



ERASMUS+ STUDENT AND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ESAA
MAGAZINE
Edition 0

An Introduction to the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association





Dear Reader,

The ESAA brings together all European Union funded exchange students and alumni to offer them a dynamic platform for networking, professional development and intercultural learning while at the same time promoting higher education in Europe and worldwide cooperation.

The ESAA will increase the visibility of the Erasmus+ as an excellent example of higher education in the EU. It provides its members with a number of various opportunities, from travelling, through meeting people from all over the world, to becoming creative and bringing unique ideas to life.

We organise intercultural pre-departure training seminars, have an experienced entrepreneurship incubator and support our members' social projects with dedicated funds.

This publication will guide you into the world of ESAA.
We wish you a pleasant read!

"Studying abroad
was a great
experience and
it gave me an
international way
of thinking."

Ákos Károly Bagó

Winner of the Hungarian Design Special Award in 2008,
and the Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2007

Hungary to Netherlands . 2004–2005

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About ESAA

Aims and functions

We offer Erasmus+ students and alumni a dynamic platform for networking, professional development and intercultural exchange.



What is the aim of Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association?

The Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA) aims at providing one single, comprehensive platform for past, present and future Erasmus students and alumni. In order to achieve this, three long-established student and alumni organisations (ESN, EMA and OCEANS Network) and the garagErasmus Foundation (the new Erasmus alumni network for recruitment and youth entrepreneurship) have combined their efforts. The ESAA – potentially the largest network of European and international students and alumni – offers a dynamic platform for networking, professional development and intercultural learning while at the same time promoting higher education in Europe and worldwide cooperation. Its goals are to ensure that the Erasmus+ programme and its underlying values remain effective and visible, as well as to provide a forum to contribute to its further development. By increasing network opportunities, training skills and competences, fostering intercultural dialogue and enhancing knowledge of EU education and cooperation policies, the ESAA aims at profiting from the synergies of the four composing organisations, as well as with the partnership with the EU institutions, universities, the private sector and civil society.

Why do associations such as this need to exist nowadays?

In recent years, Europe has developed in the context of a rapidly evolving world. The global economic situation has brought significant challenges for both Europeans and non-Europeans, and especially for young people and their career prospects. Against this background, the ESAA can provide a significant contribution. Firstly, to encourage young Europeans to be strong in the sense of belonging to a single community and culture. Secondly, to provide students and alumni with



North America

Europe

Asia

Africa

South America

Australia

a closer
look



2 Lien Van de Kelder

Actress

Belgium to France . 2007

"My Erasmus experience has changed my life, has given me an open view and has made me believe even more in Europe."



1 Oliver Stotz

Head of stotz-design.com and lecturer

Germany to United Kingdom . 1992–1993

"To learn about other cultures is imperative for a designer today and in the future. To study in other countries is the first step to work in the design business, and a great experience."





3 Shiella C. Balbutin

Assistant Professor, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan

Philippines to Denmark and United Kingdom . 2005–2007

"I Remember

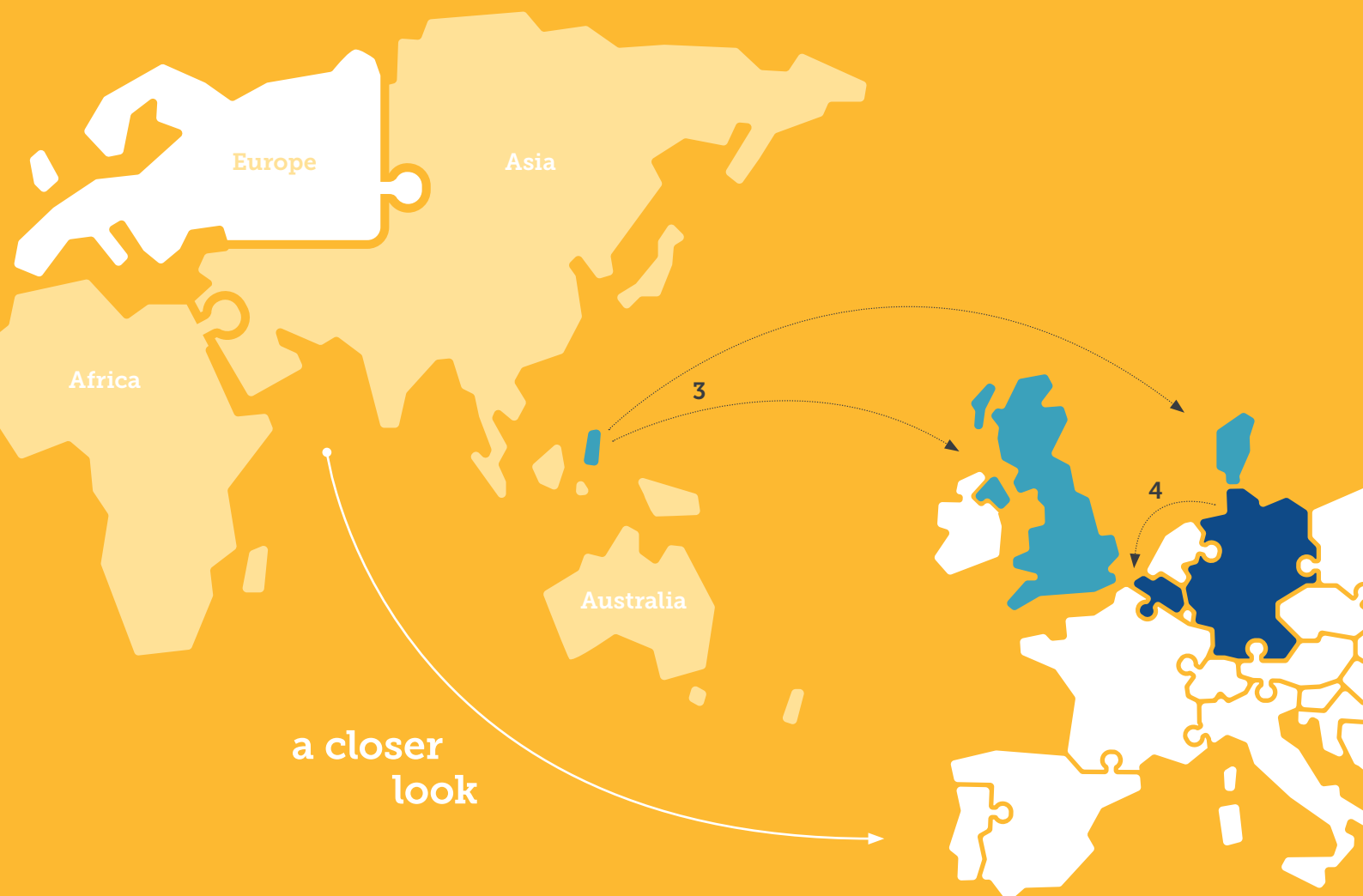
I remember the pleasures of living an independent life and of appreciating what that means.

I remember the people I met and the beautiful cultures they represent.

I remember crying on my way back home, too overwhelmed by all the beautiful memories of studying and living in Europe.

I remember feeling grateful to have been given the once in a lifetime experience.

I will remember my Erasmus Mundus journey for the rest of my life."



better chances to face the professional and social challenges ahead, especially when it comes to finding employment. Last but not least, the ESAA also aims to facilitate dialogue between EU partners. The ESAA functions as a multi-dimensional platform for networking, promoting dialogue, and providing academic as well as professional exchange. We believe that the ESAA can enhance training and job opportunities for its members and project the cultural and social appeal of Europe also outside of the 'old continent'.

How does the ESAA promote higher education in Europe and support the process of internationalisation?

First of all, thousands of volunteers across the world in almost every corner promote EU-funded joint degree and exchange programmes. In doing so, the ESAA can increase the awareness and visibility of Erasmus+ programmes and higher education in the EU in order to make more and more people aware of the opportunities and benefits available to them. Secondly, the ESAA fosters relations within Europe as well as in other parts of the world, connects universities, students and alumni, and gives them a platform for exchange and dialogue. The ESAA can make Europe more international and make the rest of the world more aware of what Europe has to offer. ■■■■



4 **Jan Philipp Albrecht**

Member of the European Parliament

Germany to Belgium . 2005

“I studied law with a focus on European and international law in Bremen. In 2005 I went to Brussels for one semester as an Erasmus exchange student in order “to get closer to Europe”, get to know other cultures and see European law from another perspective. That was very helpful. My time at the Université Libre in Brussels helped me to tie my studies to politics. During this semester I also was an intern at the European Parliament. Erasmus was a great experience for me and influenced my choices in life. I once said to a fellow student: “If I come back to Brussels this will be as a member of the European Parliament.” Who would have thought that this would happen so soon!”

"The ESAA brings together four complementary organisations ... achieving a wider outreach."

Why was the ESAA created? What were the challenges before ESAA and what do you expect from this new organisation?

The ESAA was created to match the way the EU supports higher education. We launched Erasmus+ at the end of 2013, a wide-ranging programme of EU funding for education, training, youth and sport. While it introduces some new elements, it also brings together a number of previously supported activities for higher education mobility such as Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus under one roof.

Over the past years, we have been really impressed by the work done by the volunteers helping students prepare for their study periods abroad, providing buddies to welcome and look after them, forming links between students and course coordinators, and keeping alumni connected to share news and advice once their course has ended. This all adds to the quality of the student experience.

We were looking for a way of channelling this enthusiasm and experience into the new programme. So the ESAA brings together four complementary organisations to work together in achieving a wider outreach, creating meaningful synergies and potentially being able to be much more visible to a large number of stakeholders.

The ESAA's goal is to support students and alumni, to track graduates and make them feel part of a community. It's a community that can share its experiences among its members and further afield. Alumni can help promote the programme and act as ambassadors for European higher education. And for Europe as a whole.

How will the ESAA work?

ESAA is already working! ESAA comprises a Board representing the four associations. Two strands of ESAA each focus on the specific needs of a particular group of people. The Credit Mobility Strand focuses on activities for students and alumni of the shortterm credit mobility – the traditional Erasmus mobility, both in its classic intraEuropean mode, and in the brand new international mobility component. The Degree Mobility Strand caters especially for the current and past students of the Erasmus Mundus joint master degree programmes. Then there are a lot of shared activities – such as promotional activities, communication with members, IT platform, etc. Particularly networking can help alumni share

professional expertise among themselves, and promote new ideas and start-ups with the corporate world.

Is the ESAA another umbrella organisation or a service provider? Will the presence of Board members from grassroots organisations ensure a bottom-up approach or is ESAA's work from the top down?

Well it's both!

It is not only supposed to act as an umbrella to create an environment in which existing associations can work together where it makes sense, but also where they can maintain their own identity. I don't think that means it is from the top down. On the contrary you allow each organisation to have its say, yet to also combine forces to fill the gaps between them and to develop new activities where they are needed.

And it's a service provider too, because that's the way the Commission can best support its activities. Everyone involved is a volunteer (which incidentally makes their work all the more impressive). The Commission has contracted ICU-Net to provide dedicated manpower and the financial and logistical support they'll need to organise information sessions, other meetings and also develop a community on line. Then the volunteers can focus on the content.

How will you ensure that you reach your target audience?

I think we have a target audience of our own – our members. We'll want to inspire and engage them to play their part in our activities. And then they should see the benefits for themselves.

But there's a wider audience too, as we want to show the benefits of international mobility. It's interesting that mobility doesn't just benefit the people who move. The students or staff who stay at home learn so much from visiting or returning students or teachers.

And further still we need to demonstrate these benefits to the wider world: to other students, educational establishments, decision-makers, employers. We can show part of this through the results and statistics in our impact studies. But there's part of it that only really becomes clear when people tell their own stories. Erasmus+ is all about people sharing their knowledge and experience, and the ESAA should be creating the context and sharing the stories to make this happen. ■■■



Adam Tyson

Head of Unit, Higher Education, European Commission

"Erasmus+ is all about people sharing their knowledge and experience, and ESAA should be creating the context and sharing the stories to make this happen."

Adam is Head of Higher Education, Modernisation Agenda and Erasmus at the Directorate General for Education and Culture at the European Commission. He is responsible for developing EU higher education policies, overseeing the implementation of the Erasmus strand of the Lifelong Learning Programme and preparing proposals for the future. In his previous post as Head of Policy and Inter-institutional Coordination, he was responsible for overseeing the development of policy in all areas covered by DG Education and Culture and for ensuring good relations with the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the other EU Institutions.

In previous posts in the Commission, Adam has worked on issues such as combating poverty and social exclusion, fighting discrimination on a wide range of grounds and been responsible for Communication and Speechwriting for the Commissioners for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Before moving to the Commission, Adam spent ten years in Brussels working for the UK Government in the fields of labour and social affairs.

www.eurashe.eu/about/experts/tyson

Who we are & what we do

**The four organisations constituting
the ESAA and the projects,
which they create and support.**



The **Erasmus Student Network** is the biggest network of student organisations in Europe. Since its establishment in 1990, the ESN has grown to currently 498 associations, so called 'sections', in 37 countries. Altogether, there are around 14,500 active members. Often they are supported by other students who act as mentors for international students. The ESN thus annually involves around 29,000 young people and offers its services to around 190,000 international students under the principle of students helping students.

The ESN works for the creation of a more mobile and flexible education environment by supporting and developing student exchanges as well as also providing an intercultural experience to those students who are not able to access a period abroad ("internationalisation at home"). ■■■

www.esn.org



The **garagErasmus** was founded in order to mobilise talents and business ideas that aim to help the Erasmus Generation to find and create jobs.

Since its launch in 1987, the Erasmus study experience has enabled more than 3 million Europeans to experience mobility in a different country. For the participants, studying abroad has most often been a defining period in their lives and created some of their most cherished and memorable experiences. While on a foreign exchange, students not only improve

their language skills, but they also gain intercultural competences, become more self-reliant and form an international mindset. Moreover, students with an international experience tend to have a greater sense of initiative and entrepreneurship than non-mobile students. These skills are greatly appreciated by employers and are among the key aspects sought by recruiters internationally. ■■■

www.garagerasmus.org



The Erasmus Mundus Students & Alumni Association (EMA) was founded in 2006 as an initiative of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission with aim of connecting students and graduates of Erasmus Mundus joint degree programmes.

In a nutshell, Erasmus Mundus degrees are highly competitive master's and doctoral programmes that offer the opportunity to study one course at several European & partner universities leading to joint or multiple degrees. It's a mobility programme thus students move from one institution to another over the course of the programme. This offers students the opportunity to experience different cultures,

exchange knowledge thereby becoming highly adaptable, flexible and internationally connected.

Over the years, the EMA has grown an international organisation with over 11,000 members and with presence in 174 countries. The EMA focuses on promoting the excellence of the Erasmus Mundus programme, sharing of intercultural experience as well as networking and professional development of its members. ■■■

www.em-a.eu



The OCEANS Network, the organisation for Cooperation, Exchange and Networking among Students, was originally founded in 2010 to strengthen academic and intercultural links between the EU and other industrialised states – namely the US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Since 2015, the OCEANS Network has opened up to welcome and support all exchange students and alumni coming from or going to more than 70 countries participating in Erasmus+. What all OCEANS members have in common is their important role of connecting the EU and their home country, or the countries where they had their exchange.

The main objective of the OCEANS network is to provide an accessible and inclusive platform to develop long lasting relationships between people, universities, cultures, countries.

Being an OCEANS member is not only about sharing a study experience, but it is also about friendship, about discovery and diversity. It is also about networking and professional advancement, and it is very common for members to find valuable career opportunities, inspiration and directions by getting in touch with like-minded people from all over the world. At a broader level, the OCEANS Network aims at turning the temporary academic exchange experience into a lasting resource that not only enriches the single individuals with different skills and personal or professional connections, but also contributes to a climate of peaceful and improved cooperation among Europe and other countries in the world. ■■■

www.oceans-network.eu

The projects

Of Erasmus Student Network, garagErasmus,
Erasmus Mundus Association, OCEANS Network

Erasmus Student Network


The daily activity of our local members consists of organising events and promoting initiatives that can improve the quality of life of exchange students, enrich society through international students and promote mobility amongst the locals, all on a voluntary basis.

The international level provides support to the local sections through a wide range of international projects which cover a diverse range of fields. Here is a description of some of the ESN's most important projects.

Mov'in Europe: Mov'in Europe is an initiative that promotes mobility. Its aim is to raise mobility issues on the political agenda and provide better information about mobility opportunities for young people, students and young graduates. The implementation of the project occurs through the development of innovative and lively digital campaigns, a network of ambassadors who provide information about student mobility and initiatives all over the network, such as mobility days, fairs, conferences and promotion of mobility experiences.

SocialErasmus: SocialErasmus promotes a social attitude among young citizens participating in mobility programmes. It helps facilitate their integration into the local community while at the same time giving them the chance to make a long lasting social change in society by volunteering. Through SocialErasmus activities, international students experience volunteering activities that allow them not only to understand society's problems, but also to work on solutions. Thus, SocialErasmus provides an opportunity for international students to get to know other realities and learn how they can contribute to improve society as citizens of the world.

ESNcard: The ESNcard is the ESN membership card and also a student discount card, sold by the ESN sections in almost all countries where ESN is present. The project consists of the online platform ESNcard.org and the ESNcard itself. The amount of discounts is constantly rising, both online and in local stores all over Europe. Discounts are available in such diverse categories as travel, electronics and food & drink. 130,000 ESNcard holders have access to the services and benefits provided by the ESN network and its partners.

ESNsurvey: The ESNsurvey is the biggest regular European research project planned and carried out entirely by students for students. It is conducted annually and surveys students at higher education institutions. ESN shares the results with the main stakeholders in higher education and mobility programmes and provides recommendations for further improvement. In the last few years an average of 15,000 students have answered our annual survey. 

garagErasmus

The Erasmus generation, composed of extraordinarily talented people, is what drives the garagErasmus Foundation, which created the online platform Check-in Europe – the first professional network of the Erasmus generation. On this platform, former Erasmus students as well as like-minded persons with other international experience can upload their CVs and list their skills, competences and business ideas. Check-in Europe thus offers a huge marketplace where the profiles of all registered users are available for companies and recruiters. Moreover, entrepreneurs, investors, and start-uppers will gain the opportunity to identify potential partners and new business opportunities across an enormous number of individuals.

This digital community is also the powerful engine to bring the European idea to the local level. In 2014, garagErasmus launched the gE4Cities, a programme to establish local chapters of the association in many European cities. Currently, five ge4Cities have received formal recognition: Athens, Istanbul, Lisbon, Prague and Tours. These local garagErasmus associations can use the Check-in Europe platform to discuss relevant topics, match local talents and invite people to their events and meet-ups. The foundation's local associations, which consist of a small group of volunteers, take care of the face-to-face matching of persons and ideas. The Check-in Europe platform is the ideal place where individuals who are interested in similar topics, who work in the same city, or who want to establish a start-up can find each other.

Check-in Europe is at the backbone of all the association's activities. Meet-ups of local associations, 'gE4City' (e.g. gE4Lisbon) and Joint Projects of alumni (coaching, mentoring), cities/regions (territorial marketing), companies (recruitment, business development abroad), investors/business angels/crowd funders (investment) and universities (career guidance, start-up centres, alumni tracing, lifelong learning).

In a nutshell, Check-in Europe facilitates online/offline matching between registered individuals and their counterparts across Europe:

- Other alumni, for joint projects, coaching and mentoring
- Recruitment agencies, for public and private employment
- Investors, business angels and crowd funders, for investments
- Companies, wishing to expand abroad, searching for contacts persons and business partners in target countries
- Cities and regional authorities, wishing to raise the attractiveness of their areas for international talent (territorial marketing)
- Universities, for better alumni tracing and more effective (international) career service
- Universities, for a better and more comprehensive targeting of their lifelong learning offers

In order to successfully promote and attract the Erasmus Generation, garagErasmus aims to connect universities, cities and companies working together within a public-private logic to empower growth and innovation. garagErasmus enables local companies to find the international staff they need and to expand their business across Europe and beyond. Universities, as well, receive greater benefits for internationalising their career- and start-up services, and are able to trace alumni and their careers in an improved fashion. ■■■

what we do 

Erasmus Mundus Association

EMA Events Globally: There are twelve Regional Chapters represented by EMA members spread across the globe with grassroots representation led by EMA Country Representatives in 174 countries. EMA provides funding for members to organised events to promote Erasmus+ (Erasmus Mundus programmes) and to orientate new EM beneficiaries before setting off to Europe. Other events are organised to connect alumni around the globe and link EMA members with industry professionals.

EMA Career: The Professional Development (PD) Team organises a 'Mentor Mentee Programme' that offers space for EMA professionals to gain coaching skills while helping junior EMA members to find their career path.

EMA Community / Social: One of the EMA objectives is to share intercultural experience. The Community Development (CD) Team makes sure that members stay engaged through projects such as 'Paper Traveler', EMA Day or 'Love Beyond Borders' to mention just a few.

EMAnate: The EMA magazine, prepared by the Communications Team, offers a very diverse content that include EMA events and activities, photo competitions, success stories and articles.

EMA Networked: Sust-EMA-bility is an initiative that promotes a culture that focuses on sustainable practices with particular interest in environmental issues. GeoMundus is a network of EMA members and students related to Geoscience disciplines who organise a yearly conference with focus on Geospatial technologies. EMA Entrepreneur Network is formed by members interested in starting their own business and is a platform to share knowledge of experienced entrepreneurs with fellow EMA members.

Course Quality Survey: This research project is one of the most successful initiatives of EMA and is run by the Course Quality Advisory Board (CQAB) in close collaboration with the Erasmus Mundus Programme Representative Network (PRNet).

EM graduate Survey: Research that analyzes the quality of over 180 Erasmus Mundus Programmes based on feedback of graduates and their post-study experiences. 

OCEANS Network

What does the OCEANS Network do in concrete terms for students and alumni? First of all, it provides **support to students** prior their departure and during the exchange period, by organising pre-departure orientations and intercultural training seminars. This is useful to equip students with the required awareness to manage their study period abroad and to overcome possible cultural shocks caused by living on a different continent for the first time. Our support does not stop with the end of the exchange period. In fact, OCEANS has been providing a number of **opportunities for alumni's personal and professional development**, by organising webinars, seminars, conferences and workshops where members can learn useful soft skills or get to know more about a topic they are passionate about. In this sense, OCEANS provides a **unique platform for networking**, not only among members, but also by taking advantage of members' connections to create networking opportunities with external institutions, companies and organisations around the world. Additionally, the Network also acts as **entrepreneurship incubator** by organising entrepreneurship competitions and by providing support to develop and realise innovative ideas.

Finally, OCEANS offers **volunteering opportunities** that allow members to grow both personally and professionally by taking on progressive responsibilities and performing leadership roles within the network. In sum, what OCEANS Network offers to students and alumni is **international connections worldwide** and **opportunities for growth**. 





Kickoff Conference June 11–12 2015

250 participants gathered together
for an official reception and kickoff conference
in Brussels, Belgium.





In the field of European higher education, a new organisation is being established: the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA). It will bring together European Union funded exchange students and graduates by uniting four existing associations under one new umbrella:

- Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- garagErasmus (gE)
- OCEANS Network

As a new and dynamic platform, the ESAA will enhance international cooperation, networking, professional development and intercultural learning among members, while promoting higher education in Europe and developing new partnerships worldwide. This new initiative was launched during a reception and the subsequent kick-off conference on the 11th and 12th June 2015 in Brussels.

Tibor Navracsics, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said: "Erasmus+ is one of Europe's flagship projects, and rightly so. Studying in another country, whether for a short or longer period, is a great experience for young Europeans: It helps them to enhance their skills as well as to understand and accept cultural and other differences. Student and alumni associations offer crucial support to help young people make the most of this opportunity – before, during and after their stay abroad. That is why I am very pleased that the ESAA will help to channel this support and know-how even more effectively. I am looking forward to seeing new activities that will further improve the mobility experience, encourage networking and help promote the opportunities Erasmus+ offers to a wider audience."

More than 250 participants were invited to join the ESAA for its kick-off, including members of the four founding associations, representatives of the European Commission as well as other stakeholders involved in the creation of the ESAA. Xavier Prats Monné, Director General of the DG for Education and Culture, and Chantal Gaemperle, Group Executive Vice-President of LVMH, opened the conference on European Higher Education and the ESAA. The conference closed with a TED-style call for action to collaborate within the ESAA in order to help promote Erasmus+ on a global platform.

The aim of the event was to showcase the establishment of this new umbrella association, to discuss the strategic de-

velopment of the ESAA, to highlight the benefits of bringing together our four organisations and much more. Also, panel discussions and inspiring workshops were part of the ESAA kick-off conference:

In the workshop "Inspiring stories from the Erasmus+ community", three members of Erasmus+ community shared their story of self-discovery, personal development and success. Georgiana Mihut talked about the importance of good quality higher education and gave advice on how to bring together a group of people who voluntarily, without any reward, accomplished very time-consuming and important study.

Rosa Maria Utset Gil talked about how moving out and going for some time abroad changed her life, how it boosted her self-confidence and helped her overcome her fears. Her most important lesson of her exchange: We are not aware how influenced we are by our culture until we go abroad and discover a completely new world.

Leasa Weimer inspired everyone, especially women, by her story of doing a PhD, being EMA president and being a mum of a newborn at the same time. She encouraged to be brave and go for it following the words "Leap and the net will appear".

The workshop "Youth entrepreneurship and innovation: another way for Erasmus" was focused on topics related to entrepreneurship and on sharing the experiences of the students and alumni of different organisations of the ESAA.

The workshop started with a talk from Elizabeth Humberstone of EMA who is leading the startup "Apply Yourself" which offers application and admissions services to Erasmus students. She talked about the challenges that startups face when entering the public sector, using the education sector as an example. She pointed to many challenges in the sector, for example pricing things in a sector in which institutions do not have a lot of financial resources and aiming for profit in an area where activities are typically seen as social work.

Next, Ben Gill from Oceans Network presented a talk on "How to be an entrepreneur" in which he shared his experience as an entrepreneur and talked about his early startups such as goodchocolates.co.uk and Adventure Travel Film Club. He gave many tips to new entrepreneurs such as always checking the numbers, not being afraid to enter new terrain and, most importantly, not giving up. Memet Unsal talked about "InnoCampus - An innovation and entrepreneurship platform at universities". InnoCampus is a prefabricated portable platform, which consists of coworking, co-learning and co-creation (FabLab) spaces as well as a digital platform. Damien Lamy-Preto talked about the importance of networking for

entrepreneurs. He provided examples of how networking can be used to get new ideas and feedback, collecting useful information and numbers, and as a means of reaching out to the clients. Pavan Siram from the EMA presented the RealiseIT project and how it offers an opportunity to ESAA members to become entrepreneurs.

The aim of the employability panel session panel was to answer the following questions: What impact will Erasmus+ have on the labour market and on employability within Europe? How are foreign study experiences and related skills relevant for recruiters in private and public organisations? How can professional mobility in Europe be fostered? Four outstanding speakers discussed these questions with the ESAA community: Dr. Christoph Anz, BMW Group, Director of Education Policy, Maurits van Rooijen, Rector and CEO of the London School of Business and Finance (LSBF), Vanessa Debais-Sainton, Head of Sector, Higher Education, Erasmus+, DG Education and Culture, European Commission, Leasa Weimer, ESAA Board Member, EMA President.

Dr. Cristoph Anz talked about the importance of international experience and interdisciplinarity for leading positions. He mentioned also the necessity of having the ability to use the

academic theoretical knowledge obtained in university for real life problems.

Maurits von Roojen discussed employability from an educational point of view. He talked about the role of higher education institutions in connecting three involved stakeholders: student, educator and employer.

Vanessa Debais-Sainton illustrated with statistics how international mobility improves employment chances. It increases employment chances by 40%, 10% of students studying abroad start their own companies. At the moment, only 5% of students participate in Erasmus and more people should have access to it. Erasmus+ and the ESAA have a great impact in shaping modern education. ■■■■

For more information on the event and ESAA visit our website: www.esaa-eu.org

#ESAAskickoff

#ESA Ae u



Structure

The ESAA Board

The Board is the steering body of the ESAA and responsible for the major decisions concerning its function.

It is composed of ten members nominated by the four organisations which constitute the ESAA.

The members set annual strategy, develop work plans and decide on budgetary planning.



Melania Lotti, Vice-President of the OCEANS Network

She is responsible for the international development of the OCEANS Network. Interested in external relations and EU affairs, she has studied in Italy, the Netherlands and South Korea.

Neringa Tumėnaitė, President of the OCEANS Network

As a human rights activist, she has a strong interest in intercultural dialogue and youth empowerment through non-formal education, which is the perspective she brings to the ESAA.





Leasa Weimer, former President of the Erasmus Mundus Association

She oversaw the strategic development of the EMA. She holds a PhD in higher education policy and works as a knowledge development adviser for a professional association on the internationalisation of higher education.

Emrah Karakaya, Vice-President of the Erasmus Mundus Association

He has enjoyed the Erasmus programme 4 times: Erasmus, Erasmus Placement, Erasmus Mundus Master and Erasmus Mundus PhD.



Edlira Alku, Representative of the Erasmus Mundus Association

She studied in Italy, Germany and Hungary and now works as a senior manager at one of the biggest charities in London and brings to the board experience in governance and management.



Pavan Sriram, former Vice-President of the Erasmus Mundus Association

He is the founder of REALISE IT, an Business and Social incubator focused on new ideas. He spent 7 years in various roles at the EMA. He also serves as an ESAA board member where he seeks to empower and inspire ESAA members. He believes in the true potential of ESAA to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world.



Stefan Jahnke, Former President of the Erasmus Student Network

He used to lead one of Europe's biggest student association with 13,500 members volunteering in 460 associations in 37 European Countries.

Jonathan Jelves, Former Treasurer of the Erasmus Student Network

In the ESN he was working primarily with issues linking mobile students to the private sector, through such projects as ErasmusIntern.org and ESNcard.org.



Nicola Filizola, Vice President EU Affairs & Co-Founder, garagErasmus Foundation

He is a communication senior professional and co-created the garagErasmus Foundation. Based in Brussels, he is the foundation's person when it comes to relations with the European Commission, multinationals, universities and international stakeholders.

Viviana Premazzi, garagErasmus Foundation

She is a consultant for the World Bank and field coordinator in Turin for the project Greenback 2.0 – Remittance Champion Cities and researcher at the International and European Forum for Research on Migration (FIERI) in Turin.



The ESAA Board Member interviews

Here you find out more about what the board members think of the ESAA.



Stefan Jahnke

Former President of ESN and ESAA Board Member



What are your expectations towards this new umbrella organisation, the ESAA?

The ESAA offers us a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with four existing organisations with all very different experiences and know-how. This opens a lot of doors for everyone involved in the ESAA and for the organisations as such. We have the great chance to provide added value to the Erasmus+ programme by creating new collaborative projects and initiatives which wouldn't be possible for each of the organisations individually.

How have you been involved in shaping the organisation? How will you be involved, in the near future and in the long-term?

As the former President of the Erasmus Student Network, I had the chance to be involved from the very beginning of the ESAA. I participated in the very first meetings with the other organisations and in the discussions regarding the structure, the mission and the future of the ESAA. There have been some exciting times and many challenges have been overcome. I can clearly see the progress we have made since the very first meeting and I am looking forward to representing the ESN within ESAA until the end of my term in March 2017.

What challenges do you see for the ESAA?

The main challenge I see for the ESAA is the differences in our four organisations. We all share the same aim; supporting and promoting student mobility. We all have very different approaches though, and getting together has been a real challenge, especially at the beginning. The past year has shown that if we get together and cooperate, we can create something very special, something that will give European student mobility real added value.

“The main challenge I see for the ESAA is the differences in our four organisations.”

What effects will the ESAA have on your organisation?

ESAA will give some of the over 14,000 ESN volunteers the opportunity to get active on a European or even Global perspective of student mobility. I hope that these members can build a strong network by meeting members from the other organisations and cooperating with them. ■■■



Emrah Karakaya

Vice President of Erasmus Mundus Association (EMA) and ESAA Board Member



What are your expectations towards this new umbrella organisation, the ESAA?

I believe that this new umbrella organisation will be beneficial at both individual and organisational levels. At the member's level, I expect the ESAA to be instrumental in connecting the individual members of four organisations with each other (EMA, ESN, garagErasmus and Oceans). These members have a variety of educational, socio-geographical and professional backgrounds. In doing so, our members can learn and harvest ideas from one another. Recent research has indicated that diversity brings creativity and innovation for individuals. At the organisational level, there are great opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. In the end, all four organisations serve the interests of students and alumni and, I believe, we can have a bigger impact when we work together.

How have you been involved in shaping the organisation? How will you be involved, in the near future and in the long-term?

I initially got involved when we received the first proposal from the European Commission in 2014. Back then, I was one of the representatives of the EMA, collaborating with the representatives of other three organisations. Our task was to draft the vision, mission and organisational structure of the ESAA. Later, in March 2015, together with Edlira, Pavan and Leasa, I was appointed as one of the ESAA board members by the EMA. In October 2015, I was elected Vice President of the EMA for the next two years. Also the new EMA Steering Committee has been just established. Now we are working together on how the future composition of EMA representatives on the ESAA Board should be. Stay tuned!

What challenges do you see for the ESAA?

I think the ESAA Board has done a great job in less than eight months. I hope we will keep this momentum going in the

near future as well. However, there are still a lot of challenges awaiting us. In my opinion, one of our most important challenges is our identity. We receive a lot of questions from our members about the ESAA. Some are worried about the possible consequences for our identity and the brand name, i.e., Erasmus Mundus. I hear comments like "Being a member

"I really believe that the ESAA does and will serve as a great platform for collaboration."

of Erasmus Mundus Student and Alumni Association (EMA) which is a part of Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA), sounds a little bit too complicated, don't you think?"

What effects will the ESAA have on your organisation?

Actually, changes have already started! I think the members of the Board and Working Groups have been really inspired by the members of the other three organisations and their best practices, on both social and professional levels. For example, the ESN helped us not only to register the EMA as a legal entity but also to generate ideas for funding opportunities. This will all make EMA a sustainable organisation! I really believe that the ESAA does and will serve as a great platform for collaboration. Each of the four organisations has a different set of strengths and expertise and, at the same time requires different areas of improvement! When we look at the big picture, we are sure that this diversity in the ESAA will help us to generate the most innovative ideas with the greatest impact for the students and alumni of E+ (and therefore Erasmus Mundus) in the future! ■■■



Nicola Filizola

Vice President EU Affairs and Co-Founder, garagErasmus Foundation



What are your expectations towards this new umbrella organisation, the ESAA?

The ESAA is a new organisation, only few months old, and it is the result of a large effort of synthesis among four already established organisations with the support of the European Commission. I have been contributing my enthusiasm and my professionalism to help this become a successful new platform that can help bridge students' lives with their professional lives. As co-founder of garagErasmus, I always seek the links between the world of students and the corporate world and I believe we have a tremendous opportunity here. How would it be if the student's life did not end with a dramatic jump into the darkness, but instead already had the basis of a professional future interwoven? We at garagErasmus see the ESAA as a platform where each organisation offers its best tools and capacities to encourage the other associations grow and improve. What are we in the end if not facilitators for millions in the Erasmus generation? We are keen to operate within the ESAA as the engine that serves the ESN, EMA, OCEANS and the complete Erasmus generation to bridge the gap between higher education and the corporate world.

How have you been involved in shaping the organisation? How will you be involved, in the near future and in the long-term?

Since its very inception, I have been a part of the group that works on shaping the organisation. Together with my other colleagues on the Board, I participated in the several meetings that took place to define the mission of the ESAA, together with the division of tasks for each working group. Not an easy task, as in some cases we had to prioritise the larger goals of the ESAA over the individual associations' own interests. I collaborate with the smooth operations of the professional development group and I am also a board member for the Credit Mobility Strand. I have the privileged position to be able to see and work on the adaptation of each other for a wider impact on the Erasmus Generation. Together with my colleague Viviana Premazzi I will continue to work on the two boards of garagErasmus and ESAA. There I can facilitate the mobility of millions of individuals who share our same dreams and goals.

What challenges do you see for the ESAA?

The ESAA is the newcomer in the huge galaxy of students and alumni related organisations in Europe. This fact by itself represents a great challenge as it is about positioning our work among several other organisations. Moreover, the ESAA being a platform that serves and enriches other four organisations, another challenge ahead is the continuous effort to work in teams while acting as one. As a Board representative, I see that one of the major issues at the moment is to clearly communicate to the individual organisation members what the ESAA is about and how they can benefit from it. There is a need to rethink and to find a collaborative mindset. I am sure this is possible and that I already see it on the working group level. A few months ago, the Board wanted to come up with a concrete plan of action and a mission. Now these are in place and it is time for some multi-level involvement. I see an association with some huge potential, it is up to us to make the most of it and take it to the next level.

What effects will the ESAA have on your organisation?

I do not see any major changes for garagErasmus in the operation of the ESAA. We have been established and will continue to work on empowering mobility talents on their professional journeys. The Erasmus+ Students and Alumni Associations can only help by increasing the capacity of garagErasmus to reach out to all those with the goal to enlarge their professional scopes and potential. In my view, the ESAA is an ideal place where the continuity of the four organisations occurs. Imagine, you are an ESN member or you have experience with the EMA or OCEANS and you're an entrepreneur at the same time: you are looking for a partner to scale up your business in another country. Thanks to Check-in Europe, we intend to provide everyone with a concrete opportunity to match-make their needs with someone else's in another place. On the other hand, imagine you are simply looking for a job as you want to move to another place; it isn't easy adjusting to life in a new city. Using the same platform, our gE4s can organise meet-ups that bring you into direct contact with local recruiters and companies. And all this for the entire community. We definitely see the ESAA as a multiplier and as an opportunity. ■■■



Neringa Tumenaite

President of OCEANS Network and ESAA Board Member



What are your expectations towards this new umbrella organisation, the ESAA?

I hope the ESAA will act as a force which creates strong synergies among the four partners, while also leaving space for each of its member associations to preserve what makes them unique.

How have you been involved in shaping the organisation? How will you be involved, in the near future and in the long-term?

We as OCEANS Network have been involved in creating the ESAA from early on, together with our partners from the EMA, ESN, gE and the European Commission. We were able to foresee the strategic priorities for the umbrella association, co-draft its mission and vision and to identify points of cooperation. Perhaps one of our strongest points of reference has always been trying to make sure that extra-European exchange students and alumni are well represented and catered to by the ESAA, and that it establishes itself as a body with a strong worldwide dimension.

What challenges do you see for the ESAA?

I think we have already tackled a big chunk of challenges, such as coming together at a communal table with people and organisations from different backgrounds, and trying to create something by which we could all stand by. Right now, our main focus is how to make all of the ideas we have agreed on become alive and operational, and that the ESAA continues to develop.

What effects will the ESAA have on your organisation?

Our organisation has been through a lot of changes following the new ERASMUS+ programme. Initially, the programmes for credit mobility mainly targeted six countries outside of the EU, the US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. As of 2015, the number expanded to mobility agreements with higher education institutions in more than 70 countries throughout the world. So our network has undergone a massive internal restructuring, and we've worked a lot to make sure we can reach the new students and alumni outside of Europe.

“Right now, our main focus is how to make all of the ideas we have agreed on become alive and operational.”

Here, collaboration and support of our umbrella partners is of great value, for as a young network (only five years old!) we are keen to learn and develop our capacity. This is now more important than ever as the growth in membership has the potential to increase 10 times within a year. So we have joined the ESAA at a very exciting time. ■■■

“The ESAA is the newcomer in the huge galaxy of students and alumni related organisations in Europe.”

Nicola Filizola



ESAA Working Groups

Professional Development

The Professional Development Working Group offers strategies and methodologies that can assist ESAA's members in the acquisition of professional development skills. This includes a platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration and the ability to work in diverse teams. The Working Group fosters global and cultural awareness, helps ESAA members to develop leadership and project management skills and a flair for entrepreneurship. The Working Group is responsible for the very successful ESAA incubator that invites ambitious members to bring their ideas/projects to the next level and find their bearings in the start-up scene.

Events Working Group

As the ESAA continues to strategically develop, so do the WGs. The ESAA Events WG is the youngest ESAA WG, a transformation of the old ESAA Community Development WG. In the previous WG, the members met several times online and once in person in order to discuss the community specific topics and, consequently, generate new ideas. Within this new WG, i.e., the ESAA Events WG, the members aim at managing the ESAA events, such as the ESAA annual meetings and ESAA Working Group meetings. Currently, the new WG is working on helping out for the strategic and effective management of the upcoming events.

Survey and Research Working Group

The Survey and Research Working Group keeps the ESAA community informed about important educational policies, research, dialogues on European level and the events that impact them. The R&S team will seek out opportunities to suggest seminars, events and conferences that are important for ESAA members. The Working Group is composed of expert members from each member organisation of the ESAA and they have expertise on various topics in mobility. The Working Group takes care of annual surveys, follows E+ developments and distributes relevant policy news, discussions, and/or events to the Communications team.

Promotion Working Group

The Promotion Working Group has for the first year of ESAA taken on the challenging task of organising the Kick-off event. To organise the event, which included a public conference for 250 participants and a two-day workshop for 160 participants from the ESAA's member organisations, a team of eight volunteers worked together with Board Member, Stefan Jahnke, and the service provider ICUNet to plan an exciting, yet efficient agenda. Bringing such a large number of people to Brussels and co-organising such a large scale event between the four organisations was a mammoth task. The Working Group members divided themselves in teams, prepared agenda suggestions, brainstormed session outcomes, possible speakers, logistics, the evening programme and much more. The positive feedback on the event and the excellent results speak for themselves: The team managed to organise a very special event to kick off the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association. As the trial of having a group of volunteers organising the lion's share of the event was a success, the Board decided that the contributions of volunteers will also in future be of crucial nature in giving the right amount of participation and ownership of such events to the volunteers of the ESAA. The task of organising events will be shifted away from the Promotion Working Group and will fall under the responsibility of the Community Working Group. The Promotion Working Group will focus on another very important task: the promotion of Erasmus+. For this reason, the Working Group will also be renamed the "Erasmus+ Promotion Working Group".

Communications Team

The Communication Working Group (COMMS) covers all external communication aspects of the ESAA. Through its bi-monthly newsletter it offers relevant information about the ESAA, its member organisations and Erasmus+ to all its subscribers. Our Social Media channels like Facebook and Twitter offer more regular updates about activities and campaigns and use interactive content to engage with others. COMMS is also responsible for the design and content of the ESAA website and our official magazine.



ESAA Groups

Teamwork

Degree Mobility Strand

The Degree Mobility Strand (DMS) is one part of ESAA. It is represented by Erasmus Mundus Association which consists of students and alumni of Erasmus Mundus Masters and Doctorate, which are full mobility degree programmes. In 2015 the strand carried out diverse activities including several Pre-departure orientations, Career advancement activities, Course Quality survey, Erasmus+ promotions in among others Africa, Latin America, North America, China, Middle East, Oceania, South Asia, India, Europe. ■■■



Credit Mobility Strand

The Credit Mobility Strand (CMS) forms a subgroup of the ESAA. It consists of the member organisations which primarily work with students and alumni from the credit exchanges of Erasmus+: The ESN, garagErasmus and OCEANS. The activities implemented under CMS for 2015 cover such diverse categories as volunteering, Erasmus+ events, professional opportunities and the making of an Erasmus+ promotional film.

Social projects

We believe it's important that Erasmus+ students engage in social causes in their host communities. It's an opportunity to truly connect and integrate with the local society, and to enrich the lives of the students as well as the local population. This support to the local community can also facilitate better understanding between people of different cultures and backgrounds. For this reason, the CMS has created a grant scheme to which members of the ESN, garagErasmus and OCEANS can apply to receive funding for projects which engage Erasmus+ students in local social causes. Over 30 applications were received and during the autumn many of these projects will be implemented with a combined support of EUR 25,000 from CMS.

Worldwide events

The Erasmus+ programme stretches beyond the borders of Europe into all continents. Therefore it is important for the ESAA and CMS to have a truly global presence. In order for students outside of Europe to become aware of the fantastic opportunities of Erasmus+ and of studying in Europe, the ESAA must be there to spread the word. For this reason, the CMS has set up a grant scheme where members of the ESN, gE and OCEANS can apply to if they wish to organise Erasmus+ events outside the borders of Europe. Many applications have been received and during the autumn of 2015 more than EUR 20,000 is being granted to these global events.

Professional opportunities

The transition between education and working life is very important. Yet still today there is often a lack of integration between the world of education and professional life. In order to promote a better connection between the two, the CMS implemented fully funded study trips to the exciting companies Airbnb and Innocampus which members of ESN, gE and OCEANS could apply to and get an inside look behind the scenes. More than 100 applications were received and 20 lucky people were chosen to make the trips to Dublin and Istanbul in October.

We the Erasmus generation

We want everyone to know and feel the power of an Erasmus+ experience, how it can empower your professional life and enrich your understanding of the world. The best way to learn about Erasmus+ is by listening to the stories of those who have experienced it. During the autumn a film crew will interview several alumni of Erasmus+, from all parts of the world, to hear their experiences first-hand. The result will be a video called "We the Erasmus Generation" which will leave no doubt that the Erasmus+ experience is truly life changing. ■■■■





What is planned for 2016?

The ESAA promises that a range of great activities will be organised for Erasmus+ Students and Alumni in 2016.

Training seminars, study visits, social initiatives, pre-departure events worldwide, entrepreneurial competitions such as the ESAA Incubator and webinars, and much more ...

So stay tuned and like us on our social channels to stay updated!
Visit our website to find out more about the ESAA: esaa-eu.org



