

WILL THE TURING SCHEME BE GIVEN THE RESOURCES TO COVER THE NEEDS OF MOBILITY?

The first application round of the Turing scheme met the objectives set. A total of 40,032 students are expected to receive a grant from the programme, a slightly higher figure to that announced when the initiative was launched at the beginning of the year. Thus, it can be said that the first application round was a success. A new edition of Turing is waiting for a decision to be taken at the Spending Review of the Government in the Autumn. However, when comparing the awarded budget for 2021-22 and the needs of the sector, several aspects must be considered.

In **higher education** the current academic year is exceptional for student mobility due to the pandemic. Numbers must recover after many institutions cancelled mobility in 2020-21. But, in addition, most institutions extended their Erasmus contracts and have large amounts of money available to pay for their students going to Europe this year. Consequently, the demand for Turing grants was lower than the real mobility. The situation changes for the next application, as many institutions will end their Erasmus contract in December 2022 and will have to revert to Turing in their bid for funding.

A look at the number of students going abroad in 2019, last year before the mobility was mostly stopped, shows that many more students went abroad than those participating in Turing. With data from the HESA return and the Erasmus data sets published by the European Commission, the total rounded number of students in mobility in 2019 would be in the region of 38,000 participants. Of them, 15,500 went abroad with Erasmus, 16,400 to any country in the world for 8 weeks or more and 6,000 to a variety of destinations for periods between 4 and 7 weeks. These figures were lower than those in 2018 by about 9%, most likely as an effect of the political unrest related to Brexit in 2019 and the constant threat of a departure from the European Union without a deal.

The official figures of the 2021 call of Turing (published on the website of the scheme) show that 28,997 students will receive a grant in higher education. A simple comparison between the two figures shows that only 76% of students going abroad in 2019 would have received the grant from Turing if all of them had been included in the application. And this would be a minimum percentage, as not all mobility is recorded at the HESA return, where fewer than half of institutions include their short mobility in this.

An approximate calculation of costs according to the average of the Turing grants shows that, even considering the decrease in numbers experienced in 2019, no fewer than £101million would be required to cover all mobility recorded in 2019, more than 50% of the funds allocated to higher education by Turing, which is just over £67 million.

Despite the short time between the launch of the programme and its deadline, institutions were very active in promoting new initiatives that required external funding. Those new activities involved more students than those paid with the remaining Erasmus funds. It is expected that the new call of Turing with more time for preparation will enormously increase the number of students included in the application and, consequently, the demand for more funds to cover such mobility, especially for summer schools, field trips and short-term activities thus increasing opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. An important element to consider is that all higher education institutions applying for funds from Turing were granted an amount for their students and this covered only between 60 and 70% of the demand, due to the limitations of the budget allocated. A decrease of this percentage would have a very negative effect on the expectations of the scheme. The bidding exercise would be damaged by a reduced

possibility of success, pushing the institutions to reduce mobility opportunities that have not a guarantee of receiving funds to be implemented.

In **FE/VET**, the results of the first application round showed good participation with almost 6,000 grants awarded. Before Turing, the only funding opportunity for such levels were the Erasmus KA102 and KA116 actions with which 7,500 students went abroad in 2019 for a period (2+ weeks) that would be eligible for Turing. The level of success of the applications to the new scheme was lower than for higher education with 77% of successful bids. This could explain the decrease in the numbers, although many new institutions may have applied to Turing. An improvement in the quality of applications and an increase in the number of students applying would raise the demand to reach the levels achieved with Erasmus and require higher amounts to cover the costs of eligible proposals.

There are no references in the **school sector**, as Erasmus only covered staff mobility at that level. However, the interest shown in Turing (114 successful applications out of 131) represented just above 5,000 grants for school pupils, an amount that can only increase in further editions of the programme.

Finally, **staff mobility** was not included in Turing in 2021 but has always been a demand made by the participating institutions who highly value the advantages of such mobility. Only figures for Erasmus are available, but they show how popular and beneficial this activity is. In 2019, 6,600 teachers participated in the different actions for staff mobility, including higher education, VET/FE and schools. Travels and stays would represent about £6 million without including mobility towards other areas of the world than Europe that were not part of Erasmus.

In summary, the first call of Turing has shown the high interest of the institutions but also the limits of the current allocation. The remaining Erasmus funds allowed Turing to fund an important part of the mobility in 2021-22. However, this will not be the case in the following editions, starting next year. It must be considered that European destinations in Turing (6,987 students) represented only 42% in 2018 and 45% in 2019 of those students who went to Europe with Erasmus. This means that at least between 8,000 and 10,000 more students will be included in the new applications for 2022-23 and unless there is a significant increase in funding, the success rate of the application round will enormously decrease. That would not be a good development for the Turing scheme.