



European
Commission

Erasmus+ National Policy Reviews 2024 Colombia

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Colombia

Contributor

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This national policy review provides a detailed analysis of Colombia's educational policies and their alignment with the Erasmus+ programme. It offers official, first-hand information into the country's engagement with Erasmus+ from 2021 to 2024, highlighting opportunities for improvement and identifying strategies to enhance integration and outcomes. Prepared and submitted by the Erasmus+ National Focal Point, this review contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen international cooperation and to maximise the benefits of the Erasmus+ programme in Colombia.

Reviews of policies, initiatives, projects, and/or stakeholders

In the National Development Plan "Colombia, World Power of Life", the educational sector has important commitments that allows quality education to be a transformative force to overcome inequality. Among these, specifically related to HE, are the following:

Dignity and well-being for our teachers as determining agents of change.

Within the 2022-2026 Plan framework, the dignity, training, and development of the teaching profession for quality education were established through the strategy called «Popular Pedagogical Power.» The proposal seeks to bring together the voices of educational communities, networks, and everyone interested in education to transform teaching, learning, and school management processes. It aims to highlight and recognise community-based teaching methods and drive changes in public policy.

The goal is to create more opportunities to strengthen the skills and professional capacities of teachers in Colombia through both initial training (bachelor's degrees) and advanced training (specialisations, master's, and doctoral degrees) so they can continue improving their teaching practices to meet the needs of students and communities in public schools..

For this, 25,000 flexible and contextualised postgraduate study scholarships were offered; new schools were created in the country, and the existing ones were improved; labour relations within educational establishments were also improved; the way teachers enter the system was modified, and the teaching staff was expanded.

The strategy prioritises the participation of those teachers with fewer training opportunities, which allows them to promote social transformations in their territories. The targeting of the programme considers:

- The location of the educational establishment in rural and dispersed rural areas
- The level of training of teachers
- Performance in Saber 11, 2022 tests
- Location in PDET municipalities

<https://www.mineduccion.gov.co/portal/micrositios-preescolar-basica-y-media/Poder-Pedagogico-Formacion-Docente/>

Strengthening public higher education institutions with the reform of Law 30 of 1992 to guarantee the right to higher education

In compliance with article 122 of the National Development Plan 2022-2026, which proposes the "Participatory Reform of the Higher Education System," the Ministry of National Education has led a democratic and pedagogical participatory process to construct a proposal for a New HE Law. Once a

consensus is reached in the National Concertation Table for Higher Education, this will be submitted to the Congress of the Republic.

This process has already included two phases of debate, in which the different actors of the system were convened to discuss the problems, solutions, positions, and interests regarding higher education. During the first phase, eight (8) assembly spaces were developed: three (3) national and five (5) regional. Approximately 2,150 people participated in these discussions. Simultaneously, a microsite was set up for virtual citizen participation.

As a result, the Ministry of National Education gathered and organised 713 contributions as a record of these discussions. This phase concluded on 20 July 2023, with the release of a draft text for public discussion titled «Reform to Law 30 of 1992» (also referred to as Version 1). Alongside this, a draft of the statutory law was submitted to regulate the fundamental right to education.

In the second phase, the debate process continued with various sectors to strengthen the first version of the reform project. During this time, contributions were received from public and private HEIs, government entities, union organisations, student movements and platforms, etc. Nearly 50 documents were collected, more than 195 contributions were collected through the MEN website, and more than fifty events and meetings were attended.

The result of the two phases is the public presentation, by January 2024, of a new working document or second version of the articles of the bill, which will be the input for the third phase, which will take place from January to June of the same year and who will oversee the MCN.

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/micrositios-superior/Reforma-a-la-ley-30/>

Free tuition in public higher education, with quality, equity, and territorial relevance, gradually moving towards universalisation

Expansion of coverage and free policy to promote the access of 500,000 new students to the higher education system and go from a coverage rate of 53% to 62% in this government.

Immediate Transit Programme to Higher Education to guarantee access for young people who live in rural and dispersed territories. Goal: 30,000 11th-grade students and recent high school graduates from 72 sub-regions of the country.

Consolidation of a higher education system that promotes equitable access and admission and develops a comprehensive, inclusive, intercultural, and anti-racist curriculum.

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/Educacion-superior/Pol%C3%ADtica-de-Gratuidad/409830:Politica-de-Gratuidad-en-la-Educacion-Superior>

New Plan for Educational Spaces as a Centre of Community Life and Peace: To promote territorial equity and overcome historical gaps in access to education from preschool to higher education, gradually moving towards universalisation.

It is a pluridiverse territory of comprehensive care based on knowledge and focused on care, well-being, inclusion, and equity, from early childhood to old age to enhance community life.

In turn, Educational Spaces as Centres of Community Life are based on social orders:

- Economic with a productive vocation for the sustainability of the territories
- Political with an assembly-based community social organisation to enhance the power of the people in the face of true democracy
- Symbolic in its cultural practices and ways of doing things
- Subjective in the common senses, idiosyncrasies, and way of being

These foundations allow the territories spaces for the production and reproduction of their creations that, together with institutions, enhance their capacities for sustainability.

Legislative reforms and/or policies that have been put in place in the past three years or that are still being discussed

Rescue Plan for ICETEX Beneficiaries

Economic relief and incentives in partial early payment capital write-off, academic excellence, and other social compensation alternatives.

This initiative seeks to create support mechanisms for individuals facing financial difficulties, helping them finance their studies in a way that aligns with their financial capabilities. It includes incentives for those who make advance payments or demonstrate academic excellence, as well as compensation to reduce the impact of high inflation on loans. Specifically, it offers partial compensation for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) component of the interest rate on educational loans to lessen the negative economic impact on beneficiaries when inflation reaches double digits.

The National Development Plan will also strengthen the implementation of the Income Contingent Payment mechanism for new loan beneficiaries. People who voluntarily access this scheme will be able to pay their loan according to a percentage of their income as long as the person receives a salary greater than the current minimum wage.

ICETEX can improve the conditions of its loans with fairer mechanisms and instruments for Colombians. These special loan lines adapt to their payment level and guarantee equitable access to all Colombian territories' student loans, considering their differences.

<https://web.icetex.gov.co/documents/20122/142115/Plan+estrategico+icetex+2021-2024.pdf/>

Statutory Law

The Statutory Law Project 224 of 2023, titled "By which the fundamental right to education is regulated, and other provisions are dictated", is set to proceed to the Plenary of the House of Representatives in the first half of 2024, after being discussed and debated by the First Committee of the House during the second half of 2023.

This statutory bill is necessary for several reasons:

- **Historical Obligation:** Since 1994, the Colombian State has had a duty to regulate the right to education through a special law, as mandated by Article 9 of the General Education Law (Law 115). This bill addresses that long-standing obligation.
- **Systematising Jurisprudence:** After more than thirty years of constitutional jurisprudence, it is essential to systematise these legal principles to better guarantee and advance the right to education.
- **Legal Security:** By enacting a statutory law, the bill aims to provide legal security to constitutional advancements in guaranteeing this right, preventing setbacks or misinterpretations by authorities in specific cases.
- **Addressing Barriers:** The bill seeks to resolve constitutional and practical issues that continue to obstruct the access to the right to education across all levels and modalities.

Following the National Development Plan 2022 – 2026, the State must build an educational system that improves the conditions of quality, access, and permanence, especially for marginalised territories and communities. This initiative aims to guarantee the fundamental right to education and establish the conditions and obligations necessary for its effective protection and respect by the State, society, and the family. Article 9 of Education Law 115 on the "right to education" states that the development of the right to education will be governed by a special law of a statutory nature.

The main reasons why this initiative has a Statutory and not ordinary rank:

- It is a historical debt that the Colombian State has since the issuance of Law 115 of 1994.
- To systematise the constitutional jurisprudence issued 30 years ago to date.
- Through Statutory law, legal security is given to constitutional advances, and setbacks or lack of

knowledge of the authorities in particular cases are avoided.

- Constitutional or practical problems that continue to be barriers to guaranteeing the right to education at all levels and modalities can be resolved.

Law 30 Reform Project:

In compliance with article 122 of the National Development Plan 2022-2026, the Ministry of National Education has led a participatory, democratic, and pedagogical process to construct a proposal for a new higher education law. Once a consensus is reached in the National Concertation Table for Higher Education, the law will be submitted to the Congress of the Republic.

This process has already included two phases of debate, in which the different actors of the system were convened to listen to and recognise the problems, solutions, positions, and interests regarding higher education. During the first phase, eight (8) assembly spaces were developed: three (3) national and five (5) regional. Approximately 2,150 people participated in these discussions.

Simultaneously, a microsite was set up for virtual citizen participation. As a result, the MEN collected 713 contributions and systematised them as a record of these spaces. This phase culminated on 20 July 2023 with the publication, for public discussion, of a text that, at the time, was called Reform to Law 30 of 1992 (it is also associated as Version 1) and with the filing of the draft statutory law to regulate the fundamental right to education.

In the second phase, the debate process continued with various sectors to strengthen the first version of the reform project. During this time, contributions were received from public and private HEIs, government entities, union organizations, student movements and platforms, etc. Nearly 50 documents were collected, more than 195 contributions were collected through the MEN website, and more than fifty events and meetings were attended.

The result of the two phases is the public presentation, by January 2024, of a new working document or second version of the articles of the bill, which will be the input for the third phase, which will take place from January to June of the same year and who will oversee the MCN.

Projects which are examples of good practice that have been launched in the past three years

Free tuition in public higher education:

It is projected that public HEIs will provide 360,000 places: 215,000 from public universities and 145,000 from public ITTU and that SENA will expand by 140,000, for a total of 500,000 places.

To date, a total of 50,000 new students have been estimated. For the first semester of 2023, new students reach 27,421. For the second semester of 2023, new students reach 17,823 (not counting the final closing cut-off). This data is provided from 53 state institutions. Data is not yet available for 11 institutions.

Within the components of the HE coverage strategy, which is the commitment to strengthening public HE as a progressive right, 500,000 new students will be allowed access through a set of enabling factors, approaches, and strategies, integrating the system between levels and strengthening the transition from middle to higher education.

Among them are:

- Comprehensive coverage plans
- Deepening on free tuition
- Immediate transit programmes
- Territorial spaces plan
- Enabling the academic offer with the Quality Assurance System

- In the proposed expansion of SENA coverage, 60,000 virtual and 80,000 in-person students are estimated.

Infrastructure:

Nearly one hundred expansion projects, new construction, or improvement of higher education infrastructure are planned.

Rescue plan:

Colombians who have studied with the support of ICETEX and are in the process of paying their refundable loan will receive, as a benefit, the reduction of the interest rate in extra points, which is more relevant to the entity's loans. With this measure, the Colombian Government, through ICETEX, maintains its commitment to loan beneficiaries to have a rate with better conditions.

Before 2023, interest rates during the repayment period ranged between CPI + 7% and CPI + 12%. In response to this situation, the Support Plan was implemented in 2023 and will be maintained during 2024 to counteract the high costs of credit due to the increase in inflation. As a result, interest rates were reduced, and the conditions of educational loans were improved.

Territorial Student Loan:

ICETEX designed a loan modality that adjusts to the realities of academic merit in the territories, which will contribute to closing gaps in access to higher education.

This is the Territorial Loan modality with a Social Approach that ICETEX provides for young people from nearly 200 Colombian municipalities characterised by their inhabitants' vulnerability.

This line finances the total tuition throughout the academic programme, provides rate and sustenance subsidies, and, subject to compliance with requirements, forgives 25% of the loan for graduation merit.