

Erasmus Programme as an Instrument of EU Public Diplomacy _____

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Abstract

Erasmus + Programme can be considered an instrument of soft power in countries that aspire to become EU member states. The core assumption is that due to people-to-people contacts, Erasmus participants are most likely to become informal ambassadors of the EU, in the sense that they become bearers of the EU's soft power, leading to changes in cultural perceptions and social. However, what will be the place of Erasmus in the ongoing debate on the strategy of enhancing the image of the EU? Erasmus can play a major role in this new strategy, considering the huge increase in mobility flows between EU countries and those waiting to become members. Moreover, the EU institutions are looking for new strategic tools of public diplomacy. This paper aims to test the following hypothesis: Erasmus, as an instrument of public diplomacy, affects the growth of the image of the EU in Albania. Therefore, this paper is of great interest because it is closely related to the debate on the means and goals of the EU's foreign policy and its influence on the member countries, especially Albania. It reaches the conclusion that Erasmus, as an instrument of public diplomacy, serves to increase the image of the EU, since it is a tool of soft power of the EU.

Key words: *public diplomacy, soft power, influence, EU strategy.*

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I. Introduction: Erasmus + and Soft power

One presents soft power in “Bound to Lead” 1990, as an indirect way of exercising power, which stands in contrast to the command method of exercising power, which relies on inducements or threats (Nye. 1990, p. 31). He seeks to gain support through attraction rather than force. Hard command power aims to get others to do what you want. The aim of soft power is more subtle, it is to get others to want what you want. In this sense, it is somewhat similar to Galbraith’s mention of conditioned power (the result of persuasion, but it cannot be clear) and compensatory and attractive forms of power in *Anatomy of Power* (Galbraith, 1983).

Soft power is a less coercive, less tangible form of power, the results of which are also less ascertainable, but do not carry the stigma of coercion or intimidation. The essence of soft power lies, according to Nye, in coercive capabilities. of communication, the use of multilateral institutions and the effective manipulation of interdependence.

If hard power relies on traditional concrete instruments such as military threats and economic incentives, soft power has at its disposal a much wider, albeit more elusive, set of resources. According to Nye, a country’s soft power rests mainly on three sources: its culture (the country’s attractiveness to others), its political values, and its external policies (legal entities and moral authority).

Soft power is primarily a communication skill, and as such it does not only depend on the strength of the message, but also on the talent of the transmitter and the disposition of the receiver. This is more volatile than traditional hard power and its effects are harder to predict or measure. It is more effective in creating general influence than in producing a specific easily observable action, more suitable for pursuing the goals of the environment (Nye. 1990, p. 16) (i.e. creating desirable environments, favorable to a person’s ultimate goals), than with that of goals specific pursuits of “possession” (eg. specific pursuits aimed at protecting or increasing tangible assets) these remain the most difficult forms of power (Wolfers, 1962 p. 86). In “The Goals of Foreign Policy” (1961) where he introduces the distinction, Wolfers goes on to make an interesting observation regarding the goals of the environment. According to Wolfers (1962), if such goals did not exist, peace could never become an objective of national policy. By its very nature, peace cannot be the property of any nation. Similarly, efforts to promote international law or to create international organizations are addressed to the environments in which nations operate, and their real efforts only make sense if nations have reason to worry about major things other than their wealth (Wolfers, 1962 p. 74).

Erasmus+ is the new Program of the European Commission, created to support



education, training, youth, sports, as well as the exchange of students, academic staff and administration in Europe for the period 2014-2020. It is estimated that since the start of Erasmus+ (2014), over 2 million people have participated in the program. Its budget of €14.7 billion offers opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain experience and volunteer abroad. Its implementation is carried out by the Education, Media and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels, National Agencies (NAs) of each Program country and Erasmus National Offices, available in all partner countries, including Albania.

Erasmus+ plays a key role in Higher Education Institutions because it provides and finances the exchange of students, academic staff and administration, as well as scholarships for joint Masters in the best universities of the countries participating in the program. In 2016, Erasmus+ supported 21,000 projects among 79,000 organizations in partner countries. 725,000 people went abroad to study, train, teach, volunteer with the support or funding provided through the Erasmus+ 2016 call.

The University of Tirana signed 33 ICM (International Credit Mobility) agreements in the 2014-2016 academic years. Whereas, in the 2016-2017 academic year, 56 new active agreements and 42 ICM agreements were signed. Erasmus+ Office Albania is a reference center for the processing, promotion and distribution of information and documentation of the Erasmus+ Program to Higher Education Institutions in Albania and to all applicants or interested parties.

Albanian institutions can apply either as an applicant and partner or simply as a project partner. Albanian institutions applying for Erasmus+ must be registered and have the PIC code (Participant Identification Code).

According to Erasmus+ Office Albania, the beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ program are: 165 students, 57 teaching staff, 28 administrative staff. The mobility period can vary from 3 to 12 months for Bachelor, Master and PhD students, meanwhile for teaching and administrative staff from 5 days to 2 months. Depending on the project and its conditions, public and private higher education institutions can apply as applicants (coordinators) or as partners. Non-profit organizations operating in the field of education, business, chamber of commerce, etc., can also apply as partners (according to the conditions of the respective projects).

At the end of the evaluation process of Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education Call 2017, there were 2 projects with an Albanian Coordinator and 4 projects with selected Albanian partners. In general, 15 Albanian universities and 3 non-university partners have benefited from the selected projects. Despite the benefits, Albania is the only country that does not have a law on scientific and research activity, coherent with new developments. The new Law on Science, Technology and Innovation is expected to reform the legal framework left from 1994. This is a disadvantage compared to other countries in the region. In 2016

with Executive Order No. 298 dated 01.06.2016 was created by the Minister of Education and Sports, the Working Group for the Drafting of the Law on Science and Technological Development³, the process is still ongoing. There are many delays in the process of completing the legal framework by drafting by-laws - for example Law no. 80/2015 on Higher Education has taken a long period of more than 3 years to complete.

With new legal developments, it is intended to curb a negative phenomenon such as brain drain. Albania has experienced a massive “brain drain” and a collapse of its research infrastructure structures. According to a recent study by UNDP, it was estimated that “there should be at least 2,500 Albanian doctorates and doctoral candidates in developed OECD countries”. For a small country like Albania, this group of researchers is not insignificant and represents about 40% of Albanians who have a doctorate and is estimated to be more than 25% of the country’s academic potential. This ever-growing reservoir of Albanian “brains” can and should be mobilized for the benefit of the socio-economic development of the country, especially if specific conditions exist (Gëdeshi & King, 2018).

Since 1992, the Tempus program opened the door to the European academic community and offered Albanian educators opportunities to connect with their counterparts in the region and in Europe. Tempus is the European Union program that supports the modernization of higher education in the area around the EU. All Albanian public universities and some private ones have participated in 141 Tempus projects in total. The total Tempus budget that Albania has benefited from since 1992 is 36.75 million Euros.

Two general long-term processes, the Stabilization-Association Agreement and the construction of the European Higher Education Area, have shaped the Tempus cooperation in Albania since 2000, and the dynamics of both have led to the updating of higher education priorities on an annual basis.

II. Literature review

The somewhat vague term “public diplomacy” entered the foreign affairs lexicon in the 1960s to describe aspects of international relations other than traditional diplomacy. Whereas conventional diplomacy is limited to more or less visible contacts between governments, whether in the form of a direct communication between leaders, or through official representatives of the administrations involved, determines the exchanges that take place between the government of a country and the general public between the leader of the opinions of the mass audience (Potter. E, 2009p. 48-49).

The first use of the term in its more or less modern sense is attributed to Edmund Gullion, a retired foreign service officer and dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, who founded the Center for Public Diplomacy Edward R. Murrow in 1965. Nicholas Cull, in his article “Public Diplomacy”, before Gullion with “Evolution of a Phrase”, cites an early pamphlet from the Murrow Center, which summarizes Gullion’s concept. According to Gullion, public diplomacy deals with influencing public attitudes, forming and the execution of foreign policies. Including the dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy, the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries, the relationship between foreign affairs and politics, communication between diplomats and foreign correspondents and the process of intercultural communications (Cull. N, 2009 pg. 23-27).

Gullion and Center Murrow may have been the first to use the term Public Diplomacy, but they were not the last to try to define it. Even today, despite the widespread use of the term, except for the ones that have generated dozens of institutions and centers, no one can give a single definition.

The USC Center for Public Diplomacy (United States Center) distances itself from the narrowest interpretations of this term, and formally acknowledges the role of public diplomacy as an instrument of high power, while writing that traditional definitions of public diplomacy include government-sponsored cultural, educational, and informational programs, citizen-to-citizen exchanges, and broadcasts used to promote a country’s national interest through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences. In addition to government sponsored programs. The center is equally interested in what CPD (Center for Public Diplomacy) board member Joseph Nye has labeled “soft power.” The center studies the impact of private activities, from popular culture to fashion to sports and until the news on the Internet. They inevitably, if not intentionally, have an impact on foreign policy and national security, as well as on trade, tourism and other national interests. Additionally, the center’s research interests are not limited to US government activities, as they examine public diplomacy, which concerns a wide range of institutions and governments around the globe. For the study of public diplomacy as an expanding field, there are no agreed-upon definitions. However, it can be argued that public diplomacy is, at its core, a very old idea.

III. Methodology

By means of this work, we will try to show to what extent and how the Erasmus program works as an instrument of public diplomacy, namely in increasing the image of the EU in Albania. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to find a

connection between Erasmus and the image of the EU in Albania. In arguing that this is an appropriate, justifiable and good choice, it was taken into consideration: the interest of future participants in the program, and how it will contribute to the continuous improvement of the program and the values that the EU has in our country; the existence of previous works on this topic, by researchers and researchers in the field of diplomacy, articles, reports, etc; and the works on this topic, or parts, or special aspects of it, had their value and importance as reference sources.

In these works, it is established how other researchers have made the connection between Erasmus and the image of the EU an object of study, how they have proceeded methodologically to process concepts, variables, whether these are dependent or independent, etc.

Based on the above objectives, this paper aims to test the following hypothesis: Erasmus, as an instrument of public diplomacy, affects the growth of the image of the EU in Albania.

A questionnaire was used to obtain the results for this study. Erasmus participants were recruited through national Erasmus+ offices, which agreed to forward standardized emails. However, the Erasmus participants involved were mainly alumni, those who had returned from abroad. From one point of view, this can be seen as a limitation of the survey, as one could argue that these individuals are more likely to have joined the EU. However, it is also possible to argue that the individuals surveyed were the most suitable for the purpose of this paper, as they are expected to be more aware of the EU's functions and processes and, thus, are in a better position. to provide reliable answers that can lead to results.

The questionnaire is standard and identical for all students involved in the study. The questions used in the survey come from Eurobarometer. The distribution of the questionnaires was done via e-mail. Questionnaires were distributed to 100 students who represent 6 countries in which they studied, during the months of June and July 2020.

In the questionnaires, different aspects such as age, gender, education and experience were taken into consideration. Regarding the survey, 100 people representing 6 countries participated. The results of the survey were generally as expected. The results are consistent with the results of an Erasmus impact study for 2013: "...in all regions, Erasmus students feel significantly more connected to Europe than those who have not been part" (European Commission, 2014b, page 3). Moreover, "...more than 80% feel that their European attitude has been strengthened by mobility and this perception is particularly strong in Southern and Eastern Europe (85% each)" (European Commission, 2014b, p. 3).

However, the study of Erasmus impact only addressed EU citizens as at that time Erasmus was still a program within EU mobility.



From the study, 92% of respondents feel closer to EU values after the Erasmus experience (P3).

Question 1: How often would you say you discuss EU policies?

	Often (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
Answers (%)	23.53%	76.47%	0%

Question 2: The three most important personal values

Values according to EU youth (in order of importance)	Values according to Erasmus Albanian youth (in order of importance)
1. Rule of Law	1. The respect of human rights
2. The respect of human rights	2. Rule of Law
3. Individual freedom	3. Individual freedom

Question 4: How close do you feel to the EU?

	Very close	Close	Not very close	Not at all	I don't know
Answer (%)	38.89%	47.22%	8.33%	2.78%	2.78%

Question 5: How likely is our country to join the EU one day?

	It is very likely	Likely	Not likely	Impossible
Answer (%)	18.75%	12.5%	18.75%	50%

IV. Findings

It is important to consider how improved public diplomacy will contribute to better explaining the EU's policy rationale and the positive impact of concrete EU actions. The international dimension of Erasmus as an instrument of public diplomacy in improving the image of the EU should be taken into consideration.

Even if the work focuses mainly on the main action (i.e., the movement of students to study abroad), it is interesting to combine all the main actions of Erasmus with elements of public diplomacy according to Kull's theory.

Regarding the data analysis, the first set of four questions aims to assess EU soft power through indicators of EU attraction, EU affiliation and EU preferences. For this purpose, each question starts with the following formula: After studying / training in an EU country, to measure the impact that the experience in the EU

had on the respondents. Not surprisingly, more than 90 % strongly agree or tend to agree that they are now more interested in certain topics, such as national and European identity, multi-culturalism and European cultures, EU perspectives- of, and policies (Q 2).

Moreover, they feel closer to the EU's fundamental values, such as human rights, gender equality, democracy, freedom of expression and the rule of law, and they are more open to cultural and linguistic diversity (Q 3). Finally, they would like their country to deepen relations with the EU (Q 4).

Only the question about EU membership (Q 5) did not reach 90% but 81%. This is understandable, considering the sensitivity of the question. The second set of questions aims to assess the changes in cultural and social perceptions experienced by Erasmus participants. These changes were measured through the following indicators: tolerance, respect for other cultures and the development of intercultural skills.

The questionnaire starts with the formula, thanks to my experience abroad, in order to measure the causal link between the Erasmus experience and the changes. Also, for this set of questions, more than 90% strongly agree or tend to agree with the formulated statements. In particular, thanks to the experience abroad, they can better tolerate the behavior and values of other individuals without compromising their own values (Q 6).

Also, they feel more comfortable if they are confronted with different values and ways of life of other people (Q 7). They feel more tolerant and respectful towards other cultures (Q 8). Furthermore, they learned how to interact with people of different nations and became more open to cultural issues about foreigners (Q 9). Finally, they have a positive social and cultural perception of other people with different backgrounds than theirs (Q 10).

The survey results describe a broad consensus on two main issues. First, students returning from Erasmus feel more attracted to the EU after the Erasmus experience. Second, the experience of mobility had a positive impact on the perception of others. In fact, the results of the Erasmus impact study in 2013 have been confirmed with higher scores among Erasmus students. About 90% of Erasmus participants feel more interested in EU politics. In fact, everyone talks about EU politics often or occasionally.

This evidence is sufficient to assume that Erasmus participants are likely to become informal EU ambassadors for the simple reason that they talk more about the EU than their fellow citizens do. In the second question, it asks about their three most important personal values. This question, taken from the standard Eurobarometer 84, aims to assess the eventual difference between the most important values for Erasmus participants and EU citizens. Based on the survey, the values are almost the same, namely the rule of law and human rights.

The fourth question, also from the standard Eurobarometer 84, aims to measure their belonging to the EU. Erasmus participants feel even more connected to the EU than EU citizens themselves. In other words, Europeans value the EU less than non-Europeans (European Commission, 2014b). This phenomenon deserves deeper research that is outside the scope of this work. However, as far as this work is concerned, the main finding is that the degree of belonging to the EU among Erasmus participants is high and this makes them bearers of the EU's soft power. The fifth question is not answered by any Eurobarometer. In fact, the reason behind it is not to compare the results with the opinions of EU citizens, but to see to what extent the experience of moving to the EU has influenced the Erasmus participants.

Regarding the survey, 50% of the respondents think that it is impossible for our country to join the EU and about 19% that it is not likely. This shows that Erasmus participants see integration as impossible in the current conditions. This is very interesting, as we are much closer to the borders of the EU and it is seen as an impossibility to be within the borders.

If we go by the results of the European Commission, Georgia, located in the Caucasus region between Turkey and Russia, seems to be among the most attracted by the EU. This Georgian enthusiasm is confirmed by the 2016 annual survey report of the Eastern Partnership countries, which states that "Georgia is the country most positively oriented towards the EU" (European Commission 2016e, p. 12).

V. Discussion

V.1 Public Diplomacy in the European context

This rather broad definition captures the essence of EU internal and external public diplomacy. Basically, it is about the image that a certain actor intends to project to a third party (European Commission, 2007 p. 12). EU public diplomacy is complicated by the imprecise nature of the EU's overall activity, or, more simply, the type of actor the EU wants to become on the international stage (Rasmussen S. 2009). This is partly due to the fact that the EU is an ongoing project, lacking completion, but it can also be rooted in a wider existential crisis of the struggle over who and what the EU is on the global stage. One of the complicated factors when considering the EU's public diplomacy is that, historically, it has been largely internally directed. The essence of this was captured in the action plan of the European Commission to improve "Europe's communication" with citizens, by means of which it creates a relationship and starts a dialogue with European citizens, listens carefully and connects with people. It is not a neutral exercise without value, it is an essential part of the political process (European Commission, 2005 pg. 2).

In the case of the EU, the internal aspects of public diplomacy are part of the identity construction and narratives used externally. As a result, distinctions between the internal and external aspects of public diplomacy have become increasingly difficult to maintain, especially in a saturated media environment where domestic and foreign audiences have equal access to official information.

The complex relationship between the internal and external dimensions of EU public diplomacy is perhaps best thought of as a process of self-reaffirmation, whereby messages communicated internally are also directed externally as part of the construction of internal to the identity of the Union. Many issues, such as the sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone, present coordination challenges for the internal and external aspects of public diplomacy (the latter has received little attention). This fusion of internal and external aspects of policies has also been described as mediating (which combines the international and internal aspects of a policy or issue), which applies with special force to the public diplomacy of the EU (Huijgh, 2011p.63) . The international projection of the EU relies heavily on the promotion of the “Union” as exemplary - “you can be like us too”. This is the core idea of attraction “postmodern” Europe, which is based on the assumption that external partners in the premodern and modern world will somehow want to emulate peace, stability and prosperity of EU members, which is characteristic of post-modernism (Cooper, 2003).

The legitimacy of internal identity construction, acceptance of norms and consensus around the narrative will do much to determine the legitimacy of external public diplomacy, both for EU citizens (who wish to see their own reflections) and for third parties (who wish to see the virtues of the European example reflected upon themselves). According to this logic, if the EU promotes itself as a paragon of peaceful coexistence, or an area of “human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights”, it must be seen from within and diplomacy public externality will appear firmly embedded in society (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006-9). This notion is strengthened by the Treaty on the European Union, which is even clearer about external objectives and principles than internal aspects (Article 3(5) the Lisbon Treaty).

The main external messages are either focused on exporting the EU ‘model’, which includes its normative values and principles or, for more specific issues, often takes the form of info politics (Gouveia P. & Plumridge H., 2005 p. 8 -9). The idea of transferring information, either passively (through websites, blogs or publications) or actively (by official visits of EU officials or through the activities of local EU delegation staff) is still alive, and surprisingly with little reference to public diplomacy itself. The nature of EU public diplomacy is particularly difficult to dissect when considering that the EU has no less than 164 national missions accredited to the EU and 36 international organizations and other representations,



making it one of the most major diplomatic events at the global level². The first stop in terms of the external dimensions of EU public diplomacy is Brussels itself. The EEAS (External Action of the European Union) has made considerable efforts to engage with the international press based in Brussels, many of which are directed towards the Member States themselves.

V.2 Erasmus and the image of the European Union

The EU's Erasmus program represents a significant EU-level intervention in European higher education systems. Since 1987 over one million European students have received financial assistance from the European Commission to spend part of their courses studying in a European country other than the educational institution in their home country. In most cases, this means that students who would normally study in their home countries receive funding to go abroad.

Erasmus has become one of the most visible programs of the EU and has become iconic for “Euroenthusiasts”, the use of which comes from the term “Erasmus generation” to describe young Europeans (Figel, 2007, p. 6; Kuneva, 2007, p. 3) and calls for a hope, that European Youth will prove more in support of European integration, more than their parents or grandparents. It is suggested that the Erasmus Generation is composed of young people who have benefited from European integration practices, have moved around the EU countries, think of themselves as European citizens and are therefore a base of support for further European integration. Mainly among them is the alumni, the program that gives the generation its name, former students of Erasmus. It seems to be true that young citizens of European member states, and students in particular, are more likely to think of themselves as Europeans (Eurobarometer, 2008, p. 34; Hix, 1999, p. 147). Students who have participated in Erasmus tend to be particularly pro-European (ESN, 2007).

However, Erasmus is not found to be the main one. If Erasmus leads to pro-European views, one would expect only Erasmus alumni to be more pro-European than their non-Erasmus peers. There would be a first change in their attitudes while they were away. The alternative possibility is that Erasmus students are more pro-European simply because more pro-European students choose to participate. If Erasmus affects the attitudes of Erasmus students themselves, this influence may also spread through their social networks, spreading its influence beyond the students directly involved. However, it is difficult to imagine that the program could have such secondary effects without first being affected by Erasmus students (Arts, W. & Halman, L., 2005/6). However the impact would certainly be more intense for iconic individuals who actually decide to immerse themselves in another European culture through Commission-sponsored study abroad.

Erasmus has been maintained as a tool for building support for the EU among the citizens of the Member States. If the program is visibly building support for the EU among current students, some of whom will go on to become future European elites, it is important information for policy makers. Like any other government program, Erasmus has opportunity costs both in money and in the talent and attention of its administrators, who could be employed elsewhere (Murphy-Lejeune, E., 2002).

Erasmus can build support for the EU and this strengthens the case for being partially educated in a foreign country and can create support for positive international relations (Carlson, J. & Widaman, K., 1988). Promoting the student movement in general can be a means to build international solidarity. European integration is an example, although a particularly advanced more intimate international relationship which is assumed to become more common as a result of globalization (Adia, E., 1998).

These often have significant consequences for citizens in particular and public opinion in the countries involved. It can also have a significant impact on how far international integration can progress. If it is possible to spread support for international relations through schemes like Erasmus, this can facilitate the process of globalization (Adia, E., 1998).

Therefore, it can be said that it is surprising that very few studies have been conducted which can reliably assess whether participation in Erasmus causes changes in attitudes towards Europe at a political level. Previous studies either ignore the potential influence on students' political attitudes or address it in a way that does not establish causality.

V.3 Erasmus in Albania and UET

In the framework of the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus program created in 1987, later called Erasmus +, the National Council for European Integration held on December 20, 2017 a round table on the topic "European Policies for Youth". An overview of the program and the country's participation was presented by the Erasmus+ Office Albania.

The Erasmus+ National Office in Albania held on May 20, 2020, the virtual monitoring meeting, with the European University of Tirana, for International Credit Mobility (ICM), supported by the Erasmus+ program, students, academics and administrative staff, who have completed or were still in exchange movement, joined in the meeting. UET currently has 49 inter-institutional agreements with different Universities from 15 countries that are part of the program. During the last two years 2018-2020, these institutions have agreed to exchange a total of 302 students and 354 people, academic and administrative staff.

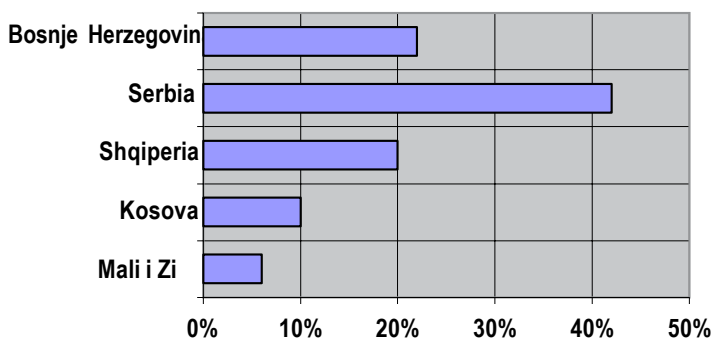


Based on data obtained from UET, in the academic year 2019-2020, 67 students benefited from the program. This number has been increased every year. If we consider the statistics of the 2015-2016 academic year, where only 17 students benefited, it is clear that the increase is considerable. This increase comes as a result of UET having developed guides in Albanian and English to help students and staff before, during and after the move. UET students can now be involved in the Erasmus Buddy/Mento programme.

For over 30 years, students and staff have moved between European universities in the Erasmus programme. Since 2015, Erasmus+ has also allowed short-term movement to Europe from other parts of the world for students, researchers and staff. This two-way movement allows students to study at a foreign university for 3-12 months and receive credits which are then recognized at the sending institution as part of their degree. Starting in 2018, trainings are also possible. Staff mobility grants of 5-60 days are available.

	TOTAL	2018	2017	2016	2015
Proposals / Albania	593	205	155	116	117
Projects / Albania	432	157	109	88	78
Students and staff going to Europe	3434	1.225	838	817	554
Students and staff coming to Albania	1952	728	509	376	339
Percentage of the regional budget (see chart)	19,8	24,71	17,58	19,7	17,21

There are distinct budgets for different regions of the world that are shared between all European countries. The institutions that are involved form bilateral partnerships with universities from Western Balkan countries and apply on behalf of their partners.



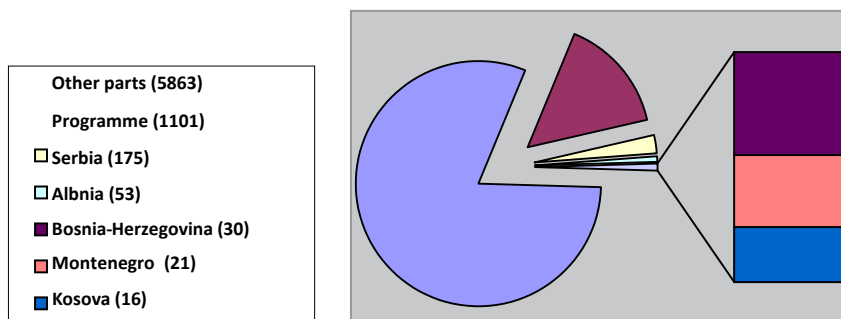
(ICM Regional Budget Western Balkans 2015-2018)

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Grants (EMJMD) provide EU-funded scholarships to Masters students from around the world that cover tuition, travel and a living allowance. The programs last between one and two years during which students study in at least two different European countries and receive a joint, double or multiple degree. Institutions from partner countries can also be part of the consortia offering these programs (although this is not mandatory) as full partners, which means that they officially award degrees, as Associate Partners, where they participate in the program in a type of field of study and currently offer joint degrees.

Albania in EMJMD projects	TOTAL	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Total selected EMJMD projects	153	44	39	27	32	11
Total proposals	506	112	122	92	119	61
Total proposals covering Albania	0	0	0	0	0	0
EMJMD projects covering Albania	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full partners from Albania in EMJMD projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Collaborators from Albania in EMJMD projects	0	0	0	0	0	0

Each EMJMD receives EU funding to award a certain number of scholarships to students around the world. Additional scholarships are also available for students from regions that make up developing or developed economies. Students apply directly to the program coordinator and can find programs in the EMJMD catalog.

	TOTAL	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Scholarships from Albania	53	8	10	15	4	16
From the global budget	41	8	10	15	4	4
From the additional regional budget	12	0	0	0	0	12
Scholarships all over the world	7259	1669	1556	1347	1308	1379
EM programs offering scholarships	86	100	87	120	149	



(Erasmus Mundus Master Degree scholarships 2014-2018)

Erasmus+ action projects Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), which lasts from two to three years, aim to modernize and reform higher education institutions, develop new programs, improve governance and build relations between higher education institutions and enterprises. They can also address policy themes and issues, preparing the ground for higher education reform, in collaboration with national authorities. About 11% of the global annual budget for CBHE projects is allocated to the countries of the Western Balkans.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

VI.1. Conclusions

The survey results prove that Erasmus leads to changes in social and cultural perceptions independently of being a tool of EU soft power. For Erasmus to be also an instrument of soft power as well as an instrument of PD in enhancing the image of the EU, it should:

- Avoid brain drain and promote brain circulation. The EU should encourage people who go to Europe, thanks to Erasmus, to return to their countries and help development there. Otherwise, Erasmus personal experience cannot have an impact on their hometown or region.
- A high level of mobility happens in both directions (to the EU and from the EU). In fact, EU citizens going to other countries meet and socialize with people who are not likely to participate in mobility exchanges due to age, social or economic barriers. However, there are very few EU citizens who come to Albania.
- In conclusion, we have the answer to the research question: Erasmus, as an instrument of public diplomacy, serves to increase the image of the EU, since Erasmus is a tool of soft power of the EU. The EU institutions believe that it is a tool to calculate the European choice of countries that aspire to integrate into the EU.

VI.2. Recommendations

- It is recommended that in the next program proposal, the European Commission defines the nature of the external dimension of Erasmus. Many have pointed out that the social goals in the Erasmus program have not been clearly operationalized and the EU institutions are emphasizing too much the employment benefit of the program and not enough the social and

cultural benefits. For this reason, it is recommended to give explanations on how to achieve more essential intercultural understanding for the benefit of strengthened interregional cooperation, especially between Europe and other parts of the world.

- Another recommendation would be to respect and implement the principle of co-ownership of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). This means that European Neighborhood Policy countries should be programming countries and not partner countries. In this way, they would share the same rights and duties provided by the Erasmus regulation for program countries. This would also encourage EU stakeholders (i.e. universities) to increase the number of exchanges with these countries, as they will have the same responsibilities.

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