



Association for French Language Studies

Statement of support for the UK's continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme

The Association for French Language Studies wishes to express its strong support for the UK's continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme. Erasmus+ offers extensive international mobility opportunities for a wide range of participants, including higher education students and staff, vocational students and apprentices, teachers, youth workers and volunteers. Since its establishment in 1987, the programme has seen growing numbers of participants with wide-ranging benefits for language learning, personal, social, intercultural, academic, educational and professional development.

The Erasmus+ programme helps all UK students benefit from international experience by spending a period of study in another country within their programme of study, with the majority of UK university students who study abroad doing so through the Erasmus+ scheme. In the case of language students, Erasmus+ is critical for the opportunities it offers to language learners to spend time in a country where the target language is used. A wealth of research points to the linguistic benefits that accrue to participants, not solely at a linguistic level, but in life-changing ways at various levels. At a time when various reports highlight the critical need for foreign language skills among Anglophone speakers, Erasmus+ is a crucial means to enhance such speakers' foreign language skillset. Foreign language proficiency is a lifelong skill which can be drawn upon in all aspects our lives, and a crucial component in the educational training of our students. Indeed, as further highlighted by employer reports, the UK's foreign languages skill deficit has significant economic implications – the development of such foreign language skills carries highly positive economic implications as an asset that contributes to further economic development. Thus, continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme reflects an overall commitment to the critical importance of foreign language learning in our global world for the individual, but collectively for society as a whole. It is also crucial to highlight that beyond language students, many non-language students also avail of the opportunities offered by Erasmus+, thereby reflecting an awareness of the significant impact of such international experience in their educational training, as they discover new

cultures and languages, and which they draw upon in their future personal and professional endeavours.

Taken together, Erasmus+ facilitates two-way exchange opportunities for a wide range of participants in both the home and host countries, with significant implications for mutual interaction, understanding and dialogue, as well as societal and economic development. At a time when internationalisation is a key strategic priority for universities, continued participation in Erasmus+ is imperative as a means of maintaining ties with European partners, providing international opportunities to students and colleagues at a teaching, learning and research level, and enhancing the international reach of our universities. The Association for French Language Studies strongly supports the UK's continued commitment to this programme.