

## **Government should follow EU lead on Erasmus to reboot higher education here, says IFUT**

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The Irish government should follow the EU's decision to massively increase funding for its highly successful and vital third-level Erasmus programme, to reboot our universities for staff, students and administrators alike, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has said.

Frank Jones, Deputy General Secretary of IFUT, made the call following statements by EU Education Commissioner, Tibor Navrasics, in Dublin earlier today, that EU funding for Erasmus will shortly be doubled, with the aim of increasing and broadening student participation threefold.

"Only a similar approach will reverse a decade of funding cuts by government, during which state funding to our universities fell by half in real terms. In the last Budget we saw a 'small steps' approach to tackling the crisis, but the time for 'small steps' is past," he said.

The Dublin meeting, organised by the Irish Universities Association, also heard that Ireland and Serbia are now alone in Europe in the category of higher education "systems in danger".

"This is due to the double impact of a collapse in state funding combined with soaring student intake. With student numbers set to rise further into the foreseeable future, our higher education sector faces an even deeper crisis if the government refuses to act decisively," Frank Jones said.

*ENDS*

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