

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM ON A UK/EU WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT OR TRADE AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2026/833 of 30 March 2026 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes established by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, as regards the amendments to Protocol I thereto

Submitted by HM Treasury, 15/04/2026

SUBJECT MATTER

1. On the 19 May 2025 the leaders of the UK and EU met for the first UK-EU Summit, in which they welcomed a renewed agenda for cooperation, the Common Understanding. This included the joint commitment that the UK and EU should work towards the association of the UK to the Erasmus+ programme. On 17 December 2025 the Government announced that the UK would associate to the Erasmus+ programme, fulfilling a key commitment made at the UK-EU Summit in May 2025.
2. Erasmus+ is the EU's flagship programme for education, training, youth and sport. The benefits extend to learners, trainees and staff in higher education, further education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education, youth programmes and sport programmes. Erasmus+ offers a wide range of opportunities for individuals to study, work, train or volunteer abroad, via short or long-term placements. In addition to mobility opportunities, Erasmus+ helps organisations build international partnerships, share innovative practices and gain access to a diverse European community. These partnerships can open doors to new ideas, resources and approaches that enrich education and training. Association will ensure that UK learners and institutions can participate fully in high-quality international mobilities, cooperation projects and wider partnerships.
3. This Explanatory Memorandum concerns the Council Decision to agree the EU's position at the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) in relation to adopting Decision 1/2026. Decision 1/2026 was adopted by written procedure on 15 April 2026 and implements the agreement announced on 17 December 2025 by making amendments to Protocol I of Part V of the TCA.
4. Decision 1/2026 amends Protocol I as it was formally adopted by the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes on 4 December 2023 to formalize the UK's prior association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus. Save for minor formatting amendments, the substantive obligations as they relate to Horizon Europe and Copernicus would be unchanged by the Decision. The amendments to Protocol I which provide for UK association to Erasmus+, and the financial conditions of this association,

will form integral parts of the TCA in accordance with Article 778 of the TCA, once the Decision is adopted.

5. Article 1(1a) and Article 2(1a) provide that the UK will associate to Erasmus+ from 1 January 2027 until the end of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. Article 1(3) ensures that the UK will not make financial contributions for any period prior to the UK's association. As such, Article 2(2) provides that UK and UK entities will not be eligible for funding which implements EU Budget commitments for 2021 to 2026. UK learners and institutions will be eligible to access Erasmus+ funds for 2027 only.
6. Article 6a ensures UK association is conditional on the notification of a National Authority, and the designation of a National Agency and an Independent Audit Body. The Department for Education will be the National Authority, and it will designate and oversee the National Agency. The National Agency is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the decentralised elements of the Erasmus+ programme in the UK. Article 6a also makes it clear that UK participation in the programme is subject to the National Agency passing an ex-ante compliance assessment as outlined in the relevant EU Regulation.
7. Article 6b provides for significantly improved financial conditions for the UK association to Erasmus+. This is notably the 30% discount to the UK financial contribution for participation, provided via adjustment of the contribution key used to determine the UK operational contribution for the programme. The adjusted contribution key also applies to any future technical adjustments to the UK's financial contribution to the Erasmus+ budget in 2027 under Article 714.8 of the TCA.
8. Article 6c provides a review clause for the UK's participation in the Erasmus+ programme, to take place 10 months after the start of UK participation in the programme. The scope of the review includes the extent to which the UK's National Agency has been able to allocate the funding that it manages. The Specialised Committee for Participation in Union Programmes will review the implementation of participation of UK entities under the programme and can discuss changes or propose measures. There is a requirement for both the UK and the EU to retain data and to provide the other with the data if it is reasonably needed for the purposes of this review.
9. Article 6d relates to the statistical cooperation required to allow for UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

SCRUTINY HISTORY

10. The original versions of Protocol I were laid before Parliament, along with the rest of the TCA, in April 2021. The updated text following amendments to provide for UK association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus were published on GOV.UK on 29

September 2023. Decision 1/2026 which provides for UK association to Erasmus+ was published on GOV.UK on 15 April 2026.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

11. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has overall responsibility for UK participation in EU programmes.
12. Ministerial responsibility for payments for participation in Erasmus+ sits with the Department for Education. The Minister for the Cabinet Office has overall responsibility for EU relations policy. The Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have responsibility for stakeholder engagement on the education and training and youth and sport elements of the Erasmus+ programme respectively.

INTEREST OF THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS (DGs)

13. The Devolved Governments were, and continue to be, regularly updated on the progress of UK association to Erasmus+. The Department for Education has regular meetings with the Devolved Governments to engage them on activities related to the UK association to Erasmus+. The Devolved Governments are included in outward facing stakeholder engagement with education, youth and sport sectors. This is to ensure that input and insight is received from all four nations. The Devolved Governments are invited to meetings of the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes as observers.

LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL ISSUES

i. Legal Base:

14. The European Union's legal basis for this decision is Article 218(9) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).
15. The TCA provides in Article 710(2) that the SCPUP may adopt and amend Protocol I.

ii. Voting Procedure:

16. The Council shall act by a qualified majority throughout the procedure.

iii. Timetable for adoption and implementation:

17. Decision 1/2026 was adopted on 15 April 2026. The UK will participate in the Erasmus+ programme from 1 January 2027.

POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

18. The Council Decision enables the implementation by the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes of an agreement negotiated by the EU and UK on association to Erasmus+, via amendment to Protocol I of the TCA. Protocol I applies to Erasmus+ as it exists for the 2021 to 2027 multiannual financial framework only.

Protocol I will need to be further amended if the UK joins the successor programme in the subsequent multiannual financial framework.

19. This deal will open up world-class opportunities for learners, educators, young people, youth workers, sport-sector professionals, and communities of all ages across the UK. It will open doors for thousands of citizens across the UK of all ages, renewing our people to people ties with Europe and beyond, and strengthen the UK's global standing – providing leadership in the fields of education, youth and sport. It supports inclusion and economic growth by developing a globally aware, highly skilled workforce and fostering cultural exchange that benefits communities and the wider education system.

CONSULTATION

20. The Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have conducted stakeholder engagement throughout the policy development and negotiations of UK association to Erasmus+ to ensure that the UK's strategy reflected the priorities of UK domestic sectors. Impact assessments have been developed in line with usual government policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

21. Under this agreement, the amendments to Protocol I provide for UK participation and contribution to Erasmus+ from 1 January 2027 until the programme ends at the end of 2027.
22. UK financial contributions are provided for in Article 714 of the TCA, with relevant provisions relating to specific financial conditions of UK participation in Protocol I Article 8.
23. The UK will pay an operational contribution (which includes administrative expenditure) and a participation fee. The operational contribution is calculated based on the total EU budget for Erasmus+ multiplied by a 'contribution key' which is the ratio of the GDP of the UK to the GDP of the EU. As provided for in Article 8 of Protocol I, for Erasmus+ only 70% of this contribution key will be applied to the calculation – resulting in a 30% discount in UK contributions. The participation fee will be 4% of the annual operational contribution for 2027.
24. The operational contribution may be subsequently revised upwards or downwards to account for any retrospective increase or decrease in the programme budget commitments in a given year. The discount will also be applied to any such adjustment.
25. The UK will contribute c.£570m to the Erasmus+ programme in 2027, which is down from the c.£810m that the UK would have been required to contribute without the revised financial terms. The UK will receive most of this money back to distribute amongst UK beneficiaries. UK participants will also have the opportunity to compete for grants from a c.£1bn central pot directly managed by the European Commission.

26. The UK contribution to Erasmus+ for 2027 is funded above the Department for Education's SR25 settlement. This change in Departmental Expenditure Limits was included in the Office of Budgetary Responsibility's March 2026 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The Department for Education will report to Parliament the costs arising from participation, including costs related to the implementation of the programme, in its annual accounts.

27. The agreement does not make any legally binding financial commitments regarding UK participation in the future Erasmus+ programme in the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework. However, the recitals to the agreement reaffirm the parties' understanding that terms of participation in 2027 represent a "fair balance" and recognise "that the participation of the United Kingdom in any relevant programme succeeding Erasmus+ under the next multiannual financial framework should be on mutually agreed terms to reflect a fair balance and be informed by the experience of the participation in 2027".

MINISTERIAL NAME AND SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, followed by a small dot.