

Mapping Erasmus+ Top-Up Grants

WP6 Mobility

May 2026

CHARM-EIGHT[∞] (CHARM-EU EXPANSION, INTER-INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS, GOVERNANCE, HIGHER EDUCATION, TRANSFORMATION)

DELIVERABLE D6.2— EXTENDED MOBILITY TOOLKIT

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Introduction

Despite a common European policy framework, the implementation and management of Erasmus+ top-ups is non-standardised. National agencies define eligibility criteria in coordination with national authorities, while higher education institutions are responsible for managing applications and verifying supporting documentation. As a result, institutional practices can vary, particularly regarding application procedures, required evidence, internal organisation, and communication strategies.

Within the CHARM-EU alliance, understanding how Erasmus+ top-ups are managed across partner institutions is particularly relevant to identify how the CHARM-EU universities implement, manage, and communicate Erasmus+ top-ups in practice and provide insight for the implementation of best practices. Therefore, we carried out a mapping exercise of top-up grants and financial support measures available across partner institutions for students and staff with fewer opportunities, including those with disabilities and other underrepresented groups, excluding green travel top-ups. The aim was to identify existing practices, highlight differences between national and institutional approaches, and support more inclusive participation in mobility activities across the alliance, to present the outcomes of the questionnaire as part of the **Deliverable D6.2 – Extended Mobility Toolkit**.

This material is the result of a survey conducted among members of Work Package 6 (Extension and Fine-Tuning of Mobility Scheme) to address the need to map top-up management within the network.

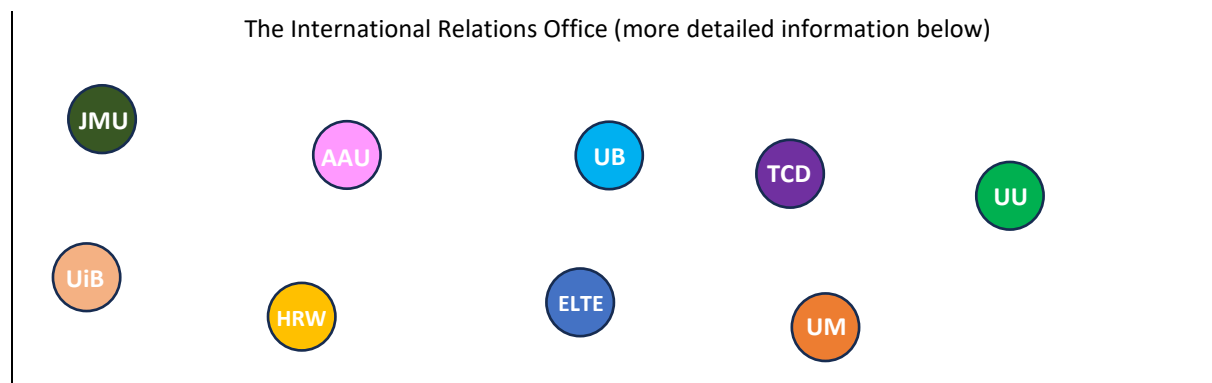
This mapping is a part of the CHARM-eight project.

“The information contained here will also serve as content for the CHARM-EU platform, facilitating the exchange of good practices and supporting future improvements to the mobility scheme.”

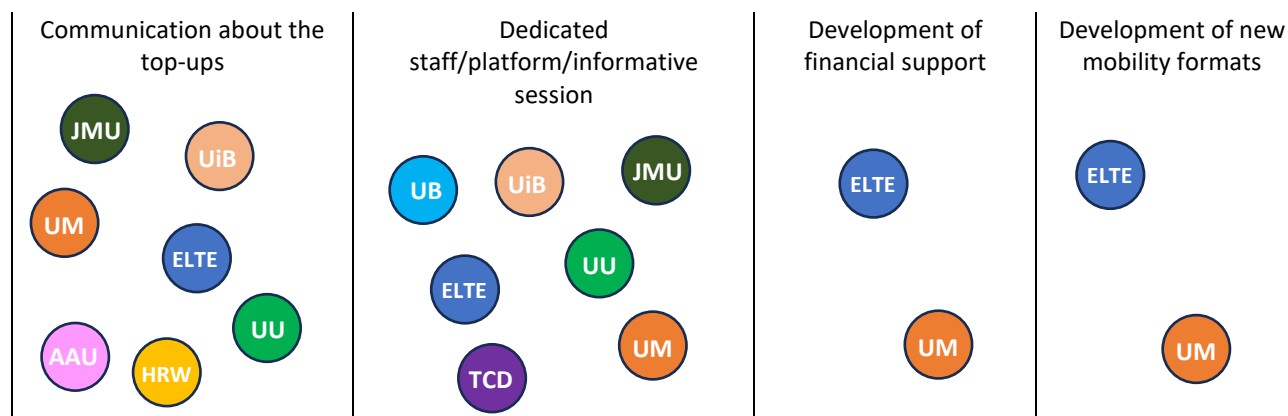
CHARM-EU institutions are grouped into clear categories, and **each university is represented by a labelled circle positioned within its corresponding category**. Additional notes below the chart provide contextual details where necessary, clarifying specific situations or ongoing updates.



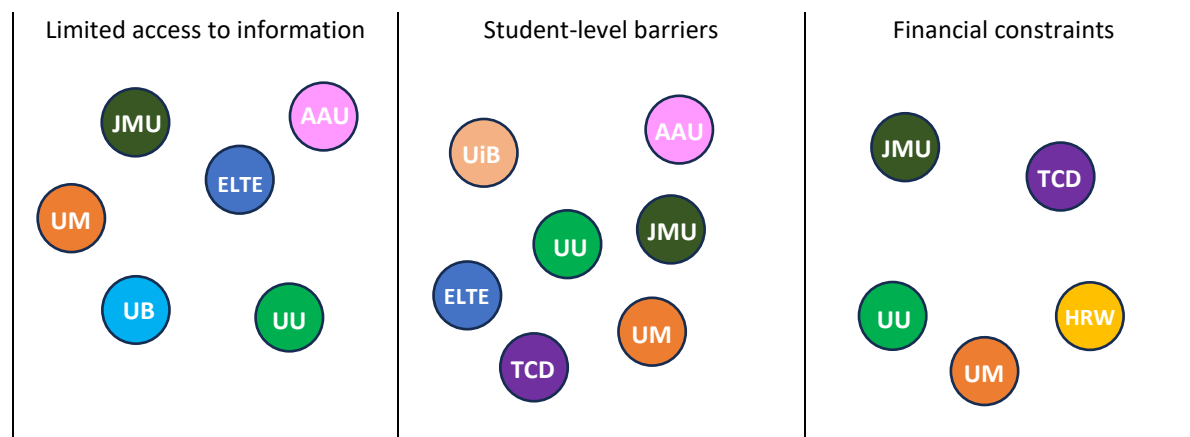
1. Who is responsible for executing the payment of Erasmus top-up at your university?



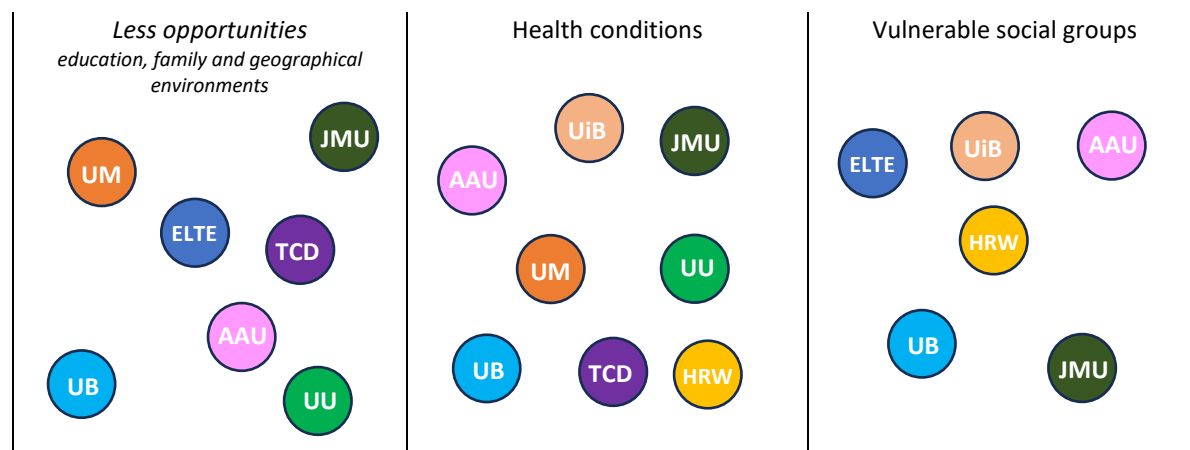
2. What initiatives have been successful in expanding access to Erasmus+ mobilities for underrepresented groups?



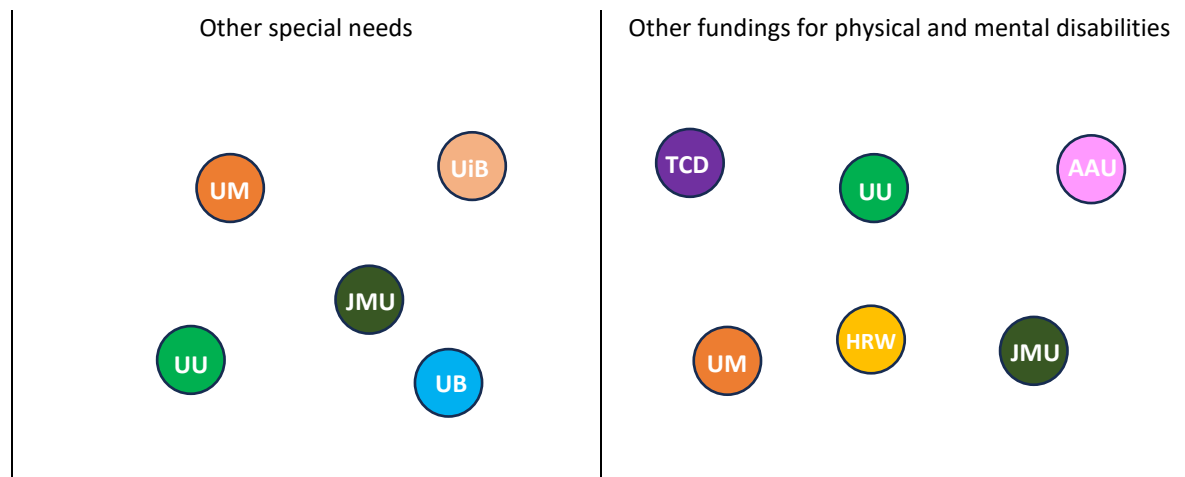
3. What are the key challenges in supporting underrepresented groups?



4. What are the situations that you top-up? (i.e.: health disadvantage, geographical barriers, cultural difference, economic-social disadvantage, disability?)



5. What are the other types of funding for inclusion purposes? If so, what for?



General outcomes from the survey:

Question 1: The management of the payment of the Top-ups is coordinated by the International Offices, by the staff responsible for Mobilities or the Erasmus+ programme in general, respecting the Erasmus+ rules and the internal/national finance regulation.

- **Recommendations :**

It is recommended to adopt a harmonised approach to the administration and payment of Erasmus+ top-up funding, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly defined and that payment structures are efficient, transparent, and student-centred.

Specifically:

- **Integration of top-up funding into standard grant payments:**

Top-up funding (e.g. “fewer opportunities” support) should be fully embedded within the overall Erasmus+ grant, rather than processed as a separate payment. This approach enhances administrative efficiency, reduces duplication of processes, and improves the clarity of funding for participants.

- **Clear allocation of responsibilities:**

Institutions should assign the central Erasmus+/International Office as responsible for the administrative management and preparation of payments, while ensuring that execution is carried out in coordination with central finance services. This dual structure supports both programme expertise and financial compliance.

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Question 2: Regarding the implemented initiatives that resulted in better ways to promote Top-ups, [communication about the top-ups](#) and [dedicated staff/platform/informative sessions](#) are the options most cited by CHARM-EU universities.

- **Recommendations :**

- 1) **Transversal analysis of initiatives**

A. Financial support as the primary factor

Answers from CHARM-EU universities emphasise:

- Broader grants (top-ups, disability support, social-based scholarships),
- Simplified eligibility and application processes,
- Clear communication on financial entitlements.

Observed effects:

Very high assimilation where well implemented:

- 40% participation among disability/health groups (ELTE),
- Around 16% overall assimilation at UU (120–140 students/year).

This aligns strongly with system-level evidence showing that financial top-ups are decisive in allowing mobility, **with many students unable to participate otherwise.**

B. Information transparency and early awareness

Institutions with higher assimilation systematically:

- Provide dedicated webpages or platforms,
- Introduce funding early (first information sessions, including budget, accommodation, importance of providing documents for the completion of payments),
- Reinforce via multiple communication channels (emails, posters, portals, events).

Awareness leads to better/earlier financial planning, which results in higher application rates.

C. Personalised and centralised support structures

Highly effective models include:

- Dedicated staff managing top-ups,
- Individual advising for disadvantaged students,
- Collaboration with support services (e.g. Disability Services, Access Programmes).

Observed effects:

- Reduced administrative burden,
- Increased application success rates,
- Better targeting of underrepresented groups.

Administrative complexity is a major hidden barrier for students; **staff support is essential.**

D. Integration with institutional support ecosystems

Strong performers integrate Erasmus+ into:

- Disability centres (e.g. SHÜTI at ELTE),
- Access/widening participation programmes,
- Faculty-level outreach structures.

Observed effect:

- Better identification of eligible students
 - Higher trust and engagement from underrepresented groups
- Students rarely self-identify for mobility; **they are reached through existing support networks.**

E. Flexible mobility formats

Repeated emphasis on:

- Short-term mobility (5–30 days),
- Blended/hybrid mobility,
- Structured progression (e.g. travel packages).

Observed benefits:

- Enables participation for:
 - Students with caring responsibilities,
 - Working students,
 - Students with financial/time constraints.

Flexibility reduces non-financial barriers and complements financial support.

2) What distinguishes the most successful approaches?

Across cases, high-impact institutions combine multiple measures simultaneously:

Dimension	Low-impact approach	High-impact approach
Funding	Available but passive	Actively promoted and simplified
Communication	One-off information	Multi-channel, repeated, early
Support	Generic	Personalised and centralised
Targeting	Self-selection	Proactive outreach via support services
Mobility design	Long-term only	Flexible, multiple formats

Conclusion:

3) Best practices

1. Proactive financial targeting (Top-ups as a “default” offer)

Best practice: Present the Top-up as a standard funding pathway, and include it in all early info sessions, budgeting exercises, and application materials

Why it works:

- Normalises participation of disadvantaged students
- Reduces stigma and self-exclusion

2. Early, repeated, and multi-channel communication

Reinforce via digital systems (portals, emails, in-person sessions, faculty channels: students from underrepresented groups require longer decision cycles (financial and personal planning)

3. Centralised expertise + personalised guidance

Best practice: Assign a dedicated Top-up/inclusion officer who provide 1:1 advising, document support, and eligibility clarification

Why it works:

- Reduces complexity, especially for:
 - first-generation students
 - students unfamiliar with administrative systems

Combine central expertise with local (faculty-level) contact points.

4. Integration with widening participation structures

Best practice: Formal collaboration between Erasmus offices, Disability services, and Access programmes

Why it works:

- These units already:
 - identify disadvantaged students
 - have established trust relationships with students

Recommendation: Introduce joint outreach campaigns and shared data (where compliant) with relative stakeholders (Erasmus coordinators, financial departments, etc.).

5. Dedicated, transparent funding platforms

Best practice: A single, clearly structured webpage listing all Top-ups, eligibility criteria, and compatibility with national grants.

Why it works:

- Reduces uncertainty (a major deterrent)
- Supports **self-assessment by students**

6. Flexible and inclusive mobility design

Best practice: Combine Top-ups with short-term mobility and blended learning.

Why it works:

- Financial support alone is insufficient if:
 - time constraints remain
 - confidence barriers persist

7. Embedding Top-ups in financial planning culture

Best practice: Integrate Top-ups into information sessions.

Why it works:

- Helps students realistically assess feasibility
- Reduces dropout at late stages

A high-performing Erasmus+ inclusion model typically includes:

Early awareness + Clear funding + Personalised support + Trusted outreach channels + Flexible mobility options → **Increased participation of underrepresented groups**

Question 3: When it comes to key challenges in supporting underrepresented groups, the answers provided by CHARM-EU universities lead to the following conclusions and recommendations:

1) Key challenges

Challenge category	Key issues identified	Practical effect	How it helps
Identification gap	Privacy concerns, stigma, low self-disclosure	Many eligible students remain invisible	Reaches students without requiring disclosure
Information gap	Students don't attend sessions, limited awareness	Low assimilation of Top-ups	Guarantees wider awareness
Self-exclusion	Fear (travel, language), low confidence, feeling "not for me"	Students drop out early	Builds confidence and belonging
Financial and structural	Costs concerns, job, housing risk, limited study options	Mobility perceived as risky	Reduces perceived financial risks
Administrative complexity	Complicated procedures, unclear support and eligibility	High dropout or non-application	Simplifies process and reduces frustration

2) Barrier types and intervention level

Barrier Type	Root Cause	Best Intervention Level
Structural	Lack of funding, limited options	Policy and funding
Informational	Poor visibility, late communication	Communication strategy
Psychological	Fear, confidence, and identity barriers	Peer support and storytelling
Institutional	Complexity, fragmentation	Admin simplification
Cultural/social	Stigma, privacy concerns	Trusted intermediaries from other services

Final takeaway

The Erasmus+ Top-up works best when it is visible early, easy to access and actively promoted through trusted channels.

Question 4: Regarding the question on what situations institutions provide top-up to students, the responses show that institutions group eligibility into 6 main categories:

Category	Examples from responses
Structural	Lack of funding, limited options
Disability & health	Physical/mental disability, chronic illness, health conditions
Economic disadvantage	Low income, working students, financial need, scholarship recipients
Social vulnerability	Orphans, large families, first-generation students, carers, students with children
Migration & minority	Refugees, ethnic minorities, people under international protection
Educational barriers	Struggles within education systems, first-generation, academic disadvantage
Geographical barriers	Rural areas, disadvantaged regions, priority development zones

2) Mapping: situations and their underlying barriers

Situation	Code barrier type	Implication for mobility
Disability / chronic illness	Accessibility + cost	Higher costs, support needs
Financial need/working student	Economic	Mobility seen as unaffordable
First-generation/academic disadvantage	Educational + cultural	Low awareness, low confidence

Refugees/minorities	Social + structural	Discrimination, lack of support
Students with children/carers	Time + financial	Limited flexibility
Rural/remote regions	Geographical + financial	Less access to opportunities

Most categories overlap → students often face **multiple (intersectional) disadvantages**.

3) Frequency pattern in the responses

High frequency	Medium frequency	Lower frequency (but important)
Disability / chronic illness	Accessibility + cost	Higher costs, support needs
Chronic illness	Students with children	Educational system barriers
	First-generation students	Minority/refugee status

Systems still prioritise **medical + financial barriers**, while **social and cultural barriers** are less systematically addressed.

Question 5: The responses to the question: “*What are the other types of funding for inclusion purposes? If so, what for?*” show that institutions typically combine Top-ups with 4 additional funding instruments:

Funding type	What it covers	Main purpose	Target groups
Inclusion support (real costs)	High addition costs (assistance, adapted housing, transport, equipment)	Remove practical barriers (accessibility)	Disability, severe health conditions
Exceptional costs funding	Special or unforeseen costs (preparatory visits, shipping, adjustments)	Cover non-standard expenses	Disability, special situations

National social benefits	External grants (e.g. KELA, national scholarships, CROUS grants)	Ensure basic financial stability	Low-income, social disadvantage
Additional inclusion allowances	Fixed extra payments based on social criteria (e.g. rural areas, priority zones)	Address systemic inequality	Rural, disadvantaged areas, scholarship holders
Monthly top-up supplements		Cover general extra costs	Most “fewer opportunities” categories

5) Key insights

1. Multi-layered funding is essential

- No single funding type solves all barriers
- Systems combine:
 - broad support
 - targeted high-cost support (inclusion support)

2. Real-cost funding is crucial for disability inclusion

- Inclusion Support (real costs) enables:
 - assistants
 - adapted housing
 - transport

Without this, many students **cannot participate at all**.

National funding plays a stabilising role, such as: KELA (AAU), CROUS (UM), that complement Erasmus support and reduce financial risk.

3. Increasing recognition of “place-based disadvantage”

- Rural zones, priority areas
 - Government-defined “disadvantage regions”
- Shows shift to **territorial inclusion**, not only individual factors.

4. Administrative complexity increases with funding types

- More funding options → more applications
 - Additional documentation required
- Risk: Students with greatest needs face **most complexity**.

CONCLUSION:

The survey shows that **Erasmus+ Top-ups are highly effective but not sufficient on their own** to ensure inclusive participation.

While Top-ups successfully address financial barriers, the main challenges lie in:

- identifying and reaching eligible students (due to privacy and low self-disclosure),
- overcoming **self-exclusion and lack of awareness**,
- and simplifying **complex administrative processes**.

The most effective systems adopt a **holistic and integrated approach**, combining:

- **early and proactive communication**,
- **personalised support and collaboration with student services**,
- **flexible mobility formats**,
- and a **multi-layered funding structure** (Top-ups + inclusion support + national aid).

To maximise impact, Top-ups must be embedded in a student-centred ecosystem that removes not only financial barriers, but also informational, psychological, and structural obstacles.