

IHA Statement: Irish Government to fund Erasmus scheme for students in Northern Ireland

January 2021

Irish Humanities Alliance welcomes the announcement that the Irish Government is to fund Erasmus+ scheme for students in Northern Ireland.

As an all-island body representing the humanities research community across the island of Ireland, the Irish Humanities Alliance (IHA) formally welcomes the announcement that the Irish Government is to fund the continued participation of Northern Ireland students in the flagship European Union Erasmus+ scheme as the United Kingdom leaves the European Union. Indeed, the IHA's own strategy statement for the 2020s, [By imagination we live](#), had warned that the risk of increased regulatory divergence across the island posed a serious threat to the shared higher education and research community on the island. In that context, we recommended that 'the continued involvement of Northern Ireland in Erasmus+' be supported so that students in Northern Ireland could continue to benefit from the "Erasmus experience".

As set out in the IHA's ['Beyond Markets: the cultural case for Ireland in Europe'](#) event, Europe is much more than a market. Language and culture are the bedrocks of a shared European identity. The Erasmus schemes have been extraordinarily beneficial and impactful, with participants benefiting greatly from the cultural exchange that it has enabled. The Erasmus schemes have allowed students to experience first-hand the culture and education systems of other countries. It is to be hugely welcomed that this decision alleviates deep concerns that Northern Ireland's higher education institutions would be left isolated from its benefits as a consequence of the Brexit process.

In line with the EU's core freedoms, including the freedom of movement, the Erasmus programmes have enabled generations of third level students to study for part or all of their degree programmes in another European country or to undertake a work placement abroad, with their fees and costs covered. The Erasmus programmes allow young people across Europe the opportunity to study together and share their language and cultural values greatly facilitating cultural enrichment and language competency. Last year, 649 students and staff from Northern Ireland took part in the scheme.

We thus welcome this move as an investment in Northern Ireland students and as an important element in fostering continued all-island collaboration in Higher Education. We are delighted that Northern Ireland students will continue to benefit from the Erasmus+ scheme and wish them all safe and enriching travels in the future.

Further information

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