

Frequently Asked Questions: Music Students Interested in an ERASMUS Exchange

1. Why should I do an ERASMUS exchange?

An international exchange has many benefits. Functioning in a different living and musical environment could change your musical development in important ways. You could even choose to focus your exchange on certain aspects of your studies in ways that you could not pursue at your home institution. An exchange will give you the opportunity to gain more insight into the international music field and the flexibility that is needed from you as a musician. This will be to your benefit, since the music profession is nowadays becoming more and more international. You will discover more not only about the world, but even about yourself. That is a challenge that strengthens your self-confidence, widens cross-cultural insight, shapes your goals, and positively influences your future. An exchange is also a good method to develop your network of personal and professional contacts.

ERASMUS

2. What is ERASMUS?

ERASMUS is the Higher Education section of the European Community action programme called "SOCRATES" in the field of education. ERASMUS is a EU funded programme, which contains a wide range of measures designed to support the European activities of higher education institutions, including mobility and exchange of their students and teaching staff. The programme is open to the 25 Member States of the European Union, to the three EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and to Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

3. Who can participate in ERASMUS?

To participate in the ERASMUS programme, you must fulfil the following conditions:

- You are a student and enrolled in a formal programme of study at higher education level leading to a degree or a diploma (including doctoral level) in one of the participating countries.
- You are a citizen of one of the participating countries (or are recognised as having an official status of refugee or stateless person or permanent resident).
- You have completed at least the first year of your institution studies.
- Your institution is participating in the ERASMUS programme, namely has been awarded a ERASMUS University Charter.

4. How do I participate in ERASMUS and where do I go?

You have to contact your international office/coordinator to find out if you can study at selected partner institutions of your home institution in one of the thirty participating countries. There are a certain amount of places and grants available at each host institution which are given to the students mainly after a selection test organized by your home institution.

5. What kind of rights and obligations do I have as an ERASMUS exchange student?

All your rights, as well as your obligations, as an ERASMUS student are written down in the ERASMUS Student Charter, which is given to you before leaving for your study period abroad. The ERASMUS Student Charter outlines the basic entitlements of the ERASMUS students, such as free tuition and full recognition of studies abroad. The Charter also specifies the main obligations of the ERASMUS students, providing them with a concise idea of their duties in respect to both their home and host universities. An example of an ERASMUS Student Charter can be found on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/million/charter_en.html

6. Are there any deadlines I need to respect?

There is no single deadline for the student's demands, because each institution organises its selection procedure independently. Enquire at your institution concerning its application deadlines.

7. Can I apply for an ERASMUS grant? How?

ERASMUS provides mobility grants to many thousands of students. These grants are intended as a contribution towards covering the extra costs involved in studying abroad, such as travel expenses, language preparation costs, higher general costs of living in the host country. The ERASMUS grant covers the period of study abroad (from the three months to a full academic year). The application procedure for an ERASMUS grant varies from country to country. Contact the international relations office of your home institution about the grant application

8. How much is the ERASMUS grant?

The awarded amount varies significantly from country to country. In any case, don't expect a full scholarship. The ERASMUS grant is intended as a contribution towards covering the difference in living expenses abroad. It can be combined with additional funds provided by the institution, by the member state or by the other public or private bodies.

9. Can I get an ERASMUS grant even if I am receiving a grant or a loan in my home country?

If you are entitled to a national grant or loan for study at home, you will normally continue to be entitled to it during your ERASMUS study period abroad.

10. Can I receive a grant for studying abroad in countries not covered by the ERASMUS programme?

There are some possibilities (bilateral exchange programmes, CEEPUS, NORDPLUS, private grants). You can study abroad in the countries of South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia), the new Independent States of the former Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) and Mongolia with the TEMPUS programme.

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

11. How do I find the right institution/teacher?

Most institutions for professional music training have an international office and an international relations coordinator or contact person. Here you can discover which institutions abroad your school organizes exchanges with and who teaches there. Most institutions also have websites; you can find links to the websites of more than 220 institutions for professional music training on the websites of the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC: www.aecinfo.org). You should also discuss your plans with your teacher: not only should he/she be fully informed about your plans to spend some time in another institution, but teachers usually also have international contacts and may be able to help you with choosing the right teacher and institution.

12. What is a bilateral exchange programme?

A bilateral exchange programme is an agreement between two institutes to co-operate on exchanges and possibly on other types of collaborative activities including financial aspects. Many professional music training institutions have bilateral exchange programmes with one or more institutions abroad.

13. What is a multilateral exchange programme?

A multilateral exchange programme involves a group of institutions that have made arrangements for co-operative activities as a network. This means that the members of the network can possibly collaborate with more institutions than in a bilateral exchange programme. Examples of such a multilateral exchange programme exist in professional music training, but these networks are supported by programmes other than the EU programmes (e.g. the NORDPLUS, CEEPUS programmes).

14. Can I do an exchange at a college that is not part of the existing network of contacts available at my school?

This depends on the rules within your institution. In many cases, international offices welcome new cooperation possibilities if the institution you have in mind is interesting to the school. In some cases, you are allowed to organise everything yourself, including establishing contacts, admission, and accommodation. However, some institutions will not allow the exchange to take place without an agreement on the details of your exchange regarding finances and recognition of studies between the two institutions. Please take into account that going outside the existing network will take much more preparation time, as the arrangements that have been developed in an existing bilateral/multilateral agreement are not in place. Often benefits offered in regular exchange programmes, like waiving of tuition fees and exempting from entrance examination, cannot be granted outside networks.

15. Do I have to do an audition? How?

According to the Erasmus University Charter, institutions are obliged to facilitate student exchanges by considering students applications only. However, due to the specifics of Higher Education Institutes in music with the one-to-one teaching feature in the major subjects some kind of audition has to take place in almost all cases. Information about the requirements should be available from the international office/contact person or from the host institution.

Usually a recording or videotape is accepted. Sometimes theoretical tests are also required, but sending a transcript of records with modules you have taken so far and the results achieved will normally be sufficient.

16. What language requirements do I have to meet?

Some knowledge of the language of the host country is recommended; in some cases, it is required. You should ask your international office/contact person whether it is necessary and possible to follow a preparatory language course either at your home institution before your departure or at your host institution before beginning your study period abroad or during the study abroad itself. Host institutions of countries where the national language is less widely used and taught often offer European Intensive Language Preparatory Courses (EILPC) to incoming ERASMUS students.

17. Can I choose my teacher?

The choice of teacher will depend on the arrangements your institution has made with the partner institution abroad. Usually you can mention a preference for a specific teacher, but this teacher might not have a place in his/her studio. In that case, another teacher might be proposed. Students who want to study exclusively with a specific teacher are advised to make contact with this teacher beforehand; for example, during a summer course or a personal meeting/audition.

18. What about music teacher training courses?

Music teacher training programmes may vary substantially from country to country. You will have to discuss with your teacher, the international office/contact person or others in your home institution, and the specialists at the host institution whether you can follow courses in this area and if these courses will be recognised as part of your study abroad programme. The European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) has produced descriptions of national music-teacher-training systems in the various European countries as part of the European project EFMET – European Forum for Music Education and Training (for more information about EFMET, please visit the AEC website at www.aecinfo.org/bologna/teacherdescription). These descriptions provide information on how these systems are constructed; information has been collected on classroom music teachers and instrumental/vocal teachers.

19. Can I participate in ensembles during my study abroad period?

In most institutions you should be able to participate in ensemble activities, such as chamber music groups, orchestras, or big bands. These possibilities could differ from instrument to instrument. Ask the international office/contact person or the host institution about the possibilities and make sure your learning agreement mentions this clearly. It is important to ask for this ahead of time, as sometimes the participation in ensembles requires careful planning beforehand.

20. Will there be performance possibilities?

This will depend on the arrangements that can be offered by the host institution; make sure that you are informed about these beforehand. If you take part in ensembles, usually one or more performances are involved. You can also prepare a farewell performance at the end of your exchange period within the conditions and opportunities offered by the host institution.

21. Should I take courses in addition to my main instrument classes?

This depends on the arrangements between your institution and the host institution, on the learning agreement (see questions 15, 16 and 19 below) and on the requirements stipulated by the study programme itself. It will also depend on your study phase, which might ask for these additional courses. Some conservatoires in Europe are part of larger higher education institutions or have connections with universities and can therefore provide classes in other fields than music. Even if it is not compulsory, it is advisable to follow courses in addition to your main instrument classes, since many institutes offer very interesting and useful courses.

22. How long can I go and when?

This depends on the arrangements made between your institution and the host institution: the length of the ERASMUS exchange periods can usually vary from a one term/semester (the minimum period is 3 months) up to one full academic year. Please take into account that academic calendars can be different in the various countries.

23. When and how should I start making preparations?

Keep in mind that preparing an exchange takes a lot of time! Please take a close look at all relevant deadlines. Usually you should start a year (six months at the least) before the actual exchange, but sometimes even sooner if the institution you want to go to has an early deadline. And if you want to do an exchange outside the existing partnership of your school, a year could even be too short!

RECOGNITION

24. Will I receive academic or credit recognition at home for my study period abroad?

The exchange agreement made by your institutions should have a clear provision in relation to academic or credit recognition. An exchange study period should be an integral part of the programme of study at your home institution. Full academic recognition should be given for the study period abroad, as decided upon in the learning agreement between the home and the host institution. Make sure that the host institution provides you with documents of proof - for example a Transcript of Records – with information about the courses you have followed, the credit points obtained, performances you took part in, what kind of assessments you were asked to do, etc, before returning home (if possible). A short evaluation letter from your principal teacher can also help.

25. What is a Learning Agreement?

For most exchanges, an agreement will be drawn up before the exchange takes place, with details on the courses the student will be taking. In the framework of exchanges within Europe, this agreement is an essential part of an exchange arrangement and is called the Learning Agreement: the Learning Agreement is a contract that indicates precisely what courses you will be studying. Students are expected to complete a Learning Agreement well before they arrive: the student, the relevant person(s) in the home institution, and the relevant person(s) in the host institution should sign it. Subsequent modifications to the Learning Agreement are permitted as long as all parties concerned agree on them. At the end of the study period abroad, the host institution will provide the exchange student or the sending institution with a Transcript of Records reporting the results obtained in the agreed programme of study. The Learning

Agreement should contain information about the course (name, number of credit points (ECTS), and the type of assessment) and some general information about the student.

26. What is ECTS?

To facilitate academic and credit recognition, the majority of European higher education institutions have adopted the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This system provides a common scale for measuring in credits the student workload required to complete course units (for example, one full year of studies generally amounts to sixty credits). As institutions can autonomously decide about the number of credits allocated to each subject, therefore the number of credit points for one subject may vary between home and host institution. You should inform yourself about these arrangements before your exchange.

27. What if the curriculum at the host school is different from that at the home institution?

A different curriculum should be the very reason why you want to go on an exchange! You will have to discuss with the responsible person in your institution whether certain courses at the host institute can replace courses you would have to take at the home institution. In this situation, it is vital that there has been sufficient contact about the content of the Learning Agreement beforehand. In some cases, students do not attend all subjects needed in their study programmes during their exchange period at the host institutions, and therefore are unable to bring back the required number of ECTS credits. In these cases, the home institution may ask you to do additional work afterwards, especially if the lacking courses are compulsory for the successful completion of your qualification.

28. What about examinations?

In an ideal exchange programme, in which both institutions have sufficient trust in each other's quality and assessment standards, the examination procedure you will follow should be the one adopted by the host institution. This may involve written papers and oral and/or performance examinations. In general, you should not have to pass another examination in your home institution and you will nevertheless receive academic recognition for your study abroad period. The learning agreement between the institutions indicates what modules you will be studying and subsequently what examinations you will be taking.

FINANCES

29. Do I have to pay tuition fees abroad?

In the ERASMUS system, exchange students should not have to pay fees (for tuition, registration, examinations, access to rehearsal rooms/studios and library facilities, etc.) to the host institution. However, exchange students should take into account that small fees may be charged for certain costs, such as insurance, student unions, the use of photocopiers, recording products, etc. on an equal basis with local students. It is vital to draw up a budget at a very early stage. Keep in mind that it is not always possible to get a work permit abroad.

If you decide to do a study-abroad period outside the framework of an exchange programme, please take into account that substantial tuition fees could apply.

30. Why and how should I apply for a grant?

Even if you do not have to pay tuition fees, an exchange will cost much more than studying at your home institution. You will have to pay for travel, visa and permits, insurance, housing, etc. Your international office/contact person can inform you if there are grant possibilities. You can also obtain information from the embassy of the host country or from the Internet (for more information, see the website Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Socrates, www.aecinfo.org/SOCRATES).

31. Is it possible to keep my national grant/scholarship during the exchange?

In the ERASMUS system, you can continue to use your national grant/scholarship, as you stay registered in the home institution. The international office/contact person of your institution can provide more information.

32. Can I receive a grant for attending preparatory language courses?

ERASMUS students leaving for countries where the national language is less widely used and taught may be provided with additional financial support to attend an European Intensive Language Preparatory Course (EILPC) in the host country prior to the normal ERASMUS study period. Such additional support may only be awarded to students selected for an ERASMUS study period abroad, with priorities being given to candidates with longer study periods. Your international office can inform you about language grants outside the ERASMUS programme.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

33. What practical things do I have to think about?

- Finding *accommodation* is one of the first steps in your exchange experience. Often the least expensive alternative is to have a room on campus. However, some institutions might not have a campus. You should ask for advice on this matter from the international relations officer in your institution.
- Whether you need a *visa* and a residence permit depends on the country you are from, the country you are travelling to, and the duration of your stay. If you do an exchange from one country to another within the European Union (EU) as an EU citizen, you do not need a visa. However, you may need to apply for a residence permit in the town in which you are staying. If you plan an exchange outside the EU, you will need to arrange a residence permit and visa before you leave. In most countries, a work permit is needed if you wish to do a part-time job. Applying for a work permit can often be a time-consuming (and costly) procedure. The international office at host institution might be able to provide you with more details about visa and permits.
- You have to take care of health, travel, instrument, and liability *insurances* before departure. Your international office should be able to provide you with more details about these issues.

OTHER

34. What are the differences between conservatoires, music academies, music colleges, and Musikhochschulen in Europe?

In the various European countries, there are many differences in systems for professional music training. The different use of terminology is confusing, too: conservatoire, conservatory, school of music, music academy, Musikhochschule, and music university. If you want to have more information about a system in a particular European country, you could visit the descriptions developed by this project of national systems for professional music training in Europe, which can be found at www.aecinfo.org/bologna/gendescriptions. Descriptions of music teacher training systems in Europe can be found at www.aecinfo.org/bologna/teacherdescription.

35. Are there any organisations that could help me get further information on this topic?

There are different European students associations from which you can get more information about higher education, universities and being an ERASMUS student, you can visit our links page and find some useful links on related institutions and organisations.

36. What is the difference between undergraduate and graduate?

The term *undergraduate* refers to the first cycle of studies (usually called Bachelor's). The term *graduate* or *postgraduate* refers to second-cycle studies (usually called Master's). A postgraduate student is currently in the second cycle. The graduate phase is a specialized program that can take from one to six years, leading to a master's (one-two years) or PhD (4-6 years) degree.

37. Still have a question?

Contact the international relations officer in your home institution and he/she will give you an answer or at least will tell who can help you.

38. An Action Plan in short

Below you will find a list of things and actions you should think of when planning an ERASMUS exchange as a reminder. All points are mentioned in the text above.

- Gather information
- Select host institute
- Clear study programme (if possible with credits)
- Permission and supervision from home and host institution
- Budget/cost-plan
- Grant application
- Visa and residence permit (if applicable)
- Insurance
- Language preparation
- Accommodation abroad
- If required and if possible: work permit
- Social preparation
- Address abroad
- E-mail account

- Contact address
- Arrive several days before the start of your studies