

Frequently Asked Questions: Teachers Interested in an ERASMUS Exchange

1. Why should I go on an exchange?

There are many reasons why an ERASMUS teaching exchange could benefit you as a teacher. As a tool for staff and curriculum development, an international exchange broadens horizons and gives new insights into different teaching methods and approaches to professional music life. In addition, you could use the exchange to promote your class or department by launching student exchanges and/or setting up regular teacher exchanges and/or specific cooperation projects. An exchange can also be part of continuing professional development or a research assignment for the teacher. Sometimes an exchange can even solve the problem that develops for institutions when a teacher is on tour, as an exchange teacher might take his/her place during the absence.

The general mission of your participation in an exchange is “bringing your institution closer to Europe and bringing Europe closer to your institution”. Furthermore, it is important to offer international experiences to students that cannot participate in a student exchange. The ERASMUS programme gives you the possibility to participate in and to make a contribution to the development of a European dimension among higher music education institutions in Europe.

2. With which institutions abroad does my institution have contacts?

Most institutions have a list of international institutions with which exchanges are organized. Your international office/contact person can inform you about the possibilities and advise you which institutions could be available to you. Some of your colleagues may already have been on an exchange; ask them about their experiences. If you would like to have more information about a specific institution, most institutions have extensive websites; you can find links to the websites of more than 260 European institutions for professional music training on the websites of the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC: www.aecinfo.org). You have to take in consideration the fact that only institutions holding an ERASMUS University Charter may send or receive an ERASMUS teacher.

3. What is a bilateral exchange programme?

A bilateral exchange programme is an agreement between two institutions to cooperate on teacher and student exchanges and possibly on other types of collaborative activities under certain financial arrangements. Many professional music-training institutions have bilateral exchange programmes with one or more institutions abroad.

4. 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).

5. 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 27 Member States of the European Union, to the three EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and to Turkey.

6. How do I go about organising an exchange?

Usually the first contact regarding an ERASMUS teacher exchange is set up by the international relations officers of both institutions. In some cases you are asked to contact the teacher or department concerned yourself to discuss the possibilities for a visit.

7. How long should I go for and when?

The most common exchange arrangement is a faculty exchange for one to two weeks, for which the home institution pays for the travelling and lodging costs with financial support of the ERASMUS grant. In this case no teaching fees are foreseen. If the visit is planned within the framework of a bilateral agreement between two partner institutions outside ERASMUS, normally the sending institution pays for travel costs, while the receiving institution provides for lodging.

A visit should not take place when other important projects are scheduled or during an examination period. Semester-long exchanges (for example, for sabbaticals) exist as well, but they tend to need a lot of preparation. Housing is usually a big issue.

8. How many students will I teach?

The number of students taught is decided between you and the host institution. According to ERASMUS teachers exchange rules, you have to teach not less than 8 academic hours OR stay a minimum of 5 working days to teach at the host institution. The number of teaching hours and length of a teaching visit are previously agreed by both – sending and receiving institutions - and indicated in the bilateral agreement.

8. How will my students get taught when I am on an exchange?

If a real exchange (one teacher out, one in) is organised, the hours your students miss while you are away, will be compensated when the teacher of the host school visits your institution. If not, you may be asked to do some extra work at your home institution afterwards.

9. Should I perform a concert?

You and the host institution decide whether you will perform a concert, but why not offer this possibility? By organizing a concert at the beginning of the teaching visit, you could promote your visit and students will be more inclined to participate in your class.

10. What practical issues do I have to organize? Where will I stay?

You should provide the host institution with your curriculum vitae and, if possible, any recordings you have made. The practical issues such as travel schedule, hotel reservation, and the timetable of your classes should be arranged by the host institution. Ask beforehand if somebody from the host institution will pick you up upon arrival and bring you to the hotel or school.

11. Do I get an additional teaching fee to do an exchange?

It is important to realise that many exchange programmes do not pay teaching fees; often only travel and accommodation costs are covered from the ERASMUS grant. You just do your work in another place, so you take your salary with you. Teaching visits should be approached as an investment in your teaching: it is a tool for staff development, information exchanges, developing new professional and personal contacts, and promotion.

12. What can I do in addition to teaching?

It is advisable to visit some classes and school performances to meet with teachers and get a better idea of the host institution, its educational methods, and its culture. You could provide your international office/contact persons with important information and develop some ideas for future cooperation. Remember that if you just do your classes and nothing else, your visit could be perceived as a promotional or recruitment trip.

13. What are the feedback and reporting procedures after my teaching visit?

You should give feedback not only by completing questionnaires given to you by your international relations coordinator or by writing a short report, but also by talking about the results and experience of your teaching visit to as many colleagues and students as possible.

14. 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/gendescrptions. Descriptions of music teacher training systems in Europe can be found at www.aecinfo.org/bologna/teacherdescription.