**Improving higher education**

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Erasmus+ is the European Union’s programme to support education, training, youth and sports in Europe. The 2021-2027 programme has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion which is nearly double the funding compared to its predecessor programme spanning from 2014 to 2020. The programme funds academic mobility and cooperation projects involving partners from the Programme Countries and the Partner Countries worldwide. A total of 34 Programme Countries comprise the 28 EU member states and six other European countries including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. The fund supports activities that are closely matched with the EU’s priorities for cooperation policy with partner countries and regions. Erasmus+ comprises International Credit Mobility (ICM), Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs), Capacity-Building for Higher Education (CBHE) and Jean Monnet Activities (JM). Since 2015, Erasmus+ has also allowed short-term mobility to Europe from other parts of the world for students, researchers, and staff. This two-way mobility enables students to study in a foreign university for 3-12 months and obtain credits which are then recognised at the sending institution as part of their degree. Starting in 2018, traineeships are also possible. There are also grants for staff mobility of 5-60 days, as well as distinct budgets for institutions to establish bilateral partnerships with universities from Asian countries. Under International Credit Mobility (ICM), a total of 155 proposals, involving Pakistan, were submitted for the period from 2015 to 2019. Out of the total, only 72 were selected for funding. Carrying out these selected proposals, 286 students and staff from Pakistan travelled to Europe, while 111 students and staff moved to Pakistan. Out of the total ICM regional budget for 2015-2019, China capitalized a maximum of 28 percent of the budget followed by Vietnam (16 percent) and India (11 percent). However, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia could get a share of only 9, 8 and 6 percent of the regional budget, respectively. Pakistan was among those Asian countries which could grab the least share as compared to other countries.

[Nawaz seeks exemplary punishment for “cabal of five”](https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2023/nawaz-seeks-exemplary-punishment-for-cabal-of-five)

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs) awards EU-funded scholarships to students from around the world that cover tuition, travel, and a living allowance for one to two years during which students study in at least two different European countries, and obtain a joint, double degree, or multiple degrees. Institutions from partner countries can also be a part of the consortia that deliver these programmes, though this is not obligatory. The total EMJMDs selected, during the period from 2014 to 2019 were 204, out of the total 613 proposals submitted. Out of these proposals, only six (6) were found involving Pakistan. The EMJMDs selected involving Pakistan were four (4) only. During the period from 2014 to 2019, the total numbers of scholarship winners from Pakistan were 320. Out of the total, 275 were from the global budget while 45 were from the additional regional budget. The total number of scholarships awarded worldwide was 9,389. Among the Asian countries, Pakistan was awarded the maximum number of scholarships (320) followed by the Philippines (263) and Nepal (128).

[Miftah Ismail criticises govt for massive drop of foreign reserves](https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2023/miftah-ismail-criticises-govt-for-massive-drop-of-foreign-reserves)

Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education action (CBHE) projects that last from two to three years are aimed at modernising and reforming higher education institutions, developing new curricula, improving governance, and building relationships between higher education institutions and enterprises. They can also tackle policy topics and issues, preparing the ground for higher education reform, in cooperation with national authorities. Around 30% of the annual global budget for CBHE projects is earmarked for Asian countries. From 2015 to 2019, overall 3,811 proposals were sent out of which, there were only 13 projects that involved Pakistan. Out of the total proposals received globally, only 744 projects were selected, including seven (7) involving Pakistan. However, none of these projects was coordinated by Pakistan. Nevertheless, 18 were instances of participation from Pakistan in selected projects. Among the Asian countries, Vietnam leads with 211 projects, followed by India and Thailand with 169 and 129 projects, respectively. Among those projects, “Transforming Academic Knowledge to Develop Entrepreneurial Universities in Pakistan (TAKE-UP)” was awarded in 2019 with a total volume of €1.0 million to a consortium of six universities including the University of Gujrat, Universitat des Saarlandes, Germany, Athens University of Business and Economics, Greece, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Comsats Lahore and Government College University, Lahore. Despite having huge potential, though Pakistan outperformed the Asian countries by winning the maximum number of scholarships in Erasmus+, the share in the other components remained very unfortunate, bleak and insignificant. The new Erasmus+ programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sports for the period 2021-2027 has been launched bringing over €26.2 billion to support mobility and cooperation among higher education institutions worldwide. Therefore, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and all universities should create awareness campaigns and launch a series of special training workshops to fully exploit the opportunities extended by this EU-funded programme to get the maximum benefit for the sake of the development and growth of the motherland.