) and Portugal, while the top sending countries were Germany, Poland and Spain.

Erasmus staff mobility (teaching assignments and staff training)

In the academic year 2008/2009, Erasmus supported 36 400 mobility periods for teaching and non-teaching staff from higher education institutions, allowing them to receive training or to teach abroad. This represents an annual increase of 13.6%. The top sending countries were Poland (4 300 mobility periods), Spain (3 700) and Germany (3 100), while among the top destination countries, Germany ranked first (3 800), followed by Spain (3 400) and Italy (3 200). 55% of the staff participating in the programme were male. Out of the total, 8 staff with special needs participated in Erasmus exchanges. The average duration of such mobility periods was 6 days.

Teaching assignments

Erasmus enables staff from higher education institutions and companies to spend a teaching period of between 1 day – or at least 5 teaching hours – and 6 weeks at a higher education institution in another country.

The number of teachers that benefited from this type of mobility through Erasmus has been steadily increasing in recent years. In the academic year 2008/09, there were 28 615 teaching assignments, 5.4% more than in the previous year. 28 330 such mobility periods were undertaken by teachers from higher education institutions. As a new option, 285 staff from companies were invited by a partner institution abroad to teach there.

The highest numbers of teaching assignments were recorded in Poland (3 10), Spain (2 900) and Germany (2 700), while Germany (2 900), Italy (2 700) and Spain (2 600) were the largest recipients of Erasmus teachers.

Teachers were most mobile in the following subject areas: humanities and arts; social sciences, business and law; and engineering, manufacturing and construction. On average teachers spent 6 days abroad for teaching.

Staff training

Erasmus also enables staff of higher education institutions to undertake training in a company or at a higher education institution in another country. This training can last between 1 and 6 weeks.

Support for staff mobility for training was introduced in 2007. In 2008/2009, 7 800 training periods were undertaken by staff, 59% more than in the previous year. These exchanges are for academic and non-academic staff alike, including central administrations and support services.

Poland (with 1 300 training periods), Spain (760) and Finland (660) sent the highest numbers of staff and the United Kingdom (900), Germany (870) and Spain (850) were the most popular destinations for staff exchanges, which lasted 6.5 days on average.

Erasmus intensive programmes

Erasmus offers teaching staff and students from different countries the possibility to come together for short study programmes of between 10 days and 6 weeks.

In 2008/09, 319 Erasmus intensive programmes were organised (up from 257 in 2007/2008). A total of 22 700 students and teachers participated, of which 8 400 were students from other countries.

The countries organising most such programmes were France (37), Germany (31) and Austria (30) and the most popular subject areas were social sciences, business and law (78); science, mathematics and computing (55); and engineering, manufacturing and construction (52). The average duration of these short programmes was 12 days.

How does a university qualify to participate in the Erasmus programme?

A university or other higher education institution from a participating country must sign up to a number of principles and other obligations set out in the Erasmus University Charter before they can participate in Erasmus mobility or co-operation projects. For example, the host institution should not charge tuition fees for incoming Erasmus students, full recognition of satisfactorily completed courses or placements should be given to the student upon return to their home institution; and the highest quality in the organisation of the scheme should be ensured. Institutions need an 'extended' charter to send students on company placements.

ANNEXES:

Annex 1: Outgoing Erasmus students from 1987/1988 to 2008/2009

Annex 2: Outgoing and incoming Erasmus student mobility in 2008/2009 (studies and placements combined). More detailed information can be found on the Erasmus website, including separate statistics on mobility for studies and placements

Annex 3: Outgoing and incoming Erasmus staff mobility in 2008/09 (teaching assignments and staff training combined). More detailed information on the Erasmus website, including separate statistics on teaching assignments and staff training

Annex 4: Outgoing Erasmus students as a share of student population by country (2008/2009)

The annexes are available in electronic form here:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc920_en.htm