

Policy context

Online administrative procedures in European policy documents

The different digitalisation initiatives in this knowledge base are part of an effort to modernise European Higher Education by digitalising processes. At the European level these efforts are grouped under the [European Student Card Initiative](#) aiming to improve authentication and registration for students who aim to study abroad. The European Student Card Initiative is one of the core initiatives in the vision to create a [European Education Area](#) by 2025.

The European Student Card Initiative and its underlying projects are mentioned in several key European policy documents that came out during the last couple of years:

- Report about the [European Approach to Micro Credentials](#) (December 2020) see p.19, p.28
- Communication about the [European Education Area](#), (September 2020) see p. 21-22;
- Communication about the renewed [Digital Education Action Plan](#) (September 2020), see p. 17;
- Communication about the [Digital Education Action](#) plan (January 2018)
- Communication about the [renewed EU agenda for higher education](#) (May 2017), see p. 11;

It goes without saying that Higher Education Institutions throughout Europe have not only helped drive these efforts and they are expected to remain active actors in supporting the digitalisation processes.

Digital management of student mobility in the new Erasmus Programme

Digitalisation of the administrative procedures is one of the priorities of the new Erasmus Programme.

The programme guide makes clear that all HEI participating in Erasmus Mobilities should implement the digital:

The mobility project should implement the European Student Card Initiative to facilitate the online management of the mobility cycle and other more environmentally friendly and inclusive approaches in line with the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and the ECHE guidelines.

As announced in 2019 and confirmed with the new Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) 2021-2027 and its associated implementation guidelines, accredited higher education institutions commit to implement digital management of their student mobility in line with the standards of the European Student Card Initiative. In line with the objectives of the European Student Card Initiative, the **Erasmus Without Paper (EWP)** Network ensures that any higher education institution can connect to the network and seamlessly share data with their partners to facilitate digital Erasmus+ administrative processes.

Higher Education Institutions are expected to be connected to the EWP Network and to start exchanging digital Erasmus+ agreements (Online Learning Agreements and Inter Institutional Agreements) with their partners through the network **from June 2021 onward**. In order to achieve a fully digital management of Erasmus+ student mobility, all higher education institutions need to be connected as soon as possible. In order to make sure that no one is left behind, the Commission will consider the 2021/2022 academic year as a transitional year. This means that at the very latest before the start of the academic year 2022/2023, all higher education institutions participating in the Erasmus+ programme must be connected to the EWP Network. Alternatively, they may lose their accreditation for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.

The Once Only Principle in Connecting Europe Facility

The [Once Only Principle](#) is an important policy goal in reducing administrative burdens under the Connecting Europe Facility programme. For Higher Education it means that students and staff will be able to authenticate themselves with a single login, allowing them to access many services and information available and relevant for student mobility. This will happen regardless of their geographical location therefore strengthening inclusiveness and contributing to delivering the European Education Area (EEA).

In order to ensure the Once Only Principle in HE, it is paramount that systems can uniquely **identify students and authenticate its users**. Therefore the European Student Identifier (ESI) was created and embedded in the eduGAIN infrastructure and the student-facing components of Erasmus Without Paper.

The European Commission strongly encourages higher education institutions to join their National Research and Education Network (NREN) as soon as possible to allow their students to benefit from using their home university credentials and their ESI to identify themselves. An alternative solution for HEIs that are not able to join a NREN is being made available in close cooperation with National Agencies.

Further reading

[Policy Background - Digitisation in Erasmus+ mobility management](#) by Valère Meus (March 2019)

[Digitising Erasmus: no more paperwork](#) by Stefan Jahnke et al. (Linkedin) (August 2018)