



EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE
EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.A - Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps
EACEA.A.4 - International Capacity Building

Erasmus+ Programme

National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO) and Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)

Terms of Reference

B. Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)

1. HERE OBJECTIVES AND MISSION

The purpose of the National Teams of Higher Education Reform Experts is to provide a pool of expertise in order to promote reforms and enhance progress in higher education (HE) in the countries concerned and therefore participate in the development of policies and reforms in Higher Education in their respective country.

The mission of the HERE is threefold:

- Support policy development in their respective countries by supporting modernisation reform processes and strategies in Higher Education, in close contact with the local authorities concerned and in particular as regards for instance curriculum development, modernisation of governance, management and functioning of higher education systems and institutions, strengthening relations between the higher education sector and the wider societal and economic environment, etc.
- Support policy dialogue with the EU in the field of higher education possibly in synergy and coordination with the various policy platforms established under the Erasmus+ programme or other potential initiatives established by, and under the guidance of, the European Commission.
- Support Erasmus+ and EU funded projects by disseminating their results and outcomes, notably best practices and innovative initiatives and exploiting them for modernisation and development purposes.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

HERE teams will be established in the countries neighbouring the EU (the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Southern Mediterranean), in Central Asia and in the Russian Federation.

3. HERE PROFILE

The HERE scheme is a “peer-to-peer” exercise. Although HERE do not replace the work done by Ministries, Rectors Conferences, Quality Assurance Agencies, academic recognition centres, National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO), etc., they should be well embedded in the national higher education environment and cooperate closely with national authorities.

Members of the national HERE team should hold (or have held) one of the following positions (or a combination thereof):

- (Vice-)Rectors
- Deans and Heads of Department
- Senior Academics
- Directors of Study
- Responsible of administrative services (such as International Relations Offices, Quality Assurance departments, Career orientation services, etc.)
- Ministry officials dealing with higher education
- Other Higher Education experts and researchers
- Students.

Whatever their status or functions, HERE must be highly motivated and concerned by their overall mission, available to attend and actively participate in the proposed events, willing to report widely about the results and to initiate activities locally.

Further to their appointment, HERE will have to sign a *Code of good conduct* stating their responsibilities and duties in relation to their activities as HERE. In particular, the absence of conflict of interests and the experts' availability to participate in the activities abroad and the coordination meetings in his/her home country will be essential.

4. SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE HERE TEAMS

As a group, each national HERE team must have the necessary knowledge and expertise to provide counselling to institutions and peers on the different areas covered under their mandate. In this context, the composition of the team must provide a suitable balance between the various profiles (academic/administrative/student representatives) and fields of competences. The inclusion of at least one student within the team should be ensured.

In order to guarantee that each members of the team has the knowledge and competences required to fulfil the tasks assigned, training shall be provided through international training events such as conferences, seminars and study visits.

The size of each national HERE team will vary in accordance with the size of the country and the number of higher education institutions, with an estimated number of 5 to 15 members per team.

A **Chair** will have to be identified by each national HERE team with the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the group and being the main contact person for external stakeholders.

5. TARGET GROUPS

In order to fulfil their mission, with the support of NEOs, national HERE teams will perform activities at national and international level, targeting primarily:

- All Erasmus+ and on-going beneficiaries as well as potential Erasmus+ beneficiaries in the country (i.e. higher education institutions and individuals; civil society; non-governmental organisations; enterprises, professional organisations, research institutions, vocational training institutions; etc.) and any other stakeholder in the field of higher education.
- National authorities in charge of higher education and their affiliated bodies.

6. ACTIVITIES

6.1. HERE activities at international level

Activities at international level will be organised by an external service provider, under the supervision of the European Commission and the EACEA, and will correspond to the following types:

- **Thematic seminars** designed to meet specific needs common in various Third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ programme. The aim of the thematic 10 seminars is to provide new knowledge and practical experience. They may include field visits at higher education institutions or other relevant stakeholders. They will also provide a platform for questions, discussion and exchange of practices on specific topics and processes.
- **Study visits** that will take place in prominent universities of EU Member States and third countries associated or non-associated with the Erasmus+ programme, focusing on specific topics and fields of interest, common to various Third countries. Such visits will provide an opportunity to meet with academic and non-academic staff directly responsible for the introduction and the implementation of specific reforms or policies in the field of Higher Education. The visits will include meetings with several types of stakeholders as well as presentations, question & answer sessions and debates.
- **International large-scale conferences** including keynote speeches by prominent experts and specific workshops dedicated to the attention of the HERE teams of all Third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ programme. Such conferences will deal with themes and topics connected to the core issues of the modernisation of the higher education sector in fields such as governance, management, funding, curriculum development and lifelong learning.
- **Technical assistance missions:** Specific technical expertise and advice by EU or Third country experts will be provided locally to HERE teams to carry out training and consultancy activities in the Third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ programme, targeted at a wide audience of university staff, officials and other higher education stakeholders. The service provider will identify relevant experts, who can be entrusted with such short term missions. These technical assistance activities will be organised upon specific request from the HERE teams, channelled by the NEOs, at national or regional level.
- **Surveys and publications:** HERE may be involved in the preparation of surveys or publications commissioned by the European Commission or EACEA in relation to the higher education sector, its institutions, policies, reforms and modernisation process.
- **Virtual expert community and material:** HERE will be provided with a web platform to communicate, liaise and exchange. This includes the provision of information materials, brochures and case studies.

The support services required for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the international HERE activities will be provided by the European Commission and EACEA with the support of an external provider.

6.2. HERE activities at national level

In addition to the international activities referred to above, HERE teams will have to perform counselling and advisory activities at national level and more concretely:

- **At institutional level,** HEREs' work will consist in counselling, advising and providing assistance to higher education institutions with regards to the introduction and implementation of reforms. HERE should be actively involved in all kinds of promotional and awareness-raising activities about higher education reforms in general and EU higher education programmes and initiatives in particular. Experts with specialist knowledge and experience may be recruited for the development and delivery of training activities for HERE in those areas.

- **At national level,** HERE will support national authorities in designing, implementing and monitoring policy reforms in the field of higher education. Overall, this could include the following types of activities:

- Advice and expertise;
- Involvement in policy making process, preparation of national reports, codes, draft laws & decrees;
- Organising or participating in seminars, workshops, roundtables (teaching, training, informing, disseminating);

- Lecturing, participation in panel discussions and debates;
- Interviews (radio, TV, newspaper, specialized press), public appearances;
- Drafting of reports, analysis, studies;
- Publication of papers on the higher education reform processes in the Third country.

7. APPOINTMENT OF THE HERE

For the period 2022-2027, new HERE teams will be proposed by the NEO and the national authorities in the Third countries concerned. This proposal will have to be endorsed by the respective EU Delegation and confirmed by the EACEA in line with the criteria defined by the European Commission.

8. MANAGEMENT OF THE HERE TEAMS

The setting up of the HERE initiative together with the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the HERE's activities in support to the higher education modernisation and reform processes in the Third countries is based on joint responsibilities shared between the European and Third country responsible bodies.

The European Commission is responsible for the general steering of the HERE initiative according to its political priorities. In particular, the Commission will give guidance related to the themes to be considered for trainings and events. This includes also steering of the content, priority setting, overall monitoring of the activities and budget of the action, definition of the selection criteria and profiles of the HERE. It also includes regular review and approval of the HERE overall objectives and results achieved based on ex-ante & ex-post information, reports and presentations submitted by the EACEA.

The EACEA is responsible for validating the selection of the individual HERE members in accordance with the criteria and profiles defined by the European Commission. The EACEA is also responsible for approving and monitoring the HERE's activity plan and budget included in the NEO grant agreement, ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach for all involved countries. Finally, EACEA is also responsible for managing the service contract with the external provider that will support the organisation of HEREs' activities at international level.

The EU Delegations in the Third countries are closely associated in all HERE activities. They endorse the appointment of the HERE in the Third Country. The National Authorities propose the appointment of the members of the national HERE teams, in liaison with the NEOs. They will set strategic goals and targets for the work of the HERE, in the light of the state of progress of higher education reforms at national and institutional level.

The National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO) provide administrative, logistical and financial support to the National Teams of HEREs, supporting and coordinating their activities, following the strategic goals and targets set by the national authorities. They act as intermediaries between the EU (EACEA) and the HERE teams. In close cooperation with the National Authorities, NEO participate in the process of HERE appointment.

From a management point of view, NEO:

- Implement the budget allocated to the HERE as part of their grant agreement (see section 9. Funding of the HERE activities below);
- Monitor the HERE activities;
- Provide feedback on HERE activities in the framework of the progress and final reports to be submitted to the EACEA.
- Keep the National Authorities informed on the implementation of the HERE's work programmes.

9. FUNDING OF THE HERE ACTIVITIES

The travel and subsistence costs incurred by the HERE for their participation in international events, as well as the direct costs related to local initiatives involving the HEREs, will be covered by the NEO grant agreement.

No remuneration is foreseen for the HERE, but a limited part of the NEO budget can be used to contribute to certain specific tasks carried out by the HERE, subject to prior approval by the EACEA.

The organisation of the international HERE activities will be financed through a service contract with an external service provider.