

SocialErasmus Charter and Policy Recommendations

SocialErasmus+: policy recommendations for Higher Education, Schools, student organisations and the European Commission



"Erasmus+ should go beyond individuals, impacting home & host communities"

"A policy framework for community engagement and volunteering on exchange"

 SocialErasmus+

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About the project

The **SocialErasmus** programme incorporates all volunteer activities where international students engage with locals to contribute to their local host society. The **SocialErasmus+ project** is an Erasmus+ KA3 Forward-Looking Cooperation grant project to support the development and professionalisation of the SocialErasmus initiative across Europe.

The main aims of the project are:

- Better integrate the international exchange student in the local society by organising volunteer opportunities to ensure an exchange of values takes place between the International students and the local community
- Developing and professionalise the implementation process of the activities by involving more stakeholders such as Higher Education Institutions and local schools in the process.
- Increasing the learning experience of students by engaging with Higher Education Institutions and Non-Formal Education experts to build in elements of Community Service Learning in the curricula and increase the recognition students receive for their volunteering activity.

The SocialErasmus+ project has a focus on **Erasmus in Schools activities**, to ensure also local youth experience internationalisation and intercultural communication in classrooms from a younger age.

The implementation of the SocialErasmus+ project is coordinated by ESN and implemented with the support of the European University Foundation, Youth for Exchange and Understanding, Erasmus Student Network Besancon, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, University of Vienna and the University of Vigo.

Introduction

With more than 4.4 million higher education students having taken part in the Erasmus+ programme, it is one of the most successful initiatives of the European Union.

The Erasmus+ programme has been developed to create young generation who's cultural identity transcends traditional cultural divisions, who carry memories and values within themselves that originate from all corners of the European continent.

To ensure that this happens, an Erasmus+ experience must reach further than the study programme. Therefore, Erasmus+ should go beyond individual participants, impacting both their home and host communities. The programme should encourage students to be active participants during their exchange by volunteering and engaging with their host community.

This experience will make each Erasmus student an ambassador of the programme and its message, multiplying the results of the investment in each participant and supporting the creation of a society of active citizens.

We are therefore calling for an Erasmus programme that is more social!

Volunteering on exchange

This Charter points out the different benefits the Erasmus+ programme can have on exchange students as well as on local communities.

The focal point of the charter is the social impact of the Erasmus+ programme, highlighting benefits not directly related to a person's academics progress or employability opportunities.

The indirect aim of the Erasmus programme is to create a new Generation of Europeans that have a better mutual understanding and intercultural awareness of citizens with a different background.

This charter examines the different key elements that should form the backbone of an Erasmus experience.

Integration and inclusion

Erasmus students should feel integrated in their host society and empowered to interact with their members to build understanding and break down barriers between people from different backgrounds, further strengthening social inclusion.

Local context

By interacting with locals, Erasmus students get to experience the local reality. Students should have the possibility to immerse themselves in the local culture, this allows them to experience local customs in order to better understand the local context.

Exchange of values

Building bridges between locals and Erasmus students fosters an open dialogue and the exchange of values between people with different backgrounds to force a person to look at the world from a different perspective.

Personal development

Personal development is a key aspect to an Erasmus experience. Not only does it expand your knowledge, it empowers students to test and improve their social skills as well as rediscover their personal beliefs. Erasmus changes the participants' self-perception and broadens their horizons.

Local context

Building intercultural awareness to increase understanding of different cultures is important for both the Erasmus student and their host society to overcome prejudice of people that have a different cultural background and ensure acceptance of intercultural diversity.

Global and European citizenship

Erasmus students and the locals they encounter during volunteering activities, should feel encouraged to think outside of local and national confines. The programme should aim at creating global and European citizens, ensuring human connection between people from all over the world and bringing Europeans closer together.





Active citizenship

The Erasmus programme should empower students to make an active contribution to society. By volunteering during Erasmus, people can leave their mark by giving back to their host society.

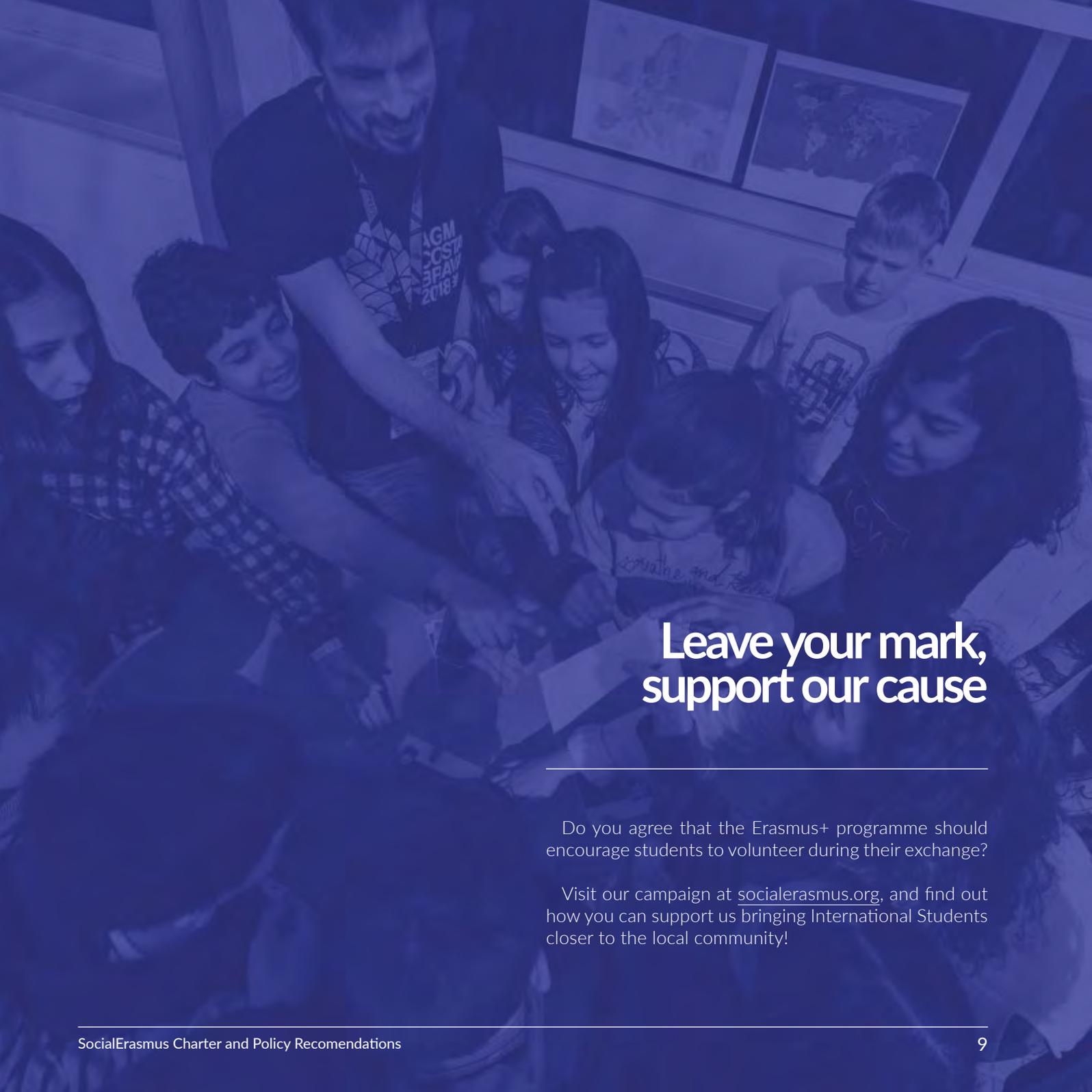
Higher Education has the social responsibility to engage students to reflect critically on society and take up their democratic rights to improve life in local communities.

Internationalisation

Encounters between Erasmus students and locals raise awareness about mobility opportunities and the benefits of Internationalisation to local society. It fosters a positive attitude towards multicultural societies and ensures the world stays more connected than ever through exchange of information, international business and travelling. Erasmus encourages people to improve their knowledge of foreign languages.

Education in the 21st century

Erasmus should contribute to bringing education into the 21st century. Community Service Learning builds a stronger link between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, allowing for a better learning experience of students by bringing elements of non-formal learning into the formal education system.



Leave your mark, support our cause

Do you agree that the Erasmus+ programme should encourage students to volunteer during their exchange?

Visit our campaign at socialerasmus.org, and find out how you can support us bringing International Students closer to the local community!

Policy Recommendations - SocialErasmus+

Erasmus students should have the opportunity to experience and learn from their host culture and extend their academic exchange by engaging with the local community. The programme should facilitate and encourage Erasmus students to impact this local environment by offering volunteer opportunities and a learning environment that transcends the traditional academic setting. As a result, students will have a better intercultural understanding, greater learning outcomes and showcase the importance of internationalisation to the host society.

To this extent, a consortium composed of student and youth organisations, universities and schools has conducted an Erasmus+ co-funded project: SocialErasmus+, which builds upon more than a decade of experience with offering volunteer opportunities to international students. Allowing international students to volunteer in local schools and engage with pupils and teachers has a far-reaching positive impact on all involved parties.

It is crucial to build upon this experience and utilise the outcomes of the project to systematise the access and recognition of volunteer opportunities, as well as to maximising the learning outcome of students and the impact they can have on the local community.

For this reason, we have prepared policy recommendations for all involved stakeholders of these “Erasmus in schools” activities. We believe that a common approach by European institutions, student and youth organisations, universities and schools can contribute to reaching the goal to further recognition of volunteering, impacting local communities and creating a framework in which activities that contribute to the aims of SocialErasmus+ can take place in a more systematic way.

The **policy recommendations** are highlighting concrete points of actions that each target group can take, combined with concise explanations and where appropriate with examples, good practices or concrete proposals for policy changes.

European Commission

1. Broadly speaking, **recognise volunteering** as an in-kind contribution of Erasmus+ co-funded projects and provide Higher Education Institutions with the necessary funding to facilitate volunteer activities and cooperation with local students and youth organisations like the Erasmus Student Network.
2. Encourage the integration of Erasmus students into the local community in the **Erasmus+ Student Charter** under the “During mobility” heading. This can be depicted by encouraging volunteering and specifically SocialErasmus activities as examples for those activities.
3. Update the **Erasmus Charter for Higher Education** to reflect the necessity to fully recognise all relevant Learning Outcomes achieved during an Erasmus mobility and to ensure that HEIs support the facilitation of integration activities and intercultural learning as a central element of student mobility.
4. Encourage the recognition and transferability of overall expected learning outcomes of the Erasmus mobility, by updating mobility documents such as the **Learning Agreement for studies and traineeships** to include general learning objectives for the student during their mobility.
5. Foster a cross-sectoral forum where Higher Education Institutions (HEI), the school sector and youth and student organisations can connect and build their capacity in community-engaged learning.



Educational Framework for Volunteering on Exchange

SocialErasmus+: towards an educational Framework for community engagement and volunteering on exchange



"The Social Responsibility of Higher Education"

"University support for community engagement and volunteering"



A detailed rationale that links the social responsibility of Higher Education Institutions and guidelines on how to implement the aforementioned recommendations can be found in the [Educational Framework](#) developed in cooperation by universities, student associations, schools and other NGOs.

1. Facilitate community engagement for international student at your institution by providing a **framework** and necessary complementary funding for in order to organise those activities.
2. Embed community engagement activities as experiential learning activities into **curricula** of relevant study fields, for example by creating service-learning modules.
3. Provide a support framework and provide necessary complementary funding for student associations connected to the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to organise student volunteering initiatives.
4. If students undertake an **internship** abroad e.g. through the Erasmus+ traineeship scheme, include learning outcomes induced by volunteering and community engaged activities in the framework of such internships.
5. Create **recognition** mechanisms for student volunteering and community engagement activities that are conducted as extracurricular activities by Erasmus students. These can be including the learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement, certificates or badges.
6. Facilitate **partnerships** with local schools and NGOs to allow for a structured approach to community engagement activities, complementing the academic dimension of Erasmus mobilities.

Local student organisations

Practical Guidelines for Volunteer Activities

SocialErasmus+ supporting the organisation of volunteer activities and community engagement during international student mobility



"How to set up a volunteer initiative from A to Z"

"A learning-centred approach to volunteering"



1. Create cooperation agreements with schools to ensure a framework of trust in which Erasmus in Schools activities can take place on a regular basis.
2. Utilise SocialErasmus+ promotion material as provided on the SocialErasmus+ website [<https://socialerasmus.org/>] to promote activities to students, demonstrate success stories to your university and schools involved.
3. Appoint a local volunteer, for example a local ESN Board member who will be responsible for conducting SocialErasmus activities throughout the academic year and to create new and maintain existing partnerships with schools and the Higher Education Institution.
4. Ensure a framework is set up around the community engagement activity, in order for learning objectives to be set, and a reflection process that guides the learning process is integrated.

The '[Practical Guidelines for Volunteer Activities](#)' supports the organisation of volunteer activities and community engagement during international student mobility, starting with the search for local organisations to host student activities, the practical preparation and implementation of the activities as well as the evaluation and debriefing of the activities.

Schools

Erasmus in Schools Guide

SocialErasmus+: Internationalisation through Community Engagement in schools



"Why hosting an Erasmus student in your class is a good idea"

"Practical guideline on how to set up an activity from A to Z"



1. Schools should invite international students for subject-specific presentations and discussions with pupils as part of **internationalisation at home**.
2. School leadership should set up **structured partnerships** with universities and student and youth organisations like ESN.
3. Teachers should include service-learning activities in their curricula and engage in topics such as active citizenship and civic engagement.

The [Erasmus in Schools guide](#) summarises the benefits of bringing international students into local schools and explains how school teachers can implement an erasmus in schools visit in their school, explaining how the online platform to connect schools, student organisations and international students.



WHY ERASMUS

- ✳ To improve my language skills
- ✳ To meet new people from all around the world
- ✳ To know a different culture
- ✳ To learn to do things together as an international community



“

*Discovery is not in
seeking new sights,
but seeing with
new eyes”*

– Marcel Proust

socialerasmus.org



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