



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service



## **Outcomes and conclusions of the Transatlantic Roundtable on “The Current State of EU-US People to People Exchanges in Higher Education”**

**9 October 2023, Brussels**

### **Policy background and identification of needs**

Transatlantic exchanges and people to mobility feature prominently on the EU-US policy agenda. The strategic partnership for research between the EU and the US has grown into a robust and enduring alliance. The EU Council of Ministers has recently approved the renewal of the EU-US Science & Technology Agreement, with cooperation activities, visits and people-to-people exchanges being a cornerstone of the agreement ([Link](#) to press release from 5 October 2023). On the contrary, no comparable EU-US agreement for higher education is currently in place, although a long tradition of cooperation exists, and a large variety of programmes and support mechanisms underpin this partnership.

In a world of global crisis and geopolitical tensions, our shared values such as democracy, academic freedom and pluralism have increasingly become under threat. External and internal challenges are affecting our security, our economic competitiveness, our ability to sustain cutting-edge research and innovation, and to offer new opportunities for young talents. These challenges also affect the overall cohesion of our societies. There is an increasing need for intensified transatlantic collaborations and people-to-people exchanges, as they can valuably contribute to making our societies more resilient.

### **Objectives and outcomes of the Roundtable**

On 9 October 2023, the DAAD Brussels office and the Institute of International Education (IIE) co-organised a hybrid roundtable with the participation of highly ranked representatives from US and European stakeholder organisations to discuss the opportunities, enabling factors and hindering elements of transatlantic mobility of students, academics and researchers. Against the backdrop of the 27th US-EU summit on 20 October 2023 in Washington ([Link](#)), the roundtable was an excellent opportunity to share and spark ideas for the development of meaningful measures that underpin the ambitions of people-to-people exchanges between the US and the EU.

All stakeholders would greatly benefit from more intensified exchanges. Our societies need a young generation that has undergone skills training, qualifying them in a globalised world and increasing their employability on the job market. There is, however, a great need and potential for increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in transatlantic exchanges, which should be leveraged. Removing barriers to mobility by improving visa and immigration regulations, investing in foreign language education, continuing a dialogue on aligning academic frameworks and lifting financial constraints

by offering targeted scholarship schemes that pay attention to the diversity of target audiences and institutions is urgently needed. The positive contributions of funding programmes such as Erasmus+, Fulbright, Gilman and DAAD scholarships was explicitly acknowledged in this context. Moreover, offering and exploring new exchange formats such as online collaborative learning and blended mobility can make transatlantic cooperation more accessible, resulting in extended participation.

Strengthening EU-US exchanges should certainly go beyond purely striving for a quantitative increase of the mobility rates. People-to-people exchanges are truly relevant and valuable only if they can create a societal value and a real impact, for which joint work on substantial topics and issues is key. For instance, collaborations with a focus on tackling global challenges such as mastering the green and digital transitions can provide a meaningful and impactful framework for people-to-people exchanges.

Due to the global dimension of key challenges our societies and economies are facing, it is crucial to include partners from the Global South in multilateral alliances. Therefore, the participants identified the need to enhance transatlantic partnerships with universities from Africa and to explore new levels of collaborations.

Another supportive factor and important precondition for impactful transnational collaboration is the application of a holistic approach in entrepreneurship education. Engaging in partnerships between academia, industry, and government, is a boosting factor for innovation.

Moreover, with a view on the various funding programmes and initiatives in place, there is not always a clear understanding of the US-EU funding landscape in the field of HE and how its opportunities can be grasped. Mapping the diversity of programmes and improving marketing efforts to communicate the opportunities can foster transparency and encourage participation in transatlantic mobility activities.

With the Bologna Declaration, the Erasmus+ programme and other initiatives, the EU and its member states have made people-to-people exchanges within Europe a priority for the young generation. There is still a significant potential in the EU and in the US to expand these achievements at the transatlantic level.

Participants agreed that a common EU-US framework for transatlantic mobility and collaboration in HE would be extremely useful. Such a framework could provide a context for continuous stakeholder dialogue on improving cooperation, harmonise existing support initiatives and develop new structures one, incentivise the establishment of institutional alliances, promote diversity, equity and inclusion and facilitate mobility formats.

DAAD and IIE are tremendously grateful for all stakeholders that have contributed to the roundtable and shared their experience. They will continue their dialogue on the further development and intensification of transatlantic people-to-people exchange initiatives and continue to observe EU-US policy developments. A follow-up roundtable is scheduled for 2024 in Washington, DC.