Making Mobility the Norm-NORM
Project number: 2019-1-DE01-KA203-005031

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Making Mobility the Norm-NORM

Project number: 2019-1-DE01-KA203-005031

E+ KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices
KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education

IO3 RESEARCH REPORT

by Johannes Weinreich, Carmen Fels, and Franziska Heike

Philipps-Universität Marburg (UM), Germany

Eva Marcén Cruz - European University Foundation (EUF), Belgium, Luxembourg

February 2022

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AUTh – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

ELTE – Eötvös Loránd University Budapest

EUF – European University Foundation

EWP – Erasmus Without Papers

HEI(s) – Higher Education Institution(s)

LA – Learning Agreement

MIC – Marburg International Club

ToR – Transcript of Records

UAH – Universidad de Alcalá

UB – Universitat de Barcelona

UM – Philipps-Universität Marburg

UVSQ – Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

VMU – Vytautas-Magnus-University

ANECA-Agencia National de Evaluacion de las Calidad y Acreditacion

ACQUIN-Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute

Executive Summary

This report combines the results of in-depth research with focus interviews about the structural barriers of (physical) international student mobility in the European HEIs who are partners of the NORM project consortium. The analysis is underpinned by interviews conducted with various stakeholders from different structural levels of the participating HEIs, who oversee international student mobility in general as well as Erasmus+ mobilities in particular. In terms of methodology, the evaluation follows a qualitative inductive approach based on aspects of the concept of Grounded theory.

Chapter 1 introduces a summary and compound conclusion of the results and findings of the previous two intellectual outputs completed by NORM consortium members as the interviews feeding IO3 were designed relative to the results of IO1 and IO2. Chapter 2 contends a problem definition that functions as the background for the interviews as well as providing details about the implemented methodology and structure. Chapter 3 analyzes the interview transcripts and summarizes the findings subsumed in four categories: general findings, internationalization at the home HEI for outgoing students (sending perspective), internationalization at the home HEI for incoming students (receiving perspective), and the students' perspective. This chapter additionally addresses the main discrepancies and similarities between the findings of IO1/IO2 and IO3. Chapter 4 performs a case study from the perspective of two national accreditation institutions, ANECA in Spain and ACQUIN in Germany, who monitor and evaluate study programs for accreditation or re-accreditation purposes. Their relevant point of view and tailored recommendations assist in the comprehension of the national (sandwich) perspective that operates between the default normative European perspective and the local perspective provided by the interviewed HEIs. Finally, in chapter 5, we situate the accumulated sources and findings in a larger context, which informs the work of two subsequent intellectual outputs of the NORM project and submit distinguished recommendations that address the identified obstacles with the principal objective of making mobility the norm.

The report's leading findings confirm that the perception of barriers to international student mobility in Europe is not homogeneous. HEIs are subject to international, national, local, and, quite often, distinctively individual factors as they design structures

for and implement individual international student mobility. While some obstacles to making international and inter-European student mobility the norm are as diverse as the special interests of the various stakeholders involved, several key issues were identified and repeatedly corroborated by the stakeholders. Deterrents vary from cultural tendencies to undervalue internationalization to logistical difficulties, such as the scarce use of ISCED codes among HEIs and the late publishing of course catalogues. Insufficient funding on both an institutional and individual level as well as lack of language competences severely affect student mobility across the board, but are not complex obstacles in themselves. In contrast, other obstacles such as continuously difficult recognition processes of international credits and routinely implemented degree program designs that disregard student mobility as an overall objective are highly complex and often necessitate individual commitment by the stakeholders on all levels. A successfully implemented student mobility will in consequence partially depend on the willingness of a wide spectrum of involved parties to minimize the accessible structural barriers.

Introduction

IO1 and IO2 highlight that student mobility is most successful when certain structural and individual prerequisites are met. The importance of flexibility among instructors and international mobility staff in charge of credit recognition cannot be overstated. Standards and directives set by university administration help stipulate a mobility-friendly structural environment throughout an institution that may go beyond "traditional" semester-based physical exchanges and include other forms of mobility e.g., Summer Schools. HEI leadership furthermore influences the consideration of mobility windows in degree programs, the availability of funding for the promotion of study opportunities abroad as well as the availability of comprehensive information material for various stakeholders (IO1 report 2021, p. 26, 32; Vossensteyn et al. 2010, p. 91 in IO1 report 2021, p. 28-29; IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 18-29).

IO2 reveals that structural barriers constitute a primary hardship for students interested in a mobility and have therefore become substantial obstacles in making international student mobility the norm. Students encounter pressing difficulties in regards to the transfer of credits from host to home universities, often due to a lack of information about the curricula and course opportunities at partner institutions. An inadequate amount of information and guidance can cause feelings of insecurity during the application process (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 22-28).

IO3 aims to identify and deconstruct structural barriers within study programs in Higher Education Institutions in order to extract hypotheses and recommendations for HEIs to adopt and implement into their institutional structure and consequently normalize mobility. A one-size-fits-all approach remains impossible as institutional structures as well as national and regional barriers vary considerably between participating members. Hypotheses and recommendations require to be situated in this context of variables. The output's outcome will finally serve as the foundation for the Curricula Design Guide – one of the core outcomes of the NORM-project.

Chapter 1 summarizes IO1 and IO2 and highlights these outputs as the basis of the in-depth research. Afterward, chapter 2 advances the methodological aspects of the research. In chapter 3, interview transcripts are analyzed and findings are abstracted under the following main sections: general findings, internationalization at the home institution for outgoing students (sending perspective), internationalization at the home institution for incoming students (receiving perspective), and the students' perspective. This chapter also provides a short overview of the main discrepancies and similarities between the findings of IO1/IO2 and IO3. Chapter 4 then examines the input from two national institutions heading the evaluation of accreditation and re-accreditation of study programs. The inclusion of the external and unbiased perspectives of national agencies is a crucial step towards improving national structures of study programs. Comparing and contrasting additional interviews, we generate a multifaceted and comprehensive set of recommendations. Chapter 5 introduces specific suggestions on how to design curricula that are inclusive of our goal of implementing mobility as the norm. The conclusion summarizes our findings, hypotheses, and suggestions concerning structural barriers to mobility in the Erasmus+ program.

1. Summary of Preliminary Research

In IO1, literature-centered desk research as well as a survey were conducted among Higher Education Institution partners of the NORM project with a focus on mobility in the context of European Higher Education. The objective was twofold: gaining a detailed understanding of different mobility options and identifying the main challenges students and staff face while planning a mobility. Mobility options include academic mobility, blended mobility, credit mobility, degree mobility, and double or joint degree programs. Mobilities are divided into categories by length of duration. Short-term mobilities include all exchanges under two months, mid-term mobilities are two-six months, and long-term mobilities describe mobilities that surpass a six months duration. A Freemover mobility is an additional option for students who wish to organize their study abroad without the framework of regulations inherent to most mobility programs. In the context of academic exchange, a distinction between incoming and outgoing mobilities is drawn. Depending on the type of mobility, foci alter between country of origin and host country, but a sound cultural understanding of both is significant for a successful mobility (IO1 report 2021, p. 6-8; Bologna report 2012, p. 152-153 in report IO1 report 2021, 6; Bologna report 2018, p. 202 in IO1 report 2021, p.6; ECTS User's Guide 2015 in IO1 report 2021, p. 6; Mapping University Mobility Project 2015 report 7).

Mobility windows are defined as a specific time in the curriculum set apart for studying abroad. There are options of "[t]raineeships (internships/work placements) abroad/student mobility for traineeship" (IO1 report 2021, p. 7) that are also considered a student mobility. In addition, new mobility opportunities have been developed recently, such as the "[i]nternational distance learning experience" (IO1 report 2021, p. 8), in which the host university offers online courses that include instructors and students from partner countries (IO1 report 2021, p. 8).

The report shows a notable discrepancy in mobility numbers that can be linked to the attractiveness of countries and the availability of different types of mobility (IO1 report 2021, p. 9-15). Moreover, only degrees that inherently command an international focus seem inclined to incorporate a mobility window into their curricula. It takes great effort from university staff to set up study programs with mobility windows and joint degrees

that are accommodating of the interests of the academic staff from both institutions (De Moor and Henderikx 2012, p. 13 in IO1 report 2021, p. 17-18). On top of these necessary but complex collaboration efforts, implementing mobility windows can also be difficult due to simple differences in semester calendars. Implementing a comprehensive English-taught program that is attractive to international students and enabling students to easily compare course offerings from home and host institution is complex but essential. The importance of employing curriculum-targeting policies is highlighted in order to set up functional mobility windows instructive for the entire institution (Ferencz et al. 2013, p. 73, 86; 93-94 in IO1 report 2021, p. 20-21). A significant increase in the availability of double or joint degree programs is also integral in reaching the goal of making mobility the norm (IO1 report 2021, p. 22).

The report demonstrates that the main challenges of mobilities can be divided into two main categories. Personal reasons, such as financial or family circumstances keeping staff and students from participating in a mobility, constitute one such category (Souto-Otero et al., 2019, p. 5 in IO1 report 2021, p. 13). These personal and financial barriers are not at the core of the NORM project's focus, but it remains noteworthy that financial issues in particular are frequently listed as a main obstacle in the literature analyzed for the report of IO1. The second category centers around structural barriers such as recognition of credits earned while studying abroad and the implementation of mobility windows. Other obstacles disclosed include the lack of linguistic proficiency for academic purposes in the host country's language, the unavailability of information material concerning various aspects of the mobility period, as well as skepticism about the complete recognition of the time abroad in the curriculum and field of study (IO1 report 2021, p. 25, Brus and Scholz 2007, p. 17, 41 in report IO1 2021, p. 25).

The report outlines several steps that can be taken to increase student and staff interest and involvement in international mobilities. The promotion of programs would benefit from an increase in personal nuance as part of the outgoing information, such as reports of alumni students who have studied or worked abroad. In order to reach students with essential information about mobility opportunities, the report suggests maximizing the use of social media due to its far-reaching popularity (IO1 report 2021, p. 32-33; Bauer and Kreuz 2015, p. 101 in IO1 report 2021, p. 26).

A wider variety of programs and types of mobilities may appeal to students who are not interested in or suitable for the traditional Erasmus+ program. Examples of alternative mobilities are summer schools, intensive training programs, and study trips. These choices typically provide students with complementary and concise time windows for exchanges. Interestingly, the report recommends increasing staff mobilities not only for reasons of inherent advantages for staff itself, but also because witnessing staff mobilities can act as a pull factor for students. Overall, it is fundamentally important that sending institutions and their respective bodies are flexible in recognizing ECTS credits gained by students at the host institution. A different study in the report indicates that the benefits of mobilities are not widely and comprehensively understood by students, which has contributed to the lack of interest in mobilities. It is therefore necessary to prioritize the communication of the undeniable benefits of mobilities, such as the improvement of language skills and the acquisition of intercultural competencies. Furthermore, the report suggests that in order for mobilities to become the norm, they may have to be integrated into curricula as a mandatory degree component, which in turn assumes an improved compatibility of academic calendars between home and host universities (IO1 report 2021, p. 26, 32; Vossensteyn et al. 2010, p. 91, 87 in IO1 report 2021 27-29).

Centering student mobility, the two reports of the surveys of IO2, contribute valuable insight into the effects of mobility barriers. The survey results were provided by students and conducted between 22 June 2020 and 31 July 2020 and, in a second round, between 12 October 2020 and 18 January 2021. The student mobility report evaluates a variety of factors that have a potentially negative effect on the international mobility of students (IO2 report survey for students 2021, p. 3-8).

Among the principal negative factors are income constrains, perceived academic barriers such as the difficulty of credit accreditation, and the lack of knowledge about the effects of international mobility on the academic education. For those who did not participate in a mobility, credit recognition insecurity is listed as one of the main drawbacks in spite of 48.18% of the survey participants stating that 75% of their credits were recognized. Recommended changes to improve accreditation include the refining of compatibility between courses offered by home and host university as well as the

increase of flexibility in reagrds to course recognition (IO2 report survey for students 2021, p. 8).

When accreditation falls beneath 75%, it is predominantly on account of students experiencing difficulty finding partner HEIs that offer compatible courses (IO2 report survey for students 2021, p. 10). Only 45,64% of the students state that a mobility window is incorporated in their degree program. If such a window is not included in the curriculum, the limitations for a mobility become significant (IO2 report survey for students 2021, p. 8).

The evaluation of the survey points to a widespread fear of mobilities causing a prolongation of study time; a worry that should be assessed as a structural barrier. Other high-ranking barriers addressed include the complexity of the application process for a mobility and the lack of access to and information about the syllabus of the potentially attended host HEI. While there are overlapping responses, the survey shows no clear consensus among the answers of the participating students' part of the NORM project consortium, emphasizing the many nuances of barriers (IO2 report survey for students 2021, p. 13).

The staff survey was conducted between 12 October 2020 and 18 January 2021. This survey similarly focuses on student mobilities, but includes the perspective of HEI staff to render a more thorough understanding of systemic challenges. According to the survey results, mandatory mobility is not a commonly employed degree element in most HEIs. Most degrees with a mandatory mobility either are related to management, business and international business studies, or center around a foreign language. A few universities have additionally incorporated mandatory mobilities in the fields of physics, engineering, and technologies of information (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 7). When mobilities are mandatory, the one semester physical mobility is the most commonly realized mobility. In contrast, only 7.7% of students indicate that within their compulsory mobility, they chose a short- or long-term mobility. However, short- and long-term mobilities were utilized frequently in combination with the semester-long mobility. Over half of the mobilities were funded through the Erasmus+ program (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 10). This survey underlines that a generalization of reasons for the lack of mobility within a department is not beneficial and varies from one country and university to another (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 11).

Yet, when questioned about potential reasons of low mobility rates, similarities between the student and staff survey results abounded. HEI staff sees income limitations, followed by structural barriers, such as the incompatibility of courses and academic calendars, and challenges with course accreditation as the paramount grounds of mobility hesitance. Similarly, the interviewed staff includes language barriers and the lack of information about the role of the mobility for the student's academic career as probable mobility burdens (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 17-21).

Mobility pull factors, staff agrees, are centered around gaining life experiences abroad, improving or initiating foreign languages skills, and encountering different learning and teaching methods. Equally appealing to some is the prospect of taking courses unavailable at their home university with the goal of diversifying curricula and increasing future employment opportunities. Participating staff also addresses the importance of increased accreditation flexibility within the regulations of home institutions (IO2 report survey for staff 2021, p. 18-20).

The report concludes that from the perspective of the surveyed, the most important structural barriers for outgoing students are:

"[u]ncertainty or lack of information on courses and syllabus at the partner institution […] [p]oor matching between the courses/subjects of the partner institution and those offered by my institution [e]xpected difficulties in credit recognition between the partner institution and my institution" (IO2 report staff survey 2021, p. 22-23).

The two surveys demonstrate that only the combination of personal and structural barriers can lead to a comprehensive understanding of mobility barriers for students. The main structural barriers and thus the main concern of the NORM project are subsumed under these principal topics: **credit recognition, curricula structures including mobility windows, and top-down vs. bottom-up measures for internationalization.**

Although the main focus of the reports are barriers to international mobility, several best practice examples are incorporated. These are instructive when formulating hypotheses about necessary changes in higher education institutions for mobility to become the norm. Notably, both of the reports emphasize that challenges and good practices differ among each HEI, which reinforces that generalizations about structural

barriers can be misleading. The number of students going abroad rises with the increase of flexibility in credit recognition amongst academic and international mobility staff. Mobility measures initiated and enforced by the highest executive level administration of an institution are more likely to be successful when implemented throughout study programs. An improved publicizing of study opportunities and benefits (e.g. diversifying curricula, opportunity to learn foreign languages and improve the prospects of further job opportunities) is imperative. Program information provided by the International Office, Erasmus+ coordinators, and Erasmus+ alumni should be available in a variety of formats and across numerous platforms. As part of this, timely access to the course catalog and accompanying information is an indispensable goal.

The outlined outcomes of IO1 and IO2 are the basis for IO3. Therefore, the main structural barriers and the identified good practices can be abstracted into a problem definition. **Due to the lack of general consensus on structural barriers, an in-depth analysis of specific study fields is imperative in determining which information necessitates inclusion in a Curricula Design Guide and a Curricula Matching Tool.** Based on this problem definition in IO3, various in-depth interviews were conducted within the universities that are part of the NORM project. The objective is to collect a cornucopia of opinions about structural problems from multiple study fields as well as the International Office staff, who engage with the Erasmus+ program daily.

2. Methodological Background and Research Objective

This chapter provides a methodological overview of the research procedure of the interviews and consecutive implementation in the report. It offers an in-depth look into the main objectives of the interviews as well as an explanation of the approach taken in preparation for the Intellectual Output 3. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the actual research procedure. In addition, key information about the interviews are provided, such as the number of persons interviewed as well as details about their professional HEI position particularly regarding involvement with the Erasmus+ programs and other pertaining study programs.

2.1 Main Aim and Design of the Intellectual Output

The main aim of this output is to gather in-depth information about structural barriers of international student mobility, especially within various Erasmus+ opportunities. The interviews were primarily conducted with HEI staff, representing both administrative perspectives as well as faculty positions. In addition, students were interviewed to gain insight into the perspective of potential mobility participants. Depending on the organizational structure of the HEIs in question, the interview partners stemmed from differing administrative and faculty units. Some directly involved in the administration of mobilities work as faculty or closely attached to the faculty while others' positions were located within the general HEI administration. The gathered information serves as a basis for the Curricula Design Guide, which is one of the subsequent outputs of the NORM project.

Originally, the plan for this output had been for the University of Marburg staff to conduct in-depth interviews based on an analysis of specific study programs in which student mobility is underdeveloped. For example, study areas such as teacher training, law, and medicine are typically highly regulated and, thus, provide its students with fewer mobility opportunities with regard to credit transferability. HEI staff working in or in support of these programs and active students were the initial target group for the planned interviews and subsequent workshops and trainings.

The results of the analysis of the survey of concrete bottlenecks of the highly regulated study programs would have formed the basis for the planning of several study visits

and workshop trainings at each HEI of the consortium. The workshops would then have been set up to give the participants and their HEI programs a detailed insight into research-based strategies on how to implement structures that improve student mobility especially with regard to aspects of the curricula design of study programs. The trainings were to target program coordinators, international relations officers, faculty deans, student representatives, and teachers in each of the seven universities of the NORM consortium. To broaden the perspective, other study fields would have been put into focus in order to see how mobility opportunities are implemented in these restricted fields to provide for a modal scenario showcasing how student mobility can be made the "norm."

To achieve better comparability, the original output design intended to involve an independent HEI from the region of the consortium HEI in question to ensure that mobility barriers with the consortium partner as an individual entity are not based on structural matters beyond the sphere of influence of the respective consortium HEI. In other words, each district in which the HEIs of the consortium are located would have had an additional HEI involved in the study visits. This would have enabled the consortium HEI to accrue additional information and attain better comparability with other HEIs who share the same regional and national background both in terms of legislative and socio-economic factors. Thus, roots of structural bottlenecks would have been identified and at the same time, the possibility that these are based on a national level beyond the scope of a consortium partner's means to improve existing structures would have been eliminated.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes had to be made in order to actualize this report. It was no longer possible to conduct in-depth studies of cases of specific study areas at particular HEIs and then travel to each of the HEIs in order to organize physical workshops and interviews. To gain the required information and results as best as possible, the consortium decided to conduct a series of online focus interviews and shift the attention from workshops designed to evaluate and inform particular staff of the participating HEI to providing the best possible background for the subsequent IOs of the NORM project, mainly the Curriculum Design Guide.

An interim analysis of the initial interviews concluded that the intended mobility focus on a typology report would not provide the required background for the follow-up tasks of the consortium. Especially the heterogeneity in organizational structure and responsibilities of the consortium HEI proved to be a challenge for the general applicability that a typology report would have called for. Essentially, a general concision regarding de facto mobility typologies cannot be made easily. Rather, this report shows which structural barriers can be found at universities and what can be considered good practices in order to make mobility the norm. Just as the findings of this report, the path towards the result as portrayed in this section can serve the interested reader as signposts and inspiration for the process of identifying and tackling structural barriers of international student mobility. Furthermore, the report and its findings may serve administrators with thought-provoking impulses and ideas on which measures can be taken to make study programs more mobile and curricula more flexible.

2.2 Methodology of the Interviews

The findings presented in this report are based on an inductive, Grounded theory approach, in order to formulate the research questions and sharpen the scope of the interviews. Grounded theory aims to gather information for the purpose of constructing and creating theoretical and hypothetical arguments, which aim to explain an observed phenomenon. It is described as an inductive, constructive research set up which is the opposite of the deductive research process that verifies a previously designed theory. Therefore, the main practice of the Grounded theory process is based on collecting data through conducting interviews and analysing them (Kahn 2014, p. 224; Glaser; Strauss 1967 in Shahid Khan 2014, p. 224, 226).

The research process of Grounded theory starts with conducting a first set of data and is followed by its subsequent analysis. Typically, the analysis of the data is incorporated into the data generation process. Therefore, the data collection is strongly connected to the categories, codes, and concepts that are set up in the analysis process. While collecting new and additional data, the concepts get clearer and the data collection gains both accuracy and focus. Therefore, the ongoing data analysis can be loosely described as follows:

first data is coded, then

codes are applied to the existing and ongoing data collection and an adaptation might be implemented in subsequent data collection,

codes are compared and (re)adapted,

a check for upcoming categories,

creation of sets of categories,

categories and respective features are applied and modified (if required),

assessment of the degree of required elaboration of categories and respective features,

detailed conceptual justification or clarification of the concepts and

description and clarification of analytical reasoning for the research process.

The research process ends when a satisfactory amount of theory has been conducted from the analysis of the data and data saturation occurs. A structural framework is then developed by examining the connections between the central and supporting categories. Within the process of elaborating these relationships, a Grounded theory is established (Egan 2002, p. 281-287).

It is important to note that there is no generally accepted understanding of Grounded theory (Mey; Mruck 2011a, p. 9). Therefore, the delineated research process is just one of the understandings of Grounded theory as briefly introduced in this chapter.

Based on the idea of Grounded theory, a research process was designed while implementing this report. Thus, after an interview or a set of interviews was conducted, a revision and review process was performed resulting in an adaptation of the interview questions used for the upcoming interviews. This also made it possible to redirect the focus of prospective interviews to prioritize topics, issues, or problems that had been mentioned in previous interviews. At the same time, this analysis process created categories and concepts for evaluating the results. After several rounds of interwoven data analysis and data collection, the emerged categories were used as head categories in order to structure the results of the interviews. Then the connections between the subcategories were elaborated and subsumed under central categories. For example, under the central category of general findings, the categories of the personal assessment of the barriers of student mobility of the interviewees was summarized and classified. This method was applied throughout all central categories of the analysis and eventually generated a structure for the report at hand.

Research Procedure

The initial research questions for the interviews were based on an analysis concerning bottlenecks of student mobilities as presented in IO1 and IO2. The names and contact details of the interviewees of each HEIs were provided by each consortium partner. A date was set for each university to conduct the interviews. The interviews were then implemented via BigBlueButton, a European video conferencing platform (BigBlueButton n.s.). The interview questions and a consent were sent in advance to each interviewee. The interviews were recorded to facilitate the creation of transcripts that were subsequently prepared by each participating HEI. After the first interviews had been conducted, a preliminary analysis of the results was prepared with a focus on particular categories of obstacles that were mentioned as barriers for mobility. As previously mentioned, the interview questions for following interviews were adapted based on the categories identified in the interim analysis as well as specific issues that had been raised. As this process was repeated after the completion of particular sets of interviews, the interview guide was continuously adapted to cover both categories and codes that were of particular interest in the preparation of an upcoming interview.

After the interviews were completed and the recordings were transcribed by each HEI, the final analysis of the interviews began. While various categories had been identified during the interim analysis, the concluding assessment that covered the entirety of interviews resulted in the final categories as listed below to be the main comprehensive points in the creation of hypotheses to be tested in elaborate detail:

OPIONION-BASED: Personal Assessment of the Interviewees Concerning Mobility Barriers

SENDING Perspective: Top-down vs. Bottom-up, Mobility Window et al, Program Design, Curricula Matching Tool, Credit Mobility, Practical Matters

RECEIVING Perspective: Structural Matters, Practical Matters, Top-down vs. Bottom-up

STUDENT Perspective: General Impression by Students

DEVIATIONS: Discrepancies and Similarities with the Findings of IO1/2 and IO3

These categories are discussed in chapter 3 of this report. They are analyzed independently as well as in relation to each other. Simultaneously, the categories

speak both to the interview partners' structural as well as individual assessment of mobility barriers. Thus, the various categories cannot be strictly separated from each other as several cross-category aspects can be identified which are mentioned and discussed in several categories such as, for example, different government regulations that restrict universities in planning study programs. In addition, the category division provides structure to the coding of the interviews and sub-categories suggested by the Grounded theory research methodology.

In addition to program coordinators, international relations officers, and faculty Erasmus+ Coordinators, student representatives from the NORM HEIs were also interviewed. By including students in the list of interviewees, it was ensured that the target group received a voice in the analysis of barriers of student mobility beyond the questionnaire conducted in IO2.

Following the category-specific and cross-category analysis, the results are compared with the previous finding of IO1 and IO2. Thus, the IO3 report adds both value and information to the previous intellectual outputs. It narrows the focus of the research project and the three-fold (IO1-3) analysis of mobility barriers secures a comprehensive understanding of structural barriers of mobility beyond the aspects that have previously been identified. Looking at the similarities and discrepancies between the findings of IO1-3, one notices that despite the different research approaches of IO1 (literature review), IO2 (survey), and IO3 (in-depth research via interviews within the HEIs of the NORM project), there are aspects that are recurring in all three intellectual outputs.

After this analysis, interviews with representatives from two national accreditation agencies are discussed with a particular focus on mobility aspects in study program design in the framework of Erasmus+ programs. For these interviews, a separate questionnaire was developed, with the purpose of better understanding the role of international mobility opportunities in both the study program design and the evaluation process. As the design of IO3 also places a particular focus on the interviews of two national agencies who evaluate and accredit study programs, the interviews and their subsequent analysis does not follow the Grounded theory approach. Instead, an

interview guide was designed to serve as the basis for the interviews with ANECA in Spain and ACQUIN in Germany.

These interviews focused in particular on the following aspects:

- form and design of the audition process
- aspects of internationalization that are important for the evaluation of degree programs
- the audition process and the way international(ization) aspects are incorporated
- how feedback and recommendations are shared with an audited entity
- how changes (as compared to previous audition) are addressed
- the regulatory background on which an audition is based

The aim of the interviews with ANECA and ACQUIN was to get a third perspective on mobility barriers within study programs. As the agencies operate on a national level, the perspective these interviews provide complements the student and university perspective on the barriers of structural mobility of study programs, which was obtained by the previously conducted focus interviews of this output.

In the final content chapter, recommendations are presented taking into consideration two particular aspects: the relatively unambiguous aspects shared by almost all interview partners as well as more complex structural aspects. These are created through the categories and codes of the results of the interviews presented in chapter 3. Thus, the recommendations are the hypotheses formed from the categories, codes and statements of the interviews. It is important to emphasize that no generalizations can or should be made because of the heterogeneity of the involved HEIs. In terms of administrative structure, the HEIs are just as diverse as the national and regional (regulatory) environment in which they operate. Rather, the hypotheses are intended to help create the curricula design guide.

2.3 Information about the Interviews

In total, a series of 24 interviews was conducted in the preparation of this IO. While the majority of interviews were carried out with just the interviewer, a recorder and the interviewee present, one interview was in writing, and several interviews were conducted with two or more interviewees simultaneously.

In total 26 HEI staff plus two agents of the national accreditation and evaluation agency of the study programs AQUIN and ANECA were interviewed. The 26 HEI staff came from various institutional positions and different angles of the Erasmus+ context. The interviews were conducted within the period of May 2021 and February 2022. The following list shows the different positions of HEI employees that were interviewed:

One Faculty of Department of Erasmus+ and International Affairs member

One Advisor of Internationalization of the University

One Coordinator of the different Stakeholders in the University for International Affairs

Three persons of the International Office (member and head of the office)

Two persons from the International Office of a Faculty

Five Erasmus+/ ECTS Coordinators of Faculties

Two Institutional Coordinators of International Affairs

Two Administrative Erasmus+ Coordinators of the Faculty

One Academic Erasmus+ Coordinator of the Faculty

One President of the Marburg International Club

One ECTS Responsible Academic Coordinator

One Head of Students Mobility Office

Three Faculty Vice-Deans

One Vice-President for International Relations

One Head of the Student Union of the University

One Head of the Erasmus+ Mobility Unit

This list demonstrates well the vast variety of positions of the interviewed people. Interestingly, diverging terms are used for similar positions or positions that carry similar responsibilities. Some universities employ professors of the faculty to assist as so-called tutors with the mobility registration process. At the UB, tutors accompany the preparation of the learning agreement and the recognition of the courses taken abroad. At the UM, on the other hand, employees who partner with the student in the application process are called ECTS Coordinators (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 95; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 75).

In conclusion, this detailed description of the interviewees' positions confirms the diversity of the perspectives gathered to give insight into mobility barriers and

previously implemented good practices. Nuance and diversity are similarly reflected in the representation of interviews spread across a total of nine different faculties. This list includes:

School of Theology

Two different Faculties of Geology/ Geography

School of Dentistry

Three different Faculties of Law

Two different Faculties of Primary and Pre-School Education/ Education

Faculty of Humanities

Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Science

Faculty of Medicine

Faculty of Agriculture

3. Mobility Barriers from the Perspective of HEI Staff and Students

This chapter presents detailed key analytical findings in the interviews and highlights the most crucial structural mobility barriers within the Erasmus+ programs. Based on Grounded theory, several categories are developed and subsequently used within this chapter as headings for the sub-chapters.

3.1 Opinion-based Evaluation

Instead of limiting the interviewees with central questions about structural aspects of mobilities immediately, the interviews begin with open-ended questions as a means to extract an individual assessment of general mobility barriers. The feedback to these particular questions is presented in the following sub-chapter. In the course of analysing the data, it becomes evident, however, that structural challenges are inseparable from the interviewees' individual concerns. Overlapping answers are accumulated in the fields of mobility windows, lack of access to information, program design, credit mobility etc. These are described in more detail in other sections of this chapter: 3.2. SENDING Perspective and 3.3 RECEIVING Perspective.

Personal Assessment of Mobility Barriers

Students' uncertainty about their personal proficiency in English is commonly cited as a mobility barrier. Often students lack basic information about the required language level to successfully participate in courses/programs instructed in English at partner universities and in consequence do not feel confident to proceed with an application (Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 25-26; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 15-16; Interview UVSQ head of student's mobility office 2021, p. 57; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 98; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 127).

In regard to socio-culturally relevant factors, students frequently choose to remain within the confines of the familiar, which was confirmed by numerous HEI students from Spain, France and Greece who live in their parents' house while studying (Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152; Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110-111; UVSQ Interview Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 73). While individual students have unique reasons

for choosing to stay close to home, "fear of the unknown" appears as a recurring explanation (Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152). This fear of moving out of the family home for domestic studies is, naturally, heightened when it comes to international opportunities and often thwarts any mobility progress (Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152-153). Some interviewees had the impression that students are unsettled by a hypothetical prolongation of study time if an international mobility were to be included (Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152; Interview AUTh Faculty of Geology 2021, p. 169; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 15; Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 124).

The interviews call attention to the lack of awareness about the significance of transnational mobilities as benefits are not emphasized frequently enough (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 98). The Vice-President for International Relations at the UVSQ discloses that an increasing number of students, who study to become English teachers, do not view a learning experience abroad as necessary because of the steady decline of requirements of oral language proficiency for English teachers in France (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 63). Additionally, the International Coordinator of the Faculty of Law at ELTE reveals that a number of students received information about international mobilities from former students whose own experience lie ten or fifteen years in past. The result of this information exchange is problematic, as mobility opportunities, in the last decade, have increased in available funding as well as quality of credit recognition. (Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 124).

Financial situations and challenges emerge as a key barrier when students lack the financial capacities to study abroad. Frequently, the monthly rates of the Erasmus+ grant are perceived as insufficient to truly release the beneficiary from financial strains (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 98; Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110; Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 121; ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 124; ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education 2021, p. 127). In these cases, the students' families are unable to financially support them during their stay abroad. The combination of a financial strain caused by a study abroad and the financial strain from an extension of university enrolment prohibits many from exploring international mobilities altogether and is

particularly problematic in Greece due to the recent financial crisis (Interview AUTh Faculty of Geology 2021, p. 163; Interview AUTh Faculty of Dentistry 2021, p. 182; AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152).

3.2 Mobility Barriers from the Perspective of a Sending HEI

The following section focuses on the mobility barriers students face when preparing for mobility, the physical stay abroad and the return as identified by the interviewees from the sending perspective.

3.2.1 Structural Matters

This section focuses on the structural barriers addressed in the fourth section of the interviews. The topics, among others, include the importance of the inclusion of international perspectives regarding mobility windows and re-accreditation processes.

Top-down vs. Bottom-up

Within the consortium, universities typically have clear guidelines regarding mobility and the recognition of courses. At UAH, for example, 50% of all enrolled students must complete a mobility of sorts. Thus, university staff are required to develop types of mobility that are compatible with different study programs (Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021, p. 116). At VMU, the former university president is known to have held strong positions that courses taken abroad during a mobility should be fully and unequivocally accredited (Interview VMU Institutional Erasmus Coordinator 2021, p. 36). University senate discussions at AUTh concluded that bilateral agreements must be terminated either if students cannot finish courses with an examination or if the available classes at partner universities are incompatible with home study programs (Interview AUTh Institutional Erasmus Coordination 2021, p. 138).

The decentralized structure of many universities cultivates a democratic decision-making process. In spite of its many benefits, this distribution of tasks and responsibilities can inhibit the process of mobility improvements as faculty from numerous fields and study programs are keen to have their perspectives included (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 102-103). The UVSQ, in particular, faces difficulties in the context of re-accreditation as the process is

overseen by the Central Student Committee, a vast body of members and requires support from a majority (Interview UVSQ Vice-President of International Relations 2021, p. 64-65).

Mobility Window

The analysis of the interviews reveals that only a few degree programs have implemented an explicit mobility window in their curricula. Quite surprisingly, these two study fields are intrinsically internationally focused being the Faculties of Law at VMU and ELTE (Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 125; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 14-15). The vast majority of respondents admits to the lack of an explicit mobility window in their curricula (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 48; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 98; Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152; Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 121; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 127; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 98; Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Sciences 2021, p. 103; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 77). At the same time, many degree programs have included modules well-equipped for international mobilities which actualize a mobility window even if not explicitly formulated as a mobility window in the curriculum (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 48; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 127; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 14-15; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 77).

Staff who are not strictly bound to one degree program or field of study, and therefore have collaborated across university campuses, indicate that the existence of mobility windows and flexible accreditation strongly depends on the individual program and respective faculty. (Interview UVSQ Interview Student Mobility Office 2021, p. 57; Interview AUTh Institutional Erasmus Coordinator and Staff 2021, p. 141-142; Interview VMU Erasmus Mobility Office 2021, p. 37). It is impossible to identify or draft a generally applicable mobility window for all universities as the structures and suitability of semesters and programs vary dramatically. Pharmacy students at UB, for example, can only go abroad in their fifth year when elective courses are mandated as part of the curriculum (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 103). Meanwhile, students at VMU have the unique opportunity for a mobility in

January as January is customarily reserved for re-sit exams (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 11). Moreover, degree programs range considerably in length, for example, a Master's degree in Spain can be completed in one year, whereas in Germany the standard specified period of study for a Master's degree is two years. Similar discrepancies can be observed throughout Bachelor degrees: the standard period of study time for a Bachelor's degree is three years in Germany, but four years in Spain (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 93; UM Interview Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 76-78).

Program Design

Several of the interviewees suggest that the international perspective has not been adequately considered in the past when designing or re-accrediting study programs (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 93; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 97; Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 102-103; Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 46, Interview UVSQ Vice-President of International Relations 2021, p. 64-65). Many degree programs undergo the re-accreditation process approximately only every eight to ten years and ten years ago the international perspective received little attention in these processes (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 93; Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 103-104). At this level, structural challenges of re-accrediting programs to increase mobility come into play. At UVSQ, for example, the re-accreditation of programs is facilitated by the Central Student Committee and a majority of this body is needed to support and pass a newly developed or revised curricula that includes an international perspective (Interview UVSQ Vice-President of International Relations 2021, p. 64-65). In some cases, an international perspective has been deliberately discounted by faculty for lack of conviction that international orientation is necessary or beneficial for the program (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110).

However, many other universities highly value and choose to incorporate an international perspective in the re-accreditation or accreditation processes of study programs (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 77; Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 122; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary- and Pre-School

Education 2021, p. 128; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 17; Interview VMU Erasmus Institutional Coordinator 2021, p. 35; Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 26; Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110). The chosen approaches are manifold and inevitably unique to the university. VMU staff explains that in Lithuania study programs are evaluated every five years by an international agency. This agency, as implied by its name, assesses the steps taken to facilitate the presence of an international perspective within mobility opportunities. International perspectives are relevant for the design of new or the improvement of already existing study programs (Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 17; Interview VMU Erasmus Institutional Coordinator 2021, p. 35; Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 26). Programs that are defined as specific or narrow occasionally encounter difficulties filling all available program slots with national students. At the UAH, these programs were opened to international students as a way to circumvent a potential dissolution of the programs. In consequence, it entails that these specific and narrow programs need to become more internationally oriented in order to increase the program suitability and attractiveness for international students (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110). At the UM Faculty of Geography, the study degree's international perspective is organically taken into account as the Erasmus+ coordinator is also the dean of the faculty and can therefore easily combine both aspects (Interview UM Faculty of Geography, 2021, p. 77). Many of the faculty coordinators state that they estimate themselves to be qualified to represent and integrate the international perspective into the accreditation or re-accreditation processes (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 102-103; Interview UM Geography 2021, p. 77; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 17; Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 26).

Curricula Matching Tool and Expanding EWP

In all interviews conducted, the interviewees agree that timely and digitized access to the information provided by the Curricula Matching Tool would support the objectives (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 100; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 52; Interview UVSQ Head of Student Mobility 2021, p. 59). According to the administrative coordinator for Erasmus+ at the Faculty of Medicine of the UB, the

Curricula Matching Tool would support the Erasmus+ administration in ways of simplifying the process (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 100). The Erasmus+ Coordinator of the Faculty of Geology at AUTh mentions that within her faculty, lecturing staff struggle to locate relevant information on the partner universities' websites. She also points out that due to staff and time constraints, she lacks the capacity to individually guide students towards the necessary information. The Matching Tool would be a great solution for staff who are similarly affected by the complexity and lengthiness of the process (Interview AUTh Faculty of Geology 2021, p. 171). Students can in like manner profit from a Matching Tool when attempting to procure corresponding courses at partner universities (Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 156). The Matching Tool additionally has the benefit of providing students with an opportunity to explore the availability of classes prior to leaving, thus allowing sufficient time to collaborate and agree on course recognition with the respective staff at the home university (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 64-65).

This idea of a curricula matching tool is not new to some HEIs. ELTE, a consortium HEI, has already begun working on a curriculum matching tool for itself and its partners (Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 121-122; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 128).

Although all agree that a Curricula Matching Tool could be helpful, one interviewee expresses a pressing concern. A digitized and automated tool can present limitations in terms of flexibility as it always refers to its parameters. A tool in this sense can be interpreted as inadequate concerning individual needs, accommodations, and exceptions. It cannot replace the dialogue entirely that is often needed to facilitate a successful mobility. Once again, a single solution applicable to all students seems out of reach. (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 83).

While the majority of interviewees support the expansion of Erasmus+ Without Paper (EWP), some express similar concerns about this development (e.g., UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 71; Interview VMU Institutional Erasmus Coordination 2021, p. 41; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 20-21; Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 95-96). As EWP would be connected to the course

catalog, inflexibility within the system could cause hiccups during the application process. An openness to individual manipulations and solutions is required to help EWP thrive (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 106-107). There are exceptions to the rule. The medical school of UB, for example, understandably practices severe strictness in the recognition of courses and therefore is unwilling to broaden the scope of accepted courses or be generally flexible in the accreditation procedure. The school of medicine would consequently not benefit from the expansion of EWP (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 100).

3.2.2 Practical Matters

The following sections focuses on the practical side of student mobilities with particular relevance to credit mobility, students' search for course information at partner universities, the use of ISCED codes in curricula, and the potential benefits of digitized and timely access to course information specifically pertaining to Learning Agreements.

Credit Mobility

Many similarities appear when comparing the process of course information procurement between partner universities within the consortium. Students typically begin their search on the partner universities' websites expecting to retrieve information about the available course catalog (Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 19; Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 29; Interview UVSQ Head of the International Office 2021, p. 58; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 80). Next, students seek out the respective staff to discuss details of the Learning Agreements (Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 19; Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 29; Interview UVSQ Head of the International Office 2021, p. 58; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 80). In some cases, tutors, academic advisers or administrative Erasmus+ coordinators are more profoundly involved in the process and offer services such as sharing helpful links with students or discussing individual suitability of courses (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 99; AUTh School of Dentistry 2021, p. 178-179; Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 105; Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 95).

Several of the interviewees indicate that they do not keep track of previously approved classes (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 80; Interview UVSQ Vice-President of International Relations 2021, p. 68-70). The Erasmus+ Credits Coordinator of the UM Faculty of Geography remarks that in the course of several years a familiarization with some university's course catalogs naturally occurs. He emphasizes the individual needs of every student as well as the frequent alterations within course catalogs at partner universities and on the grounds of this insists to maintain the availability of dialogue as an integral part of accreditation (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 80). Two participants, by contrast, specify that they either keep previous Learning Agreements for reference or have composed a list of previously recognized courses (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 50; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 99). Alternatively, the UB Faculty of Education publishes reports of former students' mobilities on the faculty website, which provides insight into which courses were taken at partner universities (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 95). The website of the ELTE Faculty of Law offers an excel table containing previously recognized courses (Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 125).

Interviewed students list various challenges when attempting to acquire information about the recognition of courses. The overwhelmingly greatest challenge is the late release of the partner universities' course catalogs. This leads to the completion of the Learning Agreement before it can be corroborated by the current course catalog, which in turn means that Learning Agreements are partially subject to speculation and often require subsequent alteration (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 105; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 81; VMU Institutional Erasmus Coordinator 2021, p. 38). Students then have to rely on the previous year's lists or the respective administrator's past experience limiting their scope of independence (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 105; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 81).

This process is further complicated by frequently encountered incomplete information, which can result in unclear understanding of course content (Interview UVSQ Head of the International Office 2021, p. 58; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 50). It is recurrently difficult to find corresponding courses that fit the needs of the students and their study programs (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs

2021, p. 113; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 128). The infrequent and inconsistent offer of courses taught in English at various universities additionally interferes with the actualization of mobilities (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 69). A different, but equally problematic, barrier arises from the inflexibility and high demand of teaching staff and relevant coordinators for the corresponding classes to overlap in terms of content consumed instead of competencies gained. If staff showed more willingness to see the bigger picture in regard to class accreditation requirements in appropriate cases, this barrier could be removed (Interview ELTE Educational Affairs Department of Erasmus+ & International programs 2021, p. 119; UVSQ Interview Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 64-65). Only one person asked about barriers to locating course information at partner universities responds that no barriers could be found (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, 99).

ISCED Codes

Most interviewees indicate that they are not using ISCED codes within their course catalogs (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 52; UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 71; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 83; Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021, p. 115). VMU currently uses ISCED codes, but respondents mention the occasional difficulty determining concrete ISCED codes for interdisciplinary courses (Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 30-31). Another university that uses ISCED codes is UB, particularly in the Faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy and Food Science (Interview UB Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 106; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 100). Two respondents have never heard of ISCED codes (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 52; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 83).

The Vice-President of International Relations at UVSQ points out that the mere correlation of ISCED codes of two courses does not indicate course comparability due to potential variations in workload and semester length (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 71-72). From the results of this analysis, we can deduce that available mechanisms and structures created specifically for course comparison have not yet been comprehensively realized. A future

recommendation of the introduction of ISCED codes is probable and explained in more detail in chapter five of this report.

Extra-Curricular Courses

The question of whether extra-curricular courses can be recognized on the transcript of records reveals an interesting picture. The Head of the International Office at UVSQ declares that extra-curricular courses cannot be included, but the Vice-President for International Relations and the Erasmus+ Coordinator of the Faculty of Law at UVSQ contrarily report that it is possible to recognize extra-curricular courses (Interview UVSQ Head of International Office 2021, p. 57; Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 66-65; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 48). The same phenomenon can be observed at ELTE University. While the Educational Affairs Department at ELTE claims that selected courses necessitate recognition, two Erasmus+ coordinators suggest that it is possible to take extra-curricular courses, even if the Law Faculty encourages its students to first find courses that can be recognized and accredited (Interview ELTE Educational Affairs Department 2021, p. 118; Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 127; Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 121).

The interviews demonstrate clearly that the strategies and structures of course recognition vary greatly between universities. Three interviewees from law faculties acknowledge the possibility of recording extra-curricular courses in the Transcript of Records (Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 127; Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 18; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 48). In contrast, the Faculty of Medicine at UB exclaims that it is principally not possible to integrate extra-curricular studies in the ToR. This lack of flexibility can also be discovered in less traditional study fields as UM, for example, categorically does not recognize extra-curriculars in ToRs. This applies to both, courses taken abroad as well as courses taken at UM itself (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 99; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 79). These heterogeneous results demonstrate the difficulty of projecting course recognition according to subjects and correlating levels of regulation, such as medicine or law, and prove instead that ToR recognition is a very subject- and university-specific matter.

Short-term Mobilities

Several of the respondents state that they do not offer alternative forms of mobilities for outgoing students (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021 p. 107; AUTh School of Dentistry 2021, p. 183-184; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 54; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 101). According to the International Erasmus+ Coordination, AUTh only offers one-semester student mobilities and Erasmus+ traineeships (Interview AUTh International Erasmus Coordination 2021, p. 142). In this particular case, the School of Dentistry is closed during the summer period when short-term mobilities in the form of summer schools would take place (Interview AUTh School of Dentistry 2021, p. 183-184). The Erasmus+ Coordinator at the UB School of Medicine wonders about the future of alternative mobilities because of the staff and capacities necessary to organize and realize these programs (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 101). While the UB Faculty of Education supports alternative forms of mobility, they cannot award credits for them (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 96).

More than a few of the interviewees indicate that their respective university offers and recognizes alternative mobilities (Interview ELTE Faculty of Law 2021, p. 126, Interview ELTE Faculty of Humanities 2021, p. 123; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 84, Interview Head of International Office 2021, p. 60, Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary- and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 129; Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 115-116). These alternatives range from winter and summer schools to internships, traineeships and language classes (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 115-116; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary- and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 129; Interview UVSQ Head of the International Office 2021, p. 60). The ECTS Coordinator of the Faculty of Geography at UM, however, calls attention to the frequent difficulty of recognizing summer schools and other alternatives because the participation certificates typically do not include the number of credits awarded (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 84).

Effects of Incoming Students and Staff Mobility

Not all participants can unanimously corroborate the positive effect of incoming students on mobility decisions of local students. For example, the Erasmus+

Coordinator of the Law Faculty of UVSQ explains that the number of incoming students in their field is too small to speculate about a positive influence (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 54). The Faculty of Medicine of UB reports similarly small numbers of international students and adds that foreign students tend to stay disconnected from local students. The UB is a bilingual university, offering courses in Spanish and/or Catalan. Arguably, the majority of incoming students are more likely to be proficient in Spanish only and cannot participate in courses taught in Catalan. This inevitable division underlies and partially explains the fractionalization of national/international student relations (Interview UB Medicine 2021, p. 100-101).

The development of the so-called "Erasmus+ students bubble," a phenomenon describing Erasmus+ students commingling exclusively with other Erasmus+ students, is reinforced by the housing situation at UVSQ. The university dormitories are not typically inhabited by native French students, which undermines the contact of national and international students significantly. The student association, however, strives through various events to ensure that local and international students come into contact with each other (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 73). The coordinators of the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Science of the UB report that Erasmus+ students are often drawn to each other because their preferred language of communication remains English (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 107).

Then again, several interviewees point out that international students do in fact have a positive effect on local students' opinions about their own mobilities (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 96; Interview AUTh International Erasmus Coordination 2021, p. 126; Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 72-73; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 128). This positive effect can be attributed to witnessing the active and lively participation of incoming students in class, which, in turn, presents national students with a positive example of a mobility experience (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 72-73; Interview ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 2021, p. 127). The interviewees from the UB Faculty of Education argue that in-class contact between national and international students fosters an interest in exploring the possibilities of mobilities for oneself (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 96).

The Erasmus+ Coordinator of the Faculty of Theology at AUTh utilizes the international presence further and requests that Erasmus+ students give a short introduction of their university, country and previous difficulties within the Erasmus+ context. This personal nuance provides students with a unique insight into a specific university and fosters budding interests (Interview AUTh School of Theology 2021, p. 155). In a similar manner, staff mobilities positively affect international mobility interest. Local students are given the opportunity to ask the visiting staff questions and experience a teaching style that could dispel a potential fear of the unknown (Interview AUTh International Erasmus Coordination 2021, p. 126).

3.3 Mobility Barriers from the Perspective of a Receiving HEI

The following section offers a change of perspective as we examine the receiving institutions' impressions and challenges. The aim is to illustrate which structural and practical barriers are present at universities and to introduce recommendations for minimizing these barriers for incoming students.

3.3.1 Structural Matters

Incoming students face structural barriers on several levels. We will discuss ISCED codes in particular as well as the challenges of the class enrolment process for incoming students.

ISCED Codes

As outlined in chapter 3.2.2.2, very few universities within the consortium use ISCED codes in their course catalog. The lack of this practice does not only impact local students, but also complicates the process significantly for incoming students as they struggle to construct a Learning Agreement centered on speculation about the recognition of selected courses. Researching course compatibility without ISCED codes in the course catalog is a time-consuming and tedious collaboration between

the student and the respective coordinator. This is a particularly challenging exercise for interdisciplinary programs, where courses are populated with content from dissimilar faculties and departments. Satisfying requirements from two departments can become a balancing act and frequently restricts the number of accepted courses, which considerably impedes mobility.

Enrolling Incoming Students in Classes

Most universities indicate that incoming students and local students use the same enrolment system (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 99; Interview VMU Agriculture 2021, p. 29-30; Interview UM 2021, p. 81-82). While operating within the same system at UAH, incoming and local students, for distinction purposes, utilize two different entry points (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 114). VMU supplies two websites for course registrations, but they are identical bar one aspect: one is in English, the other in Lithuanian (Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 29-30). At UVSQ, incoming students are enrolled through the International Office using a distinctive software (Interview UVSQ Head of the Students Mobility Office 2021, p. 59). A number of interviewees remark that additional or specific courses for international students do not exist and incoming and local students attend the same courses (Interview VMU Department of Educational Affairs 2021, p. 118; Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 51-52; Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 70; Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 99).

3.3.2 Practical Matters

Certain structural barriers are more practical in nature. This section focuses on the publication of the course catalog and the question of what would constitute a sufficient amount of courses with English as the language of instruction.

Publishing of the Course Catalog

The majority of interviewees suggest that the university's course catalog is published relatively shortly before the semester starts (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 70; Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 81; Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 94; Interview UAH Office of its Vice-

President for International Affairs 2021, p. 114; Interview UB Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 105). For example, at UM the course catalog for the winter semester, which starts in October, is published in August (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 81). By force of circumstance, the LAs pertaining to that semester are due in June and have to be filled out without a current course catalog. The UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs expounds that there is no guarantee that all previously offered courses will take place again, with the inevitable result that many LAs will have to be adjusted at the beginning of the semester (Interview UAH Office of its Vice President for International Affairs 2021 114).

At UB Medical School, the course catalog typically only varies in schedule not content, so incoming students can rely on the previous course catalogs (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 97). The School of Pharmacy and Food Science reports a similar modus operandi in which only minimal changes are made to the course catalogs from semester to semester. Here, too, the course catalog is not published until July (Interview UB School of Pharmacy and Food Science 2021, p. 105). In these two cases, changes to the LA are less likely due to the unavailability of a class but can still occur as a result of overlapping class times.

In comparison, VMU, publishes its course catalog decidedly early. The winter semester course catalog is published in March including a preliminary list of courses for the following summer semester. The final list of summer semester courses is then published in October (Interview VMU Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator 2021, p. 39). Naturally, this constitutes a tremendous benefit for incoming students. In this case, students can plan and construct their LA without the insecurity of daunting course catalog changes and affiliated signature hunts.

English as Language of Instruction

Generally speaking, universities within the consortium offer courses in English. At VMU, a number of courses within various study programs are offered in English (Interview VMU Faculty of Agriculture 2021, p. 32). In addition, one of the university's requirements is that students reach a C1 level of English proficiency within the first two years of university attendance, often fulfilled through English classes attended in school. If students, however, have not attended English classes before entering

university, only a B2 level is required within two years (Interview VMU Erasmus Institutional Coordinator 2021, p. 37-38). Courses in English, especially at the Faculty of Law, are commonly taught by international teachers, prompting an annual remolding of courses and teachers (Interview VMU Faculty of Law 2021, p. 20).

UVSQ in comparison offers fewer courses and describes experiencing difficulties including English language courses in the study programs (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 48). The Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Law affirms the challenge of securing teachers who agree to teach courses in English. The reasons for this are bifold: some teachers simply do not speak English well enough to feel confident teaching in English, others insist on their right to teach in French (or their respective native tongue) (Interview UVSQ Faculty of Law 2021, p. 53). Instructors repeatedly point to the conundrum they face if they have to accommodate local students who do not speak English well to participate in the class successfully and have not found a satisfying solution yet (Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 2021, p. 69).

The UM Faculty of Geography agrees that there is an insufficient number of courses offered in English which results in a low number of incoming international students (Interview UM Faculty of Geography 2021, p. 82). The UB Faculty of Education offers eight to ten courses each semester instructed in English (Interview UB Faculty of Education 2021, p. 96). In contrast, the Faculty of Medicine at the same university does not offer a single course in English, exclusively instructing in either Catalan or Spanish, which creates a major hurdle for incoming students (Interview UB School of Medicine 2021, p. 99). According to two UAH interviewees, language of instruction is, in some cases, regulated on national level. For example, an English teacher in Spain is expected to be educated and fluent in Spanish as well as English, so the Master's Degree in Education is offered in its entirety in Spanish (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 110). Moreover, one of the UAH interviewees elaborates that when a course is offered in English, it is poorly received by local students even though both international and local students are welcome in the courses (Interview UAH Office of its Vice-President for International Affairs 2021, p. 116).

This part of the interviews concludes that most universities incorporate courses instructed in English in their course catalog, though the amount and variety fluctuates greatly. When the course offer is particularly small or incoming and local students are not proficient in the language of instruction, mobility is affected negatively. Along with it, national regulations can play a role in determining the language of instruction.

Top-down vs. Bottom-up

The incoming perspective demonstrates that efforts are being made to increase universities' attractiveness to potential incoming students through the early publication of the course catalog, the availability of a variety of courses in English, and the improvement of enrolment and administrative processes for incoming students. In regard to international orientation, one clear objective can be deduced: English-speaking instructors must assume responsibility and be willing to teach courses in English as necessary. This change dismantles the burden the limited availability of courses instructed in English currently poses during the accreditation and recognition process.

In many ways, this can be viewed as a win-win development. A wider variety of courses instructed in English benefits local students as it gently forces them to move beyond their comfort zone and improve their English skills - undeniably crucial for their academic future and a potential confidence-booster to venture into the crossing of borders in form of a mobility.

This development could generally increase the implementation of courses instructed in English in the curricula and module plans of study programs, overall improving the degree and freeing it from the confines of one national language, a questionable practice as is. This is discussed in more depth in the recommendations of chapter five.

3.4 Mobility Barriers from the Students' Perspective

The students' perspective was highlighted in two interviews: one with the president of the MIC, short for the Marburg International Club (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021) and the other one with the head of the Student Union of Vilnius Magnus University (Interview VMU Student Union 2021). The roles of the two respondents vary greatly and therefore give nuanced insights.

The MIC focuses on introducing incoming international students to Germany and the German culture mainly spotlighting the region of Marburg or Hessen, the province in which the University of Marburg is located: "We are getting them [international students] connected both to the international and to the local life of Marburg." (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 85). The MIC functions as a meeting point for international students and locals who consider going abroad. For some of their events, they collaborate with the International Office. The MIC president acknowledges that there is room for improvement pertaining to the advertising of the Erasmus+ program (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 85-88). The role of the MIC president is to facilitate communication with university bodies such as administration, the International Office, and the German Academic Exchange Service. The MIC and its president cannot exert any influence on structural matters such as accreditation and recognition processes. Rather, the MIC perspective is valuable in regard to student life in Marburg itself and the challenges faced in day-to-day living situations. The MIC also assists with the planning and preparation of the orientation programs spearheaded by the International Office. Their presence during orientation facilitates a good opportunity to introduce the club and establish a connection with international students. WhatsApp groups with international students have proven to be a good platform for informal questions and are utilized widely. The International Office offers help with structure-oriented questions relating to university-specific platforms and portals (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 86-88).

At VMU, the Student Council and the Student Parliament of the University elects the head of the Student Union. The head of the Student Union is among other duties responsible for promoting and securing the inclusion of international students in the Student Parliament. The implementation of this goal has been halted by the dominant use of local languages in meetings. International students have the right to contact the Student Parliament with any perceived problems or dissatisfactions. The Student Parliament forwards and distributes information received from the International Office to prospective international students. In addition, Student Council is invited to join the university governing bodies where they have the chance to involve local and international students' perspective. While the Student Parliament predominantly centers around the exchange of student issues among students, the Student Council collaborates with the International Office as well as with the respective mobility

coordinators. When necessary, the Student Council also meets directly with students to assist with challenges and represent their needs (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 6-7).

Constructively, both the president of the MIC and the head of the Student Union have participated in an international mobility, so they are familiar with the Erasmus+ and another alternative international program (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 85; Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 5). When questioned about her personal experience with the mobility application process, the president of the MIC explains that information about the existence international mobilities was shared early during the orientation week. Between this timely exposure and department-specific distribution of information by instructors, her interest was sparked quickly. In her case, this was sufficient subjection to the matter to initiate an application (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 88). A similar impression was submitted by the head of the Student Union of VMU who argues that information is easily obtained on the department websites. Even when questions arise, students at all universities can call, write emails, or visit the Erasmus+ program offices at the university or department level (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 9-10).

Interestingly, both of these student representatives view the financial burden of a mobility as the overarching barrier in the Erasmus+ program and remark that increased funding would be their chosen priority of change (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 89-91; Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 10). The president of the MIC highlights that some students fear the prolongation of their studies. These students are frequently dependent on "Bafög" (German financial support system for students (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung n.s.)) (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 88), which only provides financial means for six semesters for Bachelor degree and four semesters for Master degree students. As might be expected, financial worries are not limited to German students. Incoming students commonly express uneasiness about the continuation of their degree program after the Erasmus+ mobility (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 88; 90). Additionally, they both state the obvious, but often overlooked: some students simply do not desire to go abroad (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 10; UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 89-90).

Ranking third on the MIC president's barrier list is the adversity students face attempting to find curriculum-corresponding courses at partner universities (Interview Marburg International Club 2021, p. 88). A solution, she proposes, must include an increase in mandatory English courses with the twofold benefit of preparing potential local students for an international mobility and maximizing the inclusion of international students and experiences in otherwise homogeneous environments (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 89). The president of the Student Union at VMU criticizes that the advantages of mobilities are not abundantly and clearly communicated (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 10-11).

Both consider the implementation of a Curricula Matching Tool a valuable progressive step (Interview VMU Student Union 6; Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 11). Such a tool could provide unambiguous and detailed information about partner universities and possibilities within those. The potential applicants could face a smaller hurdle in terms of independent research and support needed from their respective department (Interview UM Marburg International Club 2021, p. 89). At the same time, this tool could be an opportunity to familiarize students with all mobility opportunities early on in their studies, so that mobility windows are not accidentally left unnoticed (Interview Student Union 2021, p. 11-12).

3.5   Deviation and Similarities between the Findings of IO1/2 and IO3

In order to adequately analyze deviations, a restatement of the initial research parameters aids understanding. IO1 and IO2 focus on conventional mobility barriers on a personal level. IO3, however, aims to investigate structural mobility barriers before and during mobility. Consequently, IO1 and IO2 were used as groundwork to facilitate a closer observation of barriers in IO3. Due to significant divergences between the NORM-project HEIs, all of the outputs verify that it is impossible to develop one representative mobility typology report. While Erasmus+ countries showcase diversity in numerous areas, even universities within the same country prove to be dissimilar in a plethora of ways. In reaction to these differences, we present the main findings of our research in conclusions and suggested recommendations with the objective of making mobility the norm.

All three outputs are conclusive in foregrounding the absolute need for flexible course accreditation, recognition, and transfer. A narrowly designed recognition process prevents students from successfully applying for a mobility. Mobility windows within course programs are of exceptional importance and deserve wider implementation. However, a standard uniform European mobility window proves to be unobtainable, because degree length as well as semester start and end dates vary dramatically from university to university. Equally important is a widespread mobilization and proliferation of English-instructed courses. These should not be the exception, but rather the norm.

In sum, the outputs uncover that while structural barriers are instrumental in dissuading students from partaking in international mobilities, personal barriers cannot be disregarded when assessing barriers comprehensively. Financial considerations emerge as a paramount personal challenge. Students draw attention to the fact that Erasmus+ is expensive and that the Erasmus+ funding does not cover all costs involved in relocating and living in a different country (Interview VMU Student Union 2021, p. 12; Interview AUTh Faculty of Theology 2021, p. 152; Souto-Otero et al., 2019, 5 in: IO1 report 2021, p. 13 ; IO1 report Staff Survey 2021, p. 17).

4. Mobility Barriers from the Perspective of Accreditation Agencies

This chapter assesses the results of the interviews with the representatives of two national accreditation agencies: ANECA in Spain and ACQUIN in Germany.

It is divided into four sections, the first one providing a brief overview of the two agencies and of quality assurance standards on credit mobility, followed by a section evaluating the interviews, a section on recommendations for overcoming barriers to mobility and finally a conclusion.

4.1 About ANECA and ACQUIN

Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) is the main quality assessment body of Higher Education in Spain. They carry out evaluations, certifications and accreditation activities within the Spanish University System and contribute towards its constant improvement and adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (ANECA 2022).

Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN) is an association of 150 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Germany and abroad. They carry out nationwide and cross-university accreditations of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in all disciplines. Their aims include ensuring the comparability of the quality of higher education qualifications, contributing towards shaping the EHEA, increasing the attractiveness of HEIs for foreign students, promoting the quality of university education and supporting the establishment of a quality culture at higher education institutions (ACQUIN 2022).

Both organizations are members of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the designated stakeholder organization of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (ENQA 2021). Their quality assurance procedures are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). They were adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2015 and provide the framework for internal and external quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA 2021).

Mobility is mentioned as one of the ESG purposes in the Standards and Guidelines document emphasizing that, "they support mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders." (ENQA 2015, p.7). Additionally, in section 1.4 of the guidelines focusing on institutions applying pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student cycle. They emphasize the importance of having "fit for purpose admission, recognition, and completion procedures" especially if an institution's students are mobile. Furthermore, institutions must ensure "fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning" which are essential components to ensure the students' progress whilst also promoting mobility (ENQA 2015, p.13).

Further references to mobility are found in section 1.6 of the ESG guidelines regarding institutional funding for learning, teaching activities, and the provision of adequate and accessible learning resources and student support. In their guidelines, they emphasize the importance of providing a range of resources to support student learning for a good higher education experience and catering to the needs of a diverse student population, including international students. Support services are considered essential for facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems (ENQA 2015, p.14).

4.2   Assessment of Interviews

In both interviews, the representatives were asked questions pertaining to barriers to mobility they have encountered, the value of incorporating a mobility element in the curricula and recommendations on how to overcome these barriers. These questions were asked with a focus on all degree types and subjects. Regulated professions, such as medicine, law, or engineering, were the focus of the research conducted in the NORM project and it suggested a tendency of less mobility opportunities within these degree types. Questions were asked specifically about these degree programs as well during the interview.

General Barriers to Mobility

Both agencies stated that there is an understanding that international mobility elements must be audited, meaning audits should verify whether elements conducive to mobility are present or not. Each remarks that the implementation of mobility as part of a course curriculum is optional in their respective countries. ANECA points out that their audits contain specific questions about mobility and if a program does not have mobility, they add it as a suggestion in their report. However, lacking mobility does not incur any consequences for the institution in the report. ACQUIN also reports that they encourage adding a mobility component as a recommendation during audits.

Regarding barriers to mobility, we found some common barriers across all degree types in both countries that have also been seen across the research for this project.

Financial Obstacles

Once again as seen in the literature analyzed for the report of IO1, financial issues are declared the leading cause of low mobility numbers. The number of available scholarships is too small and the Erasmus+ grant is not a suitable amount for many students to be able to support themselves abroad (as it aims to contribute to and cover the difference between the living costs of the respective countries). With rising living costs, including increasing student rents, this will likely remain an issue for the foreseeable future. Moreover, personal circumstances, such as caring for family members or lacking extra support from universities/or other relevant authorities for travel and accommodation, can discourage students from pursuing mobility abroad. According to ANECA, some programs can overcome this issue by receiving additional funding for mobility from other sources, such as the Commission or regional governments, particularly if the program is related to a research project.

Credit Recognition

Credit recognition is another key barrier that was brought up in several of the interviews. Students can encounter difficulties with their module and course planning at their home university if the expectations generated by the Learning Agreement before mobility are not met with the credit recognition after a mobility. Careful arrangement of a Learning Agreement before mobility, and taking the necessary systematic steps in sharing course descriptions for mobile students reduces the likelihood that a student faces (recognition) problems during and after a mobility.

Mobility Windows

Study programs struggle to identify suitable opportunities to embed mobility windows. Often, the curriculum (especially in terms of potential credit recognition) does not account enough time for a standard mobility and instead suggests a short mobility (e.g. internships) of around 6 weeks, which is an insufficient amount of time for students to go through the minimum acculturation steps of sojourners that trigger the development of intercultural and professional skills that are the result of an average mobility experience. Setting up a specific mobility window might encourage students that are potentially interested in mobility.

Language Skills

Similar to previous conclusions, proficiency in a foreign language is another obstacle. Students might not feel confident in their ability to study a foreign language. ACQUIN mentions that many German students gravitate towards other German students as they feel more comfortable with people from their home country and consequently barely interact with local or other international students. They often come back disenchanted with the experience because they did not truly manage to dive into another country's culture or learn a new language. This disappointment in their mobility has the potential to affect other students' perception of mobility and might disincentivize them from going abroad next time.

Attitudes towards Mobility

While Spain ranks high in terms of incoming and outgoing students (SEPIE, 2020), according to the representative of ANECA Spanish students are not traditionally mobile. They are inclined to study in their own hometown or province and do not have a tendency to move to other provinces to study. Data from the Spanish ministry of higher education reveals only about 16.8% of higher education students study in a different autonomous region than the one they originated from (Spanish Ministry of Universities, 2021, p.29). Cultural predispositions and family ties play an important role in this decision, as some parents want their offspring to stay and study locally (as well as this option being more feasible financially). Students earlier in the report echoed similar fears, citing fear of the unknown during student interviews as one of their reasons to remain within the confines of the familiar.

The representative from ACQUIN sees a similar trend. Additionally, in their view, there is a substantial change in the attitude of students towards mobility. While professors in Germany are supportive of mobility, students wish to remain in their own country as some of them feel insecure and anxious about going abroad. It being their first experience living on their own in a foreign country, the fear of slow adaptation can become crippling in some cases. The representative also said that they observed a similar trend across all of Europe, not just in Germany.

Barriers to Degrees in Regulated Professions

The interviewees were also presented with questions relating to barriers to mobility in degrees for highly regulated professions, such as law, medicine or engineering whose students tend to be less mobile or having less opportunities for mobility due to the nature of their degree (such as national law, or rigorous curricula). Both agree that there is value in incorporating an element of mobility to degrees in regulated fields. According to the representative of ACQUIN, the inclusion of mobility in the curriculum has the potential to provide the intercultural (and other professional) skills and competencies needed for life. The representative for ANECA highlights that employment is limited in certain fields in Spain and mobility would allow students to prepare for a potential future career abroad, in countries that have a higher demand for their skills.

Academic staff affects the mobility of students too. According to ACQUIN, professors are inclined to support mobility, but students' motivation to apply for mobility is waning. ANECA, in contrast, discloses that numerous Spanish professors maintain an old school mentality prioritizing the mother country and insist that these compulsory subjects should be completed in Spain only.

Students of degrees for regulated professions similarly struggle with financing as a key barrier to mobility. However, other barriers such as credit recognition and mobility windows are complicated by additional difficulties due to the nature of these degrees. The representative of ANECA argues that issues with credit recognition stem from the origins of mobility in Spain before it was part of the European Higher Education Area. In the early stages, mobility was regulated by signing an agreement in which modules

from a Spanish university had to be exactly equivalent to modules from a foreign university, widely understood as module-to-module recognition.

After becoming part of the European Higher Education Area, recognition was based on competencies, which was not an optimal solution for all modules especially to those belonging to degrees from regulated professions. For these types of degrees e.g. medicine or industry, there is a ministry, which states that students who wish to become a doctor or an engineer must have acquired within their study program certain core competencies. When adding a mobility element, these strict regulations must be considered. Many professors want their students to acquire these competences in Spain, as they fear they might not be recognized or properly convalidated if they study them abroad.

Additionally, they can affect mobility windows as the core competencies make up much of the modules within at least the first three years of degree programs. The expert suggested that in the 4th year there is potential room for mobility, as this tends to be the year for students to take optional subjects. Though this will depend on a program's duration, engineering is 4 years long while medicine is 6 years long in Spain. Albeit these difficulties, ANECA emphasizes in their audits when suggesting adding an element of mobility that while these core competencies are regulated by Spain, the law does not prevent students from obtaining them abroad and they can be convalidated.

4.3   Recommendations

During the interviews, the representatives offer several recommendations towards overcoming these barriers. They are presented below in two sections: one with recommendations regarding course accreditation and curricula design and another on recommendations on other issues beyond that.

Accreditation and Curricula Design

The informants agree that the realization of mobility should be an integral part of curricula planning and design. Therefore, they recommend increased efforts in embedding mobility within curricula by finding and incorporating specific mobility

windows. ACQUIN suggests that the 3rd semester or the semester before the writing of the thesis constitute good windows (for non-regulated study fields). Students have already explored their home university and had the time to outline a dissertation topic. Concurrently, waiting a few semesters allows time to improve their language skills before going abroad. During this time of active attendance, instructors are in a crucial position and are encouraged to emphasize and support opportunities for mobility.

The representative from ANECA also stresses that mobility should not be limited to physical mobility. They therefore suggest that students be exposed to how their competencies are taught abroad in their study plans. In curriculum design, the reality of globalization cannot be overlooked, as students deserve to be prepared to work in a global market.

Virtual Exchanges

One way this could be potentially achieved too is through virtual exchanges. They can be defined as a ¨unique form of online learning that incorporates active international or intercultural exchange and collaborative learning with peers across countries¨ (Di Marzo P., Gabriels W., & Rayon González J., 2022, p.5). Virtual exchanges can offer several benefits with respect to social, interpersonal, intercultural, multilingual as well as subject-specific, academic and technological skills (Di Marzo P., Gabriels W., & Rayon González J., 2022, p.11). However, its potential to democratize education by allowing someone to follow education from anywhere has been overestimated (Di Marzo P., Gabriels W., & Rayon González J., 2022, p.10). Additionally, they are not a substitute for physical mobility. They cannot offer the level of social interaction and firsthand experience in a foreign country that physical mobility can offer (Di Marzo P., Gabriels W., & Rayon González J., 2022, p.11).

Seal of Excellence in Internationalization

Another way of incentivizing mobility, as pointed out by ANECA, is to encourage degree programs to commit to obtaining a seal of excellence in internationalization. These certifications affirm that an accredited degree simultaneously excels in an additional area, possibly an attractive feature for students. The representative of ACQUIN, however, contends that, while seals of quality could help overcome some barriers to mobility, they would go against the very essence of the NORM enterprise

by making mobility seem exclusive. Our main objective has to coalesce around embedding mobility within students' consciousness: for them to understand studying abroad as a pivotal part of their education and consequently as something normal and available to them.

Inter- and Transdisciplinary Study Programs

ACQUIN moreover suggests creating more inter- and transdisciplinary study programs and joint degrees, as they typically foreground opportunities for embedding mobility within their curricula. A joint degree program is "an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions" (EQAR, 2022).

Interdisciplinary studies can be defined as a combination of disciplines that "allows the student to learn by making connections between ideas and concepts across different disciplines. Students learning in this way are able to apply the knowledge gained in one discipline to another different discipline as a way to deepen the learning experience" (Weller, 2021). Students gravitate towards interdisciplinary programs valuing the benefits of allowing them to develop critical thinking or intercultural skills as they explore topics across varied perspectives and consider alternate ways to acquire knowledge encouraging greater creativity (Weller, 2021).

Nevertheless, integrating mobility into these programs is not without its own share of issues because learning agreements tends to be from one department to another faculty. When students try to go outside of that agreement or need several agreements between various departments there are administrative hurdles, such as who will sign the learning agreement as technically you have a coordinator responsible for the specific agreement. This will require a lot of time and organization, and rethink traditional processes. ACQUIN recognizes the administrative process will be more challenging and that more staff and support will be required in the coordination of these agreements to overcome these hurdles.

Leverage on the European Universities Initiative

The representative of ANECA also mentioned the European Universities Initiative by the European Commission, as another measure to support mobility. These are transnational alliances of universities which "include partners from all types of higher

education institutions and cover a broad geographic scope across Europe" (European Commission: European Education Area, 2022). They also "offer student-centred curricula jointly delivered across inter-university campuses, where diverse student bodies can build their own programmes and experience mobility at all levels of study" (European Commission: European Education Area, 2022).

The representative also added that a recent change in Spanish regulations regarding degree titles now provides universities from these alliances' greater flexibility in terms of curriculum design. In their view, if the alliance has to fulfill regulations from different countries it can lead to confusion and complicate the development of course curricula. This change in regulations should make it easier to establish alliances.

Other Issues

The experts were also keen to comment on matters that go beyond the normal purview of their agencies.

Student Support

A recommendation both interviewees agree on is that sending and receiving institutions must provide better student support, in all matters involving assisting students in planning and organizing their mobility. Support should indisputably include making students aware of mobility opportunities in their courses, providing clear guidance on the application process, finding accommodation, organizing travel arrangements and once in the receiving institution support on issues such as opening a bank account in a foreign country and other administrative issues related to moving to a new country.

As previously mentioned, one of the barriers for mobility is that some students feel reluctant to leave the safety and support of their family, and for many a mobility would be the first time they would be living on their own and abroad. If students knew that they would receive comprehensive support from the sending and receiving institution throughout the whole process, the whole concept of an Erasmus+ mobility would become less daunting and thus students would be more likely to participate. To determine the right type of support for students, ACQUIN recommends a regular evaluation of the reasons why students do or do not choose to study abroad.

Understanding trends can assist universities in providing the appropriate type of support to students. Additionally, tandem partnerships and cooperation with the ESN should be encouraged to establish a foundation for interaction between incoming and local students at the partner university.

Language Courses

Both representatives recommend substantiating the number of available language courses. For a successful mobility, knowledge of the language of the studies, moreover confidence in applying already existing language knowledge or basic knowledge of the language spoken in the country of the receiving institution is inevitable. Many students simply lack the required foreign language knowledge levels to go abroad or lack confidence. A revised focus on language acquisition and instruction could help overcome this barrier, so students have the opportunity to attain the skills and confidence to study and live in a foreign country. The representative from ANECA suggests taking it one step further and calls for the implementation of a robust system of foreign language learning in schools before students reach university. This goal can be achieved through mandatory and elective foreign language modules and courses within universities and by teaching a range of subjects in a foreign language. These changes render institutions more attractive to Erasmus+ students or foreign students who are interested in earning their entire degree abroad and with it upgrade their international profile.

Albeit this brings its own set of issues. Both representatives agree that increasing the number of courses instructed in a foreign language may negatively affect the interest of local students attending certain universities. As has been mentioned earlier in this report, when a course is offered in English it is often poorly received by students in the respective countries (ES, DE). Furthermore, in the view of one of the representatives, one of the reasons students choose to study locally is to do so in their mother tongue, wishing to obtain the kind of grades they do not believe attainable in a foreign language. At the same time, international students might choose to study in a specific country because of their interest in courses instructed in the local language. Therefore, a balance between courses instructed in local and foreign languages must be carefully structured while continuously giving consideration to the fluctuation of needs. Additionally, some institutions lack financial resources to design curricula in English

and many professors do not possess the imperative proficiency to instruct their respective courses in English.

National Strategy on Mobility

ANECA argues that countries should have a national strategy for student mobility and not just universities could take the initiative in promoting international mobility as well. Student mobility enriches a country and has the potential to be used strategically for a country's cultural and economic advancement. The exchange created through international mobility allows for the promotion of the country to incoming students while outgoing students act as ambassadors reflecting their country's image abroad. All efforts of enhancing successful student mobility ultimately effectuate changes that benefit everyone.

Professors' Attitudes towards Mobility

As indicated earlier, rigorous academic traditions on the part of some professors or instructors in reference to embedding mobility in highly regulated degrees presents a barrier. The false belief that students' core subjects and competencies must be attained in for example Spain as stipulated in national regulations is widespread, though the law does not preclude the acquisition of these competencies abroad. According to ANECA, we are starting to see a growing number of professors who participated in mobility as students and on this account are motivated to encourage mobility in their courses. Those that have not, should be emboldened to become first-hand familiar with mobility in order to effectively share mobility benefits and become proactive in integrating mobility-friendly practices in their work. In their view, mobility of academics is an aspect that should be evaluated too during audits.

4.4   Conclusion

The two national accreditation agencies ANECA and ACQUIN identify similar transnational barriers to making mobility the norm. These obstacles reflect the positions of the previous chapters and can be organized in the categories of financial, accreditation, language proficiency, and personal/cultural reasons. Recommendations attempt to address these issues but acknowledge that solutions are complex, specific, in many cases require localization/tailor-made solutions and occasionally cause new

challenges. Nevertheless, solutions such as strongly highlighting how the law does not prevent mobility from taking place in degrees from regulated professions, finding and incorporating specific mobility windows and creating more interdisciplinary programs or joint degrees are a good place to start to address some of these issues. Mobility has proven to obtain the potential to enrich a country (culturally, socially, economically etc.) as well as prepare its students and young adults to work in a globalized world and we should take as many steps as possible to enable students to partake in it and make it the NORM.

5. Recommended Changes

The following section identifies and discusses targeted curriculum-design recommendations in order to implement mobility as a norm. These recommendations are based on the findings of the interviews presented in chapter three of this report. The identified recommendations are contained under main themes raised during the coding and categorization of the interviews. First, the focus is on the overt aspects that need alteration to reduce mobility barriers. This section is unique in the sense that these aspects were addressed years ago but still represent bottlenecks to student mobility. The second section concentrates on structural recommendations examining how to accredit and re-accredit programs in order to make mobility the norm.

It bears repeating that these recommendations are recommendations only and should be adapted as necessary at any time. They are based on European experiences available to us as represented by the seven HEIs in the consortium of the NORM project. Naturally, a few of the recommendations are either already implemented in several HEIs or cannot be implemented due to national restrictions and laws. Furthermore, changes within study programs or in regional and national regulations require a laborious administrative planning and effort, causing changes to be a time-consuming and often tedious process. These recommendations are not intended to serve the unique needs of universities universally but should be understood as ideas and suggestions to review and adjust practices to serve the Erasmus+ program better.

5.1   Recurring Findings

This section proposes recommendations for overt areas that can influence, promote, or hinder mobility itself as well as the number of mobilities. These suggestions target the creation of equal conditions for local and international students at universities, the funding of Erasmus+, top-down vs. bottom-up internationalization of universities from the sending and incoming perspective, the access to information about aspects of mobility (from the application to the recognition of courses), and the interaction between universities' structural potential and program requirements.

Student Equality

A prerequisite of successful mobility is the equal treatment of incoming and local students in all areas but, specific to the NORM project, in terms of administration. When incoming students enrol in courses, it is consequential that they use the same programs as local students. Using the same program prevents incoming students from a potential enrolment delay that can negatively affect course admission. Providing international students with timely access to enrolment also allows for international students to be instrumental in the actualization of courses by expressing their interest and commitment in attending courses that may have otherwise not had a sufficient number of students registered.

Funding

All three outputs (IO1, IO2 and IO3) foreground that mobility funding through an Erasmus+ grant is not proportionate to the expenses accrued during a mobility. Even though the grant is based on the countries' cost of living, common expenses amount to more than the current monthly stipend. Often, the students' families are not in a position to compensate for the sequential monetary deficit. Moreover, many are part-time working students who cannot afford to forego employment in exchange for an experience abroad. It remains to be seen if the Erasmus+ program increases that are presently being implemented are going to sufficiently offset the increased cost of living due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other geopolitical aspects. The current Bafög rate, Germany's national financial aid system for students, equals approximately 700€ a month posing this as the appropriate sum to concurrently study and sustain a living (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung n.s.). The old as well as the new and

increased monthly Erasmus+ stipend is set lower than the German Bafög payment. We recommend that the EU reconsider the funding of Erasmus+ as the relevance of European exchanges, particularly in light of current political and societal changes, has become indisputable to facilitate the acquisition of insights into promoting peaceful coexistence.

Besides increasing the Erasmus+ monthly stipend, another recommendation is to increase the overall funding of Erasmus+ and utilize the additional funds to improve staff capacities at universities, a crucial factor for an efficient operation of Erasmus+. These additional resources could be funnelled into the advancement of the various Erasmus+ mobility options (one semester mobility, internship, short-term mobility). In some degree programs, the availability of short-term mobilities or other alternative forms of mobility could provide an essential opportunity to integrate and actualize a mobility when the traditional forms do not suffice.

Top-down vs. Bottom-up Internationalization of Universities

The interview analysis within this output paints a clear picture: the objective of the internationalization of universities necessitates approaches employed through top-down as well as bottom-up strategies. However, modifications within top-down approaches carry significantly more weight when the deconstruction of systemic obstacles is of high priority. Achieving a satisfactory level of internationalization through the increase of mobilities at universities is an intersectional task requiring the active involvement of all pertaining departments and respective entities in order to normalize the ideal of the mobile student. The urgency of seeing an enhanced level of participation in the process of internationalization applies to both the sending and receiving institutions. If international orientation reaches a higher priority and status in the guidelines for nationally severely standardized study programs, the actualization of mobilities in these traditionally guarded study programs becomes more realistic.

In the field of humanities, for example, students are encouraged early on to consider a thematic specialization in their degree. While the study program's content outside of their focus is still intrinsically relevant, students are expected to pursue mastery in their concentrated subject in order to uniquely and valuably contribute to their topic and therefore their study program. In this case, a comprehensive flexibility in course

requirements allows for an expansion within the study field through exposure to the curricula of different European universities. This is not to say that professions in the fields of natural sciences do not profit from acquiring an interdisciplinary profile.

In a similar manner, it must be ensured that during the redesign and re-accreditation processes of study programs respective Erasmus+ staff participates in the relevant discussions and therefore verifies the consideration of an international perspective. Because internationalization is intersectional, however, the responsibility of this movement cannot solely fall on the shoulders of the international office. The collaboration between international office staff and the departmental heads, encouraged continuously by the dean or president of the university, is of great consequence in the pursuit of simplifying course accreditation and normalizing mobility.

Approaching internationalization from the bottom-up perspective, we recommend that instructors are motivated to unequivocally support the internationalization of their program. Here it is significant for instructors to acknowledge that course contents do not have to match flawlessly to be recognized. Such courses are, in fact, very difficult to find. What should instead be foregrounded is the attainment of similar competencies and skills in a subject that to a degree relates to the content of the required module. Likewise, possible changes to the Learning Agreement should be expected and handled with flexibility as they are often beyond the students' scope of influence. The input of instructors affects the development of modules and the implementation of mobility windows greatly and should therefore align with the overarching internationalization goals.

Access to Information

The role and importance of access to information in regard to the preparation of an Erasmus+ mobility cannot be overstated. Developing an uninhibited path to essential, precise, and accurate mobility information is fundamental to assure students can successfully prepare without missing relevant particulars and documents. In this context, for example, access to the course catalog is integral in preparing the LA and it is therefore advantageous for the course catalog to be published before the deadline of the LA. This permits students to include current and correct information in their LA,

which in turn helps to ensure that courses are effectively recognized. Early access significantly reduces the probability of inevitable changes to the LA during the mobility. Knowing that the carefully crafted LA is based on reliable information, provides the student and respective coordinators with a pleasant confidence that their work was not done in vain. This particular recommendation has been revisited here because the majority of universities in the consortium indicate that their university course catalog was not published until after the LA deadline. Based on this, we can assume that other European universities also publish their course catalog later than is convenient for mobile students.

Moreover, we recommend the inclusion of ISCED codes in the course catalog. These codes classify and assign courses to specific subjects. If home and host university use ISCED codes, the course comparison process is markedly simplified. Codes assist in cross-departmental course comparisons and allow for the long-term planning of your degree. The simplicity of codes may motivate students to engage in independent research more confidently. Mobility coordinators benefit from the efficiency and time-saving properties of codes. At the same time, ISCED codes cannot replace the expertise of coordinators who through often year-long experience have accrued invaluable knowledge about appropriate recognition as well as the unique advantages of certain courses. ISCED codes should not be used as final criterion for assessing the compatibility of courses, but rather as a helpful planning tool to all involved parties.

Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews reveals that students struggle to obtain information on university websites because many university websites are run in their national language instead of English. Even though the websites can nowadays be translated quickly through various freely accessible translation websites, the accuracy and reliability of the translation is questionable. Consequently, we recommend providing access to the original website and pertaining documents in English, as this would guarantee the correctness of the information and foster independence and understanding in the interested student.

In connection to access to information from the incoming perspective, courses instructed in English play a significant role. A large number of courses offered in English gives students the option of including several courses in their LA and this way

have fall back alternatives in the case of cancelled classes. A good command of English typically enables access to a study abroad experience especially if the instruction language of the destination country is not mastered yet. The inclusion of English in European curricula is therefore necessarily an overall objective of this project.

Interaction of Requirements and Capacities

Within the Erasmus+ context, the structural conditions of the university, such as staff capacities and staff training, should align with the requirements of the Erasmus+ program. Erasmus+ programs inadvertently encompass a large bureaucratic hurdle including the fulfilment of a vast number of documents and work steps by the responsible staff and students in order to make an Erasmus+ mobility possible and successful. On account of this, it is critical for the university's Erasmus+ department to be equipped with a workload appropriate number of well-trained staff. This is the only way to secure the greatest possible success of the Erasmus+ program and realize the Erasmus+ mobility quota set by the EU.

5.2.1   Structural and Policy Matters

This section outlines recommendations for the improvement of structural issues within the execution of an Erasmus+ mobility. In particular, we address and analyze aspects of policy matters, standardization, flexibility as well as mobility windows.

Policy Matters

Overall, changes must occur at the level of policy matters, particularly vital in respect to the accreditation or re-accreditation of study programs. As the interviews with the two national accreditation organizations establish comprehensively, evaluations direct attention to a study program's international orientation and possibility of mobilities. In this context, the ACQUIN representative in Germany emphasizes and recommends that the responsible parties redirect their efforts from a predominantly intrinsic approach to an extrinsic one including an approach that centers on international orientation. A narrowly focused approach is exacerbated when the International Office and Erasmus+ staff is not profoundly involved in the accreditation and re-accreditation processes, which is the case at numerous of the participating universities.

The aforementioned staff is typically distinctly familiar with the reoccurring problems of subject requirements and course details and can likely contribute ideas to improve the mobility of previously immobile degrees. Through the inclusion of intrinsically internationally oriented staff, universities are more likely to develop towards implementing modules and courses that can be successfully attained abroad.

The collected interviews testify to the complexity of intra-university structures. The redesigning and re-accreditation of existing study programs is actualized through a collaborative process of negotiations between a variety of affected chairs and subjects. Disagreements arise in regard to course and chair distribution. The extent of the departmental participation defines the financial allocation for the individual chairs and subjects and the extent of co-decision-making.

Along with it, re-accreditation and accreditation in many universities requires confirmation by an inter-university committee. The challenge here is to ensure that committee members equally prioritize the significance of internationalization so that previous progress does not come to a halt at this intersection.

From Standardization towards Flexibility

Within degree programs, the extensive objective is to accomplish an advantageous balance between standardization of programs and flexibility in mobility recognition. One-semester mobilities benefit from reliable standardization so as to provide potential students with a certainty about the details of the procedure. A highly standardized mobility allows for a linear and unproblematic course and module comparison rendering a straightforward recognition process. Categorically, rules and regulations minimize unexpected or unwanted changes and therefore result in a streamlined and efficient procedure.

Alternatively, less traditional types of mobilities profit from a certain level of flexibility such as mobilities to write a thesis, summer schools, short-term mobilities or traineeships. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that teaching, to a degree, is also possible online. In the near future, it may be possible to attend particularly important courses at the home university online while on mobility in another country in order to satisfy strict module requirements. This option assists in minimizing student fears in regard to possible graduation delays or the need for course repetition. Some university

schedules lend themselves to particular short-term mobilities, such as VMU and their practice of reserving the month of January for repeat exams. Naturally, January then constitutes an ideal month for short-term mobilities as long as partner universities exist with similar opportunities. In spite of the numerous benefits of flexible mobilities, the majority of interviewees explain that this less established mobility type is still not available to students at their university.

As often, both highly structured as well as flexible alternative mobilities present with strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, we recommend the development, inclusion, and recognition of alternative and versatile mobilities. The one semester student mobility serves an important foundation and centerpiece of Erasmus+ mobilities, but certainly cannot accommodate the nuanced needs of international education. Complementary mobility forms, such as medical or pedagogical traineeships for future physicians and teachers, are invaluable to the international experience.

Mobility Windows

Our final recommendation discusses the creation and implementation of mobility windows in degree programs. Mobility windows are one of the most obvious solutions to structural obstacles, operating as a foundational baseline and framework for students who consider a mobility. The interviews corroborated that many degree programs include courses in their curricula that lend themselves to being replaced by courses abroad. While the conceptualization of the courses allows for a mobility, a distinct mobility window is not often delineated. Clearly defined mobility windows support necessary comparisons between universities.

When comparing semesters and respective mobility windows, the results are approximations rather than carbon copies of original curricula. Dissimilar structures of Bachelor and Master degrees obstruct a simple comparison. For example, in Spain the average duration of study to receive a Bachelor's degree is four years, with the Master's degree designed to be acquired after one year. In contrast, in Germany a Bachelor's degree is typically acquired within three years and the Master's degree within two. It is only natural to conclude that mobility windows in these cases do not easily overlap. In addition, the internal structure of degrees varies significantly affecting the allocation of mobility windows. At VMU, students have considerable course election

flexibility in the first two years of their Bachelor's degree, not having to particularly focus on the main subject quite yet. These first two years then present as a suitable time for mobility windows. Conversely, the Faculty of Law at UVSQ offers its elective courses in the fifth semester, placing the suitable mobility window near the end of the Bachelor's degree program.

Conclusively, mobility windows cannot be understood as a rigid construct by students, teaching staff or Erasmus+ coordinators confining mobility rather than expanding it. Instead, it is a loose and flexible arrangement that foregrounds times and modules within a degree that are uniquely qualified to be utilized for a mobility. Recognizing and underlining an appropriate mobility time window is a simple, but crucial tool for universities to draw students' attention to international study options.

Conclusion

Intellectual Output 3, preceded and fostered by IO1 and IO2, is rooted in the Grounded theory approach structuring interviews by collecting and coding data, leading to an interim analysis and subsequently refined surveys, culminating in a structured assessment of the supplied information. Through 24 HEI staff and two accreditation agency interviews that were virtually conducted, underlying causes of student immobility were illuminated from culturally and professionally diverse angles. The outcome is not a universal panacea to the inertia of student mobility, but rather an in-depth exploration of a multifaceted subject matter that catalyzes a substantiated attempt at deconstructing the prevalent barriers to mobility.

Though discrepancies in participants' estimations occur, the similarities in opinion about the governing causes are striking. Generally divided into two head categories, personal and structural barriers, the NORM project confronts the organizational systems that allow these obstacles to flourish while integrating the dismantling of personal deterrents when possible. Several barriers and complementary recommendations are noteworthy for their urgency and universality. Among these is the arresting need for a modified and improved information exchange system. With an eye on establishing the vital significance of academic and cultural exchanges, the mediation of mobility information has to encompass personal experiences, platform-

diverse accessibility and streamlined application processes. The interview results ascertain that an increase in joint/double degree programs with accommodated mobility windows as well as a wider variety of short-term mobilities is decisive for the recommended development towards successful mobility. In this context, the implementation of ISCED codes and a Curricula Matching Tool would minimize administrative leg work significantly. With expanding choices, however, university capacities for personal guidance and consultation by accomplished staff must not be allowed to dwindle.

The Erasmus+ program aspires to produce an environment in which students can feel confident that a mobility provides considerably more benefits than inconveniences for the student's personal and professional path. This confidence commences with a well-developed linguistic groundwork enabling students to develop language skills consistently and efficiently. A formidable number of courses instructed in English is integral to achieve this goal and would positively affect outgoing and incoming mobility numbers. Respective staff can showcase their understanding of the exceeding rewards of mobilities by recognizing and accrediting courses flexibly with a commitment to the acquisition of heterogeneous competencies rather than uniform content. Personal factors merge into structural barriers when the focus moves to the financial burden of mobilities. While students in some countries are culturally reluctant to leave their nest, lifting the burden of financial duress connected with mobilities would mobilize many. So as to achieve an expansion of the influence of the Erasmus+ program on the European academic experience and in due course make mobility the norm, we endorse a combination of these progressive cross-category efforts.

References

BigBlueButton (n.s.): BigBlueButton. Built For Online Learning. About. Online: https://bigbluebutton.org/open-source-project/about/, accessed: 21.03.2022.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (n.s.): Was sind Bedarfssätze und wie hoch sind sie? Online : https://www.bafög.de/bafoeg/de/das-bafoeg-alle-infos-auf-einen-blick/foerderungsarten-und-foerderungshoehe/was-sind-bedarfssaetze-und-wie-hoch-sind-sie/was-sind-bedarfssaetze-und-wie-hoch-sind-sie.html, accessed : 04.04.2022.

Chong, Gin H. (2008): Measuring performance of small-and-medium sized enterprises: the grounded theory approach. In: Business and Public Affairs 2, N. 1, p. 1-11.

Egan, Marshall T. (2002): Grounded Theory Research and Theory Building. In: Developing Human Resources 4, N. 3, p. 277-295.

Kahn, Shahid (2014): Qualitative Research Method: Grounded Theory. In: International Journal of Business and Management 9, N. 11, p. 224-233.

Mey, Günther; Mruck, Katja (2011a): Vorwort. In: Ders. (Hg.): Grounded Theory Reader. 2. ed. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag Sozialwissenschaften, p. 09-10.

Mey, Günther; Mruck, Katja (2011b): Grounded-Theory-Methodologie: Entwicklung, Stand, Perspektiven. In: Ders. (Hg.): Grounded Theory Reader. 2. ed. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag Sozialwissenschaften, p. 11-48.

Psychological Research (o.J.): Why Is Research Important? The Process of Scientific Research. Online accessible under: URL: https://opened.cuny.edu/courseware/lesson/14/student/?task=3, last time access: 28.12.2021.

Chapter 4 References

Aneca, 2022, Presentation, http://www.aneca.es/eng/ANECA/Who-are-we/Presentation Accessed: 16.02.2022

ACQUIN, 2022, About ACQUIN, https://www.ACQUIN.org/en/about-ACQUIN/ Accessed: 16.02.2022

ENQA, 2021, About ENQA, https://www.enqa.eu/about-enqa/ Accessed: 16.02.2022

ENQA, 2015, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Brussels, https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf Accessed: 18.02.2022

SEPIE, 2020, Erasmus+ 2019: a year of achievement and personal and professional enrichment for thousands of Europeans (Erasmus+ 2019: año de logros y de enriquecimiento personal y profesional de miles de europeos), http://sepie.es/doc/comunicacion/prensa/2020/informe_anual_e_2019_def.pdf Accessed: 01.03.2022

Spanish Ministry of Universities, 2021, Facts And Figures of the Spanish University System. Publication 2020-2021 (Datos y Cifras Del Sistema Universitario Español. Publicación 2020-2021), https://www.universidades.gob.es/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Datos_y_Cifras_2020_21.pdf Accessed: 10.03.2022

Di Marzo, Paola; Gabriels, Wim; Rayon Gonzalez; Juan, 2022, Unleashing the Potential of Different Mobility Formats (How Long is too Long IO6 Policy Recommendations), https://www.hlitl-project-eu.uvsq.fr/medias/fichier/io6-policy-recommendations-final-docx_1650434465492-pdf?ID_FICHE=220402&INLINE=FALSE Accessed: 14.03.2022

European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), 2022, Definitions, https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/ Accessed: 16.04.2022

European Commission: European Education Area, 2022, European Universities Initiative, https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative Accessed: 23.03.2022

Weller, Martin, 2021, What are the benefits of interdisciplinary study?, Open University, https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/what-are-the-benefits-interdisciplinary-study Accessed: 30.03.2022

Appendix

NORM consortium interviews conducted among persons at the universities among the consortium partners

Participating institutions:

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh, Greece), Eötvös Loránd University Budapest (ELTE, Hungary), University of Marburg (UM, Germany), University of Alcalá de Henares (UAH, Spain), University of Barcelona (UB, Spain), University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ, France), Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas (VMU, Lithuania).

Number of universities: 7

Number of countries: 6

Geographical distribution

Northern Europe: Lithuania

Western Europe: France, Germany

Eastern Europe: Hungary

Southern Europe: Greece, Spain (2)

Appendix Interviews

Making Mobility the Norm

NORM

Project number: 2019-1-DE01-KA203-005031

E+ KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the Exchange of good practices

KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for higher education

IO3 Interviews

by Johannes Weinreich, Carmen Fels and Franziska Heike

Philipps-Universität Marburg (UM), Germany

Eva Marcén Cruz - European University Foundation (EUF), Belgium

January 2022

Abbreviation

EUF - European University Foundation

UM - Philipps-Universität Marburg

MIC – Marburg International Club

VMU - Vytautas-Magnus-University

UB - Universitat de Barcelona

UAH - Universidad de Alcalá

ELTE - Eötvös Loránd University Budapest

AUTh - Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

UVSQ - Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

Contents

Interview VMU Head of the Student Union 30.09.2021

Answerer = A

Interviewer = I

Protocol = P

I: First official question. Do you agree to the recording of the interview?

A: Yes, I do

I: Okay, so we are only using this for the NORM Project. And if we use details of the interview, we won't forward anything personal okay.
Okay. So, we will start with the questions and work our way through the interview.
So, first of all, do you know about the NORM project, other than us contacting you?

A: Could you repeat please, I cannot hear…

I: Do you know about the NORM project?

A: I think no.

I: Okay, so should we introduce it to you quick so you have an idea about the background of the interview?

A: Yes

I: Okay, so that is P's job.

P: So, yeah, the NORM project is composed of 9 consortium partners – 7 universities and 2 student unions, ESN and EUF, and the main aim of the project is to tackle the structural barriers that are there for mobility so students who go abroad and the final thing should come out at the end of the project is one clear message for us that you go into it and can find out which courses can be taken at other university and also

curricula design guide for the universities so that they can make their teaching more international and that for example, have mobility windows, in their studies. So, I think yeah, that is the main thing about the project.

A: Okay

I: It is about intellectual output, we are working on the third intellectual output, which is focusing on the interviews. So, for example, we have a broad idea of what the challenges to mobility are and now we are going into more detail so basically, we have research, the qualitative analysis and this is the part of the project.
Have you been abroad, did you go abroad during your course of study?

A: I have been abroad, but I was going a non-EU university program on international, it's not Erasmus, I am studying Chinese language, Asian Culture and Psychology, so as our university is based on liberal ideas, so we can study two programs different programs, so I was going on practice to Taiwan and spent several months there, which is amazing because I can go not just to study, I also went for 2 months, I just had it in the middle of the academic year, so it means that I finished one semester in Lithuania, went to Taiwan, finished my practice and then came back and I did not miss any semester in my university and did my spring semester.

I: Did you get credits for that?

A: Yeah, I had to, I had a practice, so I just had practice credits. If I can call like this. So I just heard that there are practicing universities where I could just have the practice abroad and come back. And my, my colleagues had practiced in this semester during this semester and they needed to have this practice. So, I just had it before and I just present what I did in Taiwan.

I: And so, these practice or internships are they mandatory in the program, everybody needs to do it?

A: Yes, but it's it doesn't mean that you must go abroad. So, you can do your practice wherever you want, in my program you are supposed to go abroad because you are

5

learning language. So, it's a good thing to go out and go abroad, but it's not a must. If you, can you go, but it's a really good to experience and real good possibility to know language, is better. So, I just wanted to. Maybe to understand better the language. I wanted to go to Asia for a year because we can go for one year or a half a year or one semester. So, I decided that I love to see Asia for some months because culture shock and lot of things like this, and yeah.

I: So, you are planning to go again?

A: No, I do not. I went to Taiwan and then the COVID started so the pandemic finished everything. So actually, the students from my course, they were supposed to go last year, but because of the pandemic they cannot and this thing. I just inside feel very happy that I had the possibility to go before, I like, you know, I just had a dream before, of the pandemic, so I could go before. And then I already was in Asia, but I won't go again for now because pandemic didn't finish yet. So it's still here and in Asia, especially, but now I'm studying psychology and not any more, Chinese language. So there is no big dream to go to Asia because I am studying psychology.

I: Okay. The next section of interviews is concerning the student union body and we already talked about before:
The student union body and the parliament elected you as it's head and what is the Student Parliament and your role as a representative regarding International Student Mobility?

A: So maybe I will answer more about international student politics in the university, because sometimes it's really difficult to, to invite international people in all the politics of the university. I mean, some things, like parliament, we have the head of all students, so in teams its been difficult because everything is in our local language, so we need to have all meetings in English. And sometimes it's really difficult because it's with a government of university and so on so it is a bit difficult thing. But I'm very happy that last year we started working on it and now we have in the student parliament the international students. So this means that all that all international problems they can send to us, to this parliament. And it's I don't know. It's just a possibility for them, we can send to them all the information we have from governments from possibilities to

6

go abroad from some traineeships because we have a lot of emails each semester in the in the beginning of the semester we have a lot of meetings with administration and our international departments, presenting possibilities to go abroad, how to find them, how to find the best university, which suits your program and so on So I am happy that we can send this information exactly to the students and they can split this to all international students. So if I answered…

I: It is a perfect answer, yeah, that was very practical, so you are distributing information because you have contact through the student body as a whole.
The next question is process oriented, is the student union consulted for strategic decisions, for internationalization, for mobility, for example, implementing within the university administration program include, do they consult you?

A: So, in all these big decisions I have, I have a possibility to attend and I have what a voting possibility. So, I think if there's any new program or any new big decision, they just write it. I can't see it, because I am not there, so maybe, in the government somewhere, the international department have something like this, but I just, each time when something is changing or they have new ideas. So, the student council is invited and then we can attend and we can send that information, which we have, which we can apply from international students as well.

I: We already know, when we prepared the questionnaire here, we had a whether not like, a mindset as we probably should have in our structure. Is that so there are representatives at every department who worked with international students in particular and work with German students or International School funding to go abroad, but most of the administrative work is done by the international office.
So do you have an international office in the University or is international affairs made that is related to every department and every department basically has its own structure?

A: So, we have an international office and its actually people who just finish all university. So when this means that they just had, the experience how they went somewhere abroad. So this international office, as I said, they have meetings each

semester. They sending actually a lot of information about all possibilities, about new applications, about some projects. It's not just about studying abroad, but it's also about some internships, some practice, some projects as I said, so I'm not, I, I cannot say where's the difference. The difference between international department and international students' office. But I think that international student office is that first place where all international students are coming and they have meetings and they have meetings with their mentors because each international student has a student, a local student or not local student, but the student mentor. So, then the meetings are organized by this international office and also in this international office have meetings with our local students. And as sometimes as I remember it this international student, not students, international office, is having some courses, just to present. So, I mean, I had the course at the first year of my studying and they just came to present who are they, what are the possibilities to go abroad? And so on. It's all. So they're not just having a meeting where you can come, but they're coming to the courses, to the students and presenting everything.

I: So in Marburg, yeah, we also actually go to the faculty, to the students, to to advertise for international mobility.

A: I am just saying it is good.

I: And when you talk about, you, do you as the Student Parliament, collaborate with the International Office? Are you in contact?

A: Exactly as a parliament, I think, maybe it's just specific one problem. And we found out too, because when I'm presenting the story of international students and local students. What are the bad things happening, good things, and just feedback from them. So sometimes maybe we can ask specific questions and analyze with the parliament and the international office. But it's not like because parliament is more of it's, it's a place where students are meeting. They are giving a word to my team. They just decided something. And they achieved that the, there are problems with something, like with international students, for example, and they're sending to my team the, the problem and we need to clear how to work with this as far. So parliament is not that working with administration as a student council. So I, so I can answer that

8

in student council last year we had a committee with a coordinator who is working with the international students. So, we had some meetings with them. I mean that, we were meeting with the international students, presenting, who are we how they can find us how we can help them. So, student council is, I think it's it's more working with international students than parliament.

I: The next section of the interview is concerning the structural perspective, in your degree programs, generally speaking, at your university, are there mobility windows implemented?

A: I think yes, absolutely.

I: In which semester are they typically implemented?

A: You mean, maybe I will just clear, the window you mean, it could be, maybe you can explain me more.

I: So mobility window is, let's say if we're going to design a program, you say like a bachelors' program in the 5th semester, we arrange courses or we offer modules that easy for easy to transfer to other universities because they're not specific to your location because they are taught more or less everywhere. So, it's easy for students to then go abroad and get a credit recognition and to come back. Something like that. Or when we have Programs with partner universities for the exchange students, your curriculum is designed so that in that semester, the curriculum more or less matches the student's curriculum. It is just a semester, more or less, which it is easiest. Almost easy for students to abroad and not have bad credit.

A: Yeah. So I think that we have, I cannot say exactly the same semester to each program, I think. Absolutely. No, but the first two years of bachelor is more or less a lot of courses which are with all university students. This means that it's not exactly what are you studying, but it's like that the basics of it's going to be philosophy, psychology some biology, and so on, other things like this, which are not supposed to be in your program. But it's our university thing. We have this possibility, so I think more or less all programs, you have the possibility that mobility window, I didn't know this name. So,

it could be a fifth or sixth semester on bachelor study. So, my, exactly my program Asian studies, where more or less we are going on the fifth semester. So, this means that third year of studying, yeah.

I: Yeah, that's typically it.

So as a student, how would you typically learn about mobility opportunities? Does the international office come to you, the student body at the start of semester and giving opportunities? Do you have email lists? Facebook, websites, informing students about the opportunity to go abroad?

A: Yeah. So we have the physically we know where is it? Yes. In which department where, where this office, we can find it. And on the internet, it's absolutely easy because we just can Google it, like our university name and international office, or just Erasmus program and then it's in different pages, but it's something similar and you have a lot of possibilities, just a list of universities a list of countries, at list of possibilities to have scholarships and a lot of information where is may be more expensive where it's cheaper. As long, if it's important for the student and a lot of the contact, so we can write an email, we can call, you can come physically to the department. So it's quite easy actually, because all students are going to find it, its in the main page.

I: Structurally speaking, what from the point of view of this student body, as a whole, what are the main challenges to the student mobility, structurally speaking?

A: I wanted to say pandemic. I don't know, maybe. It's more on students being that not all students want to go abroad. Maybe not all students understand why it's good. And it's quite strange because offices in the departments they are coming, they're explaining, they're saying we had the meetings with the students who already were abroad and they just come and tell what they experienced, but sometimes students, they just don't want, so I don't know. I, I can say, okay, international office should have made more meetings. They should send more emails with explanations, how to go somewhere. But I don't know. Isn't that the problem, sometimes I think it is more on the student side, they do not want to go.

I: So you're saying that there's sometimes no benefits to going abroad or sometimes the benefits to going abroad are not communicated effectively?

A: Yes. I think the second thing that it's not that to explain that much and sometimes, you know, Once student can go to learn language and other to see that country to, to just I don't know, to have some mainly future jobs to find there, someone to write their bachelor or big paper, yes. Or just do a survey in that country. So there's different things why different reasons why students are going. So sometimes I think departments offices, they cannot explain all that happens when going abroad. So they just seeing that it's a good thing. And it's a good possibility to study the language and to get to something you experienced to meet new people, you know, but it's not only these goals. You can find something else. Yeah.

I: So one of the goals of NORM as P explained is to develop a curriculum matching tool. Credit recognition is sometimes quite difficult. And that's one of the key aspects that project is tackling.
So from your perspective, what would be the advantages to a curriculum matching tool or a design guide?

A: Maybe, I just know, imagine that they have only two semesters, approximately two semesters to choose when you can go abroad. So I think maybe. To show students more about possibilities, not just in a semester, well, that you can go in your first year, second year, in the middle of all the year, because we have a good gap before autumn semester and after autumn and before spring semester, we have a one month free when you can go abroad. So use this, And explain what, what students does can do, and they send them more abroad on this January month.

I: So you have your entire January as free?

A: Not exactly, but we just finished our autumn semester in December. So this means that by December we are having an exams so. In January where we have retakes and we have some practices, sometimes it depends on the program, on the course. But usually in January, we don't, we don't need to study where if you didn't pass your exam, that you need to pass on January, but only this to how I went to Taiwan that I just had

11

really, I passed my all, all these exams on the first week of December, and I just went to Taiwan. I came back on February, so I knew that our university have this month and where the, I think only one university in Lithuania, others are passing the exams on January so we can use this so we can more Say to students that on January can go and find some not that long, but short scholarships sorry. Practices and and some just projects or something like this, but not just studies, you know, that you can go abroad and use it.

I: This is very interesting. Before this job I was working on a special program, and basically, we were thinking about this three or four week program and that's exactly the window we were looking actually, at the first week of January to the last week of Jan and we, we couldn't find universities in Europe, that had a gap in January. Typically, you know, in South Korea, in South America, there is summer, so an area that there are gaps in that time, also, sometimes in New Zealand and Australia, where they have long breaks, summer breaks, but not in Europe. So that's pretty interesting to me that there are universities that having beak in January.

A: Eh, yes. And each year we have more and more teachers who are just presenting what you can do in January. So this January, I will have a practice. So I, but local practice, not abroad, but we just have a meeting with psychologists and so on. So I mean, each year, our teachers trying to find what we can do on January. So I think that it's really would be a really amazing input for international department. That would be more at presenting the possibilities abroad, what you can do on January, but now I understand that it's still pandemic and you cannot go everywhere, you know.

I: Yeah, and last question, if you can change one thing to support student mobility, what would it be? Anything?
Recognition, credit transfer, financial support, or local administration, what would you change, if you were given a golden card, which option would you choose?

A: I would give more money, give way more financial support, but not only for students, but I mean maybe not exactly two students maybe to the class for students, but I would change that financial support that system and try to find a better way and to give more

money to students because sometimes it's really difficult and sometimes this is the minus that it's really expensive and not all students can do this.

I: Thank you so much!

A: Thank you. You will finish your recording or no.

I: Yes.

Interview VMU Dean of the Faculty of Law 30.09.2021
A= Dean of the Faculty of Law

I = Interviewer

P = Protocol

A: Yes, I agree.

I: Okay, the details of the interview, we will not forward any personal details of the interview, of your answers. Okay, so, the first section of the interview, about general information,

do you know the NORM project already, if yes what do you know about the NORM project?

A: Well, I must say that I really have very minimal information about it only from our main international department, the central international department well they invited or asked whether I would agree to participate in this interview and just very, very shortly presented it. So I really just.

I: Okay, so a brief introduction the background of the project, P can introduce.

P: Yeah. So it's a project made of nine consortium partners – universities and organizations and, and main aim is to tackle structural barriers for mobility and Erasmus set up. There are different outputs. So this is output three, before this we had surveys, desk research to get an overview of barriers and now we want to go in-depth and what should come out of this project is a curricular design guide for each university so each program is set up in a more international way with for example, mobility windows and there should also be message to students so that they can get online and check which courses are there at the university and how they can go abroad and how they can get accredited back home and so on. So that's roughly the project.

A: Okay. Thank you.

I: So, you already talked that you are the vice dean of the faculty of law, the next question would be concerning the Erasmus context, what is your role in the context, institutionally speaking, what are your responsibilities?

A: My responsibilities

I: Yes, in the Erasmus context

A: So, one of them would be introducing, not just providing information about such a possibility for the students. So we meet with students and, or their representatives basically once a month. And when the semester starts, usually, we try to provide basic information that you know, such possibility exists that you could go to study for a semester or longer abroad where they can find necessary information. What are partners institutions? What is the procedure? And so one of the tasks would be this. Then another one is just discussing with students where they already decide to try to go abroad. We'll discuss practical issue of how to choose writing for institution or do they want to achieve, what courses they want to have? How they should formulate their program. And then when they come back, it's always nice to hear their feedback, how they did. And so basically these things, and then also we will review their agreements. We see if everything corresponds, how the program, if you know, when they come out, they don't have any problems things like that.

I: So in your field, how many in terms of percentage, for example, students would, typically go abroad during a program?

A: I have to say that, you know, we have really small numbers in the faculty of law. And I think that the biggest reason for that is the specifics for study, because they had to study many, national, legal courses and they are mandatory, according to Lithuanian regulation. So we have special laws that regulate, the studies and these laws, they set a number of courses and credits that have to be studied during a legal studies. So it order that to pursue a legal career as a judge or an advocate. So that limits their possibilities because then, you know, so that's why it's not too easy to convince them to go abroad. And so basically we have, let's say five students per semester that actually are going to go abroad.

I: Okay, you know, technically speaking,

is there any mobility model in your program? The four-five students that go, what do they go for?

A: Yes . And so we formulated, when we created our program, two years ago, we actually tried to have that where the one year, especially they have many courses that are elective courses. So they are not mandatory for them, so they can easily be replaced with anything else in legal area. And they can actually study abroad and then in particular we encourage them during this year to go abroad and study in foreign universities. But not in all it programs because we have one program where a bachelor program, which, It does not have this window. So that means that if they decide to travel abroad that prolong their studies at the university.

I: Yeah, they have international law programs, they are highly mobile, which was surprising, because in Marburg University, the law program is very national focused, they are not the most mobile department. Now the next question, I am not sure if you know, if not, let us know and it would be perfectly fine, we keep asking this question to everyone,

which is the most mobile department from your university? So from which faculty does most students go abroad?

A: you know, from the whole university, I really don't know that information, so I cannot say.

I: But this is quite surprising to us. So there's in Germany is correct. It's an, a given in the engineering and the sciences they are not as mobile, as languages, for example. But then, in other countries, its quite the opposite That, that we besides students are mobile and having intercultural experiences, focused on ourselves. Okay. One of the aspects of the NORM project is to identify mobility barriers. By mobility barriers, we only talked about, mobility window.

So in your opinion, from the perspective of your department, what are the main barriers for the students to go abroad?

16

A: So one of them is of course, that they sometimes consider, that it is complicated with legal studies, although we try to provide information that it's really possible to do, but in a certain, for example, in the program, doesn't have the window. They do not want for them to prolong the studies is very scary. It's something where they, they don't want to consider it. And of course it might be related to financial issues. Sometimes, maybe also language, although we, our university is very strong at languages, but then also we noticed that often students are not confident enough.

So they are afraid that when you study law, of course, then, you know, if you, if you study legal course in English. It has specific terminology. Sometimes that might scare them. So that also going to be an issue then also they might consider it maybe too expensive that they do not have additional financial support Although yes you get funding by Erasmus program. Well, in any case, you might need additional money to support yourself during your stay and not every student can actually afford that. So maybe these would be the main obstacles.

I: You mentioned about prolongation, that you can go abroad for a semester then add another semester back home, are there consequences we know that influences, for example you have a window when you go out, for example in Germany, financial support is restricted to some specific semesters.
So are there consequences to students, like financial consequences?

A: No, that would be probably just psychological obstacle that, you know, my studies will last longer than Four or five years. So this is one of those things. And also they are always looking forward to pursue their legal career. And that also, that means that, you know, you will have to wait one year or longer. So probably these reasons, rather than because they do not have any financial consequences that would come from the university or the state regarding scholarships.

I: And you also mentioned financial aspects as a barrier to mobility and I was just wondering, Currently, We are in the process of preparing payments for students, we have already prepared them. We are issuing the payments that. So if I was to, I said, okay, so I assume this is my day of arrival and this is the day of my departure and this, I am not 100 percent sure that I am going to get the financial contribution, or it was most grad that I was expecting.

Do you think that a change to regulation, for example, a lump sum, and for a student to have the minimum requirements, then we have to do that. And how that helps students, if you change the system?

A: Yeah. Well, that's an interesting question. I'm not sure whether is the system or, you know, on the, just if they actually just think of their stay abroad and just compare to the support that they get, and then they see that no, it's not enough to stay somewhere. Maybe that the reason more than, how they, how they are getting so financial support. I am not really sure. Maybe that would help, I am not sure.

I: From my point of view, it is an administrative nightmare, Erasmus. And I understand that students people, they go abroad, they do not have plans yet. There's a lot of insecurity. So we are highly regulated. The students, they have payments to make. If you don't have a down payment, a deposit for an apartment, that you need to stay and if you do not have money for that, where do you go.

Okay, Anyway, the fourth section considers design of the program structure.

So if you would design a new program, how has the international perspective considered during the design and the credit accreditation process of the program?

A: It is actually a very important part, because, we noticed that in, when we, get experts who do accreditation for old programs and when they do that, this is one of the questions that arise about the student's mobility. We also understand that this is a very important part and we always try to think about, you know, Either to, to, to leave a certain period of time in the program where they could travel and have elective courses. So yeah, so basically we always in our mind, because this is a very important part. And we, our faculty is always very international. We're constantly invited to visiting professors from abroad. And this was one of the, one of our goals to make sure that our students are well acquainted with Legal English. So, you know, if they decide to abroad that could help them be able to already have the skill to figure out English. It's it's always, we always consider them.

I: And structurally speaking, are members of the international office, are they invited to the council that designs the programs?

A: Well, we didn't create a new program already for a number of years. So it would be difficult to say, but how it will be now because, the last program that was accredited was five or even more years ago. Yeah, but yeah, I'll possibly be in contact with international department as I am responsible for this part of the faculty. So we're always in contact and we meet from time to time to discuss what are the reasons why we have, let's say just a few students who are willing to go abroad, how can we change it? We discuss our program and to where we see the possibilities of how it can change, maybe things in advance, I mean, for the future. So it's a, it's a regular, actually, the process that we do at our university.

I: And in your programs, do you have, in German, key modification modules, so these are modules that allow for flexible regarding what students can choose, and to our question, is there a general flexibility, for example, extracurricular activities or curricular activities that you can transfer to your core curriculum?
In the program, if you will, if you have different modules in the program that students have to take some courses to him, he said something like key qualifications, where they take courses for community services.
For example, all language, something very flexible, that would be easy to go abroad and get credits transferred?

A: Not really in legal studies, anything like that. Maybe during the first years of their studies, when they study not the legal courses, but the study just to, but these broader courses that they choose, but usually they do not go abroad in their first semester. Yeah. So, but when already the legal courses starts, they start usually more intensively in the second course, Basically, it's just legal studies. But on the other hand, you know, we have a number of legal courses that are absolutely easily can be picked up anywhere else. It's about public international law, which is or European union law. So these are the courses that, it doesn't matter. You can, you can study them, not only in Lithuania but also somewhere abroad, so there are a number of these courses where it's really not a problem to replace the location.

I: And do you offer students the possibility to, let's say if they don't work and they take a class, on the loan agreement to still print that on their transcript of university, the class.

19

Do you recognize the class, in terms of credits?

A: There is possibility that if they do further additional qualification courses. I think we discussed that we could actually add them in in the certificate. Yes.

I: Coming to study programs, how can students get information about courses?
I think we talked about that.
 Do you have a history of course metrics that you advise them when you go abroad, for example at the University of Marburg, they recognize in the past certain courses, at other universities?

A: Well, the students decide to go abroad, they usually, tend to look for every university and find out what courses they offer by themselves. Which, you know, all information is available online and usually they come to ask us about their choice, and then we discuss the obstacle, what would be the problem or risks that we see or, you know, say, yeah, everything looks really great, you know? So we go and add, usually this is how. We always offer from the beginning, but usually students tend to do this first step by themselves as all information can be found online. And our central, the international department, they actually have. You know, clear information that is provided on their website. So they start from there. They pick a location, check the, the, their curricula. How do you, well, what work would you recommend or how does it….

I: And from your perspective, what are the main values for your students that make it hard to find the necessary information that they need to come for a well prepared learning agreement?

A: So, yes, sometimes, they cannot find information in English, which we found like, well, for example, they want to go to Spanish university. And although they offer Erasmus programs for the students, but sometimes the information, its not provided entirely in English. And then there are problems in finding out and you are sending emails individually and try to get approval whether certain courses will be how in English so that they kind of make sure, because, we had, I think, accidents, accidents when students go abroad and find out that the language or the course is not English and something that they do not speak. So this is probably one of the main obstacles.

20

I: It is interesting, how the project is trying to solve these obstacles, the next question is, going the same direction. That is the background itself, in the university of Marburg, there is a course catalogue, for the full term, it should be in August, so when does your university publish the course catalogue, institution typically published. It's. You already mentioned about language, so is it published in English at the third part to the question. **Our question is does your course catalogue include ISDEC codes? Basically European codes, regards to, subject areas?**

A: Yeah. So usually our international department is actually they are really doing a good job. We are sometimes angry that they require the prior information- so early, but at the same time, we understand that students are searching for programs, and are willing to come, We need this information earlier. So usually it's for example, spring semester, they tried to get all information posted already for autumn semester. So usually it's not so early, so for us, those who work with the programs, it's not very easy, because English courses at our faculty are mainly taught by foreign professors. So every year they might, they might be different professors. So for us, it takes a while to discuss with them to their possibility, the timeslot and everything. But yeah, our university tries to post all information rather early. And it's it, its in English, because all information in English, has to be with descriptions about courses. And as they provide codes, I'm not sure whether those exactly calls that you are asking, but I guess, yeah, because every course has the specific order. And I think that this. Yeah.

I: If you're adding exchange students, are they administered, in terms of campus management in the same system as every other student and the background to the question is it is sometimes difficult, before exchange students arrive and have access to the IT system?
And the background to the question is if the student has a certain course on the learning agreement, can guarantee that the student gets to participate in that course, to take that course, so that is the question, yeah.

A: Yeah, we actually know as we do not actually have that many students. Yes. So we put every effort to satisfy their needs, and if there is a problem, that the student came later and did not enroll in the course on time, we always ask professor to provide

information. My email so that the student can actually access that everything he or she needs. So, yeah, we do have different, you know, we like different decisions individual here, just reacting to individual situation. If we see that there is such a problem.

I: So, we should skip a couple of questions. We already talked about ISDEC codes.
 Do you support the idea to extend and support Erasmus without paper?

A: Sorry…

I: Are you familiar with EWP, Erasmus without Paper?
Erasmus without paper is basically an effort by to digitalize the Erasmus program..

A: Yes, it is making everything online, yes, I know,

I: So, which tool are you using?

A: That is a good question, usually my assistant, deals with it, I would say.

I: Okay, so you support the idea to digitalize the course catalogue, basically, of your courses?

A: I think it would be an amazing idea, you know, it would be very helpful, it would be an amazing idea, yeah.

I: Okay, and there are several countries in Europe in terms of student mobility, for example, Spain, is a primarily receiving country now the UK has left.
So, are you a sending organization in terms of reciprocity or a receiving organization, do you send more Erasmus students or receive more Erasmus students?

A: I cannot say about the whole university because I do not know the numbers, regarding the faculty, probably there is a balance, we send almost the same as we receive, probably a bit more receiving, in the faculty than we are sending.

I: Final question of the day, do you evaluate the mobility of your students and if yes how do you do it, and for which purpose do you use the feedback that you receive?

A: Yes, we actually get information about how the students visit and studies abroad, their experience and how they, to just get their feedback about their whole stay and what we try to do, we try to hear certain problematic aspects they have, you know, for the future students, maybe to discuss them before they go, if there is something we see that there might be something, a risk, its good to have certain information before going abroad, you know, how to behave, what to do, certain things to avoid, yeah, basically, we use the information to discuss with future students.

I: Okay, thank you so much. P, you can stop the recording.

Interview VMU Erasmus Coordinator at the Faculty of Agriculture 30.09.2021
Interviewer = I

Answerer: Agriculture Academy Erasmus Coordinator = A

Protocol = P

I: Okay, so P is going to start recording. We will be keeping the information, we won't share it and we won't share your personal information for the interview, it is just for the NORM project. We have a couple of sections prepared for questions for you. Some questions are concerning your personal opinion or experience and some are directed towards where the structural information, how you handle certain things at your institution, but we'll start with the general questions.
Do you know the NORM project and if not or not so much would you like for us to introduce the project to you?

A: Yeah, you want, I should introduce the Erasmus project…

I: No no no, the NORM project, we are conducting this interview in the frame of a strategic partnership between our universities in the NORM project. It's a Key Action Tool funded program, its called norm making mobility the norm, tackling mobility barriers, within Europe basically.

A: Yeah, yeah I know because I was not introduced to the project, it was quite new when…

I: Okay

A: …<something in Lithuanian> said that there will be some interview from Germany, especially because in our agriculture faculty we do not have any agreement with Marburg University, other German universities yes, , but with Marburg not yet, that means it is quite new for me.

I: Yeah, this is not university specific, it's a, P, why don't you introduce about this project.

P: Yeah, so the NORM project is a consortium project, so, 7 different universities, our university, 2 from Spain, one from France, Czech university of course and one from Hungary and two big organizations, ESN and EUF. As Johannes said, the main aim of the project is to tackle down structural barriers to why students don't go on Erasmus. And there are like, different outputs, different tasks we are doing.

First task is research, we're doing literature and trying to find out the broader perspective and common ground why people don't go to programs as well as surveys. Now we are on the in-depth interviews so, finding out the specific programs for the issues and where are the differences and what is common about Erasmus boundaries, basically. The main aim of the project is to design a curriculum matching, so that you can get online and see which are the universities offering the courses in your specific study program and you can also see which courses can be accredited at your home university. That aside, there will also be a curricula design guide, so basically, an assistance, for when you want to make your study program more international. So, for example, mobility windows and stuff like that. I think that is the main aim of the project, I would say, yeah.

A: Okay, if you have questions, please ask and I will try to answer

I: Yes, sure, we will start with the questions. So, at your institution, what is your role in the Erasmus context?

A: Okay, firstly I would explain that the Erasmus mobility, especially Student Mobility, is divided into two, lets say, levels, one level is the faculty level where it's related to studies – Studies abroad, incoming students to our university and that is the responsibility of the faculties. The faculties, there are special persons, sometimes vice deans for studies or vice deans for international relations, they are responsible for all study things and the students – outgoing and incoming. My role is a role, related to formalities of exchange students. It means that, I held all documentation, preparation of exchange outgoing students , including learning agreements and other formalities, applications, what needed help in realization of selected students, it means the selection of students is going on faculty level, and then they are selected and then they are on responsibility of mine. I then organize the formalities for exchanges.

Similarly, in incoming students it means that I am responsible for all applications of incoming students to our Agricultural Academy, all formalities, Learning Agreement and so on, but issuing of orders of acceptance and so on, as soon as they are accepted in the faculty, my role is minimal, it means that later when the students are on responsibility of studies at the faculties, their faculty is responsible for their studies.

More or less, teachers, it's a little bit different, teachers because it is not the faculty's responsibility, only for selection, the teachers are selected for exchange then after that they communicate directly with the teachers for the outgoing teachers and I am also helping with the formalities, the mobility agreement and all this documentation confirmation and so on and including also incoming teachers and which is, for example, if the faculties accepting and then confirming their visit and also confirming on behalf of all of Agricultural Academy.

More or less, I have also some responsibility on the level of, not only Agriculture Academy but also on all of Vytautas Magnus University that is related to Erasmus exchanges with third countries. I mean International Credit Mobility, in that field, my responsibilities are relations and exchanges with most Asian countries and African countries and they are responsible for all exchanges with African universities and Asian universities except some industrial countries like Japan, Taiwan, Korea which is responsibility of my colleague.

I: So those are Key Action 1071 program?

A: Yes, yes

I: Okay, got it. Okay, so diving in to mobility barriers, in your opinion or your experience, as an institutional coordinator,
what are the main barriers for new students to go abroad, for outgoing mobility? What are the difficulties they face?

A: We had such, lets say, questions, and for other things regarding that, and, we made some, survey of the students in the beginning of this year, and we got the answers, not so big number, but something around 75 students answered the questions why they are not going or if they are going what is the problems or the positive things in the exchange and in common I have, according to their answers, I have, such opinion that

the main problem for students who are not going, or let's say not going with big enthusiasm, is because of such things like not certain language level, according my opinion, that is not really true because simply, Lithuanian students are not sure about their language level, but then I compare it with other international students, our students speak in quite good English. It is simply, I would say, not confidence on themselves, on that.

Another thing, of course, is the compatibility of the study programs, and looking for the subjects which are similar to those which are recognized in the home university, especially because study system in Vytautas Magnus University compared to former Alexander Stulginskis University is much more strict and accounting for the courses, it means that, before, students had possibility of the whole semester without any problems, which was not successful during exchange semester, now it is limited to credit numbers, a very fixed credit number which one should get outside the country which means that in exchange, that is little bit, the students, afraid, that they will not get this minimum number of credits that they are not sure about that therefore. Of course, not all study programs, they are active, there are similar study programs in other European countries, therefore, lets say, the activity of the faculties could be more intensive to find study programs more similar to find from the courses. Now the students are left for themselves to find the subjects and that is not very good because then students should look for many many universities in Europe to find that and the faculties could find them and know which ones are more suitable for the university.

Yes, of course they are advertising but then we do what we can and of course now adopting for new forms and for media and so on but it is something not a big problem and usually students who want to go on exchange as they have. And one thing comparing to other faculties of Vytautas Magnus University that in our Agriculture Academy there are Applied Sciences here.
What it means, it means that the social aspect of their studies, that their future of job is not as important as in other faculties – Faculty of Social Sciences and other humanities and business studies and so on. Even Applied Sciences students, they are engineers, they are agronomists, they are foresters, and for them, this exchange is not so important, more important for them is their study structure they have very exact study program because one subject is based on another and if they are missing any

subject they will have problem in the future. Therefore they are afraid of exchange programs, because any break in their structure, they can lose any subject which are based on their format, this is also problem. It can go too long for that.

I: No, it wasn't too long, it was extremely interesting, especially the last part of your answer, because, we also, as a university, witness that our humanities students are more mobile, but in comparison, the sciences students are in comparison, immobile. They tend to not go abroad, the question is of course, the answer would be from faculty members in terms of courses, they do not need to go abroad, what kind of education could they possibly get, than our education and the benefits from international experience is not as important in that field, in sciences, in applied sciences as in humanities, right.

A: Exactly

I: Yes, so we are on the same page there and you confirming that helps. So, when you design a new program, a degree program, for example, how is the international perspective considered or heard in the design courses.
Are you a representative for the international perspective in the board that designs the program?

I: Yeah it is, design of few programs is very tightly related to evaluation of existing programs. It means that if evaluation of existing study programs which is regularly made in our country at each university including our university each 5 years should get accreditation, if the international aspect of those programs is important and that is really important because in our study system of evaluation agency mean National agency they are taking a lot of importance on international things, that the evaluator board is usually mostly from foreign professors and only one professor is local, from Lithuania when they are evaluating study programs. That means that international aspects is very important and there are always counting how many exchange students you have, how many courses you prepared in English or in other languages, usually in English, how the mobile teachers and so on, and such all things are very important and therefore when they are designed, the study program to keep that in mind always.

It means that, if we are preparing the new program for accreditation then we are always taking in mind the international aspect. One example, which is quite new program is, Agri Food Management, which is prepared together with other two Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia and now we share accepting international students in this international, lets say, of course to make a joint study program, is quite complicated, because of national law and rules which is revised differently for different requirements for diplomas. Therefore we solve this question in exchanges of including the contents and exchanges in each university in the same content of semester. It means that for example if study starts in September, they go to Estonia or students from Latvia and Lithuania to Estonia and after that next semester they go to Latvia and Lithuanian and Estonian local students and so on. But diploma is issued by the university which is accepting the students, which is admitting the students.

I: I have a question, are students enrolled in all three universities?

A: No, what I mean is, they are admitted only in one university, but they are going in frame of Erasmus, to other university, and taking the semester in other university. In total they have 2 semesters of our country, other semesters in home university. International students mostly from Asia and Africa but that case, we have joint programs, but also adopting national law for joint programs. It means that, it is not one diploma, but the different diploma. One example which is successful and works and in future we have plans to make more such programs not necessarily with Baltic states, it could be with Poland also, we have good cooperation with Poland, some Italian, some German university, some other university, but lets see it would be in future, in other faculties of Vytautas Magnus University, we also have such, in Political Sciences faculty, in Social sciences, we also have such program. It means that all these new programs mostly internationally oriented, you know, Lithuania is a small country compared with Germany, we cannot avoid international, without international it is impossible our higher education system would not be normal.

I: One of the interesting things of the NORM project for us is how narrow minded we were when we initially started the project, and now when we started looking at the project because I had my mind set based on my experiences from Germany and something like we are a small country and we cannot afford to not internationalize is

something that did not cross my mind because many students and professors in Germany do not see the need to internationalize, they are quite reluctant towards the idea of internationalization. So this is a totally different intercultural experience for me. **So, when you have outgoing students, so how do they typically find their courses, diving more in the direction of, the subjects, how does the process work?**

A: You mean, a selection of courses in the host university shared by..

I: Yes, just very briefly, do you go online and search the course catalogue, do you have a course catalogue on hand, based on your experience with your partners?

A: Yeah that is based on what I said before, according to responsibility of the faculties, from my side of international cooperation department we prepare the basic material, lets say, process for the selection of courses, it means that the links with the our partner universities websites, to their course catalogs, but this is not anymore related with international cooperation department. This, the later one, the selection of exact courses, is the responsibility of students and the faculties. And they usually work in such way, students are selecting some university they want to go, of course this is selection not always based on studies but also on sunshine, on other things, but after that, they are going also to faculty and discussing that with their responsible vice dean and building the learning agreement plan and after that learning agreement is fulfilled by faculty and not by international cooperation department and after that is filled we can help them apply, usually most of our applications online, they may need to confirm some documents but the students applying individually, they are nominating them before, and of course, they are applying individually. I don't know, I answered this question.

I: You answered this question I agree, and we also have some background information about your university. The next question would be, so we are trying to do the course catalogue, the question would be when you actually publish your own course catalogue and we know that you guys publish it rather early or at least as we understand you

publish in English version that is especially interesting for international incoming students rather early on more less semester ahead of time. Which is quite impressive. **Again, the next question is, concerning incoming students, and today how do they enroll in the courses? Is there an IT system in which they are implemented into the system and then they choose their course for which they have a learning agreement? Is it the same system that everybody else or local students use? Or do you have a parallel system for international students?**

A: Yeah, this, lets say, I will explain the system, how the students study. First of all, I would say that, the local students and international students, they use the same system. The same way registered, same way using the website, in some cases its in English or Lithuanian website but English website is used not only for incoming students but also for local students because our university is quite international and university is international oriented and we have many international students which are regular for degree students and they are using English website which is totally the same as Lithuanian, the system is also the same. Only one difference is that they are using the course catalogue while registering not for Lithuanian courses but for courses which are taught in English and that is it. I could say more but it is quite complicated and still are in transition and we want to improve this system because it is quite complicated system yes because we publish quite early, in April. But it doesn't matter because it will be courses in September because its changing, in summer, it is changing, because in Lithuanian and English some courses are same some are changing. In September it is not possible to register to some courses or if it is possible if group is not formed, also depends on teacher if they agree to run with one student or not and then cancelling or changing. All these practical things, which I think most universities in Europe have that thing, only one thing that our teachers are also pressed a lot to use English language in their studies not only for incoming students but also for local students, for example if there is one two students it is recommendation for teachers to include this one-two international students with local students group in that case make explanations in English and to study together with Lithuanians, it is also such things have been added. Yes of course, sometime may not happen, sometimes different questions arising, the system not always works smoothly, but at least the system is working smoothly in technical things, it means, it is very clear in how it works during September registering of courses, of course they should be admitted first using

order, then they receive user ID and password, all this IT system. Of course, after that automatically they are transferred to Moodle system to make it possible for study in distance education, and also, not only distance but in normal system, to present material and so on.

Look, it's a long discussion, if I say all these things, it will be some clear questions I can answer but to…

I: There is no need for that and the amount of time you use of course, it appears natural for you to have your students in the same IT system for example as your degree seeking students, and to offer the same classes to both groups, its not the same system everywhere

A: Yeah yeah, of course, in Alexander Stulginskis university, it was the same system as you say, it was totally another system for incoming students. It was separately registration and so on. Now in Vytautas Magnus University its all joined in one system.

I: Do you know if when you publish course catalogue do you use ISCED codes to describe the different courses?

The European subject codes, numbers, basically variation of numbers that describe subject areas.

The more numbers you click, the more you go into detail with the back end to the question is comparability for students? If yes, they looked at course catalogs, right?

They have a certain number in their own for the course they would like to have their credit transferred for at the home university and at the host university. That's the idea.

A: Yeah these numbers are used while students are studying here, I don't know, the relation connect the home university numbers and the title. Only one thing and that is yeah, in the site of ours, the course catalogue is still not working properly, because students have to make a lot of work to find the courses, which is, they are now under preparation for design of new course catalogue which will be more easier. It should be run during autumn maybe winter semester after that we will be use. Now yes students yeah they have some process but they are lets say, in the course catalogue grouped by the faculties not by the topics that is for the sometimes some courses for example in Business Management, they should look by faculty. Some courses in faculty,

Economics and Management. That is what does not work smoothly yet but I hope in the Winter semester it would work better.

I: Now we are coming to the closing aspects, final section of the interview.
A**re you sending, talking about reciprocity, are you sending and receiving equal number of students, or is it leaning in one direction?**

A: No, I think yet more balance. I don't know exactly numbers, only Konstantinas could have more exact numbers. In total, Vytautas Magnus University, in our university, Academy, lets say, numbers are depending in some times, we are more outgoing students, sometimes more incoming students. Before we joined Vytautas Magnus University it was much more incoming students compared to outgoing. It changed, it started with Erasmus, more outgoing it was, but in last years, the situation changed, more incoming than outgoing. Now as I see, this year, it is still more incoming than outgoing students, but it is better, for example, in total Vytautas Magnus University, this year we accepted more incoming students than it was before pandemic, that is very strange, we are also wondering how we exceeded the numbers before pandemic of incoming students. Maybe it was some rumour in Europe that we accepted more students contactless. We accepted more than 300 exchange students, before pandemic it was 250, that was not expected for us.

I: You are a university of 8000 students in total?

A: Yes

I: And you accept 250 to 300 exchange students?

A: Before pandemic it was 250, this autumn it is more than 300 students.

I: So, 300 exchange students in 1 semester?

A: Not counting international degree students, yeah.

I: Where do you house them, do you have housing for them?

A: No, its normal for Vytautas Magnus University, from the beginning of international exchanges, its one of our main aims of our university is based on liberal ideas and exchange about liberal studies it means all these possibilities of different English courses, therefore students are trying to come here, because in English language they can do everything here, without learning Lithuanian language. Also bigger part of Lithuanian population can now understand each other in English of course older generation as mine still speaking good Russian but this is I think one of the late generation, younger generations they are not speaking anymore in Russian and they are speaking in English.

I: Same in Germany

A: <speaking something in German>

I: <speaking something in German>

A: <speaking something in German, about "Erasmus days">

I: <something in German, something about feedback positive or negative with international students>

A: <speaking something in German>

I: <speaking something in German>

-End of interview-

Interview VMU Erasmus Institutional Coordinator 30.09.2021

I = Interviewer

A = Erasmus Institutional Coordinator

P = Protocol

I: Okay. So, you know, there information that we use from this recording is for the intellectual output and, and we do not use any personal details we receive from this recording. Okay.

We start with a general section; do you know about the NORM Project and how do you know about the project?

A: Yes, I do know. you know, the main idea and probably more about the project. I was a little bit involved in the project dealing with our team and also getting ready for this interview by looking at the different programs and contacting people who may want to give an interview.

I: And, you are a consortium member right. And, at your situation, what is your role?

A: I am the head of Erasmus mobility unit. I, myself directly deal with staff training visits and incoming teaching visits from foreign companies. I am also responsible one of the consorts In Lithuania, the Erasmus consorts, which is traineeships, staff training initiatives and visits from companies, the coordinator of the consorts is the Lithuanian Federation of Industries and there are five other members, five other universities.

I: And in your university, in terms of percentage, how many students tend to go abroad?

A: It depends on the year. I think it's…

I: Non-pandemic.

A: Yeah. Yeah. Up to 10 percent maybe and not per year, but the number from the students who finished the university. Yeah.

I: Yeah, per class basically, right. So if you have a better program for your programs per class, that does it.

Which department in your university, is the most mobile department, where do you have most mobility, relatively speaking?

A: Yeah, we have a lot of faculties, humanities, political sciences, economics, and management. And probably natural sciences. So those those faculties are the ones that send the biggest amount of students abroad. So the faculty of humanities, faculty of political sciences and diplomacy and faculty of economics and management faculty of natural sciences.

I: Okay, and on the sciences side, how are they performing?

A: As I mentioned, we in 2019 got married with Alexandras Stulginis University, which is kind of agricultural university, so they have more technical specialties. In our case, before the marriage, we had on the faculty of informatics, faculty of natural sciences the faculty of natural science, the students from faculty, they arrive on mobile, before traineeship, but also for study mobility, the faculty of informatics is smaller, a lot smaller than the faculty of natural sciences. So the number of outgoing students is also a lot smaller, they are not that active. I think that will also be, you will have an interview with the vice dean of the faculty, she will tell you more, students working there, as IT students started working, early in their study life, it might be one of the reasons, why the students are not keen on, going abroad.

I: And from your experience as an Erasmus coordinator, institutional coordinator, what are the main barriers for students to go abroad? Not structural assumptions, but your experience as you advise students?

A: Some very obvious reasons are scholarship sometimes difficult is finding place to live abroad, language of instruction. And probably the, the variety of partner universities because those universities who are considered to be very good and have big quantity of subjects taught in English they are popular and many students want to go there and the universities are not that keen to host or those who don't want to go there. But yeah, it's probably this. What other reasons might be..

36

I: Well, what you think off the top of your head, it's quite interesting. Actually, what you answered that because what we heard from the coordinators was that the field will take long to finish the group and a credit transfer issues that cannot be optimally done. So apparently you have the control which other universities do not have

A: Actually. Yeah. I don't think that this is the case in our university. I still remember our previous rector of the university saying that if we agree to to let the student go abroad to study, so we must make sure that all the subjects are recognize when he's back and they cannot be in discussions about all this. So most of the cases, so we're not going to have any problems with the recognition. Yeah. And of course from that, that we do not have a problem of studies due to a model. You might get a little bit probably a different idea from a colleague who will be speaking from the academy of agriculture, as I mentioned, the the joined us a few years ago, let's say, so we are still working day-to-day on on, on obviously making the procedures completely the same in all university, same requirements and same obviously rights and like that. So, and in their cases in their university there were some difficulties will the recognition of some technical subjects about changing too.

I: The next section is section concerns. It's about the theoretical program structures. So from the international office section of the university, and the administration.
How is the international perspective or your perspective considered during the planning pace of the process of a new program or during reaccreditation of a program?

A: Do you mean Erasmus programs or study programs?

I: Any program, if you design a new BA or MA program, for example, let's say you want, the faculty want a new program, a specialist program in international law.
Would you be invited to participate in the commission that sets up the degree?
Do you have a chance to submit suggestions to for mobility window, for example, the background, to the question.

A: Actually, I myself have participated in quite a few evaluations, but those programs that are already running and they need the real evaluation to keep going. So I participated in, in such evaluations for quite a few times with a local and international commissions, experts. So the internationality of the programs is very important criterion there. I also participated in, just recently, yeah, in the last year, and also when they asked to get the evaluation of very new program and they were interested also where the students may, may go, what partners, the faculty or the department has, et cetera, but how they, how they put all the curriculum. I don't, I don't know. I do not think we as international office can influence to do that.

I: Okay. So in terms of having an impression on how many of the programs offered in the university have a mobility window, in terms of percentage?

A: I don't really know the percentage, but in general, most of the programs allow and encourage students to participate in the mobility. And at the moment, as we mentioned in the questionnaire some of the regulation national law and the law programs, there are some subjects that are legitimacy to take here. And they cannot be studied abroad and recognized here. So there are some restrictions and the law programs structure how to say a little bit more compared to other study programs. Cause they have like three primesters, they study sometime in June and even July. So sometimes it's difficult to organize the mobility due to that reason.

I: So the background to the next question is it's the courses that students, so students may take them abroad and that are mentioned on their transcripts, but not counted towards their credit. So something like Key Qualification Modules. So these are, credits, like American style application training courses.
Do we have that kind of modules?

A: Yes, we are a liberal arts university. So all the students, the first two years of their education, they studied different subjects apart from other their major. So they have to take something from social sciences, something from humanities, from natural sciences. So, and they have those optional subjects in there as well, where we can choose what to, what they want to study. So some subjects can be taken abroad that is, that are not directly connected with their major and recognize here as an optional

subjects, all students entering the university they, have to reach a C1 English language level and if they already, where the C1 English language level, then you choose other languages. So they have options to take, and yeah, they can take.

I: So, just to understand, one of your admission requirements for every student is C1 English?

A: No, it is not admission requirement, but when they enter university, they have to reach C1 level during the first two years of their education, if they have previously studied English they can, they have already C1, if they do not have any history of studying in English anyway and they studied in French or German in school. So then they have to reach B2 English level.

I: The next section, is the study program structure.
So how do you, for future students, find information for the courses, which they can get credits transferred?

A: Yeah, generally what we do, we have two rounds of competitions for, for Erasmus and mobility scholarships here, one in usually in September and the other one usually in February. So when we announce the competition, publish the list of our partner universities. And the partner universities the list is split up according to their department, what they study. So, if they study journalism for example, they have a list of universities that this department has agreements with. but so in a way we already made sure that they know the universities that has subjects in their field. And then in each faculty we have vice dean or international coordinator who advises them on what university they may choose which one has the most similar, say subjects. And then the other work that is done by the students. So, before applying, they need to check webpages of the universities and in the application process, we ask them to list five universities in priority in a list and they also have to mention what kind of subjects they are applying to study there. So, when the committee checks the applications based on the efforts of the student or the looking into partner universities. If he knows what he's going to spend, et cetera.

I: In your perspective, so as the students prepare the application, that also includes a code, a kind of short, a table or something like that.
But what are the main barriers which, which make it hard for students to find the necessary information to make a decision on their upcoming learning agreements?

A: Yeah the time of publishing of the subject list, of course.

I: Okay, so the question we asked your colleagues, was, when the university publishes its own course catalog?

A: Yeah. We, every year we struggle with that. Actually. It's rather difficult to do that due to the reason that Lithuanian courses, Lithuanian general time table is published very late. And for exchange students we need to have early. And for faculties, it's always very difficult. In the last several years, we try to publish a very detailed list for all the students will the name of the class, of course, credits teacher, then the auditorium the time of the class. And then for faculties. It's become very difficult, when, after three or four months, they need to make Lithuanian time table- and then they already have English and they have somehow to match those subjects within the free spaces. And so it's really difficult for faculties. So now we decided to publish the list without the exact time of the class and exact place of the class. It's not that probably convenient for students, but it's a lot easier for the faculty. So we try to somehow try to navigate between those two groups. So, back to the question, for in spring, at around the middle of the March, we announced the time table for the Autumn semester. And then a preliminary list of the subjects for the spring semester. So in spring we have kind of a whole list of subjects for a whole upcoming year. And then in autumn, we revise the list of the, what we publish for the spring semester and sometime around the middle of October, or we probably the final list for the spring.

I: That is very impressive.

A: Yeah, but everytime it takes a lot of effort to do that.

I: I understand, because, it is quite impressive and it does take in a lot of effort. Because from my understanding, we as a university, are a barrier to mobility, with publishing the course catalog in advance, We have to be completed by that students can only past course catalogs into consideration.
Anyways,..

A: We have tried to look at it from our perspective. That's where we are announcing the competition in February, mid-March lets say. So we would also like to have our list ready in February, because other universities also have their competitions sometime February, March, similar time. So we, we putting even earlier, but as we offer around the 700 in different subjects per semester, so, you know, lots of people involved, lots of faculty. So its rather difficult to do. So now when we decided not to publishing rooms and times of classes, I think that a year or something, we will somehow manage it to, to, to publish the list even a little bit earlier.

I: And then diving a bit deeper into the perspective at your institution, how to students enroll into a particular class.
Do they use the system the other students, the local students use, or is there a system, a parallel system for them?

A: Actually what we do in our application system that all incoming students completed application forms. This system is connected with our internal study department system. And one of the students before coming they are selecting subjects, after the application process, we'll really see what subjects they're planning to study in our university. And then, when they come to the university, they are enrolled in the same processes as our degree students. And at the same time they are choosing the courses that they listed in their learning agreement.

I: Okay. So the background to the question was, if you have a student, All sides agree on one agreement. And then the students arrive at a later date or after the enrollment to the actual date, or after the classes have started for local students, how can you can guarantee that the students can participate in the class that was agreed on.

41

A: Yes, we try to make sure that all the subjects that students chose we'll be running during the semester. But of course, it's very difficult to do because as we announced in the list of the subject, half a year ahead of when it is supposed to start. So some group or subjects are only chosen by one student, some study programs do not start, there are no other students to study them, so those subjects get cancelled. We try to inform the students before the time they come that something changed, one subject was cancelled, and he or she may try to look for another, so yeah, we try to manage the process, but of course, no, basically, not yet guarantee 100%, all the subjects will be there. Now we have some discussions with the vice rector and are trying to come to the idea that only those subjects that on our full degree programs and they are offered for Lithuanians and foreigners degree students, only those subjects should be announced and offered for incoming exchange students. And if we finally become to this decision, it would be useful and it would tremendously increase the number of subjects for the students who come to the university. And for the next day, when the students are subject to shouldn't be an arms author for for incoming exchange students. But again, with this decision, some subjects, interesting subjects may not be offered to the exchange students. So yeah, always trying to find the middle ground.

I: Yeah. The learning agreement. Yeah, so coming to the course of the interview. So as you know, one of the goals of the NORM Project is to develop a crucial matching tool. And the question about the is, do you feel that digital access to information of courses would help with the preparation? I assume your answer is yes, because you already are practicing that.
And so let's skipping that sort of asking the question as you prepare your course catalog do you use ISCED codes to describe the subjects or the subject areas you offer making it easier for the students to compare courses and make assumption on possible credit transfer mobility?

A: Again, we already talked with our study department and we are trying to do that. But in our national system, we have ISDEC codes only appointed to the to the subject and as subjects in study programs might be, from different fields, I mean from different study areas. So there is no possibility to put the same ISDEC the, for all subjects within one study area. And that's why we still kind of do not have these ISDEC appointed to to, to every subject. But we have some national classification, which is all similar, but

not the same, so most kind of subject area, which do not want to mash with subject area.

I: And would you support the idea of expanding a course catalog into the EWP sphere where there is interchangeable of subjects?
You already sort of basically whatever your previous answers suggest that yes would be great, but it would be very difficult, extremely difficult to implement because you don't know which classes you offer maintaining this.

A: Yes. We just recently finished one strategic partnership project, which is aimed and the lead of the project was university of Lodz in Poland. And the main, main idea of the project was also to prepare a tool, to compare subjects online. So yes, it's very difficult to on one hand not all universities have a database of their subjects for the curriculum. So to upload the, all the subjects and the system takes ages and then something changed. So somebody has to look after that and update the information, which is already there. So it is a lot of effort. And if we have all the universities that just perfect and splendid, but there is no ideal thing. There is no possibility that anytime in the future such system will appear and it will be Possible to have, but it will be, if everybody will be ready to, to have their subjects somehow digitally digitalized and ready to upload in the systems will be just perfect for the students, just a dream.

I: Yeah. And I think skipping co-op questions and coming to the close the question, do you evaluate these students and mobilities? And if yes how we use the information that you receive, in example, for the design of the programs?

A: Actually as a university, we have Erasmus reports where there is evaluation in a certain sense by incoming and outgoing students. And we also have our own questionnaire for incoming students with questions from quality of teaching methods used, dormitories, from international office. So after each semester we have to, we try to look through the answers looking our weakest, we have discussions how we can improve for many years we have some problems with our dormitories, the systems and the quality of some rooms. So we, we discussed with administration and everytime we try to improve the weak parts. But in general, as a, you probably know this too. Most of the students there are happy with the general idea of the mobility. So the tend to

43

overrate some things, put them as a very good experience, even though we have some times some doubts.

I: Yes, I agree. So people, all students that participate in the mode of mobility they're after those speaking where they're happy, then our experience is those that don't participate, that we are wondering about and Questioning them why they are not participating. I don't know, what is the best way to go abroad. Nowadays, necessity. And I think it's access to the internet and you communicate with people abroad and then you do not need to go abroad I think you do need, but I don't know, the perception is that maybe it is not needed anymore.

A: Yeah, we also, I mean with friends sometimes, but they call us, we talk about the same thing. I was an exchange student in 2008 and still at that time, it was kind of a little bit difficult maybe to get the scholarship. Not many students were going, not because they didn't want, but because they couldn't get into the group program. So to say, I'll eat maybe a little bit and Everybody was starting school, that there is such possibility, but if you go and very interesting and then year by year, and then the number of the scholarships that we can offer and just grew up. So everybody who almost want to go, they, they have the possibility to. And then, yeah, I don't know what are the reasons. The thing is yes, the internet, the cheap flights students just go abroad by themselves this added value of the program kind of disappeared during the last years. Students, Probably most of the universities, we have real lots of different possibilities to get a scholarship, to go abroad for studies and for traineeships. Now in university, we have for the last 12 years, a university established scholarship to go for study exchange beyond European union. And so they're making use of this too, but mostly the students, for example, what studying Asian languages, East Asian culture. So Well, all students from that program, they are going to Japan, China, South Korea in general, the, even now the last year, the number of outgoing students in our university is decreasing. The number of incoming students is increasing. And the percentage, the percentage is that we have probably twice more incoming students than outgoing. I mean, yeah.

I: Okay. I think we can turn off the recording.

Interview UVSQ Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Law
22.09.2021
I = Interviewer

O = Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Law

I: Okay. Perfect.

So just out of curiosity, structurally speaking every department at your university has a person who has a mandate, to take care of international affairs, or is it a paid position? What is the structure like?

O: Well, I actually, every department has an academic that is in charge of international affairs, but we got the international office staff, it is centralized within the university. So we have a central office in charge of international affairs. With a director, a vice-president X who you already met and then we have in each faculty, academics which is in charge of international affairs.

I: So you just said, it's your first encounter with the NORM-project? What do you know about the NORM-project or should we introduce the project to you?

O: It would be great if you could introduce it to me because I just heard about it when Jan asked me to meet you and to answer to your questions.

I: Okay Y your turn.

Y: So the NORM-project is a project with consortium partners and two organizations , the EUF and the ESN. And, the University of Versailles is in it. The main focus is to tackle, all the structural barriers which are there for like Erasmus exchange or mobility in general. And what should come out at the end. Is a curricula matching tool, as well as a curricula design guide. So for universities, to implement for example, mobility windows easier in a structural way. So that is roughly everything about, the NORM-project. To get like the general issues of the mobility, and now it's more like in detailed into this which we want to do with you as well. So yeah, that's it.

I: We already know that you're the exception to the rule at your department, Jan told us that you have a great student mobility.

O: Yeah. We have quite a lot of students, studying abroad each year.

I: So that's quite exceptional. Law Faculty in general tend to be not. No, not have many mobile students, at least from our perspective in Marburg here. It's not the best department in terms of mobility.
Um, so could you, could you do us a favor and describe your role, uh, at the university, in terms of the Erasmus context, what are your responsibilities?

O: Okay. So as I have just told you I am a vice-dean for international affairs. So as we get to the Erasmus context, my role actually on the one hand I am supposed to follow up, to develop or create partnerships with other law faculties in Europe and I am also in charge of the coordination of students mobility. So it'd be supposed to select students first for mobility second to help them to chose their courses abroad. And third, I'm also supposed to convert their marks they obtain while studying abroad to recognize their marks and their courses they have followed abroad. So basically this is my role trying to develop publish partnerships and to follow up on ongoing partnerships and on the other hand to help students with their mobility.

I: And as a hobby you also teach. That sounds like a lot of work.

O: As I explained you quite a lot of work, actually, I think it's too much work and it would be better if I could focus ah for instance development of partnerships because it takes quite a long time to accompany students , in their uh, mobility process from the beginning till the end .Yeah, because we have an average of 50 students, studying abroad each year. So it takes quite a lot of time to to to accompany them.

I: So the next question doesn't really apply, we would ask you, which is the most mobile department in terms of student mobility at the university. But we already know that. We will get numbers later on from X for that question. We already know that you are in the top tier group. The next set of questions concerns mobility barriers. And we'd like to do a qualitative and quantitative assessment. And we start the quantitative assessment.

In your opinion, what are the main barriers for students to go abroad?

We read in X report that finance aspects quite often come up. With X we talked about how, from a German perspective it's not easy for us to understand that finance really does matter a whole lot, but then again, we are from a rural area. Our cost of living is relatively low. X told us that students accommodation can be 450 euros a month, and that is a number that's quite considerable for a student budget.

So in your opinion, what are the main barriers for student go abroad?

O: Actually, from my position which is an academic position there are at least scholarships that helps them doing their mobility. I'm not sure that the cost issue is a main issue with regards of the student's mobility from my standpoint, which is an academic one. I think it relates to the fact that law is a very country specific. Students are often concerned because they will, not have the possibility while studying abroad to take exactly the same courses as they would have taken them I'd say remained as a university of Versailles. These field of law is very country specific, so it's quite difficult for them to take the same courses while studying abroad . So long lasting barrier to students mobility, but we also now manage to deal with it. But nowadays I think we are about to face an issue because there are some changes in the selection process at the master level in France now students are selected when they enter the first year of their master degree, and usually mobility takes place during the third year of the bachelor degrees in France, so students are a bit concerned with an the impact of their mobility on the master selection process. They are afraid that the selection process is based on their marks they obtain, especially during the third year of their license, they are also concerned with the fact that they will not follow all the courses that can be required to enter a master program, a specific master program. So from my standpoint, the main barrier , relates to that. I don't think that there exists many solutions to this barrier it could be for us to meet students to study some of the courses French courses. To make them more comfortable, with the fact of missing courses. But from our standpoint, it is a main barrier as regard the costs it depends actually it depends it varies dramatically from one country to another. We have quite a lot of students today who go to Eastern Europe. Whereas there the costs are rather low as to compared with the costs in France so I am not sure if that is a great barrier to mobility.

48

I: So what you mentioned last about students typically going abroad in their third year at the same time, beginning the application process for the master's program, right. **Is that a rather structural problem or an academic problem from your point of view?**

O: Im not sure yet because it's the new formula because we used to do the selection process after the first year of master, it was did, but it wasn't fresh to do it after the first year of master and they have just been for one year, that we have started selecting students between the bachelor and the master. I don't know yet what will be the consequences, but I feel that students are a bit concerned by this issue. I it's an academic issue, its a bad academic issue I've seen but actually the consequences could be to fall on the one hand for students are more concerned with mobility during their third year usually they do their mobility during their third year but on the other hand it gives room to the possibility to develop mobilities during the master degree, because now we don't have that much students going abroad during the master degree, but nowadays since they are all selected when entering the first year of the master degree. So they have the possibility to do one semester abroad during their two years of master degrees. So I think it's something we should develop.

I: There might be a change from BA mobility to MA mobility?

O: Yes that might be.

I: That might be the consequence. Okay the next set of questions, concerns the study and program structure. And we were wondering, how is the international perspective for example, mobility opportunities considered during the accreditation or the design process of a new program, a course of study. If, for example, you want to do, let's say a bachelor of international law, let's assume you don't have that. And you were going to meet to design the program who would speak for the international perspective whose job would it be to raise attention to student mobility opportunities for example.

O: I actually am supposed to do it, but I'm not sure we really take it to account that mobility while design or a bachelor's program. Actually, we have two special paths or special curricula at the bachelor level. We have a bachelor, with an international path

law bachelor, and we also propose a double bachelor with Lieu. They are English speaking we got these two bachelor programs. Most of the students that take that special programs studying abroad during their third year. It explains why we have so much students today, who go abroad, the existence of these two special programs. But that being said, we have not organized a semester during, which it is easier to go abroad. As a matter of facts that status to go abroad during their fifth semester. So their third year, and it is a semester where we propose at the university of Versailles public international law class. Predict international course European law. Courses to study abroad take abroad. So it is a opportunity for them to study abroad, but it is not really considered that we design the stuff. It could be better.

I: So what I understand by chance the fifth semester is your mobility window, which works fine, but it wasn't designed not by intention.

O: Yeah yes.

I: It doesn't really matter, I guess how you get your mobility window in as long as you do have one. And if you have one in the fifth semester, that's great. It's the same thing here. If you're only just starting, let's say in Germany, we start in October and the application deadline for the following for your third semester would be at the end of November. So you basically have a six week window after you start to prepare your application to go abroad. That's of course, nobody can do that. So that leaves the fifth semester, like you're just mentioning for us as a mobility window and you don't really have that many other options. If you want to stay within your six semesters.

O: And also on the other hand we have special exams. That the exams for those students who study abroad during their six semester, they have the possibility to take their exam before going abroad, because usually the exams take place in January. So students are already abroad they have to stop their courses at their host universities to go abroad. So we organized for them exams earlier than for the other students. We organize exam sessions in December and those are proposed so that we can count that as ongoing mobility is that we try to integrate to our curricula. We try to integrate English speaking courses in our curricula but it is not that easy to do, but this is

something we try to take into account when designing our programs to increase our outgoing mobility.

I: So just to get this right, because I find it quite incredible. You have a class and you have one set of students continuing at your university and the other group won't after that course. Basically you offer two examination dates for those students. That's pretty remarkable.

O: Exactly it's quite demanding because we ask colleagues to prepare two to three topics for the exam it's quite demanding. But we do it because otherwise it would be impossible, almost impossible for students to study abroad during the spring semester. Because our exams usually take place in January, you know, so often students have to be already not really in Germany but actually other countries, uh, courses start in January. So students have to be there in January. So we organize for them exams that special exam sessions in December.

I: Okay. And if your students go abroad, can they take classes that haven't been previously mentioned on their learning agreement. And would you still be willing to recognize them?

O: I ask the students to make the changes before the courses start to make changes in their learning agreements during their mobility. Usually they have to do it because, courses might change from one year to another or it could be that some courses don't fit in their schedules so they have to do it. I permit them to do it but I ask them to mention it to me before doing it. Actually, you know, rather I'm happy when they come at the end of their stay and they didn't tell me they did some changes.

I: Of course. And you previously mentioned a theoretical context talking about your, degree program and implementations of this selection process.
If a student is abroad can they take like virtual classes at your university?

O: Not yet. I think it would be good to develop, that from now its not the case. Actually we were quite late as with regards to virtual classes until last year, but nowadays we are able to compose virtual classes so I think I would try to use these new skills so that

to permit students to take classes virtual classes at our university, it's gotta be important, as we regard, you know, various country specific areas of law. It would be good

I: Okay going onto the next set of questions study and program structure, and what we're interested in is:
 how do your outgoing students find information about courses at their future universities abroad for which they can transfer ECTs credits?

O: Usually they find this information on the website of partners. They can be helped by the student office, the student mobility office at the university of Versailles. It is usually aware of where to find the information regarding the courses the course catalog in the host university.

I: Do you have a sort of informal catalog where you basically list all the courses and the matches that you made in the past?

O: Not really. Not really we don't have that. But it could be a good thing to have it I actually keep a recall of the learning agreements I previously signed so it permits me to know to what are the courses. You're not always aware of the course catalog, so you don't know if the choices that were made by students are often, the most relevant the most accurate, I would say. So I sometimes put barriers previous students I ask students if they could actually have chosen another course, but I also compare with previous learning agreements to know which courses are proposed.

I: And um, from your point of view, what are the main barriers, which make it hard for students to find the necessary information that they need to make an informed decision as they prepare their learning agreements?

O: Actually the bounds I think the information should come from both sides. From my side, I tried to organize a meeting with the students to explain that or requirements of the [??] learning agreements, but on the other side it depends on the partners. Some partners are very developed a website with very detailed, all sorts of courses, why other don't have such.

I: That leads us to the next question, the perfect segway, because we are a little bit guilt-ridden ourselves. We are not in charge of this our course catalog isn't published, for example, for the winter term, isn't published until August our official course catalog. So by then, of course our winter term starts in October. But by then the learning agreements should all be complete already of course.
So the question is when do you typically publish your course catalog?
We're changing the perspective for you from outgoing students to incoming students. How do you cater towards incoming students.

O: Actually our course catalog is published by the end of June. And it would say so to your. Yes, by the end of June for the winter semester, it's fine from this standpoint, but there are two issues. I think, so first of all, the set up, it is not really a course catalog. We are listing the courses in each curricula. So it is not possible incoming students to say, well, I would choose these courses from the first year, these one from the second year, as much as this from the third , this is what falls from the master degree. For instance, there is no complete course catalog that is proposed. So this is the first issue. And the second one is that we do. Despite my best before. It's very difficult to obtain from the colleagues details. So we just have the name of the course, but not really a details that of each course for each course.

I: Sounds familiar.

O: Yeah I guess.

I: The next question again the incoming student perspective at your institution, how do exchange students enroll into particular classes? And we are asking this questions because we sometimes find that students have prepared an online learning agreement, and then they actually make their mobility. So they go abroad, and because they are in a parallel system, they enroll later than everybody else. Then the local students courses might already be full they have to fight their way into the class. So it's difficult to guarantee the exchange students spot that they intended as they signed their learning agreement. And sometimes there are parallel systems for registration. Exchange students are late for that**.**

So I guess the background to the question is that, can you guarantee your students that the classes they selected in their, their learning agreement? Can they actually take them?

O: Yeah. So mostly I can guarantee that, that they actually have a possibility to take these courses. Is that could be two difficulties two issues to take the class. The first one is that it's a class, is withdrawn, or if we do not implement the class or any reasons that happen the other one could be that students when studying abroad have not completely understood as a prerequisite for the course, because we have, exam courses that do not appear as such. Rather, where the course catalog we do not have detailed syllabus so sometimes its quite difficult for students to take these courses. So I try to explain them to choose less advanced courses. So that can be an issue. Otherwise we do not have the capacity in our courses, actually we do not separate them from the remaining ongoing students. There are no difficulties regarding the capacity of the courses, so it's quite easy but I think we have an issue because as students can ongoing students can enroll in any course at the union at the university in any department. So sometimes they choose courses from the law department from he language department from the political science, so any department. Sometimes they have talked for instance with the coordinator of the language department, not with me. It can be an issue regarding once again there is a prerequisite to take a specific course.

I: The next set of questions is concerning the potential, the matching tool that is envisioned in regards to the NORM- project. One aspect of norm is a curricula matching tool.

Do you think that more digitized and timely the access to information about courses would help students preparation of a mobility?

O: Yes. Yes. Depending to obtain it's quite demanding to obtain.

I: Of course of course. But we are also talking of course of a tool based on experience. Just as you mentioned, you sort of collect your learning agreements and you'd have an experience. Okay that there was an equivalence there. We accepted that previously when you do it again, something like that.

54

O: It would be really great.

I: Okay. And as you prepare your course catalog are ISCED codes used to describe your courses. Background of the question, of course, you have a student from a certain area and they're interested in.

What does the university have to offer for me, maybe from different departments? How do I find what's suitable for me? And based off that harness the European standards. Do you use ISCED Codes?

O: I need to be very honest with that I have never heard about that this ISCED codes. So we thought, I don't think we are. We have it or we use it.

I: Okay. For learning agreements for example, we have to enter the ISCED codes. So this is a class this is an agreement in the area of 02351, or something like that. And then the code of course, can continue providing more details. [???].
So I inter-institutional agreements are not part of your job?

O: The key to the institutional agreements, I suppose, to try to develop the probability [???].

I: Okay. **Would you support the idea to expand the, let's say we are in the midst of implementing Erasmus without papers?**
 I assume you were experiencing that yourself. Would you support the idea to expand Erasmus without papers to course catalogs, basically providing an import export function for students into the learning agreements.

O: Yes I would but facing issues regarding Erasmus without paper and not really if that would be possible for that. But I, I think, you know, to sign the learning agreements we are supposed to turn to Erasmus without papers actually my mobility office deals, with these its quite difficult. Yeah, definitely. It would be great but it seems to be difficult.

I: It appears to be, even if you're with the major providers in the field and you're not using the dashboard. You have a tailor made software solution for you interesting.

O: Yeah it appears to be more difficult to be without papers than to be with.

55

I: [???] Speaking. It does. It does. It really makes sense. It makes sense. You don't need to. People people here, they still, they still have their paper-based records. And they run to the course instructors, have them signed the record and then they turn it in. We digitize it, we print it out, they go to their university. Okay.

O: I should actually just to add a word, uh, it would be very useful to be without papers because most of the interactions I have with my students if they, go abroad are online because, usually I cannot stay in contact with them for the learning agreements. During the spring semester or the end term semester, I can't reach them. When they go abroad it's no longer possible to do it. It prints off. So we have to do it remotely. So it would be really great to have the possibility to drop it an online tool efficiently online tool.

I: Okay so we are almost done. Last set of questions. We're going to skip the first one, in your opinion, is there a reciprocity oh, I think you already answered that. Every reciprocity and incoming and outgoing mobility, you said you have more outgoing than incoming students.

O: I think it's due to the fact that we don't propose that much English speaking courses. It's quite difficult for us to propose English speaking courses because colleagues are reluctant to teach English for various reasons. They don't have the skills to do it those around meaning that in France we are very attached to the French speaking.

I: And those incoming students that you do have, I assume they're particularly qualified to join you.
Do they have, in your opinion an effect on your, on your home students to go abroad?

O: I don't think that we have enough incoming students to throughout the sector or.

I: **And beside the standard Erasmus exchange one semester exchange, are there alternative forms of mobility that you offer your students gain credits for that?**

Again, we keep on changing the perspective you, as you, as you have your outgoing students.

O: No not at all for outgoing students, we don't offer any. But it should be the key to recognize yes during summer courses.

I: And last question. Do you evaluate the mobility experience of your students and use the information obtained as you prepare or design programs?

O: Not really. It would be great to do it, but. it did fall away I would say. So I tried to discuss with when they come back. So to know whether the host partner the pros and cons of each mobility but I don't do it in a systematic way.

I: Thank you that we have answers. Thank you to all the questions that we wanted to ask. Is there anything you'd like to know from us?

O: I'm very interested in your project. It would be great to read the outcome of your work.

I: Thanks to your colleague X. I think we are going to.

Interview UVSQ Head of Students Mobility Office 22.09.2021
O = Head of Students Mobility Office

I: **Do you agree to the recording of the interview?**

O: yes

I: Will be only used for the NORM project. If we use details out of the interview, we won't be forwarding personal details.General Information (institution and interviewee).
Do you know the NORM project?

O: Yes, a little

I: If no Marburg provides short introduction.
If yes, have you participated in the survey?

O: no

I: What is your role at your institution?

O: Head of student mobility office

I: Could you describe your role in the Erasmus context, what are your responsibilities?

O: Coordination of the incoming and outgoing mobility team in the framework of the Erasmus program and information for students and processing of applications

I: How many students go abroad in your study field?

O: We manage applications for all the university's fields of study, approximately 190 students go abroad on exchange program each year, about 80 through Erasmus program

I: Which is the most mobile department and which not and why:

O: The most mobile field is law, the least mobile students are in science. Language seems to be an obstacle for science students, as it is often no longer taught in their degrees

I: In your opinion: What are the main barriers for the students to go abroad?

O: the financial cost, the language barrier, the limited number of places for each destination

I: So students fear prolongation?

O: no

I: Do you have quantitative examples to support your opinion?

O: For some universities, we receive for example 30 applications for 2 places, the applications of students are often concentrated on the same partners

I: How is the international perspective considered during the accreditation and planning process of degree programs at your institution?

O: I can't answer, I'm not involved in this process

I: Does your institution offer a mobility window?

O: It depends on the fields of studies

I: Are you in general flexible with extra curricula options in order to make mobility within in the studies possible?

O: no

I: Can a student take a course abroad which can't be not recognized? (Is there an option to name them in their certificate?)

O: no

I: How do your outgoing students find information about courses (at the future host institution) for which they can transfer ECTS credits?

O: On the universities websites

I: How do you support your students in finding the best possible courses in terms of a) recognition and b) academic interest?

O: we put them in contact with partners and guide them on the pages of the universities courses offer, some students can get help from their coordinating teacher

I: In your perspective: What are the main barriers which make it hard for students to find the necessary information to make an informed decision as they prepare their Learning Agreements?

O: the content of the courses is not always indicated on the websites of the universities

I: When (date) does your institution typically publish its own course catalog?

O: the updated catalog is published quite late, often not before July for the beginning of the academic year in September

I: At your institution: How do exchange students enroll into particular classes?

O: students complete a course syllabus and the incoming mobility office registers them for these courses on a software

I: Can you guarantee students that they can take the courses that they marked as they prepared their Learning Agreements prior to the mobility?

O: no, because we are only aware of the cancellation of some courses at the beginning of the academic year

I: One aspect of the NORM project is the curricula-matching tool. Do you think more digitalized and timely access to information about courses would help preparation?

O: yes

I: Are ISCED Codes used to mark courses in your course catalog?

O: I don't know

I: Would you support the idea to expand EWP to course catalogs (e.g., import and export of courses into a Learning Agreement)?

O: no

I: How many international students and staff are there at your institution?

O: Around 80 exchange students each year

I: In your opinion, do is there a reciprocity in incoming and outgoing mobility?

O: No, we receive far fewer students than we send

I: Are there alternative forms of mobility for students (that you recognize in terms of ECTS credits)? (E.g. summer schools and traineeships?)

O: in some fields, an internship can earn ECTS credits and it can be done abroad

I: Do you evaluate the mobility and how do you use the information (i.e., is it used as study programs are (re)accredited?

O: in some fields, I think

Interview UVSQ Vice-President for International Relations 22.09.2021

I = Interviewer

O = Vice-President of International Relations UVSQ

I: The structural aspects of mobility. Okay so you're recording. Okay. Quite the official question.

Do you agree to the recording of the interview?

O: Yes, I do. I sent the form earlier on.

I: Perfect. So, and I assume, you know, the NORM project because you've done most of the work so far.

And just for the record, you already introduced yourself, but briefly, could you let us know, what is your role at your home institution?

O: I am a full professor in British literature at the Institute of cultural and international studies. And I'm also a vice-president in charge of international relations at my university. So, I'm in charge of developing strategies for internationalization of studies, mobility programs and so on.

I: And could you describe your role in the Erasmus context, so concerned Erasmus, what are your main responsibilities?

O: Okay. I don't have any operational function. I don't do any administration in this part. But I've launched quite a few Erasmus + projects, that projects at universities. Largely through associate membership of the US we've been in touch with a number of parties. So, like now we are participating six strategic partnerships and one capacity building project and we have five projects under evaluation right now. So, for our structure that is quite a successful Program.

I: And so you said your professor I guess you probably focus a little on that.

How many students in your field in your study field go abroad?

Roughly speaking, it's probably more difficult to answer the question for the whole university.

O: Yeah, I am sorry I didn't do my homework. I don't have figures here, statistical evidence but what I observe is in English Studies the number of students is in steady declining, which seems contradictory. You would have thought that foreign language student is predestined to go on mobility program. But we have a few and a fewer students interested in going abroad also, that's a bit of a problem. But we have let's say tens of thousands of students, of course going abroad every year on Erasmus or we have also several people who take up teaching assistant positions in the United States and people who find out programs that suit them.

I: That is of course a nice way to move abroad with a teaching internship and full tuition permission if that is possible. The next question is also rather broad. At the university of Marburg, we find that students in the MINT main subjects, that is where the engineering technology, mathematical science the core sciences they are not as mobile as for example students in the modern languages department at your university. **Which is the most mobile department and which is the, let's say least mobile department in terms of student mobility?**

O: My guess would be that quite surprisingly our law faculty is the most mobile of all, but that is probably due to the activism of some of the professors who have developed international relations as specialization in the bachelor and the law bachelor. So, these people are actively encouraged to go they don't need a lot of encouragement to go abroad they like going broad. They advertise themselves the different positions that we have. And I talk to the Erasmus about particular places. So I have to, um, probably engineering's pretty active too.

I: That is surprising.

O: Yeah. And then in the sciences, it's more complicated. That's maybe partly due also to the offer that a rather strict way of considering what is equivalent for our universities, by some of our colleagues in the sciences. But the least mobile it's probably medicine, but they're not lacking at the intention of going abroad. It's just difficult to find the correct

64

the right time to go. So, we've been working on this for some time already. The problem with the colleagues in medicine is that it's just to be so busy. It's very difficult to get them to working on this, you know.

I: Okay that's the perfect transition to the next question concerning mobility barriers, but it's a, we are asking for a rather qualitative assessment. So, in your opinion, what are the main barriers for students to go abroad? We heard quite often in Marburg it's fear of prolongations students fear that they can't study within their for example, six semester frame. And then they are in the sevenths semester and then of course the financial issue does kick in.

So we know that you did your extensive desk research, but from a personal point of view and not a literature point of view, what do you think? I mean, various,

O: Uh, I am not sure if finance is the biggest barrier at UVSQ because we have a system of combining scholarships. If your status allows you to combine also a equivalent "Bafög" in France, it's the government scholarship, which as I explained earlier, obviously, is fairly difficult to have the income the family has to be very modest to pretend to that, but we also have scholarships from the regional authorities at the [???] de France region. And then of course the Erasmus funding and we can combine the three in certain cases. We tend to find solutions for people who want to go abroad. And we also have some to answer, but rather than an exceptional way support from the UVSQ foundation. So we did that for instance, to boost a UVSQ exchange in Argentina. So the students are two people were given a thousand Euro each to facilitate the access, their travel to Argentina. So finance, it is not the principal problem. We also have, it must be admitted quite a few students where the financial consideration, are not an issue at all. So, you know, it's the reality. So I wouldn't say that is not our biggest barrier. It's more generational I feel right now. And then we have, have a strange phenomenon for instance, people who are doing the teacher certificate preparation course in France, we have a national exam to become a school teacher. So they prepared the exams for one year. And those people are very few now, want to go on mobility to Argentina and that's probably due to the fact that your oral skills in English are no longer kind of a major criterion to become a school teacher in English, you know, which is something that you might have been that's the way it is. So, so they feel it's not worth investing in this you know, that their English is good enough. Their kind of existence is to go broad enough quite a few people. It's just that they like staying

at home and not going places. So it's very different from, let's say, 20 years ago where we have fights in the, in the commerce between students, for places abroad, you know, when people were in despair or having selected themselves, also those days are gone. That's how I will say. The other problem might be to speak about NORM the lack of organized mobility, mobility, windows, uh, you know, where inside your curriculum. Uh, there is a particular moment where you supposed to go abroad the way it is particularly easy to go abroad. And we also had issues this year, along the quite extreme case of a student going to Korea and he's finding out that a number of cases in the courses they could easily be accepted was limited and the coordinator in his institute's been extremely difficult about the courses he had selected so it went back and forth for one week. And at the end of the week, most of the course he would take were full, you know, also it was appealing to student's vice dean who deal with the situation. This is very negative, of course, for all future candidates for mobility, you know, students talk between themselves and say, oh, goodness me, that faculty forget it. They going to be really difficult. So that is a concern. But the other concern that you mentioned that you might have to stay longer at the university is not relevant in France because the duration of studies is fixed. You can't add another semester just like okay you do your bachelor in three years. If you don't get it in three years. You have to reset one more year and if you're not ready at the end of the fourth year, that's it, then you're done, you know, so the same thing for the master. You can do an extra year for your master studies, but that should be the exception, not the rule. So, so doing a semester should not make any difference. Yeah.

I: Okay. So again, you made a perfect transition, but before we get to the next set of questions, So you briefly mentioned recognition, right? Learning Agreements. I remember when my own mobilities. I just went, I took whatever I was offered whatever I could get. I came back to Marburg and II showed to my teachers here this is what I did. What can you offer in terms of recognition and there was no pressure whatsoever, and I didn't have to prepare a Learning Agreement ahead of time.
Do you think that with all good intention, the Learning Agreement that should actually provide security to the students in terms of recognition and might be counterproductive, if you will sometimes?

O: Uh, well, from my experience at our university, this is it's exactly the contrary colleagues and students expect to have a learning agreement as a kind of common reference in also the trouble is that learning agreements are kind of advanced theoretical, because you know, our teachers come and go, people go on into [???] Courses are suddenly shut down because they don't have students. You know? So the offer changes every year. And in theory, you would expect everyone to be as flexible as possible and all that. So, in this particular case, this person was the colleague and unfortunately was zero flexible. It was very stressful for the student because he was in a country faraway, not speaking the language, not knowing anyone in the current situation, having to find classes that I can set up so that it went up to the senior leadership of our university to solve the story. Yeah. It took a lot of interventions to calm down the colleague and have his vice-dean saying, yeah, come on, make an effort. And we've had some of the problems in the sciences with one particular field of study where colleague is a remarkably inflexible insist on holding on to the position of coordinator of Erasmus so also but those exceptional cases that say most of the time they are reasonable, but the general feeling is it's a very good idea to have learning agreements about what the students should be doing.

I: Well, I didn't want to suggest that it's a bad idea, but I know how there are many changes that need to be made to learning agreements until we finally arrive at the final product and that can be stressful.

O: One particular points of disagreement was that if you are at masters level, and it is simply not enough classes to go around English at master's level are you allowed to choose a course at bachelor level? This is where colleagues tend to get very, very formal, you know, but in the Anglo-Saxon system, if I can call that way, you know, English, long-acting universities, you know, the problem of level, it's not same like in our system, I suppose. you know, you can take a class which is offered to the second- and third- or fourth-year student. Whereas now in our system in France people tend to think you have to do step one before you can do step two.

I: Yeah. Yeah. I, I know that from my own experience my teachers would simply give me extra work and then it hit the 400 level class that way. So not been flexible in that regard. Okay.

So, the transition that you're already made more or less is concerning the question, how is the international perspective considered during the accreditation process of degree programs at your university?
Leading into mobility windows of course.

O: I would say there's a lot of good intention and wishful thinking. So you know, in, in general terms, when it comes to describing the international dimension of studies, of course everyone and French universities tend to say, well, this is a priority for us and we are very much involved. But at the end at the structuring level, you know, when you actually do put together your curriculum, this becomes more difficult. You know? So what we do have is at least one foreign language module, which is mandatory in any program, you set up at the bachelor's or master's level. So it's not necessarily English because we had discussion about this recently If they absolutely have to do an English module or they could do Portuguese for instance. And so, from theoretical point of view it's a foreign language module. It doesn't have to be English. Of course, it turns out to be English most of the time is either English language or content related, math taught in English. And so, um, that is one thing. Mobility is encouraged, but it's not at all. You know, settling, talking about international programs, like a joint degree. For instance, we have one with a Russian partner in environmental law. So, this is a two years program and the French course is expected to go to Russia and Russians come to France. That's an exception to the rule.

I: So, but in your role in your official capacity, do you participate for example, accreditation, reaccreditation processes, as courses of studies are planned, or re-created is there a board where there's a member of the international office who advises the boards designing the course of study this is what you should do to encourage mobility?

O: Not really, um, what we do have is all, any program that is set up it has to be approved by the central student committee or committee for teaching and student life. So, in France, we have three central committees, the Senate, the committee for research and then a committee for teaching and student life. So that's where all the programs have to be approved. And then they are approved by the center. That's the moment where you can make remarks, you know? And you can say, sorry, your

program is not going to be an international one. So in theory, you could send back a project and I say, please revise your project but this is not a formalized process. So, it would only happen if you would get a majority of the members of the committee to say it.

I: Okay**.**

So from that answer, I take it that there's also no broader guidelines suggesting that you have to implement mobility windows, or as you design program?

O: No not such.

I: Then can a student take courses abroad which cannot be recognized. In other words can a student take courses outside of the, home requirements?

O: You mean extra classes?

I: Yes. We've had that. We have, we've had that just as an explanation an Italian partner student came here had a perfect learning agreement. But then took a German language class and we had that German language class on the learning agreement and the partner asked us to issue another transcript without the German language class, because it wasn't a part of the learning agreement or,

O: I don't think that I've come across in any case like this, you know, from our point of view, students are welcome to take as many courses as they think they can handle it. The partner institution often do have that. I know in countries where you have a high tuition fees, um, the chances of taking the extra class are fairly low, because, you know, a British or US partner with, would count very carefully the number of courses they provide as teaching because that means money and all that to have an extra activity. So if this could feature on the transcript, Yeah, I don't see why it should be an issue anyway, but maybe the secretary didn't know how to handle it.

I: So, one of your good practices suggestions in the end of the output two is, that international mobility can be encouraged through personal engagement of staff, for example. And personally I feel that. Talking to one another, having those best practice

models is tremendously important, but I also know our staff situation. So of the record, uh, we have for all of our outgoing Erasmus mobility, we have a person with 20 hours per week in the central office. So, uh, personal engagement is something that we are not equipped to afford.

O: Yeah. I was thinking of the faculties as well to tell you.

I: Yep. Um, so I find it that at least for us, it is sometimes difficult for students to get the right kind of information. And when I talk about information here, I mean more than just a booklet or handout. And the question is how are your students find information about courses at the future host institution, for which they can transfer credits? For example, is it like checking course catalogs? Is it talking to staff that are experienced and can tell them, well, one background of the questions is also that we know that our course catalog is published, way late. So for the semester, starting in October is published in August, but at time all learning agreements should be completed. Right. So, I guess that makes us a barrier to mobility, if you will. And we know that.
So the question, how do your students, outgoing students find information about courses? If like in Marburg it's difficult to find the official information from a partner?

O: We have a similar problem. I mean, we have a problem, the communication about existing exchange programs. So, uh, the international office does what they can, you know, within the capacity that is there. So, the problem is they do, for example, every year at the beginning of a presentation to freshmen at the university first years. But, it's during a session where they receive information about social security, about cultural programs and so on. When you arrive at university, your international mobility is not necessarily your first concern and that is normal so the information is a little bit lost right. And then of course the office would say everything is online. The trouble is that people, at least from prior circumstances students tend not to look at institutional websites, it's about the least interesting thing they would like to look at. So, it is to be objective. I think it's not enough to say the information is there online and you can get it because people don't feel inclined to look for it, you know? And so whether they're right or wrong about that is another problem that ,we need to be aware of this. I think with our European university Alliance, for instance, basically is another thing, where

we have the same problem. They are always surprised that people are not responding to the call. The opportunities provided by this program. And I said, everything's online. And, and when you do talk to students, about this, they say, we have no idea. We never heard about it so something doesn't work, right? So that's why I say personal involvement is necessary. I was thinking of faculty. Especially, when a colleague has created an exchange with a particular university, it made a lot of difference. The colleague talked to the students in the class about this place and said, it's a nice town. It's a nice university and yeah, interesting courses. And of course, I could illumine them saying they have a fantastic time. Difficult so far to open up this is, you know, word of mouth is also very, very important as far as communication is concerned. So having said that we have correspondents in the different faculties about exchange programs and they are prepared to receive students and help and provide extra information. But basically students, are expected to go by themselves, on the websites of the universities. They want to go through and check it out what, what there is on offer. And that means of course you have difficulties; our university is in a similar position to yours. Um, colleagues are slow in renewing the description of their course, them and stuff. It's not always very reliable. And yes, we haven't found that ideal solution.

I: Okay**.**

Um, so from your personal perspective, what are the main barriers make it hard for students to find the necessary information we just talked about?
Well, the information is there, but it's somehow not accessible. We talked about the role of the faculty, so what the main barriers? That make it hard for students to find the necessary information, to make an informed decision as they prepare their learning agreements, specifically the learning agreements, because this is from our point of view because we are struggling with the learning agreements, especially as we are beginning to implement, Erasmus without papers, agreements.

O: I haven't searched myself. I never tried a partner university's international pages for incoming students. So I can't tell you how that works, but I have been systematically checking for colleagues of different departments. Even inside the European University Alliance that were, if I go to a Portuguese partner, who's wonderful, you know in many cases, as soon as I click onto a particular faculty, it switches to Portuguese and then it takes quite a lot of perseverance to find out what this is really about, you know. And in

any case, I guess if a student sees that, a course is often taught in the national language, that's the end of it. For the incoming students, we have tried to draw a catalog of courses, which are available in English, but that is quite a big effort, you know, to find out if the course is still existing. If the teacher is prepared to do it in English because some of our colleagues just say okay I am prepared to teach in English, but what do I do if I had my French students who I cannot speak well in English. It's not easy to have no national attachment or courses that are offered in English. And well, first we have special situation anyway, because it is the right to teach in the national language and you can't force anyone to teach in English. And they are very proud of their own language so they don't see any reason why they should be teaching in English, which might be also, uh, kind of comfortable.

I: It's the same here our curriculum is not as international as we'd like it to be.

O: Yes.

I: When I just mentioned our course catalog is typically published in August when is your course catalog for the winter term, typically published?

O: Uh, should be ready before the summer break. So, July let's say, but some of the students form the other countries, they're already in the holidays in July. So ideally it would have to be ready in spring but people are slow in doing this.

I: And the next question also with the regard, how do exchange students at your university enroll into particular classes? Are they part of the official system or do you have a separate system for internationals? Is there a central database where we have all students and then students pick their classes from the database first come first, serve 30 students and then the classes are full, and what do you do with international students who don't have the opportunity to register, for example, in July or August?
Because they won't start until they don't arrive and are not officially enrolled until maybe October or September.

O: We haven't had such problems, you know, that a student would be refused because there are no limited places. We don't have massive groups of students arriving in one particular field of study in the university. So that's mainly why this problem has not occurred so far. I never been told about a case where somebody wants to take a class and there was no place for them.

I: Okay.

So if a student, if you have a signed learning agreement you can more or less guarantee that the student, your incoming students can take the classes or the courses that are on the learning agreement?

O: I could but there are exceptions to it for example if a teacher decides that the student is not at the right level to follow the classes, but it must be a logistical problem somewhere I have students in my class who were not able to speak a word of French or English and that isn't working like that. So, something must have gone wrong somewhere down the line to see where they're coming from.

I: Okay. The next set of questions and we are coming to an end already concerning the curricula matching tool one aspect of the NORM project is the curricula um, matching tool. **Do you think more digitalized and timely access to information about courses would help the preparation of the mobilities?**

O: Uh, you know in general all students are fully digitalized that they are used to use these digitalized tools that that think everyone's perfectly capable of finding information for themselves. Then if you know long term in advance what there is on offer, then you have enough time to negotiate with your own teachers and get it organized, decide whether you like a particular place and so on and so forth.

I: Okay and also another practical question.
Are the ISCED codes used to mark courses in your course catalog?

O: I don't think so

I: Okay and would you support the idea to expand Erasmus without papers to the course catalog?

Um, course catalog. So basically that you can go to a course catalog of any given university and just import or export courses into your learning agreement on the ISCED Codes, which are [???] codes. We don't use them either, but we were wondering and I as we prepared, why we don't use a harmless system that already exists would be so easy. If I knew that my field of study, uh, my module corresponds to, to a certain code and they could just take the code and could see what's on offer for me and make it recognition so much easier I assume.

O: That would be ideal, you know, the trouble is that, even if you have a common code or a common system, a class is not exactly, necessarily organized in the same way. For instance we noticed with colleagues from the Ukraine that, um, like in Germany they have semesters, which are 16 weeks long and in France we have 12 weeks and it's not necessarily saying something about the number of hours per week. So we don't have quick equivalents, between classes in one country and other but at least as far as the content is concerned, you know, if we would have reliable descriptions in English, then it would make life much, much easier. You know, people would be less surprised to suddenly discover this is actually about something else. And it would require a great effort.

I: Okay. The last set of questions concerning other aspects, we entitled it, in your report, you mentioned that there are three countries, Spain, France, and Germany that are strong as incoming countries. That receive a lot of students.
And the question concerns your institution how is there a reciprocity in incoming, outgoing coming mobilities? So is it roughly equal?

O: No, I don't think it is honestly, I think we send more students than we receive. And if you look at partnerships in detail, it's very equal flows between the university. So we have some partners thinking of a Finish partner, an excellent partner for us, and they're very generous in receiving quite a few students from our university and they are not sending anyone at all. But that's not because we are not attractive. I think it's just that the students at this university are often not mobile at all. In Finland this is in northern Finland so for some study areas like law, for instance, they have national system of

distributing places or their law faculty is considered the third best. If you, if you are on the average of third best students you will be sent to this university, even if you live in Helsinki. So they feel like they are already on mobility. It's not like in Germany where students are used to changing places to go off study. Same thing in France, traditionally you will stay where you study or rather you are stuck there where you live? A lot of people actually live at home because they are very few places in all the residents, you know, So mobility inside the country is not an obvious. So we have quite a few of those exchanges where we send people to certain places. Uh, we have, uh, those law field students to Eastern Europe, and I think we received that many students.

I: And second to last question, the, the, your income mobility, your incoming students, do they have an effect positive or negative on your potential outgoing students and their desire to actually go abroad?

O: I am sure they do because if I take anglophone students, for instance, they tend to be very active in class. I have [???] students that are also active because they are encouraged by the system to be active and french students tend to be quite reserved, you know? And so when they see others participating orally it encourages them also to say things, so that's definitely positive. Um, we do, I'm not sure they're still operating right now. We did have student association, which welcome incoming students and they did picnic in a gardens of the chateau de Versailles, and then so people were socializing and getting together and I'm sure all this is all has a positive impact on students.

I: You just mentioned that you organize inter-cultural exchange.
How is housing organized? Are international students typically housed together in dormitories?

O: Yeah, most of the time there and for incidents, so there will be all the international students. So I guess they are more often in contact with international students uh French students they go home, it's not so obvious to see them outside classes.

I: So there is a sort of Erasmus bubble.

O: It's not because we are putting them in special classes, like in the UK you paired them for a long time. They had been organized in a special classes for the Erasmus students. So UK was an excellent place to go. I mean, to meet people from Spain or Italy but not so much British people. And I feel in the international program I teach in Arctic studies, the international center altogether, because they, they face similar problems that you in the country they are used to communicating in English. So it's, it's easier, I suppose, between now and they do live in the same also residence. Yeah.

I: And, last question:

do you evaluate the mobility experience of your students and how do you use that information? For example, as you prepare new programs?

O: We're not doing enough, I suppose. I mean, they have to write the report. So but what we'd like to do is to get more feedback on it. Especially film feedback itself. But, you know, it takes time and we don't have the means that the international office gets in touch with the communication service. But ideally we would have filmed that's ideal or ideally we would have short films, like teasers, you know, where people are talking about their international experience. We do know that they communicate between themselves and in the chat groups that they have. Uh, people come back from the stay and say, this is fantastic. And I know to give you one example, I created an exchange with Vilnius and this way. Which I am proud of, but for French people it is extremely exotic, they don't know what to think of this city. So I kept on talking people into, going to, if you wish, you know, at some point we managed, to extend from English studies to law and then one law student went there and said it is actually a beautiful city, I had a wonderful time. Even during Covid-19 one person was there and the parents said, you stay there and they said, it's probably better there than here. And so now we have no problem recruiting people for this exchange because they just spread it between themselves saying this is a fun place to go to. Same thing for Polish universities, even in cities, which are not necessarily mostly [???]. So the people like to go because they say the atmosphere is very friendly and life is cheaper.

I: It's beautiful places if you ask me Katowize and Krakow. Anyway, thank you so much.

Interview UM Credit Responsible at the Faculty of Geography 29.10.2021
I = Interviewer

O = Credit Responsible at the Faculty of Geography UM

I: Okay, thank you for participating in the interview.
First of all, do you agree to the recording of the interview?

O: Yes, that's fine. Thank you.

I: Okay. So, the recording will only be used in scope of the NORM project. And if we use details of the interview, we won't forward any personal information of you. Okay. We have several groups of questions that we're gonna run through. The first group concerns, general information well we probably don't have to do all of them in detail. Do you know the NORM project? We already talked about that. Right. And we introduced the NORM project. We don't need to keep that on record, I guess. But for the record, very briefly. Could you repeat, and we talked about this already.
What is your role at the university of Marburg your institutional role?

O: Yeah, I'm the student coordinator and study dean at the secretary of geography. I have to deal with students who want to go, into an international, study abroad. After they are chosen and, I am there at the beginning to the end to set up their learning agreements. And after the mobility I responsible for the recognition of the study, which they have done abroad.

I: So more or less you are there throughout the whole Erasmus or the exchange cycle for students?

O: There is another person at, our department, she is responsible for all the agreements and… Yeah, the whole program overall. But the details with the students are in my hand, talking with them about the learning agreement and to look which courses they can take and afterwards, the recognition what they have done and, the recognition for our courses.

I: Okay. So in terms of international mobility:

how many, percent, how many of the students that could potentially go abroad to actually, uh, go out for, for credit mobility at your department right for what you're responsible not the university?

O: We have approximately 20 to 30% who go abroad. In a year, that's on all our study programs. The bachelor of science in geography that's the most part. The most people we have to, "Lehramt", the teachers degree. They have some people going and the Master degrees as well, we have two master programs, but the main part is the bachelor program. And in percent it's about, well, nearly a quarter. So I mean in year going out. It's about, well, at least in the, in the bachelor programs. We have about 60 to 80 people in a, in a year and maybe 20 in the teacher's education are going maybe a little bit less. Well, the last years was a little bit more problematic.

I: Yeah, of course.
So, you mentioned your bachelor students are most mobile, so to speak, in terms of total volume or also percentage?

O: I both, I think, well, our master programs are, smaller than the bachelor program, but yeah, even less, just two to three to maybe sometimes five people going from the master program. Yeah, sorry.

I: Do you have an idea why teaching students or students become a teacher aren't that interested in going, going abroad?

O: Well, maybe the, because the teacher students have the opportunity to go abroad, with the second. I don't know what, what is it? Second subjects. So, we don't get that really. And sometimes it's also, they go with the second subject, but also doing, um, lectures in geography, which we recognize afterwards as well, but they are not in my list. So maybe that that's a little bit more of that than I have here.

I: Yeah, they have, they can go abroad with three different kinds of contracts. Right. For the first, they probably have four different kinds of contracts that they study three subjects plus pedagogy.

O: Yeah, that's true.

I: Okay. So one argument could be that it's just difficult to keep score of them.

O: Yeah. Maybe at least for me.

I: Okay. In your rather personal opinion, what are the main barriers for students to go abroad?

O: Well, for the master's students, it's the time actually that just 4 semesters here for, for their master's degree, they have to decide, to go abroad at the very beginning of the. They started two weeks ago here and they have nearly to decide in the next four weeks, if they want to go abroad in the upcoming winter term in 2022. So that's a really short period for them to decide. For bachelor, I think that's not really a. For the bachelor, yeah, there is no barrier, really not to go. They have enough time and I think the numbers are not too bad. They just decide yes I want to go or no, I don't want to go. I think in the bachelor program, it's, it's not really a barrier from the study program.

I: So do you think that, a master's student would go in his or her third semester, right?

O: Yeah.

I: Thats the typical mobility window.

O: That's a typical mobility window. The master program, the fourth, the last term it's just, preparing the master's thesis and, yes, more or less only the third term they can go unless they decide to study a longer period than four.

I: Okay. So, if I understand you correctly, indirectly, what you're saying also is that, application deadlines, if they will later for master students, that would help probably.

O: Yeah. Maybe, the master program is just short. It's well because we have a little bit of time to plan all the things and they need time to plan all the things. So I think it's a hard way to, to make new deadlines for application. I don't really see it.

I: Okay let's move over to the next section study and program structure of degree programs. And you already mentioned that there are mobility windows in your degree programs. We go ahead and tackle that in a minute.
But first, how is the international perspective considered during the accreditation and planning process of a new degree program at your institution? So, for example, if you go, do you have a degree program, if you wanted to design a degree program, are you as someone who would represent the international perspective or the aspect of international mobility, are you consulted, are you part of, are you a member of the team?

O: Yes with my other duties here in the department, I plan the study program. So yeah, it's my job. And its in my mind to make a mobility window to clearly specify it's the best way to go, abroad in the fourth or fifth, or if you want to study it from this semester more in the sixth, for the bachelor. It's harder in you know, the teacher's degree because we can't define the mobility windows for ourselves because they have to do, other studies and other subjects as well. But I think, our study structure, our program is very open. So about you can switch modules or lectures from semester to semester, that makes it very easy.

I: And a little off topic, but this Marburg specific, there is a thing called "Studienstrukturreform" coming up. And one part of the "Studienstruktur", one element will be a key skill, module, with 18 credits, contributed to it, called Marburg skills.
Do you think that a recognition, for example is going to be easier? Is that gonna be a good thing for a student mobility, having such a module where it might be easier to recognize international credits?

O: It's really not new to us because we have, a profile modules in our current bachelor system as well, for 18 credit points. So that's really nothing new to us. And these credit points we have already, are used from students going abroad to make the recognition to courses we don't really have in our normal program. So that's not new to us. But I

think that's a good way to make the opportunity to have, , the security to get, what I am doing abroad recognized in my home institution.

I: In the other interviews we did, we found that recognition can be one of the main barriers to mobility. Because if you have a program where whoever's doing the recognition is very strict on one-on-one, recognition basis.
That can be difficult for students, especially in some countries you have, deadlines to meet, right? You can't just extend your program by a year, as a student or a semester. You might, you might be kicked out if you, if you don't succeed.

O: Yeah. And we don't have any of these barriers in our study programs with, the thing in mind, that we want to have no barriers to go abroad. You are not forced to make any courses by any time in that kind. And, you know, I have enough time even over the six semesters in the bachelor program or the four semesters in the master's program. And what I always tell the students, if they come up here and we discuss the learning agreement is the mobility will not end or that it is not possible because of the recognition that, that can't be, I'm very open to recognize courses abroad to our study program. That can't be a barrier and because our study program is for that kind of, I'm going abroad and recognize other courses. I think we are a good way, and that's not the barrier in, in the geography department.

I: So a strategically thinking students could keep, for example, in, in your case, some credits for the international mobility?
Because if he already knows that it's going to be easier to transfer them because you don't have to complete them in or within semester two of the program, you could also, if, if you, by some means don't get them recognized or take them aboard, you could still complete them after you return to Marburg.

O: Yeah. But the main problem, sometimes it's individual cases. They have studied so much that there is no room left and they have no room to recognize anything because the course is just done.

I: Okay, that leads us to the next question actually. Because, so the Erasmus grant is not strictly connected to the credits you can actually transfer. Right? Those are two different things.

And the question would be, do you recognize, credits, on your transcripts that you don't recognize towards the degree at your institution?

O: In the past it was, I think a little bit easier just from the system we use, we are in, I think in the moment we are not able to add extra courses or maybe we are now we can do it or, we did it. Yes. And if it's okay for the students. They just want to go abroad and they say okay but I just have six points left and what can I do? So we find a solution and we include courses, to recognize over the study program as well

.

I: Good. The next section. Oh, yes, it's actually. So it's not a structural, but it's a practical section. It's about study and program structure. Concerning the focus here now is more on students.

How do your outgoing students find information about courses at the future host institution for which they can transfer credits? Do you have a reference catalog, for example, you have your partners, you already know which partners you work well together, what kind of credits you can transfer? Do you have an unofficial catalog or something like that?

O: No, I don't have it. The individual students, they have to look at the institution abroad, which courses he or she can take. And that's the way it is, it's working they look, what they want to do, or which sounds interesting and they try to get that course. Into the institution abroad and then we decide, what, this is, what the recognition here in Marburg could look like before that. But I don't have a catalog. Well, over the years, I know, courses from our partner universities. So that makes it easier. But that changes as well over the years. So and whilst we have quite a well some more partners I don't have the time really to look after what could be possible for the students to take and the interests are so different because of the wide field of geography what the students want to take. So, it's really hard to decide or mention some suggestions which courses are good or which courses are not good.

I: So, we're going to skip then the next question.

What are the main areas, which make it hard for your students to find the necessary information, to make an informed decision on courses as they prepare their learning agreements?

O: But I think well, one difficulty is the time of when they know what courses are planned for the term they are going. That's very different from partner university to partner university, some which are very organized and they have a list and they can choose and see all the information they need for the course. Even for the term and the content and the exam or everything. And in some other universities they only have the lists from the years before, and you have to decide because you read the title of the course maybe and nothing else. And then always, you don't know if that if the course really takes place in the term. So that's very different and could be a barrier at least at some institutions.

I: Okay but I have a feeling that you, you sort of compensate that with your recognitions or your flexibility concerning your structural flexibility concerning your recognition, you can make up for a lot of that. So the next two questions kind of change the perspective. They no longer concern with our outgoing students, but with potential incoming students.
The first question in that regard is, when do you typically publish your own course catalog?

O: Yeah, well, we publish our own course catalog in the, well it's standard dates from the university, which is something middle of March for the summer term and middle of August for the winter term something like that, which is too late for international students coming here.

I: We are not judging.

O: Well I am judging.

I: Okay. And the next question. Okay. We've both been in this field for too long to wonder about this question.
In your institution, how do exchange students enroll in particular classes?

O: The incoming students?

I: Your incoming students. So the background is, is there a different separate system for, for, for incoming students to enroll in classes.
Can they involve via the very same system that your local students, use to enroll?

O: Yeah, they're supposed to enroll just like the other students as well. Sometimes there are some technical difficulties that it's really done. I have to mention that we don't have that many incoming students. That could be a little bit more. Normally they get very personal help to enroll in the courses, what to take. And we decided in an individual discussion, which courses will be good. And they may be enroll via the lecturer directly, if it's not possible to do it in the normal way over the system.

I: So you don't necessarily have a balance in your, in your agreements.
You have more outgoing students than incoming?

O: Definitely. Well,

I: There are, but you could count it by country, there are incoming countries. I think there are outgoing countries in Europe. So, there is no balance. That is a theoretical construct, the balance that we have in the countries.

O: We would like to have more incoming students here and that the problems that just depends on our I think more of that, we don't have that many courses in English. That's a main problem.

I: Yeah, we don't need to go down that path. We gonna have interviews with X and Y. And we'll talk about the nature of transcripts for international students at the university of Marburg, as well as our English courses. Okay. Next section. So, we are nearing towards the end is concerning the matching tool, which is a goal or an output of the NORM project. One aspect of NORM is the curricula matching tool. Do you think more digitalized and timely access to information about courses would help preparation?

And this is very interesting. From what I got so far is you are a rather mobile in terms of outgoing mobility department and you have a flexible recognition structure.

O: Yeah.

I: I'm now wondering whether a curricula matching tool, would be necessarily helpful because it could also turn the other way. Could it? That's a question.

O: Yeah maybe a little bit narrow of to decide, which is matching or not. And of the other way with the flexibility, we have in the moment, we just can really look what are the individual needs of the students coming back and want to recognize the courses for what is left in the study program here in Marburg. I'm not sure if it is really a curricula matching tool is helping me for that. Or maybe it makes more of barrier then what we have in the moment.

I: Yeah, or could it create confusion on the side of the student because they, if they, if the students could look at a matching tool and then, well, without, without reading so far as to understand that this is not a guideline, but a proposal for what is possible, the student would then see, oh, I've taken this class. I've taken that.
Oh, what's, what's left for the classes that I still need. There's nothing in the matching tool. That could then be a mobility barrier maybe?

O: Yeah. That could, if it's not, um, complete on that way, that could be maybe a barrier they know okay I have to do that course and that course here in my study program here in Marburg, and I don't find anything for studying abroad. That could be a barrier because in the other way we may be find some course they could do abroad to get the recognition, on that. It really depends on the completeness off such matching tool I think and that will be a lot of work to do to make such a matching tool, I think.

I: Yeah, definitely. I'm still wondering how they going to pull that off.
In your course catalog, when you publish courses, do you use the ISCED codes system? I S C E D codes system. It's a standardized European union system to mark directions of study.

O: No, I don't use it. I never have done it. And I don't really know what's it about.

I: Okay. So, the idea is if the student is looking for a course, starting with 7 1, 2, 3, 4, that's what they still need at the university of Marburg. Right? Then they could just go on the website or the course catalog of the university. They want to go and look for courses. 1, 2, 3, 4. The more numbers we have, the more you go into detail in the subject area. So, but we don't have to worry about it.

O: Don't use it.

I: Okay. Are other aspects we've already talked about the reciprocity of incoming and outgoing mobility. **Okay, so the next relevant question would be, are there alternative forms of mobility for students that you recognize in terms of the ECTS credits? Blended intensive programs, uh, for example, something new, right, that we have with the new Erasmus generation or summer schools. Do you recognize credits?**

O: Yeah we do that. Sometimes it's a little bit difficult, if we don't get any really credit points on the forms where they their participation testified. So we don't have really any idea about the amount, the credit points, the workload, which they have done for this, for summer schools. Summer schools, are especially in the master program they are used. And we, we have modules in our master program too, which are very open. Where, we can recognize such things for our normal study program, we have profile module actually a little bit smaller than in the bachelor program, but we are very open to recognize even non subject related things.

I: Okay, last question for the day. Do you evaluate the mobility experience of your students? And if you do that, how do you use that information, for example if you design new programs or redesign programs?

O: No, we don't evaluate at least structurally mobility programs. We get an idea how many people are going to what institution and we will or, at least I get the feedback if it's good, or if it's not good. And in some stage, we try to use the students coming back for information for the new students, at least on a peer to peer base. And maybe at

86

some stage we got the personal statement from students who came back and said, well, that was good and that was not good. And I give it in the new information at some stage. But we don't evaluate really structurally maybe with the people the real numbers we have it's that's okay. For me, I think

I: Okay well that's it already thank you so much!

Interview UM President of the Marburg International Club (MIC) 03.11.2021

I = Interviewer

O = President of the Marburg International Club (MIC)

I: So this is an official question.

Do you agree to the recording?

O: Yes.

I: So, we only use the recording for the NORM project and in case we use details out of the interview we won't be forwarding any personal details, of course. The warm up part we did it already.

So, I will ask you, you have been abroad, right and when and where have you been abroad?

O: I did an Erasmus exchange semester in the winter semester 2018 to 2019. And I was in Belgium and at the university of Antwerp. I studied my bachelor's in language and communication, the bachelor of arts. I did the according exchange system bachelor of linguistics.

I: Great and could you describe the role of your institution.

So, it's like a Erasmus international students association when I understood it right?

O: Yes, I am a member of the Marburg international club. In short, we call us MIC and we belong to the section local Erasmus initiative that's a club from the German academic exchange service. And every university is allowed to have a local ally, a local Erasmus initiative. And, um, according to our out goers numbers, we get financial support from the DAAD.

I: What is the role of, your club?

O: Our role is to organize events for international students in order to show them German culture to get involved, to get in contact with both other international students and also local students. Therefore, we organize many things mostly with a regional aspect and also of course with we're showing them Marburg and the university as well and yeah, there we have like a role in between the locals, because most of the members are local students of the Marburg international club members and they are showing them. We are getting them connected both to the international and to the local life in Marburg.

I: And you are the president for the club in Marburg?

O: We have low hierarchies in our club. I'm the president. And I am therefore the communication part of our club together to communicate with international office and the university and with also German academic exchange service.

I: And when we now take a look at the university of Marburg. You already said like, in regards to the international students mobility you are like the connection for them to get to know Marburg basically, and the life here in Marburg. I would like to know are you also consulted for example, for strategic decisions, like when international student mobilities are prepared for example in study programs.

Do they ask you, for example, to bring the international perspective from students into that process?

O: No, that's, that's not so much how we, how used to work. We help the team from the international office, the student assistants, who work there when they organize, the orientation program for international students. Which takes part both in September and October and then March and April and it's one week. And we as MIC members help there as tutors to yeah just to play games and something like that. But and also it's our own. We also want to do it because we also want to present our club to the new international students and we somehow want to get involved with them. For example, in other universities it's that the Erasmus student network they're organized the whole orientation program. And we are here in Marburg. We are just helping the international office but for like strategic decisions where I'm not involved.

I: Do you know if there's like a, not another club or another student organ who is more involved in things like that in Marburg?

O: I wouldn't say so. I know someone who from international office, his name is X and he is now the Asta-referent for international affairs. I don't know how much the Asta is involved in international office agencies.

I: So from your perspective, what do students have to offer so that you should be for example included in strategic decision making, the international aspects of students should be incorporated to improve the quality and quantity of student mobilities.
 So what do you think if you won't be invited what could you offer? For example

O: Um, yeah, I would say that it's very Marburg thing that most of the international students live in student dormitories outside of Marburg in Wherda, in Cappel or also in Studentendorf in Waldtal and that's quiet outside the city of course Marburg isn't that big. Where we often as Marburg International Club have the impression that these international students are living their own international life in Marburg. And don't get connected to both the university and also the city and the locals. Since there are, such local geographic discrepancies. Yeah. So I also with regard to Corona and that you spend so much time at home, and it's also the thing right now for most of the international students, that they are still in their dorms. And that's something that I would say plays a role in this transfer to strategic making that they don't have the same possibilities as local students because they don't live that close. Yeah.

I: And so you already talked about that international office activities that you would assist in that their orientation week for the international students.

Do you also are involved in that advertising or info campaign to promote international student mobility or is that not really your club doing?

O: Yes, as a local Erasmus initiative, we also provide events, for out goers. So for people who are interested in doing an exchange semester. And for example, we sometimes organize international evenings where both students from who are here from that country can get in contact with students who are interested in going in there. So yes we try to do this but we could focus more on the advertising part.

I: Those are separate events from the international office or is it combined with them?

O: Like some are combined, some things we're doing, we do together at we also do our own things. Like for example we did an Erasmus evening in May. And there we try to mostly focus on German students.

I: Okay. And like the services you offer or international incoming students is like basically at getting to know their way around in Marburg or is it also like that you assist them with, like the platform MARVIN so that they know how to use it?

O: No that's the thing that they get to know in the orientation program and that's provided by the International Office. And sometimes also we organize WhatsApp groups for the internationals because the International Office has asked us to do it because they don't want to receive private messages concerning their work in their free time. I can totally understand that. And we said, yeah, we have to find a way we can do this. And sometimes when the students realize that we MIC members are, local students, they ask us, but it's more informal. And also I would say. Uh, um, well I'm missing the English word getting lower barriers okay. Yeah, but you know what I mean? If they sometimes ask us for smaller things, but also because we are volunteers, we surely can't provide all of these questions.

I: And so as a local student. So you went out how do you learn, or get the information about mobility opportunities.
So what was your basically way to get to know what is there where can I go?

O: When I started studying, I participated in the orientation things and and the "Erstie" week where also there was one section about the international possibilities for language and communication students. And I would also say that when you study language the teacher they recommend you to also speak the language in real life in the country. So from my part, it was very well advertised, but I also have to say that not so much of my colleagues in university not many of them have done an Erasmus and. But for me, it was completely sure that when I started studying, I wanted, I always wanted to do an exchange semester.

I: Okay. So you already said that not so many and especially for language, which I would say as humans, it's easy to go because the languages are taught everywhere.

So what do you think that when you go to like a structural level what are maybe the main challenges for the international student mobility what do you think from

90

what you maybe also heard from the out going students and incoming students what are the issues?

O: Yeah. So the main issue is definitely the financial aspect that you somehow get used to the way you live in Marburg, and you'll have to think about how you can finance it. And I also get financial support from my parents, so I don't have to think about this so much. I know some people who receive "Bafög". There are these, I don't know exactly. I am not so much in it, but then they have more pressure to follow the courses and the right system. And I also had to do one semester more for my bachelor's degree because I didn't do enough courses that were compatible with my program. Yeah, the financial support is a big thing and the courses are not matching and it's okay to that. You have to be paid. They have to be. You have to agree that maybe your program, you all your study time will take longer after doing an exchange semester. Yeah.

I: So like the prolongation of the studies and you would say. Its mainly Because it's hard to find matching courses so that you get enough credits?

O: Yeah there are also people who don't like moving to another country just by themselves, but I wouldn't see this as the main reason.

I: So what I already said to you before recording the outcome of the NORM-project would be curricula matching tool and curricula design guide.

And what would be the advantages for like students when such thing as implemented, especially look now at Marburg, what will be the plus?

O: I would say definitely confidence that you know you can do it and there are you. Right now, I would say, when you try to, when you're already interested in an exchange semester, you have to do through research a lot by yourself and it's, it can be very stressful. It also depends. How good support you get from the Erasmus coordinator from coordinator department. And we'll the matching tool like this I would say you reduce the barrier and make it easier for almost all the students.

I: That's more, maybe also more predictable so that you also know that. Yeah, I can take these courses there. I can go. Yeah**.**

And when you now get back to your own personal perspective what are the three main challenges, just for it would student mobility from your point of view, basically?

O: First of all for students coming to Marburg?

I: If you have ideas for both of them you can refer to both.

O: Okay. For the students coming to Marburg, I would say there's a the problem of finance for all, for both it's finance, the finance situation, how you can, how you can pay for your apartment. And it's also, I think in Marburg it's mostly guaranteed that you get a student dorm but in most of the other universities it's not guaranteed. And so you have to search an apartment by yourself and that can be really expensive. So the, but it all has to do with the financial support, yeah. Secondly the unrepeatability of the courses you take and you're not sure what and how long your study program will take, after the exchange. I would say from my personal point of view, that most of the students they don't get in touch enough with international life before. Also for the people here in Marburg, they say have the fear that I don't know, how will it be? And I don't know anyone from this country. And since the students in Marburg are so separated from international people and they only have some courses maybe to get a lot of international students. It's a very high barrier. If you will this fear of moving to another country, I would say.

I: Would you say that if there would be more English courses, which are mandatory, so that everybody's studies together also with international students, would that be helpful? What do you think?

I: I would definitely say so after my program I had some English courses together with internationalist students. And that was so interesting also for the people who hadn't been in exchange yet because you learn different and yeah, you get another impression. I would say.

I: Um, if you're now when you look at the lecturers how do they propose that international mobility opportunities to you? Is it like that they, for example, have been on mobility themselves and like tell you know I happen to teach in Belgium it's a nice university.

Do you think that that would be or, makes a difference about the will of students to go abroad. So that people think my lecturer likes it or she liked it and I can go as well?

O: I don't think that the German students have such a high, like they look this bright f the teacher and kind of say, sometimes they tell us where they have studied it's impressive, but I don't know. I don't feel it enough because he has a much higher position in the university life. And then when they are old and I wouldn't go to another universities just because of one of my teachers have studied there, what I would say makes it better. What makes it way better if other students tell their experiences and also in these welcoming sessions from the other orientation programs, that's the thing where then you also feel more comfortable asking, um, how did you do it with an apartment and these things? So easier yeah.

I: And so we are at the end of the interview so I may ask one last question.

If you could change one thing to support student mobility, what would it be? So if you have one wish, what would you change?

O: Um, I would put more money in the financial support of the mobility programs and also more money in the advertising. I would broaden it more to also, to maybe students in school in the last year of school. So, think about going to university because I would say it's a decision or it can be a decision for choosing a university. Yeah, I would say financial aspect for both.

I: Yeah thank you. Thank you so much for answering these questions.

Do you have anything to add that right now? About Erasmus mobility or what we have been talking about that you would like to add?

O: What I would maybe just add that there are certainly some groups from international students in Marburg that are more numerous. So we have a lot of Italian students although many students from the Asian countries and I don't know how this can be

seen, but I would definitely like understand from this, that other countries can do it better to promote these exchange programs because for Italian students it's normally that you spent the third year abroad and I would say for German students, it's not so normal maybe.

I: Okay. Yeah. It's interesting. Interesting for some countries it's normal.

Interview UB Head and Member of the International Office at the Faculty of Education 23.11.2021

I = Interviewer

B = Staff of the international department of the faculty of education

A = Member of the international department of the faculty of education

P = Protocol

I:

Agreeing to the recording for the interview?

A and B: Yes

Do you know the NORM project?

A and B: No

Introduction by university of Marburg

I: Your role at your institution?

A: Staff at the faculty of education I receive the incoming students at first I receive the nomination from the other universities I tell them how to apply online to our application form. I explain our courses we offer the courses we have. And then I offer contact to other universities want to know all aspects about the mobility. I follow the ToR about the courses they followed while studying abroad and transfer them.

B: We are from Barcelona university but it's a huge one. We have a main office but every faculty has also one international office. We are members of the international department of the faculty of education. We 6 degrees and maybe more than 10.000 students in our faculty. I am the head of the office and I take care of the office supervising everything in this mobility office. It's for incoming and outgoing students' overseas mobility and Erasmus mobility. We provide all the information incoming and outgoing. In the faculty there are mainly master students. In Spain when you study

secondary education when you study history or math or something you need to do one year of Master of didactics. Without them we could have four or five thousand students less. The mobility is increasing for the last 10 years but with COVID-19 we went down in numbers. We think that we are recovering. We have a lot of incoming students for next semester. Next week we open the application for next course there is a lot of increase question than last year. I suppose there will be a lot of students going abroad next year. In this faculty we have first year education from 0-6 years and primary education from 6-12 and social education and pedagogy which is more theoretical. Those are the main programs we have and then there is the master degree for secondary education from 12-18years and these students they only do their masters and they come for half of the year here. Main degrees are these five years.

I: Would you consider the faculty of education more mobile or less mobile than others?

B: More mobile education is quite mobile second most mobile also in relative numbers. Mainly in bachelor level are the students are more mobile, master of secondary education is just for one year so that is an issue. Maybe two or three students on the master level go on mobility every year. 95% are on the bachelor level.

I: Are most master programs at your university one-year programs?

B: Yes, there are 10 or 12 masters only two or three students go abroad. Masters at Spain are for one year. Bachelor is 4 years and masters are 1 year.

I: What are the main barriers to mobility both a quantitative and qualitative assessment?

A: The structure of the MA program. BA program there are economic barriers incoming students Barcelona is an expensive city. It's a problem for students to find an apartment to stay for four months. Second barrier is the course curriculum. They want to transfer of their courses they are worried about that.

B: Economics is one barrier but the main barrier is there an equivalence for the courses they took abroad and can the credits be transferred when they come back? When they know exactly that when they go abroad that their credits can be transferred easily. When that point is clear students feel more comfortable to go abroad.

I: When does your semester typically start?

A: Winter semester starts in September; Spring semester starts 14th of February. In July is the course catalogue published. We have a short list of recommended courses for international students and we always inform universities about this short list. And students before arriving in Barcelona before applying online for Barcelona they know our course offers.

I: If there is an incoming student is that student administered through the same tool like home students?

B: First they get the list of courses then there is an interview with a tutor. Every student has a tutor this tutor recommends some courses. Because maybe a student wants to follow a course and the tutor know that this course is not correct follow for this student because it's not in English for example. Some courses are in Catalan and that information is not published in the course catalogue because the teacher is contracted in September and we don't know which teacher will teach this course. I inform the students about the application form to apply they have to choose the courses they want to follow. If they are correct, it will be confirmed by the tutor and the w send the acceptance letter and the they are official accepted. The Learning Agreement is prepared with the tutor together with the student.

I: Your faculty structure. When they reaccredit a degree program or create a new degree program are you also involved in the design of programs?

B: We are not involved. It's very difficult to change the program every 8-7 years. The last time the international perspective was not considered. I hope now the international perspective is more involved but not right now.

I: When you print out Transcript of Records are you able to mention a course that can't be recognized (example that wasn't in the Learning Agreement as credit mobility)?

B: We accept language courses and extended courses.

I: How do your outgoing students find information about courses?

B: Several ways by the website of the university. When our outgoing students come back make a report about the university abroad and publish on our webpage and students can find what they took as courses of the past years. The students follow this information very much. Main point they have a tutor for outgoing mobility. They send at times the links about the university and they know about the subjects in the link and know what credits are able to be recognized.

I: Who is the tutor do they work in your office?
In our international office we have four tutors the are lecturers 2 for incoming and 2 outgoing. They take care of all the questions and sign the LA of the outgoing students. When we talk about tutors who take care of the students. Then we also have the buddy program when students follow international students, we call them mentors.

I: What kind of issues have students while trying to find information about courses?

B: It depends with the university about international students in our faculty when you come directly to the webpage of the university it's not easy. You need to contact us and then it is easier. This is one of the main barriers.

I: One aspect of the NORM-project is the curricula-matching tool. Do you think more digitalized and timely access to information about courses would help preparation?

B: Yes

I: Do you use ISCED-Codes?

B: No

I: Would you support the idea to expand EWP to the course catalog?

B: Could be a good idea. We problems with that program narrowing the Erasmus agreements. very big ones

I: Is your institution also an incoming institution?

B: our institution sends in the past more students out and it comes to be more balanced. Send more than receive more or less the same number.

I: Do you plan a special curriculum for international courses?

B: Yes but the courses are not really only for them 10 or 8 subjects taught in English each semester and 4-5 subjects taught in Catalan which are easy to be followed. We have 4-5 students in each class always try to mix them with students from our university, 20-25 students and 5 Erasmus students are agreed on.

I: Do you support alternative forms of mobility and can you recognize them?

B: Trying to support but not recognized with credits trying to improve

I: Do incoming students have a positive of local students' desire to go abroad?

B: Yes, they know people from other countries and it's important for internationalization. Most of the students are interested in going abroad after a class together with other international students. They have an impact in order to increase mobility

I: Do you evaluate the mobility?

B: Reports publish it and students can look at it. At the last two weeks have a meeting with the tutor and ask what is going on what went wrong and well and what could be better. When they come back they have a full report about the experience abroad. This information is used for students to take out information before going abroad. Main office makes some research every two years about if the students are happy with their international experience. What are the weak parts and so on. We have three kinds of reports about information of the international experience.

Interview UB Administrative Erasmus Coordinator at the Faculty of Medicine
26.11.2021

I = Interviewer

A = Administrative Coordinator at the Faculty of Medicine

I: Do you agree to the recording of the interview?

A: Yes

I: Do you know the NORM-project?

A: Yes

I: What is your role at the Faculty of Medicine?

A: Administrative officer at the international office of the faculty of medicine. We have academic and institutional administrative by they don't interfere in the administrative management. I am the person who manages and ah all the information. My role is to control, manage and organize all the international relations and international mobilities in the faculty of medicine and health science

I: In relative numbers how many students go abroad?

 A: Each year 100 mobilities within Europe, serval study fields I don' t have all the numbers in medicine bachelor degree is the higher proportion of students who go abroad.

I: In which study programs are the students most mobile?

A: Usually bachelor degree Erasmus in first cycle. In Master degree they have Mundus quite apart from me. That is nothing I control. In my field the bachelor degree are students who go on Erasmus. Masters' degrees minority of students go abroad. In medicine the master's degree is six years it's quite a long cycle. In Spain it is six years but nursing is 4 years and dentistry are 5 years. It depends of the complexity of the study field. Medicine and dentistry are considered to be very complex study fields they are longer than usual. Normally bachelor is four years.

I: From your personal perspective what are the barriers to go abroad?

A: Promotion students are not aware of the importance to go abroad. If we have more financial and personal resources, we could promote it more. Another problem are the language barriers. Not all the students are willing another foreign language to go abroad. The economic costs are also an issue. Training Erasmus the simplification we have not implemented this kind of organization but we think in the future we will. We will simplify curricula componence. For now, we are doing as always to do curricula components unit by unit.

I: How is the international perspective considered during accreditation and planning of a degree program or the reaccreditation of a degree program?

A: There is no perspective for now. That is something we have to design and work on in the future. But for now, I can not tell you that we process and prospect it in the near future. It is me who brings the international perspective in as I am the closest one to the management of it. The university has now the rule that a minimum of credits and a maximum of credits we have to respect the rules about curricula components. We do as we are asked to do a minimum and a maximum of credits equivalences in content and credits.

I: Do you have a formal mobility window?

A: No, it's not in our agenda right now. But we hope in our future it will work. We try to simplify the program management inter-institutional agreements and so on. At this moment we are very focused in the online session of interinstitutional agreements and Learning Agreements (EWP) which is very time consuming. So, in the future we will add mobility windows in every study program where it is possible.

I: If the credit cannot be counted or the credit cannot be transferred to the study program is it possible to print them on the transcript?

A: No, we ask for a correspondence with our study plans. Things that don't correlate with our study program cannot be counted. We are very   demanding in our academic quality.

I: How do your outgoing students get the information about courses?

A: I help them a lot I refer them to the university's website and email universities. I myself enter the website and help them to decide about the study programs. So, students send me an email and I control and approve the units. I have a private database. I try to record all the information that I can from this information to decide the program.

I: What makes it difficult for students to find information to make an informed decision as they make their Learning Agreement?

A: There are no barriers. They expect someone to do it if I can find the information, they can do it too.

I: When is your institution publishing course catalog?

A: The course catalog is always the same only our timetable will change in July. It's a short period of time to organize the timetables but the study plan is always the same. We always find solution to overlapping courses. Each course is taught every semester (both winter and summer).

I: How are your incoming exchange students administered? Do you use mobility online for application and for course administration at your you use the same tool as four your Spanish home students?

A: They have to look at their study plan, they can choose any. There no courses in English we are only have courses in Catalan or Spanish bilingual society have to adapt to it. Do the same as Spanish students we can't offer them any course especially for incoming students. We use the same platform for home students as well as incoming students. They are treated like normal students of the university of Barcelona.

I: Do you think that a more digitalized and timely access to information in form of the matching tool would be helpful for students as they prepare their exchange?

A: Yes, it would be helpful because the main problem of Erasmus is that it's very complicated especially the administration so far is very complex very long and very repetitive. Sometimes the documents are reproducing the same information and I think the digitalization will help all of us. Students and administration too because we need more simplicity.

I: In your current course catalog do you use ISCED Codes?

A: Yes, every course has a number that indicates in the subject plan. So, students choose a course name and a code. The possibility to mistake the course is low. The codes are designed internally from our data base. It's not descriptive it's a number.

I: Would you support to expanding the EWP to course catalogs?

A: I think in medicine it is complicated we need to be very strict with the content. Everything that has to do with opening the content I think in medicine it's not possible. In other degree programs that is maybe possible because the things are not so fundamental as in medicine. Students must study units that are necessary for their future career. This can not be moved or relaxed.

I: Spain is an incoming country. How about your institution. Do you receive more students than you send out?

A: In our faculty more students go abroad then we receive.

I: Do incoming students have a positive effect on outgoing students and their desire to go abroad?

A: I don't think so they are quite separate. From my point of you we have a barrier that we are bilingual. For me that is a difficulty for incoming students. So, for our university it's the fact that students have to learn to languages it's not encouraging for them to come to Barcelona. I don't know how other faculties do it. But from my point of this is the fact that makes the incoming students are fewer than our outgoing students. We gave very few students who go abroad to Germany because German is difficult and not everybody wants to learn it.

I: Do you offer alternative mobilities? (Summer schools or virtual mobilities)

A: So far no, we don't have this kind of mobility. I don't know if in future it is possible. The main argument is we are very small we lack human resources we can't plan other things than the usual mobilities. It needs effort, staff and money.

I: Do you evaluate the mobility of your outgoing students?

A: We don't use this information stays in the we don't use it to encourage other students to go abroad. This is not important for us. Results are results. Students who want to go abroad it's their own decision.

Interview UB Academic and Administrative Erasmus Coordinator at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Science 26.11.2021

I = Interviewer

A = Administrative Erasmus International Relations Office Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences

B = Academic Coordinator for International Relations Office Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences Professor

School of Pharmacy 3 degrees in two different campuses Barcelona and 20km from here

I: Do you agree to the recording?

A;B: Yes both

I: Do you know the NORM project?

A; B: No, quick overview about the project.

I: Profession of you two concerning Erasmus?

B: Concerning Erasmus B is the Academic Coordinator and A is the Administrative Coordinator at the faculty of pharmacy and food science

I: In relative terms how many students go abroad?

B: 8-10% all together in our faculty. At the whole university it's about 20%. It depends on the degree. Most active is Pharmacy easier than food Science, we send normally about 120 students per year abroad. We are planning a blended intensive program but we have to think about it could be a good one kind of Erasmus Mundus but much more easier. They are trying it out in Biology want to do it in the whole university. UB is huge and they have in the whole university only three of the blended programs that are kind of pilot case. And now this year 2022/2023 they want us to implement the blended mobility. In January, they will give us a letter of intention what we can do to implement such programs in the future. Erasmus is the program which is mostly used.

I: Is the master or bachelor more active?

A: Bachelor outgoing more, Master one year very difficult, when master students want to go abroad, they do their thesis outside of the country more incoming, three to two to students go abroad.

B: The other faculties also have much more mobilities than our school. Our degree in Pharmacy 5 years when they have achieved 180 ECTS out of 300ECTS they go abroad to do their master thesis and take courses even though they are still master students.

I: What mobility barriers are there for your students from your personal point of view?

B: Language, academic plan difficult to find matching courses which are mandatory over here cannot sign a LA when the chosen course is not fitting to the mandatory courses they have to follow.

I: Are there modules which are particular easy to change?

A: No, we just have elective courses in fifth year not like in other universities that they can choose to go abroad. We are just trying to see case by case each student is a particular case usually they do these elective courses but for example if they choose to go in third or fourth year usually, they do all of the mandatory courses because we don't have enough elective modules.

I: Is there a Mobility window?

A: No

I: How is the international perspective considered during the design or accreditation or re-accreditation of a study program considered?

B: We are considered in that but they only change the program every 8-10 years. This program was designed in 2006 or 2003 when they did this program the international perspective wasn't that important back then. One objective that I have is to change that but it's very difficult. You have in the school different departments. They don't want to change because that will affect the professors' position and the power of each department. We are doing little things. For example, now we are trying to move a course from the fifth year to the fourth year in order to facilitate mobility. To change an entire program it's hard, it's a matter of years. They listen to our opinion. Things move very slow.

A: I am not in there

B: There is a big complexity to design that doesn't help to implement mobilities. Here everything is decided in an assembly. They take mobility into consideration but there are also other things they consider. Mobility is a little part of the cake. They are not going to do 100% of what we think they should do.

I: Is it more difficult for sciences or humanities to implement mobility windows?

B: I don't know. Our degrees are professional degrees. That means that we have mandatory aspects which we have to teach by law. We cannot move that. I assume in humanities that is something similar.

I: In terms of credits 180 ECTS in 5 year program?

B: 300 credits, 180 credits can go somewhere to do master courses or master thesis 60-70% of our mobility do their thesis.

I: How many credits would be open or can be easily replaced by course abroad?

B: 24 elective credits and then two branches about 30 more credits that are not mandatory. That means 50 from 300 can be replaced.

I: Can they take classes, that they don't need towards their degree? Can you print those credits on their transcript?

B: Yes but they have to ask for it all extra credits they have done.

A: The signing by professors in our department of the agreement is tutorized. They can decide if they are accepting that these credits are going to be validated at the end of their stay.

I: How do your outgoing students find information about courses they can take abroad? Do you have a record a table basically that built from experience that you recommend to your students?

A: Don't have a table we recommend it depends on each person. We send the same link for our own students. I explain them how they can see the language of the course or curses they can do. With the help of their own university then they create a learning agreement proposal. Sometimes we have to change some things.

B: We have academic advisors, one for food science and 2 for pharmacy. They work in their position for 6 years. They are experienced with some partner universities. They can advise them once they see the learning agreements. Some universities change the offer or the course catalog are published in July and August and the paper has to be signed by June. You have to trust the experience of the tutors. They are critical in that.

I: When is the course catalog published at your university?

B: By July but the good thing is, we do little change from year to year 95% from last year will be used.

I: How do incoming students are enrolled with your courses? Do they use the same platform as other students?

A: Yes, we enroll them as any other student from the UB.

B: Once they are enrolled, they are UB students.

A: Some Erasmus traineeships they are listed but they don't need any credits or courses. So, they are enrolled through the same tool but not within courses. Some traineeships need credits so we enroll them into particular courses. We use mobility online also for EWP transcripts. For incoming students, we use another software secretary generates they localize it with an E for incoming students they also generate the grades for incoming students. That's the same document like our students the general secretary of the faculty is doing that.

I: Do you think that a more digitalized and timely access to information for the preparation of the student exchange would be helpful (Curricula Matching Tool)?

B: Yes

I: Do you use ISCED-Codes in your course catalog?

A: Yes, we use them ISCED different ISCED codes for each degree even they are the same faculty so we try to manage that too.

I: Would you support to expand EWP to the course catalogs?

B: Would agree with that but without closing other opportunities. For 20-30% students it will not work. Students start to be concerned later in their studies which means that they already did some courses which could be replaced easily. The official office is asking them okay you have the block of courses and partner universities and your students follow the study plan. But that doesn't work like that because there are some students who have tow work next to their studies and some take courses earlier than planned by the program. Support the expanding of the EWP to catalogs but don't close the possibility to work with the students one by one. In the Learning Agreement you have box A and B but here they ask us to lose the equivalence between those two subjects. We have a problem when students come back, they have a qualification and they fail one subject I need to know before signing the LA I need to know what is the

equivalence between one topic and another. My institution doesn't understand that. They think okay you send these boxes, there are these five topics and when you receive the ToR then you but the qualification in your five topics. They don't understand that the qualification is not by boxes it's by topics. I would support that in the learning agreement between the box that they specify that this course in each university will specify the equivalence between the two courses. Makes it more difficult but one year later you sign the Learning Agreement and one year later you have a ToR from one university and you have to qualify this student. Sometimes it's easy.

I: Who signs the Learning Agreement?

B: I do, because they trust me but there is a head of the degree and all the qualification he has to be verified by the dean. I am not free in that. We have more outgoing students than incoming.

I; Incoming students have a positive effect on the potential outgoing students?

B: Incoming students match in a team. They do a lot of things together because they have the language, Erasmus is working.

A: Main reason why we don't have so many incoming students because our courses are mainly in Spanish, the department doesn't like it very much 49% can be taken out of our faculty usually they say yes unless they need previous knowledge.

I: Do you support other forms of mobility?

A: No

I: Do you evaluate your mobilities?

B: Every 4 to 5 years general evaluation but we don't have a particular evaluation, matter questions are not linked, don't have access to particular evaluation, codes are not related to the degree example food science you can get all the answers from

students who did something related to food and they are not from our school. We don't have access to the questionnaire.

A: It's done at the institutional level

B: There is something to improve every year they try to do that they have fights for fields physical medicine is it more medicine related or more physics related and who gets more credits matter of. Systems work with each other. Subjects set up without thinking about mobility have to move it's huge and there are other issues and it's difficult. When students are happy, we are also happy. We have to move and match and personal follow up if they have problems and speak to professor. Next year you have 300 students incoming I can't do that with the tools I have. In total 64.000 students are enrolled in the university and 3.000 students at the department.

Interview UAH Erasmus + Program Coordination of the Stakeholders within the University and Erasmus + program Adviser for International Affairs 03.12.2021

I = Interviewer

A = Erasmus + program coordination of the stakeholders

B = Erasmus + Program Adviser for International Affairs

I: Do you agree to the recording?

Both: Yes

Do you know the NORM project?

Both: Yes

I: Describe your personal role within the Erasmus context?

A: Erasmus+ Every year we improve our internal procedures there, our rules are according to Erasmus + principals. Every year we collect feedback from our students and staff in order to improve these internal things. My role is to coordinate all the different stake holders in the university I am working with an academic team in charge to watch and monitor what are things in the Erasmus+ program in terms of mobility and budget with focus to the Erasmus+ program always finding best quality and best fundings for the Erasmus+

B: Erasmus+ program I am the adviser for the internationalization, mobility and how to improve the aspects of academic management and academic mobility to improve academics and management and key actions and proposals that A has mentioned, implement Erasmus+ from the point of academics and management.

I: How many students go abroad and which are the most mobile faculties which are the most mobile degree programs?

A: 800 outgoing students only in Erasmus+ program concerning incoming 600-700 every year most active faculties clear answer humanities and management both together they have around half of all mobilities. Bachelor students are the most active

112

ones. Most of the Master just one year very complex to apply for the mobility when you are an Bachelor student you have to apply for mobility at Master stage.

I: Is teacher education federal program?

B: Don't have a stage program after BA is 4 years. Students in education need enroll in an education master which is taught nationally based (no national examination) Defined on a national basis are not open to mobility at all. After finishing the MA to go to the national test for civil service to teach or be in the academic sector for both they need the education Master.

A: For Master it's compulsory to be in school, harmonize everything in just one year difficult harmonize Master, mobility, being in a school).

B: Not only complex but in Spain even if you are going to be a teacher for English for higher education you have to be proficient in Spanish. Therefore, the MA has to be done in Spain includes the option of receiving students from abroad both as credit seeker and official students, different to Germany.

I: In your opinion what are the main barriers for students to go abroad?

A: Always three main points 1. Cultural aspects 2. Economic situation even with Erasmus support 3. Students don't want to overpass their comfort zone. Living with their families not too much distance to everything they need. Most of them even under 30 more than 75%, too many universities they don't have to move far away to stay at the same university, living in big cities to convince them to discover new cultures and overpass this line it's better for you and your future is our great challenge. They live with their parents, going to university is their first opportunity to be independent from their parents but the problem here in Spain so many universities they don't have to move very far, to stay at university because they have in the have in the same province one university, not usual that students move out of their cities because they don't need.

B: Persons below 25 years 65% and between 25-29 years 51-55% live with their parents.

I: Do students change cities between BA and MA studies?

A: Change but it doesn't mean that they have to go to another university 6 public universities and 10 private universities in Madrid, they tend to do an online Master and try to combine work within a company have more followers.

B: Barcelona and Madrid still attract students from all over the country, in every single capital of province have a university, we don't have specialized universities 3-4 exceptions most of the universities are comprehensive. Because we need to get the accreditation by the same national authority, Master opens the way to a habilitation students don't distinguish to get the diploma law, architecture and teaching, National exam medicine there is no Master this is the only example where there are national exams, Barcelona and Madrid attract in terms of job employment so the closer you are to the center to that potential job offer the better not many people apply for mobility inside of Spain, comfort zone and so on and so forth.

I: How is the international perspective considered during accrediting or designing the program at your HEIs?

A: Not quite relevant, some of the professors living in this comfort area comfortable with the current curricula with no international perspective. Some areas try to change it. They realize they need the international perspective, try to promote double degrees, official is the language most of the BA are in Spanish some of them are bilingual, lack of students in specific areas can't cover it with national students only way to cover those subjects is that they have to open it more for international students, some faculties try to include small international perspective, 1 pilot program for the mobility window, in the future it could be compulsory but at the moment it is not, not so much persons in the faculties consider the international aspect while accrediting study programs.

I: Is it financial pressure that makes the faculties more open towards incoming mobility?

A: Question of money but not a direct way, have to give work to the staff, if there are not enough students you pay the stuff for nothing or you pay for what they can teach it's a matter of country but not only our university we are a bit concerned that all the funding depends on the number of students and that's the point you need to bring international students in. Distinguish students who are enrolled under Erasmus+ they are not counted but if there are international students who stay with us to do their degree, they count for total number of students but they don't count for financial aspects, they are counted when they pay the students fees then they are counting.

B: In Spain there is clear distinction between exchange students they are in the list of the professor and in terms of what matters in financial aspects only the international students who are there for diplomas count, there is no structural thing towards these national level national level it matters in terms of accreditation of study programs that each university has, that's the reason why we understand in Alcala exchange mobility as a promotion of our official studies we understand the best way of how to get international students to enroll in our master is that they did an Erasmus+ to our university at their Bachelor level sometimes when you can usually chance can be first contact with our academic offer possibly thinking staying with us or possibly or continuing their studies with us that why exchange programs are so important at our university to discuss possibilities of joint degrees because it is connected in a way we understand that we can embed mobility in some of our official programs. Which is after all why we are today in this interview to analyze these barriers as we have analyzed them and so on and so forth.

I: Are the programs audited degree programs and if so, is the international perspective a part of the auditing process?

B: The part of the international part depends with the fields. In Spain we have different fields of education that are guidelines applicable to each of them. In form of white books that universities have to follow to prepare degrees. Every two or three years there is an external body auditing how this accredited program is working and there is an international section of the degree. The importance depends pretty much on how the program has been designed. In humanities mobility is pretty high therefore it is important for this audit that every student can go abroad when they want to go abroad.

115

It not the same when you go to law. The law faculty there is a section on the internationalization of the degree that is minimal importance.

A: But as well for this international part in the audit we have a focus on the mobility part in the audit that this external panel for them its important that you have some guest speaker yes international speaker or that you have this type of international workshop or seminars. That is more important then perhaps the mobility of students or other staff so this international part of this of this eternal audit is three years. The international section covers all these types of things. Mobility is one part some subjects is very relevant but in others its just one part of this international section.

I: How do your outgoing student's find information about courses?

A: We have in each study field an international coordinator who is in charge to give the information for the students first step to contact them to get from them some information and feedback about the different courses. Main problem: we have 10 different BA degrees 10 different curricula have to combine these curriculums with subjects and courses in another place it's a nightmare for international coordinators. Second step are the former international Erasmus+ students who went abroad. They can give them this type of practical information and guides of courses that they can find in the other partner university

B: Everything is channeled through the international coordinator of each field. The thing is that the lack of mobility windows implies that we have accreditation problems in schools in order to transfer credits to the diploma of students. It can be more or less difficult depending on the field of study. For example, to accredit courses taken abroad in engineering is difficult, have to get a certain set of courses in order to get them accredited for the diploma. That's why people in the faculty of engineering use a tool which is similar to the one that is designed in NORM. The structure of studies in Spain requires a certain set of components all of them have to be fulfilled for the students to get a diploma. Some of them are basic and compulsorily those are difficult to associate in terms of international courses. You have to find a similar course in terms of workload. Then there are courses that are optional where it is easier in order to get courses accredited. Not a mobility window as such but that flexibility. In the faculty of

116

humanities, we suggest students to go abroad for these courses in their third year. It is better to get a basic education here and then go abroad for these optional courses. That makes the work of the coordinator easier because we are establishing some criteria for the field. Not the same semantic grammar course situation is not the same situation everywhere but it's the best description with who and how students can get information which is manly the academic international coordinator.

I: The course catalog is published when?

B: Around June, July. The main problem we have two sets of publications course catalog and the calendar. The calendar is normally published in July which is to late LA have to be prepared around June. There is a high level of changes at the first weeks for mobility for the LA, these two sets of publication, the course catalog is very static so most important thing is the calendar. We have a huge bottleneck in terms of changing the LA. It gets crazy when you are coordinating 150 incoming students.

I: Through which tool do you administer the incoming students? How do they enroll into their classes?

B: Use the same but different entry points. An official student of UA is accredited once they can't do their registration every year, they don't need a third person in between. For exchange students at times, we are trying to find students for courses our most famous faculties for incoming students, normally they have limited available slots for exchange students. In that case the registration works through the international office. accreditation works through the international office, when they come in July, they see they have problems they need to change that but they can't change because there are not enough available slots. Then in this week we can change stuff and the international office is doing that. The LA and the registration don't communicate with each other. Idea is to open the online system for them but the system is not yet ready. They are in a different box in the system because they don't pay, our IT-system have to distinguish between students who pay and students who are on an exchange, essential for the persons who set up the IT-system. So this division effects the entry point. Chance that there are courses the students doesn't get in when you open up everything up to all the incoming students. System can not tell the number of available slots. When

students would register, they would be blind then constantly the support system has to step in.

I: Can your IT-system prepare ECTS for courses or complete a module?

B: Complete the module, cannot divide modules, trying how to automize that

A: At times it is not working to automize the courses when you try to split it, at times you can split it

B: Now once they are in the small room of the system, we can transfer the ToR that they have registered. You can send a ToR for the credits they have achieved. But we cannot transfer the transcript for EWP system that generates it and its not working together.

I: Do you use for the course catalog ISCED-Codes?

B: No

I: Would you support EWP expanding to course catalogs?

B: Would support it but it is very complex try to develop how to use these course catalogs IPI to connect the course catalog IT-System with database to be able for students to get the information. Confronted with some situations on how to construct the database and to connect it with the different systems the universities are using. Which was the problem of the ISCED codes that we all use to enter into the institutional agreements but we don't use them in our course catalogs. IPIS works but the functionality of it was not self-evident. I don't that we are an inch closer it then we were three years ago. Information is important in itself. We don't have a tool to make that connection. But if we get the information a student needs to prepare a learning agreement that's quite a step forward but not yet there

I: Do incoming students have an effect on potential outgoing students?

A: External perspective I think that there is an effect, local students learn about the benefits, complex to understand the mind of students

I: Able to recognize alternative mobility opportunities (short term mobility, summer schools etc.)?

A: Winter and summer schools try to promote it, discussion about on how to achieve the figures of that 50% of the students at university should have one from of international mobility. It's coming we need to give them nay opportunities in that way one channel and key action tool some of them promote this type of international experience these trainings for students in other institutions.

B: Teaching mobility key action to organize it main idea is to get a structure trying to structure the international pedagogical methods they should use, problems with the pandemic we don't move anymore crossing that cultural system, can transfer the summer school into their diploma

I: Follow up question: More classes in English local students refuse to participate?

A: Possibility to teach in English and Spanish and you can switch it every year the classes are almost empty, practical perspective can not understand that one group with Spanish 50 and the other in English just with 3-4 students they don't want to.

B: I teach in English, investing in foreign teacher speaking English is somewhat natural, being host and teach tricky to get them.

Interview ELTE Educational Affairs Department of Erasmus+ & International programs 08.07.2021

I = Interviewer

A = Educational Affairs Department of Erasmus+ & International programs

A: Introdution Agrees to be recorded, Central plus department deputy head deals PT4 many for the Earmus+ project, the contact inter isntutional agreement, Outgoing students central level and faculty coordinator for the incoming students

I: Do you know the NORM Project?

A: Yes I was at the kick off meeting know X previous meeting Y

I: Did you Participate in the survey?

A: Yes she has. Working in the central office department/ faculty most mobile students. Departmental level hard faculty of humanities faculty of law. Languages area English and American studies Italian French

I: Sience?

A: Biology not so many, faculty of economics new in operation 2019 and they really dynamic build up of the international Erasmus + , Mobility has doubled more students are at degree program and more partnership

I: What are the main barriers to go abroad?

A: Like to have an experience, Really great partnerships more and more database for traineeship are more popular. Especially after the degree project, less problems with prolongation

I: Curricula issues?

A: On track faculty of law has a database for curricula matching. Which courses can be replaced. Asked the 2020 to provide such a hand book. Choose the mobility window. Problem when they don't match with the curricula

A: How easy is it to prepare the studies abroad? Could you recognize positive effect?

A: Yes we think so. Traineeships grow have no problem there. Curricula matching problem so looking forward that it will be matched.

I: Incoming students has a positive effect to motivate them to grow abroad?

A: Internationalsition at home Motivate them to be a mentor ☐ can meet more international students. See students who were a mentor decided to go abroad. Really great experience for them help them to decide

I: Extra courses for the incoming or normal courses?

A: Less Hungarian students participate in the English courses but they are open for it ☐ challenge for them exchange students need more credits higher Credits which can be a motivator not as mixed as wished

I: International Teaching mobility?

A: Project about that teacher have a lot of influence on the students for it. Teaching mobility will be more open and international. Try to reach the teachers so that they promote the mobility.

I: Special strategy staff going abroad?

A: We have an email list for all staff working promoting the program. Faculty can reach the teachers more and ask them to promote it. Information date. Project teach with Erasmus. Hard to reach staff to go abroad same candidates to go abroad. Problem a lot of teaching staff some of them speak English or other, not so confident with going

abroad. Not sure what we can do abroad. Promote language courses closing dinner meet with the other coordinators.

Some coordinators are not as active for the others.

I: How do you select your partners?

A: Yeah, its basically are based on academic contacts. Email from university signing a partnership forward it if they approve sign, it on a central level. Quality is over quantity. Use the online assessment tool for international cooperation method to asses partnership. They keep most of the partnership they already have. Good for many university and great partners. Try to lead the way to assess partnership more □ can suggest the partnership but faculty is independent.

I: Is there a barrier?

I: Spanish and Portugiese. Agreement is prepared and go there then realise not enough courses in English or cpurses in general. Warn about it an consider turning the partnership down or

I: Can courses be taken?

A: Every course is recognised not compulsory. Sometimes need to have courses at home university it depends on the faculty. Credit transfer is an issue. Main problem: professors don't really compare the competencies more the knowledge which is not the same. At times prolong the studies

I: Does your university have alternative mobility?

A: Incoming: have multiple summer schools not that many virtual form summer school for Hungarian language and culture can also take other courses nit strictly. Most of the faculties have their own summer school. Yes.

I: Evaluate the mobility of the students?

A: Not in central level sometimes we

I: How do you cooperate with the faculty?

A: Same procedure, Information days and promotion days, Database of the international cooperation handle the finances. Announce the international cooperation. Mobility tool management and overview. They can reach the administrative Coordiantors, Big Faculty hard at times. Depends on the faculty □ some are very active. Try to reach through the administrative coordinators

I: Staff mobility internationalization can change the understanding of students mobility?

A: Will be helpful. When teachers promote either peers or their lectures

Interview ELTE Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Humanities
08.07.2021

A = Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Humanities

I = Interviewer

A: Agrees to be recorded

I: What is your role?

A: Yes, faculty humanities vice dean for international affairs

I: Do you know the NORM Project?

A: Some thing

I: Survey?

A: No person before me in the job since February

I: How many students?

A: 400 students huge faculty incoming 700, Difficult to say with COVID-19

I: What are the main barriers?

A: Erasmus of financial resources. The double burden the non-automatic acceptance of some courses

I: Mobility window?

A: Working restructuring the whole curricula matching all institute and departments have to resigned shortly. Exchange is more efficient and credits can be better accepted. Evaluate to check the curricula and try to match the subject ECTS either whole or see if a mobility window is possible. It's on the way function for the next year

124

I: How easy is the access for students?

A: Not so easy they are written on the side, Access could be improved, Faculty of Humanities 1; Interview ELTE Working on a curricula matching tool. Trainers, students and staff. Cooperation with the IT-faculty it students are developing it as part of their studies.

I: Effects of foreign students?

A: No answer

I: Teachers go abroad?

A: Effect on the students we don't have data there you enrich yourself

I: Curricula Matching tool?

A: Yeah it would help not only course matching but also details. ECTS number of hours in.

I: Mobility partners how do you find them?

A: Because we know them through our professional network, conference, schools to teach. Difficult to be matched. Through personal project

I: Can he take a course which is recognised?

A: Yes

I: Alternative forms of mobility?

A: Incoming: regular two summer schools. Outgoing: regular get calls from. Have been doing it for centuries. Internship program M.A. Program

I: Combine with a study abroad?

A: No not really. Several scholarship for the mobility, high number of students non EU and non US countries receive a lot of university 700 can come for the whole B.A. studies. Also local scholarships.

I: Evaluate the mobility?

A: Yes

I: How you use it?

A: International office feed it up for us and if not. Draw the lesson also by us

I: Mobility aspect considered by setting up a new student program?

A: Should be encouraged more initiatives to set up more courses in English. Encourage them to think more globally. Transforming already existing courses. A lot of languages 70 languages. All Roman language. In principal we can do that without a barrier don't really have a lot of incoming of the specific programs. Media studies and film very popular.

I: Accepting courses?

A: Study plan, Professor in charge head of the institute. Discuss it what can be accepted and how many credits. One by one less subjective. Documents come with the signature is giving who decide it. There might be problems. Used to be rigid but not anymore ⬜ also we are special

I: How do you reach out?
A: Information for the. Coordinator at department and institute level their task is it to reach out to the students. Very proactive regular meetings for all of them**.** Use international connections

Interview ELTE International Coordinator Faculty of Law 08.07.2021

I = Interviewer

A = ELTE International Coordinator Faculty of Law

I: What is your role within the Erasmus context?

A: Faculty law Erasmus coordinator, outgoing staff, lecture, students main work

I: Do you know the NORM project?

A: Yes I heard a lot about it previous worker started it.

I: Taking part in the survey?

A: Yes

I: How would you describe your role?

A: I can see Erasmus things. 4 years ago incoming person responsible work very close together. Outgoing lecturers administrative staff agreements what we have to renew. Hiring application make ranking for the students and staff. Promotion and recognition of the ECTS. I usually keep in touch with the professor. System what the university going to extend for all the faculty.

I: What are the main barriers for students to go abroad?

A: Main problem is the money. Great scholarship for Hungarian can not worth it to get any kind of help or other places. COVID-19. Some students who were in the framework abroad 10 years or 15 years and students meet them. Get the information when you apply its not sure that can go abroad. All students who apply its not sure that can finish on time. Is not true as well. Working on getting the information on the event and news letter □ can not be as good as I would like to be it's getting better. Have more students who go abroad.

I: Did you offer online courses?

A: Face to face till November. Online classes virtual mobility could stay in Budapest everything had to close blended

I: How many came?

A: Much more students than we thought ca. 80 students were in Budapest.

I: Offer mobility window?

A: Yes, it isn't as easy with other European university undivided master degree program 3 and 4 year all can go on mobility from 2 year. Some decide to go on 5. Year but not possible to accept for compulsory courses.

I: Do they use the window?

A: We are flexible

I: How easy is it for students to prepare for the window?

A: Easy for them is the first time they do something on their own which is burocratic. Two websites central and faculty all information are there. Our website excel form what we have recognised in the previous years detailed. Faculty Erasmus rule what are compulsory courses and what can be accepted accept all the courses for compulsory courses. Similarity in the name then we can also accept it as a specific faculty course. Special 5 courses in international for example can mobility courses there. Won't lose a semester there. What we cannot count in which is specially Hungarian for example criminal law.

I: Do you also have buddy program?

A: Yes in cooperation with ESN. Before students come to Budapest have to registration if they like to have one or not and then information to ESN and they get a mentor. Offers several programs if there is no pandemic □ short trips.

I: Incoming students have a positive effect?

A: Yes normal year offer courses not only for incomings but also for all the others. Limitation for students number Erasmus much less limitation min. 5 max. 33. Can help student to go there and ask things. Our students to think good to go on mobility

I: Staff mobility has positive effect on student mobility?

A: Yes staff mobility they can keep in touch with the colleagues mixture of one foreign and one from Budapest bloc seminar. Much more open minded and help to promote it for the students. Can be helpful is ERASMUS training for staff □ for fieldwork as well. Have to do something else like research or project of writing in a book grand for that as Erasmus is not granted. Mostly second semester March April May □For teaching mobility or November before the exams □ For teaching mobility. Training summer break. Different academic year September and first of July the year is over.

I: How do you select your partner institution?

A: 140 partner university at our faculty. Started with the professors 30 years ago are already there. Professor comes and asks about a cooperation □ check with the international office, agreement. Letters from university and request that they would like to have an agreement □ mostly doesn't end up with an agreement, most prejudiced and won't like to have small partners and ranking

I: Alternative form Student mobility?

A: Summer school yes international part email addresses are there. Partners for trainees as well not as strict as studies. Students writing about mobility.

I: Evaluate the mobility?

A: Challenge between faculties. Special possibility to apply that you are the best one. If you can increase the number 10-30% of Erasmus applicants then you get a bonus □ much more greater. In our faculty really a maximalist every year trying to find something you. Pilot virtual Ersamus fair with the partners. Closer to students maybe an Instragram challenge for them

Interview ELTE International Coordinator at Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education 08.07.2021

A: Agrees to the recording

I: Do you know the NORM project?

A: Heard about it useful for the students

I: Survey?

A: No, but the degree survey

I: Role?

A: International Officer at Education Erasmus+ university tandems

I: How many?

A: Primary pre-school 30 Students each year, small faculty

I: Main barriers to go abroad?

A: Study filed one semester period highly support the internship after graduation. Finally start to recognise the pros about going online. 1.000 and 2.000. Language problem study English and German can speak and use language but are afraid. Grand is not enough to go abroad.

I: Offer mobility window or flexible?

A: At the moment we don't have that but we want to implement it in the next 2 years. Much more flexible 2-3 years ago created a course catalogue where courses are shown for going abroad.

I: How easy it is for students for mobility?

A: Course catalogue new initiative next 7 years with the existing catalogue so asked for each and every partner. Hard to find the perfect match at times because it is Hungarian based. This semester is the texting semester

I: How did students react?

A: They were very happy helpful and very easy. Not easy to create it

I: Effects of incoming students on the students about going abroad?

A: Depends on the group of coming in, when they are active the students are motivated. When not so outgoing and present then they can ask each other

I: Staff mobility?
A: Mostly from lecturers. When they com back they tell their experience ☐ who to ask, what they have to have the main project

I: Curricula matching tool?

A: This would be helpful live in a digital live easy access that's important

I: Mobility partner how do you match them with them?

A: Partnership subject field, teacher training is important is special only focus on lower grades, mix of both which is difficult, also not special needs. Course catalogue if this is matching of there is a transfer

I: Can a student that is not recognised?

A: First aim finding courses that match but not all of them if they find them then they can add something. Wider perspective is the aim. Try to find an elective course ☐ try to take

I: Alternative mobility?

A: Summer school not for incoming, summer school advertise it, language courses**,** internship. Short time in Erasmus ☐ helpful

I: Do you Evaluate the students mobility?

A: Feedback survey by the head office obligatory for each student. Also like to organise Erasmus afternoon presentation about their mobility

I: Is the mobility aspect considered while setting up students mobility?

A: Try to include it as much as we can. Initiate partnership. Have to do everything again because a lot of the things are based on Hungarian culture or basis. Study program English Primary. Courses there are so many partners how they offer it hard to understand their system a concentrated place

I: Promoting mobility?

A: Social media Facebook and Instagram. Application minimum 4 meetings with the students, fair, flyers. Study system where they get their grades then we send that out through the system. Student Union active also Flyer posters.

I: Matching how flexible are professors?

A: Same hard to get them into in it. Structure how Erasmus recognition one lecturer is responsible for it. Title matching is great and content basis 75% match. Not so strict 40% is also fine. The other is Hungarian courses they can not do it abroad have to hand in a sperate form will be abroad how can we finish the course ☐ Every teacher can be involved. But the teachers a bit aside. Double recognition is a problem ☐ a second exam

Interview AUTh Institutional Erasmus Coordinator and Staff 02.07.2021

I = Interviewer,

A = Head of AUTh's Erasmus office

B = NORM AUTh team member, Erasmus Office staff

C = Erasmus Office staff,

D = NORM AUTh team member, Erasmus staff for the School of Psychology

E = Member of the NORM-Project staff Marburg)

I: Before we start the questions – I will explain the outline of the interview in a few moments- but first, as a formality, and I would ask "you would like to record it", I have just started recording the interview; of course we will only use the recording for the purpose of the project, so, for the analysis of the data, for dissemination and if we use any material for the dissemination, of course we won't give away any personal information without your consent if it is related to you in person.
I would just ask you if you would give your consent to the recording?

A: Okay.

I: Thank you.
And your colleague as well?

C: Yes, yes, I do.

I: Thank you. We have to be sure so we can use the material for the project; and because now we're starting a bit, I would propose that I say a few words on the questionnaire and how you would like to proceed; I expect B will come any moment and as he is involved in the project as well, I think it will be easy for him

A: Let me call him, for a moment.

I: Yes, of course.

A: If he is not going to take part, maybe we can proceed.

I: Yeah.

D: I and E, as we are waiting, I would like to ask; so,
we're going to have a transcript as exact as possible and then analyze them?

I: Yes, that's the plan. So, you would transcribe the interviews as detailed as possible and ideally you would give a quick summary as well because this would give you perspective as well. But, you would identify as the most relevant that you take from the interviews. We would use the original interviews and your – like- your synopsis and then we proceed after we have the results from all the interviews.
We will proceed to the analysis of the complete feedback from the partners and relating it back to the surveys work on the more in-depth analysis. And then the next step will certainly be that we get back to you with more detailed questions, for example, on the specific study programs that you identify. This is the one part, the other is, of course, relating to the study programs of the regulated fields or the modular fields and identify what barriers- as an example- relate to which areas which, for example, study structures and so on. It will be a process to go but the first important step is you transcribing the interviews and seeing what we take from it. Is that OK? There will be sufficient time to do this because we still take time of course to do all the interviews with the partners so you can see that maybe with your colleagues, you maybe discuss what the outcome is for you, with the interviews as well.
Sorry, A, do you know if B is coming?

A: Eh, he doesn't answer the phone.

B: I'm here. Sorry I can't connect the camera but I will try.
Let me see. It's trying to find the camera.

A: For me it was difficult because it is the first time with this platform.

I: Every platform is different.

B: Just give me a moment.

I: Yeah, no worries. Usually it's quite an easy and stable platform that we are using. We have for the university, in the University of Marburg we have two platforms that you are allowed to use; and I always prefer this one because I think it's very good to work with.

B: Hi (on camera).

I: Perfect. Good morning, B.

B: Good morning, good morning to all.

I: It's fantastic that you can all join us. I 've just asked your colleagues as well and, now, the same for you; I have started recording this interview session and I ask for your consent. As you know, as partner of the project, we will use it for the project purposes; and for dissemination and, of course, ask for you consent again if we need material for any further activities.

B: Yeah, I am fine with that. Yes.

I: Thank you, perfect. And I just wanted to say few words; first of all, first we jumped right into the small talk in the beginning and of course we know each other, B, but I think I haven't met both of you. Maybe we crossed paths when we were in Thessaloniki, but only shortly, if you remember. I am I, the institutional coordinator at the University of Marburg.
I work in the project from the beginning; and E is a new member in our team. I think you have been in quite close contact by email in the last couple of weeks. So thank you for joining and taking the time. We sent you, E sent you the questionnaire, a very long list; of course, we won't go through all the questions. As you noticed, it is more focused on ECTS Coordinators, on Faculty level. But, of course, this relies as well on your work on central level and the international programs office, your office, European programs office. And so, when we relate to the questions, we want do all the list of questions; it's more the topics that interest us; and then it's up to you to identify what your position is and what your experience is.

As you know from the Project for us is more important, for example, how your unit supports the Faculties, how your communication and corporate structures are; and how you may be influence study structures from the international perspective? So we would focus, although will be following the main topics, on-like-crediting, recognition procedures, information management. And then you are free to talk about your experiences and we would try to follow up on these with one or two questions maybe from the list; and depending, of course, on the topic who of you is the expert who wants to share the experience.

So, first of all, you all know the NORM project, you've all been involved at least in parts of the project.

For you, A, did you participate in the survey as well? it's just important for us to know what your pre-knowledge of the topic is. Did you do the NORM survey?

A: I think it was with B. B is the expert one for this, he is the central person who's dealing with NORM and of course, me, C and all the other colleagues we are in touch and give information if B asks for our opinion and all together give information.

We have the department (i.e. Department of European Educational Programs) but we have offices- let's say; the office for the incoming, the office for the outgoing students, the financial department, the international, Erasmus+ international department, and of course,all together we cooperate for the Erasmus program. Of course, B and C as they have already informed you, have the most expertise in outgoing students; B has some statistics from the Department through our MOEBIUS Project.

B: Software, MOEBIUS software.

A: Yeah, software. So from this MOEBIUs we can have information about each department. We have 41 departments/Schools.

It's very difficult for us, we are a centralized University, and our Office is dealing with all these Schools, for the Erasmus program, I mean.

We have information on recognition– they (the Schools) give us the information; we try to have all this information, we ask them to give it; I mean, at the end of the semesters we ask the information about the recognition; and all these statistics coming through this MOEBIUS project.

B maybe can send you-if you want- about these Departments you had the interviews the previous days; he can give you more details about the recognition and how they are dealing with the Erasmus project.

I: Perfect.

A: Maybe B or C want to add something? And as for the department, we have the central website, our website of European Educational Programs where we have all the information; we have the contact person in each School, the names of the ECTS coordinators. Our University was the first one that had these special ECTS Coordinators in each Department, in Greece I mean, and then the other continued with this; we are the first to put ECTS Coordinators in each School.

And after this, we have another website, central website of the University where students can find all the details about their studies from each School again. Here they can find the courses we can offer in English and in other languages of course, let's say, the Law School has courses in English, in French and in German also.

We have all this information about the Erasmus program in our website and then they can go to the special information for each School. And, also, "MODIP": Quality Assurance Unit, where they can find information, more detailed information for each School. Of course we have information about accommodation, insurance, special needs and all these that we are obliged to have in order to have the Erasmus Chart.

So, all the information is announced on our website. That was an introduction from me and, of course, B can add more details.

I: Thank you. Maybe the others switch off their microphones-I have an echo.

I don't know which microphone is. Ok. thank you I'm really sorry. Thank you for the overview and, I know that you have very effective in central Information management and in relation with your Faculties. And I would be happy B, if you follow up on this information; but I would just maybe introduce 2 quick questions so you can already include them in your answers.

One is, the ECTS Coordinators in your Faculties if they are responsible as well for- like- the administrative issues; because I think it's very interesting that you have ECTS coordinators and so, what tasks, how the roles are defined? And I know the colleagues yesterday mentioned as well that you have this evaluation

process and I would be interested-for one- I know you're very high numbers, so, what criteria you use to evaluate; is it just quantity?
Do you use other criteria as well?

And especially, as you mentioned, you have recognition data as well. So how you gather and how you use these recognition data for the evaluation? Maybe these questions first, and then we can follow up more details; thank you.

B: Ok. So, in our University because we are highly centralized, so all administrative processes- the major ones I could say- are handled by our department; so, applications, selection procedures, evaluation of applications, all these issues are handled by our department. Also, you know, preparing the grant agreement, receiving and double- checking, now with the Online Learning Agreement not so much, but approving-you know- the Learning Agreements in order to be sure that all the conditions and requirements of the program are met. All these are done by our department. so we try to separate; all administrative issues that are handled by us and all the academic issues about the mobility our handled by Departmental Coordinators; they are called ECTS coordinators, because according to the Greek law, there is certain ministerial Decision that sets the framework for the ECTS system in Greece. And in there, there is an Article, there is a certain provision for assigning in each School of the University an ECTS coordinator, someone responsible, a Faculty member responsible for managing the implementation of the ECTS system. So, we have taken this definition and we have applied it to our university. So of course, when we talk about ECTS coordinators, there are also internal administrative issues and procedures within each Department that should be handled by the ECTS coordinator in collaboration with the Secretariat. Because the organizational structure in our University is that there is a School, there are Faculties, which are broader units, and in each Faculty there are Schools and the Schools they have the president, the Head of the School and then there is the Secretariat of each School/Department in order to handle all academic issues. We do not have a central admissions office for example. I think in some German Universities there is a separate office handling all academic issues for all students. In our case, each School has its own Secretariat. So, when it comes, for example, to approving a LA internally at the School; it is a collaboration between the ECTS coordinator and the Secretariat; or when the students come back and bring back the ToR, it's up to the Secretariat in collaboration with the ECTS coordinator to get the

grades, to implement what has been stated in the Learning Agreement and to make the grade transfer and, perhaps, this is a "?" there. Perhaps also help with the grade conversion; I think one of the last painstaking issues within the university. Because it's ok, we have managed to find many ways and to find solutions for ECTS credits recognition but grade conversion is another hot topic, I think for many universities. Then, when it comes to evaluation; also, the evaluation is handled centrally by our department, so we have a central platform where all applications are being uploaded there; and it is separated by Department [School], and then in this platform we export, we get academic data for students through the Student Information System of our university/ So each student has in this platform his grades, his average grade, ECTS credits, the year of studies; I think these three. And then. in this platform the ECTS coordinators have access, they are the only ones having access and they go inside this platform and also, based on these documents, -our department just checks the documents, if they are there, are but it doesn't do anything more in this procedure- then it's the role of the ECTS coordinators to get in the platform and- say for example- check the level of language knowledge; and which is the motivation of the student. So we have also these two factors so, we have a general five Factor evaluation, let's say, which is translated into points, unit points. So the final and it's not just an average of these five factors, these five indicators; it is a weighted average, that means that, for example, the weight of the average grade is 1.5, while the weight of the ECTS credits is 1.23 and for language it's 1.

So, you see, that we give t a higher importance, for example to the academic, let's say, accomplishments of the students. So through this there is a final total units ' points for each student, for each selection that he or she does, and then, based on the agreement, then the ECTS coordinator allocate the students to different agreements. And so, we have the final selection. I think that A has raised her hand, she has to add something

I: Yes, please.

A: I think, B, we have all this procedure in one of your presentations in English. So, if you want, we can send you this procedure in order to see how we deal with this I think it's, if B wants, I thing that this would be useful to see all these steps we use. Only this, thank you.

B: Yes, I can send you. I could share it now but I don' t know if it would be useful to show all these things. So, we have these units' points and the allocation of students; it's a little bit difficult, to be honest, because some ECTS coordinators are not yet familiar, but once they get it they can do it and we have a very objective way to select students. And then we have -this is the online part of MOEBIUS that A told you before- then we have the offline part of MOEBIUS, this is the mobility software that we have developed in our University, it's an in-house built software And so, in the offline part, the offline part of MOEBIUS, there we have all the data of the students, we upload documents that the students have prepared or have returned to us when, you know, the mobility is over. In this section, except from the documents, the actual documents, the ToR, let's say, we, also, have another section within this part that it's about recording and stating ECTS credits. So, we have a very good overview; and this is a work that it's being done by C and F my colleagues there, who receive it and type in all these data that they get. So, we have a student that has a LA, for example, with 30 ECTS credits at the beginning, when he or she departs from the University, so we have it there in this section; then we have the Changes that he or she might send us and have different perhaps some of these ECTS credits; then we have the ToR; there we state how many exams he or she has taken, how many ECTS credits were successful and how many credits of these haves been recognized. So we take all these data out and we have all these kind of…, you know, we try to find – what' s the word now- …the statistical outcomes of all these, to find for example, the percentages in each School; the percentage of ECTS credits declared in each mobility, then the ECTS percentage of the ECTS credits that have been taken successfully as exams, and the percentage of the ECTS credits that have been recognized here in the university. So, we have a very good overview at the end, when we know.

25:16 - 25:57

the whole workflow or this mobility in terms of ECTS credits. it was based, of course it is not something that we came up with, it was based on previous project before; I think it was in the context before the Erasmus+ KA2 projects; it was the previous I think TEMPUS, something like that, so, we had participated in that and we had all this information and we implemented. And now we can, for example, see for a School that has a low percentage of recognition where is the point that this very nice flow broke. Is it that the students have declared a low number of ECTS credits or is that the students did not take all the exams they should have or they have taken all the exams but were

not successful, so what's the issue here? We can contact the ECTS coordinators, we can provide them with these tools and go through a discussion, perhaps, and say that, ok let's try (I'm sorry (external noise)], so we go to and say, look, look into that. The interesting point is that in some cases the ECTS coordinators are not satisfied with the numbers. You know, they have a distorted image of reality -to be honest- because they might communicate with some students that are the high-level students of the mobilities and not with those that are not so responsible and perhaps haven't taken all exams. I think it's helpful. Of course, there are problems with that, because we get this information from the Secretariats and in some cases the Secretariats do not get back, do not send us the data so they have zero ECTS recognized, but this is not the reality there.

On the other hand, these have been included in an official document from the Senate to all the Departments; it was in 2019 that it was circulated to the whole academic community of the university. So, in a way we resolved the issue and they saw it- ok, it's not, perhaps, so good to expose them to the whole community. But on the other hand it's very important, because they know that -you know- they should do something and there's also a Decision there in this Senate communication that these data, these percentages will be taken into account for the Grant allocation within the university to different schools, so it will be, also, a qualitative factor for allocating the grants. I think this from here.

I: Yeah, you know this is very interesting especially as we see that international mobility and internationalization has a direct effect on the Faculty; financial issues always show the point.

B: I, if I may? This was not only a decision from the University; I know that there is a new law, when it comes to the Quality Assurance of HE, and I think that the percentage of the funding that universities get from the Ministry will depend on the numbers of mobility, of international mobility, of Erasmus mobilities in general, so this is, also, a factor that -you know- in a more central level will be taken into account.

I: Very good. I think, A, you wanted to…

A: It's OK. It was about the Decision of the Senate. B has already informed you about this. And, also, this is a reason to stop a bilateral agreement, of course; if the students cannot take the exams or the study guide is not OK for the students, and we don't have good results from the mobility; of course, this is a reason to evaluate co-operations and then decide to stop them or to discuss again how can we go about this next year. So, we need very good statistics in order to evaluate the co-operation.

I: Actually, you already transferred to my next point, because after what you both presented my next question would be -like- what are the consequences? How do you use this information? For example, one aspect is the partnership management in the NORM project, we discussed a lot on the level of individual mobilities and, of course, on the level of partnership management and here you already described one direct effect of these data. In the surveys we noticed that major barriers, structural barriers are recognition and students' information, access to information; information in the host institution and Information management in their own institution are issues that they mention as a barrier to their mobility or to their successful mobility. You already mentioned some of the aspects.
So, how do you use or support the faculties in using the information, this quality information that you described, maybe to support successful mobility? So, for example, matching of faculties or students to specific host institutions. How do you make it accessible so students can prepare their mobility successfully?
Maybe, B, this is more for you because it's more on a practical level of your duties.

B: I think that- you know- we have the data, these data that I mentioned before, but on the other hand, we are 41 Schools in one University; it's, perhaps, very difficult to handle centrally and to make this matchmaking with the host universities and Departments; so it's mainly up to the Departments to do this one and to the ECTS coordinators, and, to be honest, when there are Faculty members that are not ECTS coordinators they usually think of this role as something -you know- trivial or something -you know- that it's not so much of a responsibility; and there are, also, opinions that it's just about going to trips and some like that. So, when they get into that, they realize and usually-you know- also complaining a bit, because it's a very huge workload, because they have the overview of all these mobilities, meaning from presenting to the Assembly, General Assembly of the School, presenting all the new agreements that

they put forward; with the requirements for proposing a new agreement -and this is the responsibility mainly of A and Savvas, my colleagues there-. There is a requirement that they should, all Professors and faculty members should first have this matchmaking and then proceed to a new agreement; there are quantitative criteria for proposing a new interinstitutional agreement. Although, I can say, that there is no mechanism like the one I described before in order to make sure that there is one there; there is the responsibility of the Schools to say that "yes, faculty member xx that proposes this agreement has done all the preparation and the research before proposing this agreement"; however, there are these annually, I could say, I am not sure if it's annual, I think it's annual-you know- checking if there are mobilities, students' mobilities, faculty mobilities; so, they are correcting measures, I could say that, in case that there are no student mobilities, because now we have around 1600 agreements with 600 partner universities, we go back to the Schools and we say "look, you have mainly faculty members' mobilities there, so, let's remove students' mobility from this agreement because there is no use of having this because there is no interest from your students for the last 3 years", for example; and so, it's an inactive -in terms of mobility- agreement; "so, let's focus on the staff teaching and training that is, perhaps, more important for you because you have -you know-your research activities and all this good collaboration with this School". I think this is, also, let's say, a quality assurance mechanism, but not so very strictly defined like the previous one. I don't know, A, if I forgot anything.

A: We, also, we organize meetings with the professors and the ECTS coordinators; before the Covid I mean; now we can only by zoom meeting -you know- to discuss these, but before Covid we organized discussions with the responsible persons, the Head of the Department, the Secretariat, the ECTS coordinators, me, B, C, and all my colleagues, and, also, the members of our Committee, because, we have also -maybe, B, we didn't mention this- this we have a European Educational Programs Committee from professors, they are, I think, ten, ten of them; and organise meetings in every School and discuss problems, for new co-operations, for the old co-operations we had; we discuss with them how we can evaluate them; how they can be more active and to send more students. Because, you know, if you have 1600 co-operation agreements -bilateral agreements- students usually prefer to go to famous universities, maybe to Spain or to Italy which are more -you know- attractive to them. So we go there and say

how to organise meetings, students' fairs; we organize students 'fairs; we used to organize every year (pre-Covid) two, in May and in Christmas, I think, before Christmas in order to inform our students; foreign students inform Greek students about their countries, about their universities in order to be more attractive to go there; not only to the large universities, but also to all Universities we have people from. So, we try to do our best in order to promote the program and, of course, not only huge universities like ours. I think these discussions are very useful, and, also, our Committee has done a very good job in this.

I: Thank you.

A: And of course, my colleagues.

I: Thank you, thank you. We talked a lot about the individual basis of mobility; so, the agreements on faculty level and the individual mobility counselling. Barriers that we identified in the discussions on the structural level, so there is -in a way- two ways to ensure mobility options for students; so, you can include it in the study structures and all you can have a more flexible approach to recognition mobility; and maybe in the development of structures or the evaluation of degree programs; so,
what is your impression at the moment or what is the policy, the decisions of your institution in approaching this topic of, maybe, redesigning re-accrediting study degree programs?
So that, it's more integrated, successful mobilities; and maybe, A, I don't know if this is more in your direction to answer this question or if B wants to answer.

B: Do you want me to?

A: B, maybe, he can try to answer.

B: I think there was an internal discussion about this, and an ongoing, for almost, I could say, three or two years about this, because, I think, there is an ongoing discussion about an effort to set up study abroad programs as a separate action within the curricula, because, as I mentioned before, we have 41 Schools, we have very different subject areas, so we have very different peculiarities in these study programs.

It's not easy for the Rectorate, the Administration of the University to impose anything and go and say that "in your curricula you should, or you have to include a mobility window, a mobility program within your curriculum.

A: They advise…they cannot say "do this" or "you have to do that"

On the other part, this is the reason why the Rectorate tries to implement these study abroad programs; in order to be something more centrally organized, so not to get into the organizational structure of each School; on the other hand, there this new law about including and introducing English language taught programs in Greek Universities. This is a Ministry directive, let's say, towards higher degree of internationalization.

So if there is not something more concrete in the context of the Ministry, in the level of the Ministry, it would not be, perhaps, not so easy to go in the curricula of each School. And I would say, I would add that – to be honest- we have made a very huge effort internally, also, to make Departments understand, because it's a matter of understanding in this case, understand that there should be more electives in the curricula, because they were trying to match courses that were exactly the same; the same content and the same title with existing ones that were- you know- in the obligatory courses already in the curricula and they do not offer, some of the Schools -others have already implemented the electives option many many years before, but some Departments were not introducing more elective courses, free choices -let's say- courses that could more easily be adapted to the courses offered at a foreign University, at a partner university. So, I think this the first step for us, the first effort and fight to achieve internally; to make all Schools to do this one; and I think that the mobility window will come as a very natural outcome of this effort, because once you have a set of -let's say- 5 elective courses with 30 ECTS credits, meaning one semester, then you, perhaps, can make it a mobility window for students.

I: Yeah. For the students it would give more security in planning; they do have to plan the whole program ahead if they want to integrate a semester abroad. So, I'm just trying…, I had a question while I was listening to you and it slipped my mind, so, maybe I come back to this in a moment once I've remembered. And, I would first, maybe, I would go to another aspect I wanted to ask you. So, apart from the traditional semester or year mobilities,

Do you offer and support alternatives; for example, for students who either cannot afford or cannot integrate into their degree program a whole semester mobility and maybe short-term programs or traineeships; how is this integrated in your strategy?

A: You mean if we offer such programs?

I: Yeah.

A: We don' t have such a program we only have the semesters, you know, and for the incoming students.

B: And the Erasmus+ traineeship.

A: And through the Erasmus+ traineeships of course; we have this for two or three months, for our students. And, especially for the Health studies, it's easier for them to go for a short program, because they can have clinics and they can have their ECTS and, you know, to complete in less than a semester; trimester it is, as C says.
But for students going outside for studies they have to attend the whole semester in order to have their evaluation, to take the exams and not only to have one course; this is not a complete mobility. And also, we cannot provide short-term studies, we don't have short-term studies in our University; that's why it's difficult to go for a short time of study for our students.

I: Yeah, yeah.

B: The main reason for these, I think that it's funding mostly. As I have told before, this is the discussion about study abroad programs for students, but on the other hand there is this funding, so unfortunately, only funded options like Erasmus+ are the main ways to have students abroad; we have Erasmus+ studies, Erasmus+ traineeships, so this is the main funding program we have so far.

I: But do you think, because if we think about the programs you offer and what mobility options can be accessible to students; and the new Erasmus program, of course tries

147

to offer more flexible mobility forms as well which is, maybe complex to integrate into your programs; to have recognizable, for example, short-term or blended mobilities. **Do you see potential there to reach out to more students if you, maybe, actively support your faculties in supporting these kinds of mobilities?**
I'm not sure which of you should answer.

B: I am the most talkative, so I will jump in and say my thoughts; because I have to leave you in five minutes, I have another meeting. I think, as usual the Erasmus+ program is a force making and introducing changes in the universities. I think this is case, also for us. So I don't know if we haven't had the Erasmus+ program if ECTS would have been introduced in the curricula, because we had another units system before that. So, I think if the program introduces shorter mobilities or blended mobilities in a way; and this is an option for the students the departments will haveto align themselves -you know- and adopt this kind of options; of course, according to the internal structure and the law, the Greek law and so on. I think that the first group of students that will benefit from these new options will be PhD students, doctoral mobility which is short-term. They already asks us that many times: "I cannot go abroad for two or three months, so I just want to go abroad for- you know- just one month or even less". So, I think this will be something beneficial for them. I am not sure about the virtual part of the mobilities, the blended mobilities; it's very very fresh, it's very new. In the latest Call we had only semester mobilities and I think we are going step by step to see what's new with the blended mobility and try to use it.

A: But I think, due to the Covid- 19 now all Greek courses are virtual now and some of the Departments also have virtual courses in English; they had to do this due to the circumstances. So, I think now in the new Erasmus+ we all need to offer virtual courses in English; and, also, to implement this blended mobility. We used to have blended mobility for our students, outgoing students I mean, and of course, they can have only the amount for the physical mobility; you know this is from the Erasmus project. But we had students who did one or two months virtually and then went to the university and had the other three months physically. So, I think we all have to do this in our new project, in our new program; and not all the schools, but I think, most of them are preparing for this, to have also these courses virtually.

148

I: Yeah, yeah. Of course, I mean, we were forced to change and now this might be an advantage because a lot of infrastructure and the learning culture, the teaching culture have changed already.

And now the next step, of course, would be to integrate this into the regular program and to -and this is an issue for example in Germany as well- to clarify regulations as concerns recognition, as concerns integration into the study structure; and I think this is more complex, more long-term process**,**

of course, but my feed into what you mentioned as well, B, with the electives; and having this as a starting point for structural change as well; so, this might go together. I think you have to leave, that's why I am bit hesitant in speaking…

B: I am curious to see what the answers from our ECTS co-ordinators were…

I: Yeah, I think it may take time to implement this cultural change; and maybe put more on structural than individual context. But I think, I have to be honest, I have done with this now, four interviews and I was really impressed with the structure, the information and the organisational management that you have implemented already. So, I think for you with the structures you have already developed there is a clear path to actually follow up on these developments, because you do have the communication channels and-in a way- the hierarchy as well, to… to change something; but we will see once we go into the detailed analysis. But, B thank you for taking the time in joining us.

B: Thank you very much. whenever you need something just mail me and I will send it to you. One more request that I have made through my mails and I just want to ask you again here about the Gantt chart, the updated Gantt chart because I need- you know- because we are a big team and I need to allocate resources within our team or just send me the link to the drive.

I: I think we were waiting as well for the update from ELTE because it concerns the next IOs. We 'll see if it's finalised and then we will upload it. Thank you, B.

B: Thank you. Bye.

I: And, A and C, we're nearly at the end of interview as well, of course, you have taken one full hour already; and I'm just checking what structural questions I don't want to miss out on these.

I was wondering what -like what- communication you are using or what influence you have on evaluating the effects of the mobility program.

Do you have the influence to change the structures in the faculties with your internal structures, with the Rectorate if you discuss these issues? Do you think this can actually trigger, for example, a change in the accreditation scheme for degree programs; because B mentioned, he as well, that on the national level, the legislation; onternational mobility is a key factor in the evaluation, as well. So, what's your impression? Do we have processes going successfully for Change?

A: I think the Rectorate has already discussed this and they want to implement this, but, you know that there is an independence in our Schools, in our Departments; and this is difficult in Greece to touch it; to go through their decisions; you know there are some old, like us, professors who don' t want to change anything; they have the "perfect" course, no one has this course in Europe-you know- in all world, so this is the course for the students, they cannot attend this course in another University. So you understand.

We have, of course, new professors, newcomers who are citizens of Europe and they want to change things, and they try to change these things and to implement-you know- these blended mobilities, virtual activities and all this. And, also, the Rectorate wants to do this, but it will be step-by-step; and of course, we try to force them and the National Agency of course tries to force them; you know the National Agency sends these new regulations to the Senate and to our Office; we push to inform the Senate and, also, the other Schools to do things, but I think this situation we have now, I mean with Covid, it was not perfect for this new program; of course it was helpful in virtual mobilities, in blended mobilities, but I think that somewhere we lost our communication because to discuss these things in Zoom, in distance is not so good; you need to inform these people physically, to discuss with them; I mean, as we usually do, to go to these Schools and to discuss the problem there; because now you ask them to come to a Zoom meeting and from the 350 people who are dealing with these cooperation agreements maybe we will have 50, because you understand it's difficult; so it's not a

very good situation now we are dealing with. But, of course, we try, we send documents, we send the National Agency's information material and we try to push them in order to have very good results in one or two years from the new program, the new Erasmus+ program; but we cannot say now that they are ready to come in this situation; we hope that our ECTS coordinators will do their job and fix these things.

I: Yeah, in the pandemic, apart from everything else, it been too long for personal contact and cooperation, personal involvement. I noticed it, also, in our Institution. I have tripled the meetings with faculty coordinators, and in comparison it's just a small group and they actually come, they attend the meetings, we are actually very happy there, they're very reliable on this, but then it's the one meeting, it's not personal level and then so much is lost in the way; and it's more like this information session, it is not a discussion but it's … because you're in the screen, there may be one or two colleagues who actively ask questions and I think discourse is essential to propriate this kind of program. If I may, I just have one last question because I haven't touched this aspect yet.

I think it would be interesting to see your perspective; in the context of internationalization of staff;

I asked the colleagues yesterday, as well, if they think that staff mobility or international activities of staff can maybe change the influence, the understanding of the relevance of international mobility for students and the relevance for change, for example, in the study culture; and what is your impression? A) is it relevant and B) how is it used and maybe implemented in your institution? Situation

A: Yes, I think they can help in this direction. Of course we used to have these information weeks in every university, you know, the staff weeks every year, sometimes twice a year, and especially to discuss these things; it was to have the previous year such a week for…, in order to implement the voluntary courses, the voluntary work from the students to the studies, to the normal studies of the Faculties, of the Schools. We cannot manage to do this. This is one of the most, you know, of the European Commission priorities now, this voluntary work from the students. So, you understand in all this staff weeks we had discussed these things, about the evaluation, about the ECTS credits etc. and it was very helpful. Also, we send about

100 professors every year, we used to send 100 professors from the university to other universities in order to teach and more than 60 in order to have training and all these mobilities were very helpful, because,you understand that after this they come back and discuss all these things with their colleagues and how the other universities implement these courses in their studies'catalogs and this was very useful. Prof. Mitropoulou, you had, I think a discussion with her, she used to go three or four times per year, maybe more, to other universities and through this she had about two or three KA2 projects and, also, research programs, summer schools' it was very helpful.

So, I think it is the first step; and it was the first step, these exchanges in order to have these programs

I: Sorry, I have to… my battery is low.

Indeed, we noticed the enthusiasm of the colleague yesterday; and she referred to her own experience and now she is transferring it in her unit so we noticed the effect.

Just one last question, did you reach leadership for these options, as well? Because they would be the ones who maybe actually implement the change, for example, to faculty?

A: I didn't hear you clearly; maybe D

D: I am not sure if I understood

I: Maybe I can repeat.

So, do you reach leadership at your institution, as well with these mobility options? So, those people who could decide on change, for example, the faculty?

D: I am not sure if I understand the question, because we function according to the directions of the National Agency which gives us common ground; If understand you asked if we can change on our own level.

I: Yeah, maybe it's not so important.
 We are over the time anyway, so thank you, thank you so much, A and

A: If you need more information, you can send us, if you need more questions, do send us, we can answer afterwards or we can send you these statistics Nikos has already informed you about before.

I: It would be fantastic to have this data. Thank you so much.

A: We hope you can come and visit us again.

D: Thank you very much. See you on Monday.

I: Yes. Thank you, D
Bye.

Interview AUTh with ECTS/Erasmus Coordinator, School of Theology 31.06.2021

I = Interviewer

A = ECTS/ Erasmus Coordinator School of Theology AUTh

B = NORM AUTh team member, Erasmus staff for the School of Psychology

C = Protocol

D = Erasmus Coordinator from the School of Geology joins the meeting)

I: First of all I have to ask you if you agree that we record the interview session?

A: Yes of course.

I: Thank you. We will of course only use the material for the project evaluation and dissemination and everything that we would like to disseminate; of course we won't use your personal information, thank you.

A: It's no problem, no problem

I: Thank you for taking the time; we haven't met before I think, so I'm I, institutional coordinator at the University of Marburg and C I think you have been in close contact; member of our team at the university

A: I was very happy to read about NORM. I am the Erasmus Coordinator for this year, it's the first year, but I am participating in the Erasmus activities since 2005. So I was not active I was just I substituting for the Erasmus coordinator who was Professor X; so now he is the Chair of the Erasmus Committee and Head of the Faculty and I am the Erasmus coordinator of the school; we still collaborate but I took the position of Erasmus coordinator-not substituting but the regular member.

I: Perfect; but it's too good you have so many years of experience. I think B is going to join us in a moment, but we can do the preliminaries. So maybe I could ask you an additional question. You mentioned you're glad to hear about the NORM project so I think you know what the project so I think you know what the project is about, what the idea and our activities are., this of course makes it easier for us

A: (nodes affirmatively)

I: I wanted to ask you, did you take part in the survey for the NORM project as well?

A: Yes,

I: Ok.

A: I take many surveys but I think yes, yes.

I: Ok, very good. So you know the idea and the design and it won't be so much of a surprise what we will be talking about today.

A: I think students will benefit from this activity.

I: We do hope so, indeed. And maybe first of all, before we go on C sent an overview of the questions. We will not follow them step-by-step because it's too many questions of course and the major part is the different like topics that were outlined in red and I tend to be more free, like off the text. Anyway, so don't be surprised because we want to react to what you are telling us of course. It's supposed to be a not so structured **and I would first ask you to maybe say a few words about your role, your position; you already mentioned that you have taken the position one year ago officially and maybe what your role your responsibility is at your faculty and in the context of course of student mobility?**

A: Well, yes. The student mobility, as you know, includes applications of the students, incoming and outgoing, grading them, select the students that will go-the outgoing students- and then we contact them, I mean that we are in constant contact with incoming and outcoming students; the incoming because they need some advice on how to find the teachers, how to contact them and all the time with the secretary, the office we have, how to help them with the papers, with the selection of their courses; everything; it is really full-time. And then there are the outgoing students who are…- that is the thing we could discuss more about- is that we tried to encourage them to

155

help them in any way we can, for example, how to find the courses that they are similar to an extent at least, if not at all, because it's difficult to find exactly the same course in universities but even partially;

how to help them select them and then contact the colleagues and tell them: ok we found this course will you be able to recognize it?

So the colleagues, the school is very flexible, we really want to encourage students going out

I: Very good, yeah. And as you noticed from the questionnaire of course recognition and the preparation of the study program abroad is one of the core aspects of our discussion.

Could you maybe give a bit of quantitative information, how many students or what percentage of students is doing a mobility abroad? Is it difficult to say?

A: It's very low. For example, because as I said I haven't followed over the years, but I know we had about 3 to 4 students per semester. They usually stay the second semester as well. This semester for example I have just selected four students and I already had one decline from one of them who has personal problems. The others are OK, but there are still problems, how to select the courses from the Universitie and how they are similar or not similar to ours, so we had a three hours online meeting to help them select the courses and then counting the ECTS

One thing is the ECTS. some of the Universities have only the credit points on their site and this creates difficulties for our, the outcoming students to other universities because, as we use the ECTS, then they have to calculate what is the equivalence of the credit points to ECTS. And some of the university's count them for year and some others- like us- per semester. This was already a difficulty

I: Yes, indeed. We know the problem of sometimes having these modules that go over the whole year and really poses a barrier to our students as well. I think B is joining us. So maybe I just had a question I wanted to ask you, to follow upon this [may be while B is joining]

Hello, B. My apologies again for the mix up before. We have just started with an introduction and setting the scene for the questions. And I just wanted to ask you, maybe before we go to the focus of recognition, what from your experience, what are

the major barriers to mobility that you would name. So you mentioned already the aspect of choice of courses and recognition; what do you think are other barriers that are the core of the problem

A: It is the fear of the unknown. So most of the students have never left home especially those for example who live in Thessaloniki, have lived in Thessaloniki, still live with their parents and suddenly they realize they have to be abroad alone with nobody else to help them; that is really the fear of the unknown, that is one thing. We try to encourage them of course. Then the money is another.. the financial matter is, of course, another issue because many families after the economic crisis we had, which was really disaster, still cannot support the students studying abroad because you know the money that Erasmus provides is not, do not cover all the costs and they have to cover some costs themselves or their parents, so this is a burden for the home who may not afford that.

I: Yeah. So this is more like personal reasons, personal barriers to mobility. But I think this links closely to the aspect of recognition.
Do you think that the fear of prolongation of studies, which is of course a financial issue as well, that this is an issue for students?

A: Yes, of course, the prolongation of studies. That's why for the last years we this tendency that the students, especially for practice, they prefer to have completed their studies and then move, go to mobility. For example, they apply at the 8th semester which is the last and then immediately after graduation or having just one course for September they go for their practice abroad. Sure this prolongation of studies is a worry for them because they don't want to stay behind in their studies.
We try to help them to have as many courses common with the semester courses or the future semester courses or those which have left from the courses before; So if possible to have them all, so no not only don't stay behind but cover courses that they haven't taken part before.

I: So do you have, like, let's say specific mobility windows or extracurricular modules that can be included in the mobility to make it easier for students?

A: This moment we don't have. the only thing we have as extracurricular- part of a course- is the practice in schools. So one student, for example, speaks German fluently and r wishes to go to Leipzig or to Heidelberg University (we have agreements for example) and they also have the same training course at schools so they can follow the same course and have the training in Germany. The opposite is more difficult, I know it's very difficult to speak Greek. But for those who would like, who had learned ancient Greek in schools, perhaps they have a certain level of Greek, they can also have this course. We also try to have an agreement with the German school of Thessaloniki, where the courses are all in German, so that the students from German Universities can have their practice at a German school.

I: Hi B.

B: Hi, sorry to interrupt, I'm really happy to see you even from the screen. Thank you A for your kind presence here. I just wanted to ask-probably I will have it in the following questions- but,
how do you recognize courses? Do you need your students to have…(because we have another way at the School of Psychology), do you ask them to find similar courses and to what extent?

A: Similar courses either partially in title or content. So if the course may have a different title and this is very common; we don't have the same titles of the courses, in Greece or other , because the mentality is different of course. But we check also the content, so if the content is similar we can recognize it; for example, it's a History or Medieval history and in Greece is Medieval and Modern History together. So we can say OK, it's Medieval and Modern History and we can recognize it.

B: Just to clarify, do you have a proportion, 50, 60% similar or is it is up to the Erasmus coordinator?

A: It is up to the Coordinator in collaboration with the teacher. Usually we prefer to help them, to facilitate them. So it has to be something very very specific. For example, the opposite, like, the course in Greece is Medieval and Modern History and the course in the other University is only Medieval, so we say OK, you have to be examined only in

the second part. This can be either with exams or an assignment; it will be discussed with the teacher but in any way we try to facilitate this recognition.

B: Ok thank you. I, do you need me to help you? You have a very good flow at the questions, so I leave the floor to you.

I: Then maybe I could perhaps quickly follow up. A you mentioned that like for the practical part this is an option for your students;
so do you think that rather than having this mobility for studies that this actually like traineeships is more easily accessible for your students?

A: Sorry, didn' t follow the question.

I: The practical part.
As I understood for your students it's easier to do at the end of the studies, to do kind of like traineeship, like a practical training at schools instead of mobilities at studies

A: It's a tendency the last 2- 3 years, we will see how it goes. We encourage them to leave in the middle of the studies so in the 3rd year- 5th or 6th semester- or in the 7th semester for example near the end of the studies, when they have also completed the previous courses, so they don't have many courses left. And also, what I think is helping them is that they have a contact student in the university they go. I think this works very well so they know how to contact, to find for some help, to find a flat or place to live, to show them around the University and help them with any difficulties they might find.
Because, as I said before, they are insecure because they don't know where they are going, it's an unknown place. They don't have dormitories in the university or have a specific place to sleep, so they have to rent a flat or a room and this is really worries them.

I: Yes, yes. So the question would go to both of you really. **So, as concerns- this is one of the aspects in the questionnaire to provide information about the mobility**

options for students- how do you do that effectively? how do you approach the students? And when do you start to promote mobility?

A: Can I say, B, first? So every year, at the beginning of the year, in October we have this welcoming of the students, of the newcoming students; so in this welcoming ceremony we have a special section for Erasmus, to inform them about the Erasmus mobility, what they can do, what options they have, to show them some sites to visit and I introduce myself, give them my contact information-telephone, mail- so that they can contact me; we really have a lot of interest. I mean we have more than twenty students declare their interest immediately, that is a good number for initial interest; but I think this initial interest should remain over the next years, especially before the application time. So I thought that this year I should have another event -let's say- with the students that were outgoing students the previous year telling them about the experience they had, the difficulties they found, who contacted them. In this way they can ask them but not formally because when we have something more formally then they just are not very eager to participate. So I arrange events informal among the students to participate and explain what they did. Really, what has tarnished me all these years is that the students returning from abroad are so much changed, so more mature, they have a total new personality so much an integrated personality. I am really astonished every time and I think this should be shown to the other students; how much this coming closer to other cultures and other people really matures them and broadens perspective.

I: In the previous interview we discussed shortly, a bit more time, the options of virtual **mobility or short-term mobility and to be honest we both agreed that the physical mobility, being integrated into the host culture, the personal contact are something that cannot be replaced by- like- a virtual context. Did your position confirm this?**

A: Fully, fully. I have my courses; I have declared my courses are taught in English when there are Erasmus students so in order to… even where there is even one Erasmus student I do it bilingual; in Greek and then in English so that the Erasmus students can participate. What I also do is, ask the Erasmus students that are following the course to present their University, how they decided to come to Greece, what

difficulties they faced, what they wanted to have as a help when they came here. And then they establish contact, so it is easier for our students afterwards to decide to go to that University.

I: This is an aspect I actually wanted to follow up, my next question, if you think that having the incoming students, international students in your courses, this is a bit of international classroom maybe as an access point for your students and motivating them, removing barriers as well. So you have already answered the question before that. You already mentioned, like, how you do the Information management for the mobility options.
From you experience how easy is it for students to prepare mobility so to get access, for example, to the information from the prospective host institution, prepare the Learning Agreement with your support of course? What are the barriers they are facing there?

A: I think it's.. they don't really know how to look in the sites. There is a very good service; our site from the Erasmus Office is very well organised. There are links everywhere, there are links to the Agreement, they can find the person or persons who are involved in the contact and then it is very easy to find the courses in universities within our course; I mean we have a special site where they can find everything in our courses, content information, ECTS information, everything. And I see in many Universities there is the same system; so it's easy; they just don't know, don't know how to look for them.

 I: So yeah, so I mean you know the content of the NORM project and you might know that **one aspect is this idea of a curriculum matching tool; and -just- do you think having, like, more transparent, maybe more digitised access to course information, timely access may be, that this would help in the preparation?**

A: Yes, of course.
They need to find very easily the information. That is what, that is what is left for them: what is the course? how can I find information? A system like this is University I think would be perfect. Visit the university, find the courses match to my courses, contact the teachers or through the coordinator or by themselves; and then just write the

agreement. The forms are easier now than were before. And the digital signature we use makes things even more easy. I don't have to meet in physical presence, I just sent…, they send me the agreement, I signed it, perfect. It' s an excellent idea.

I: Yeah, yeah, very good.
And an other aspect…. but first I have to ask; are you responsible for the institutional agreements or are they managed centrally?

A: Each one, from our School, each one signs his own or her own agreement. So we are responsible for our agreement, but all the process is done centrally. So the coordinator is responsible for checking the applications, for contacting if something happens; to sign the Learning agreement; as we say the responsible person.
When students come to Thesaloniki they are encouraged to meet the coordinator, the agreement responsible person; so they know who is the person; who is the contact with their professor, their University.

I: The reason I ask, as well, is, of course, one aspect of a successful tool to ensure mobility is to have mobility places, mobility options abroad that fit to your curricula.
And I would be interested in how you manage the quality of your agreement? So how do you select a partner; what information do you need to have a good partner for your students? Because, of course this goes directly into finding the correct courses that will be recognized

A: So, the option is that we have to be the same School or similar School. For example the School of Theology has has agreements with other schools of theology or schools of pedagogy, education. We have a great variety of courses so we can have also exchanges and agreements with Education Schools. For example, we have an agreement with Finland and it's a long-term collaboration; students regularly coming, going. And so this is the main criterion that we have: the same school or similar so we can have the same courses or similar.

I: You mentioned earlier on that you try to be very flexible with a selection of courses and recognition, so students are maybe…can go abroad even if they don't need so

many ECTS, so many courses anymore for their studies. So as I understand it you even try to support students who may not do the whole courses for their degree abroad.

How do you, how do you decide if students who only need maybe one more course go abroad?

You still support the mobility as I understand.

A: We also support them to learn the language when they go to another country. When students get to Germany; we have many agreements with Germany, we encourage them to learn the language as well. So we say, this is an opportunity, because when you are in another country you can develop new skills.

And even in Greece, when they want to come to Greece, I say to my colleagues abroad. I tell them Ok, it' a good opportunity to learn the basics in the language.

I: In a moment we can come back to the aspect of the staff mobility. But, you mentioned language and you mentioned additional competencies for students who go abroad.

How do you communicate incentives for the mobility? Do you try to convince the students on what the advantages are, so they have a motivation beyond like "I want to see Barcelona", "have a good time"? how do you deal with this?

A: For example, I had a discussion last year with a student about choosing courses. She was looking for some courses that are not taught in Greece, but were very interesting, like for example Egyptiology. I said, excellent opportunity to learn about this as there no such course in Greece. And she decided to select it. So one thing is that they can learn other things that are not taught in our University.

Also, what I find invaluable is that you come in contact with the culture. You can also as a part of your study, you can visit a museum, know the cultural life of that place; this really is what cultivates one person, not just knowledge.

I: Just a second, B, I just have to one follow-up question for A.

So just to try to summarize it; I understand that in your faculty it's more that you try to be flexible with the selection of courses than that you have, like, structural mobility options in your curriculum. So, so it's more an informal way of trying to find ways for students to select the courses abroad

163

A: Yes. If we have students, for example when a student says that I want to follow a Masters course afterwards, I want to be in biblical studies and so when they decide to go abroad to be an outgoing Erasmus student we advise to choose a biblical course, so he can get more knowledge that will use later on. I think it's very good because biblical studies are very cultivated in European countries

I: Yeah, yeah. I didn't mean to criticize it, I just wanted to try to clarify because in some degree programs that are very regulated you do need very structured mobility options to ensure recognition; and another programs it's more flexible because the programs are more open and I just wanted to clarify, ehm.., to understand better you structure

A: Courses that have more text, patristic texts, they cannot be taught in other countries because they are very very specific, so this course   if it's selected in another country it will be, let's say, not so much in terms of explanation and syntax and grammar. So then the professor in my school can say: ok, I have the exercise or the laboratory part of this course which cannot be substituted, so when you come back I want you to do this (part of the course). That's why we select very carefully the courses, together with them so they can be similar.

I: Yeah, yeah.
So there are courses that can be changed but this is communicated in advance to the students so they can create a reliable LA, ok.

A: So, that's why I talk a lot with them before they write their LA; so that they know what to choose. This Is a good process we follow, so they choose the courses that can really be recognized.
I discourage my students to take, like, training courses telling you can't go to schools there, you don't know the language, so when you come back I can't recognize it, because a substantial part of the course is being at a school.

I: B, yes?
B: Sorry, I lost you for a few seconds. **J**

ust to clarify something. If someone…, can a student choose a course that is not going to be recognized?

A: Yes, but he has to know in advance that it's not going to be recognized, like what I said about Egyptiology.

B: Yes, exactly that' s the example. **What do you do with these courses? Do you include them in the Diploma Supplement as extra information?**

A: Yes, yes.

B: Ok. So they know in advance that they will have, for example 20 ECTS credits from the other courses and they will attend another course for their own personal and educational development, but this won't be recognized; ok.

A: Yes, but it's their own choice; because if they really think that it's interesting for them, like, we have students from other countries like Romania,

and they come to Greece, to the School of Theology, they choose patristic courses, the New Testament courses …so they know what they're looking for; and they see it as an opportunity to choose, also, and learn something more.

I: Thank you, B, for adding the question; this was very helpful to clarify this. We are almost at the end of the interview because the next colleague expects enter the room shortly, but I would just quickly, if you allow me, ask one more question on staff mobility, because you mentioned already that-like-teachers being international mobile could maybe be an advantage. **Do you promote this and do you think that having internationally experienced staff can be an advantage for your student, to motivate them to be mobile?**

A: I think it's very encouraging for them because when we come back we also transfer our experience and explain about the University and say "this is really nice city with the university campus". So we explain what's going on we tell them about the courses and the teachers; and the students in this way they feel more secure that" ok if I go there then my teacher in Greece has gone, so I can contact my teacher, ask for help or

advice". Really I think it's very encouraging. And also, very encouraging for the students to come.

Every time I ago to a University abroad, in the mobility then the next year I have students from that University and the same happens with the colleagues from other universities when they come to Thessaloniki, then we have students ask them and they want to know how they can use Erasmus to visit their University.

[Erasmus Coordinator from the School of Geology joins the meeting]

I: Welcome D, and thank you for joining. thank you for joining
D: Nice to meet you all.

I: If you allow me, I will just finish the interview with you, A. I wanted to follow up with just one question on the staff mobility aspect, because…in the context of personal barriers that you mentioned earlier. That is hesitation to go abroad, maybe and not knowing anyone, going out of the comfort zone; this is of course one aspect that is interesting, not so much may be a structural barrier that we are focusing on but still one aspect that is relevant.
 Thank you, thank you for taking the time; and it was very interesting meeting and helped us a lot already following up on the issues from the survey.

A: I'm so happy about it.

I: We hope that… especially with the tool for students as well as coordinators who may be offered more quality and stability in the exchange activities. Thank you and I'm sure we will be in touch; we might follow up on this interview with some more questions or comments; thank you for your time and enjoy the rest of the day.

A: I have another meeting in half an hour.

B: Thank you, A on behalf of the NORM AUTh team; thank for your time and your kind contribution to the project; we'll be in touch for anything needed.

A: I am fan of Erasmus, I support it for many years.

B: We all love it so much.

A: Thank you once more.

I: Thank you. See you, bye.

Interview AUTh ECTS/ Erasmus Coordinator School of Geology 31.06.2021

I = Interviewer

A = ECTS/ Erasmus Coordinator School of Geology

B = NORM AUTh team member, Erasmus staff for the School of Psychology

C = Member of the NORM project staff Marburg)

I: So now I formally welcome you to the interview.

A: Thank you so much. I hope that we will go smoothly, because I see there are many questions, and I am not sure how to reply to all of them. But I think during conversation we will find out.

I: Don't be afraid, we are not planning to go through all the questions; it was just like to set the scene, so you know what direction the conversation would be going. And as you noticed now it's more an open conversation because we want to follow your focus topics a bit, as well.

A: Concerning my experience is long lasting, over 20 years. I have been in several places, even with Erasmus International, so I have some experience. Please feel free to ask me. I think it's more easy if you ask me.

I: No stress at all. We develop the interview jointly. First, I have a formal issue. We are recording this interview.

A: I have already accepted this.

I: Thank you. And I just wanted to assure you that we are using the recording for the purposes of the project solely, for the analysis of the data, for dissemination; and if we disseminate any information, of course, we won't give any personal information without your consent; nothing further will follow with recording apart from the project activities. **Maybe first of all we could start with you; you know the Norm project, I noticed already; you have some idea of the goals and the content of the project?**

A: I am fond of that as I have told in my introduction. I have many personal, many agreements, I have visited many universities, I have been assigned many courses in

other Universities, for example in Krakow I used to teach for more than 10 years courses; a course in the spring and a course in summer, (corrects) in winter semester. In other universities we have common students for master degrees, theses, we share seminars and with some of them we cooperate in research projects.

So, we were very fruitful. It was the beginning because it's not only the means- because we need to receive money to go somewhere- but at the same time you have to find a match with colleagues that share your interest etc. So it's a very big opportunity from this point of view and I think it broadens our horizons.

I: Thank you. Maybe before we start on the questions or on the topics that were listed in the survey and questionnaire,
I would have to know did you participate in the survey for the NORM project as well?

A: Yeah, in a short list, I have put some very short replies as well.

I: Just for me to know like what the pre-knowledge on the project is. And may I ask you to just quickly, maybe describe your role, what, what your position is,
What you are function is in the context of your Faculty for the Erasmus program; and maybe how long you have been working in this?

A: I have been an ECTS coordinator for the last years.

I: Ok, so are you responsible for outgoing and incoming students?

A: Yeah, and training and selection and Erasmus International, all these actions.

I: Do you have may be an estimate; how many of you students, your outgoing students how many mobilities take place or what percentage of your students?

A: Yes, we have, because a month ago we passed the evaluation of the School. So, I have prepared all that. Unfortunately, the percentage is very low. It depends on the funding, because students need to spend their family money when they are going abroad. So, it's not -I mean- very attractive for them, because, in particular during the

last years, with Greece economic recession, it was very hard for them. Even I have to spend my money when I go for one week for teaching. So they are not so motivated from this point of view.

We have better percentages in Masters and Phd theses because at that level students, perhaps, have some more money, their own money and can spend it there; and at the same time since they are in co-operation perform part of their thesis with seminars etc., so the percentages there are larger. So, let's say that we have 20, 15 up to 25 students per year and if we estimate in a gross estimate 500 students, yeah, the percentage is small, 2.5%.

I: You mentioned like more individual barriers, especially financial reasons.
What from- just as a quick overview- from your experience, what do you think are the major barriers to mobility? why don't students go abroad in your field?

A: They do like very much to go; they are interested in going. When I organize meetings in each Call [Erasmus} they are eager to go. But then there are issues. One more point that is solved now it's going to the proper University suiting their curriculum here and there. So, in some cases it's not so easy to find. On the other hand, we need to have signed agreements. It happens sometimes that the signed agreements available to students are not so many to give them the opportunity to choose. So if you take into account all these three levels so, it's going like that; we start, we have a constraint , then one more and so we have 5 to 10 students every year; not every year, every Call, every semester.

I: So these two aspects that we will follow up; one is, of course, ECTS; course choice and access to the information and recognition and the other is- like- partnership management. How…and I would now -contrary to the list- start with this;
are you responsible for your inter-institutional agreements? And how do you select partners, so you have valid partners for your students?

A: The partners depend on the links we have as scientists, all the colleagues of the department I mean; we know colleagues in certain universities. We have colleagues we know their work we appreciate their work, and this way we make the links. Once it happened to me and I took this responsibility to start a new agreement without knowing

anybody, just from the announcement; but it was not fruitful. From our side we did all the paper but some way it was frozen. So, I think personal basis is a good receipt to go forward. People are the best proxies to make the agreement. I mean meetings like that can help and I hope in vivo, not in vitro next time.

I: Yeah, because I know from my own experience, the personal element in corporations of any kind are an essential aspect that cannot be left out of the equation in a way; and, of course, the other aspect you mentioned already, with the selection of courses for your students. this matching of curricula really maybe even in quite detail can only be done by faculty staff, of course, to really select partners.
So, if I understand you take your time to select partners that really fit your requirements.

A: Yeah. One more problem with students is that since they can go after the third year of their studies-we have four-year studies- they have already successfully passed their courses. So, going in the third year or the fourth year of their studies, the courses that match their study have already been integrated here, they have already finished. This is the reason, it is one more constraint. Because they are good students, they have to have many credits to go, they are highly credited, they have passed many courses; so they cannot find there courses that fit our curriculum. But I think that finally they can find courses, because we have included free selections, they can include in their diploma free selections and, also, they can make other graduate thesis that gives many ECTS credits, and we can compromise this difficulty to match the curriculum.

I: This in now leading to the other aspect, selection of courses and recognition.
So, as I understand it you do offer -like- flexible elements in your curricula, in the form of, maybe, mobility windows, or rather extracurricular activities that students can use for the mobility?

A: Exactly, yeah.

I: And for the preparation of the mobility -this is now referring back to the questionnaire again- to the aspect of preparing the learning agreement, getting access to the course

information. One aspect would be how students proceed with this; so how, how successfully they can prepare this;

how they can get access to this information and how is your support structured in this context?

A: Firstly, as soon as the Call is announced from the Erasmus office of our University, we organize a meeting. This year it was an online meaning, so there we explain all the topics, the studies they have to take; in addition, they have taken all guidelines from the web page where they were announced. With some of them I need to have personal Skype, because it's one to one, Skype meetings to explain some more details. So, nobody all these years nobody has missed a deadline. Sometimes it happens with learning agreements to have some changes. Even in that case we managed to make some changes.

I: And if you select the students for the mobility places,
what are the reasons to- like- to match the Host institution and the students? Is it, is it really mostly academical or are there other factors that go into the decision on who will get what mobility opportunity, for example?

A: No, we have not put social criteria, only academic criteria.

I: Ok, ok.

A: It didn't happen all these years that I am Erasmus coordinator a student to approach me to tell there is a special reason to go. If they mee the criteria, he or she, they can go.

B: I am sorry to cut in, but because…, thank you professor A, on behalf of our team as well. **Because I don't know your school very well, could you please describe very shortly how do you help students choose courses?**

I: Thank you, B, yeah.

A: How do they decide to choose the courses, you mean?

B: Yes, which courses to attend at the Erasmus?

A: I will explain, in more detail. First, they have to look at the universities they have already chosen; they are… I think there are civilization or social criteria; students I think prefer to go to Italy or Spain like the other Germany, France, not UK now, no more; in these countries. Then year by year depending upon the "rumors" of a university they start going for examining the University as I said before. For example, the University in Krakow I mentioned before, we have students every year going there because they appreciate the city they are going, the cost of life, all this social environment. So, after choosing the University they are advised to go the webpage and see the description of courses, like we do it with our students here, the internal students; every year they have to see the Study Guide and organize their studies, I mean the students of Geology. Then, soon after they have chosen the courses that they have not passed successfully here, and they match our curricula here, because they have to find same as much the course; they have to contact the colleague from the School of Geology to discuss the content of the course.

In that case they have already taken the consensus of the professor here and then they take this course in their learning Agreement; and this why we're building the Las. In some cases, when we are, as I said before, there are students that have passed almost all their courses; because usually they are-let's say- the good students. In that case, we have to advise them either, if they haven't taken up to this point undergraduate thesis, which gives many ECTS, it's good because they can interact more with the colleagues in the host university or how to get to free courses which are in the Diploma Supplement and we have free courses as School; and students from the School of Geology can have two free courses from many other Schools of AUTh, even-I mean- Social Sciences, even Economics or whatever.

I: Yeah, thank you. B, does this answer your question?

B: Sorry for taking the lead but just to understand how other Schools work.
If a student has thirty ECTS credits in their LA, they can have their thesis for- I don't know how much credits you assign to the thesis- twenty credits?

A: No, sixteen credits. But this is quite a number so it's advisable to take it, to do their thesis there.

B: And probably one course or one or two courses for which they will have the consensus from the faculty member that they can attend; and one free elective, for example? Is it like that?

A: Yes, more or less. Usually, I mean most of the students, they have chosen six courses to take these 30 ECTS, this is the mean, the most usual case; six courses in the host institution.

B: Because to arrange for a thesis is rather….

I: Yes, it's rather difficult, but in the university we have the agreement with we have our colleague there who can supervise. We have directions in our School so students in their third of fourth know more or less with whom they will continue. So, in some cases not all of them may do it. In one or two Las we can have this opportunity to make thesis there. And I had also Polish students to compile their thesis here. It's very advisable, because undergraduate research is also advisable in the curricula
And we need as a community to promote that.

B: Yes, that's very good and it's very interesting.
But if a student has six courses then you recognize them all if he passes them successfully?

A: Yes, more or less. It happens in some cases, perhaps, 25 out of 30 ECTS but it's acceptable.

B: Ok, thank you. Thank you.

I: I will directly follow up on this. So, before I go back to my question, do you use DS?

A: Yes.

I: So they have a full recognition in a way.

A: I mentioned before. Perhaps, because I am speaking very fast it was not clear. We have Diploma Supplement and a course can go there.

I: That's why, I just wanted to make sure. So there is really a structured process for ECTS

A: Yes, yes.

I: I mean you're dealing with a lot of students who go quite late in their program. One aspect I wanted to ask about is, concerning barriers, the prolongation of studies on the context of recognition.
Do you have the impression that this still delays the degree for the students? Because the DS doesn't replace any courses.

A: I think that more or less the Erasmus exchanges delays a little bit the studies. On the other hand you have won so many, so much I mean, experience, this universality. I think that this compensates this delay.

I: I completely agree. This is something that is a part of the communication, to show the students the incentives for the mobility inspite of some delay.

A: This discourages some students; I mean students that need to finish their studies sharply in four year; it's not advisable
Unless they have worked so so so so hard in the first three years and they consider that one semester out of the eight semesters will be like free, free to go, ok,.So, they can go in that case but it needs to be organised well in advance, in second year. But 2nd year students are not so experienced to do that. For this reason I mean that students in master level or PhD level are more well-prepared and are far more effective on that.

I: Thank you. I would come back to this aspect of preparing the learning agreement, because as you know from the NORM project mentioned earlier; this is a curricula matching tool. It's a real thing that access to course information,

timely access to this information would remove that barrier for students so they can be better prepared for their mobility, may be more motivated.
Do you think this would make a difference?

A: Of course, of course, it is very very critical

I mean, even for internal use, in our School we have this Guide with all obligations. And unfortunately in some universities we have difficulties to find. Of course, I can't go through all the webpages of the Universities and I guide students to contact the person there. Because otherwise I will make a secretary for days and I cannot do that, because my role isErasm different and my duties that I have for other things.

I: You mentioned earlier that for the mobility options you use the experience of previous mobilities. Do you have a formal way to promote this; to use the experience for example,
I don't know, the database with previous course selections and recognition histories or to use the former participants for the pupils for dissemination? Or how do you include the previous experience in your promotion of Erasmus?

A: Unfortunately, we have not such bases and I think it would be advisable. For the moment I rely on "advertisement"; It's not organised in this way, it must be something centralized. I don't have any statistics at the moment. Of course, when we come back from Erasmus we have to complete electronically our experience etc.
Personally I have no access to others' reports for the evaluation of a certain mobility. If I have, eg. In Rome for a week and then when I come back I fill one report etc but I don't have access to any reports from students or colleagues. Of course, I don' t know how it's organised in other Universities.

I: Yeah. I don't know, B, what is your experience. Indeed the service, this official tool for reporting for like Evaluation at Central level; and to be honest I think many aspects of this are not so helpful because it's standardized. And we struggle withl it -just to make another example- we struggle with the same problem. Some faculties have very

extensive lists of what partner institution fits for what courses, and they have very detailed communication with their partners, so they can advise the students very competently; and you notice that there are changes to learning agreements. Because it's really a valid program and recognition is 100-percent but it's really an exception. In many cases each individual student trying to find information, trying to fit it to his studies, and running from one teacher to the other to get the required signature, and this is, of course, a very frustrating and time consuming process. And then often there is some insecurity if recognition will really be successful in the end and there's no what I mentioned this history of success of recognition with specific partner institution. This for us, this no history, if it's not prepared by the coordinator like manually, will take him turning the transcripts and see what they were. May be having this easily accessible can, of course, build up confidence in the process.

A: Yeah, it's a good idea. Of course, B may reply on that because this is something that may be should be central. We do that, but we need technical support, software etc. For example, I make some personal bases.
We have started to check the agreements electronically, we sign them and upload them. So it is more convenient for us, it is very well organised this way, and at the same time we know that everything is there and it is checked by the Erasmus office.

I: B, do you want to add something?

B: Yes, the procedure runs quite smoothly and the Erasmus Office helps a lot because everything is done in the same way, electronically. The only thing is we are a bit behind, all Erasmus, is the transparency in the courses and course choice and recognition. So if we manage to do a tool which using some parameters could match courses between universities, to some extend at least, that would be a great help to the coordinators and each School. And, Professor A, could you please tell us if you think this could help. **A tool that we could feed in the data and then more easily find the correspondence between courses at universities?**

A: I think it would help a lot. On the other hand, of course, we must have the freedom to choose this academic eligibility, to discuss, we cannot replace everything with machines. but I think that more technical organization would help a lot.

177

B: Of course, of course. When I talked about IT solutions, this will be fed by the people working the program.

01:11:34 - 01:12:33

Nobody is going to know your program, your curriculum better than you. Just for the technical part, to make it easier for everybody to work.

A: Yes, yes.

I: We cannot underestimate that each mobility is still an individual experience so, even if we do have standardized data, maybe it's still has to fit the individual demands; and so the role of the individual support and individual counselling that you are doing at departmental level will still remain, remain outside of the digital sphere. But if you have reliable information and don't have to -like- to research for each and every mobility from zero; then I think this can of course make work easier.

A: It will take away the secretariat load. It will be more easy for the students to transfer this experience year by year. So it would be more productive.

I: Because, what I take from the interview, recognition successful recognition is one of the core criteria for students to decide to really do a mobility; and apart, of course, from financial aspects or personal aspects. I think really to have relevant recognisable mobility is still the whole motivation for them. So to have more reliability and transparency I understand your feedback as well really would be one of the major barriers tackled.

Before we run out of time; concerning study regulations or accreditation of your programs and maybe a question to both of you, really:

Is international mobility an aspect that is included in the discussion in the development of the degree programs, of the evaluation of degree programs as well?

A: Yes, it is included in the evaluation. As I said before when I was asked about, this time in many Schools of our University there is this "examination" and yes it is included. We had hard questions about that I don't know not only each School but I think the

vice-Rector himself, Prof. Kovaios, was asked, at least in our case why we have comparatively low percentage of students for the mobilities.

I: And maybe just another aspect; you have low numbers but is the evaluation mostly based on quantity of mobilities or is it really the quality as well? For example, we have successful recognition, we have satisfied successful student mobility or is it mostly quantity that counts?

A: For the moment we have only percentages, we have only quantity evaluation.

I: Because a lot of the aspects we are discussing here concern really the quality as well. Of course we want to increase numbers and for that we do need information and smooth structures.

A: I mean with high degree of certainty that people are very satisfied even fully satisfied.

Interview AUTh with ECTS/Erasmus Coordinator, School of Dentistry 31.06.2021

I = Interviewer

A = ECTS/Erasmus Coordinator, School of Dentistry

I: Good morning, good morning.

A: Good morning.

I: Great, you received my message; the usual problems with his virtual tools

A: So, can you see me now?

I: Yes, yes. Welcome. Thank you for joining us. First of all, because we have to clarify this, we will be recording this interview. Do you agree? And of course, we will only use the recording for the purposes of the project so to analyse the information, the data and for all dissemination. We will, of course, only use the information anonymously and not publish any personal information.
Would you agree to have the interview recorded for this?

A: Yes, thank you.

B: Thank you so much; I have to clarify this formal part first; and we haven't had before so my name is I and I am the institutional coordinator at the University of Marburg and I'm Co-coordinator of the NORM project. With me is E… who is part of the Erasmus team in the University of Marburg as well.

A: Then I can talk a little bit about me as well. My name is A we have short names because our Christian names are very long and I am the Erasmus coordinator and the ECTS coordinator at the School of Dentistry in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. So I am not a lecturer only, I am not a tutor only for the outgoing and incoming Erasmus students but I also coordinate the whole program. So I will give you the information you need, I believe as accurately as I can.

I: Fantastic; and especially with Dentistry because it's one of the areas that is not traditionally so mobile, at least in Germany; so it will be interesting to hear your experience in this field. So happy to have you in this project

A: I am very glad too, because the science of dentistry has a very tight curriculum, and this is recognized across the Universities in the whole Europe. We all have ten semesters of studies, we have 30 ECTS [per semester] so students can become accomplished practitioners, but we do not promote mobility because the program is very tight.
There are some…, there are issues that we cannot easily overcome. But anyway, we have to do it because the external evaluators of the Schools' undergraduate curriculums force us to do that, so we try to do our best.

I: This aspect, to be pushed to promote the international mobility; this will be interesting to follow up as well; And E has sent you a list, a long list of questions. Don't worry because we won't go through all these; what is most relevant is -you see the heading- so the major topics
we would want you to talk about, you already mentioned some of these elements.
I have one quick question did you complete the survey for the NORM project as well?

A: Yes, yes.

I: Ok. I asked because then you already have some idea of the project and you already dealt with a bit of the structure of the questions which helps a lot, of course, to do this interview now. You already explained your positions; so what your role is in the context of mobility, of student mobility in your Department.
How long have you been in this position?

I: Since 2017, it is four years now.

A: Ok, ok; so already some experience and all in the context of Erasmus Plus.

I: Yes, yes. I think I have a clear picture of what happened during the past program; because now we're dealing with the new one and, certainly, we will have to do amendments so that it can be successful, as much success as can be within our area.

I: Before we go to the -like- more qualitative questions on ECTS and the process of the learning Agreement , just one additional question; could you give me an estimate of the numbers of mobility.
How many of your students or what percentage of students goes abroad?

A: We do not have a large number of students who finally decide to do the mobility. We have more applications, more students are selected to go for the mobility but at the end they do not decide it and they just do not do it. So we have more incoming students than outcoming, outgoing students. It is almost two to three students per year only. And the reasons are the ones I have already explained. We have more incoming students, because-you see- the Dental School in AUTh is the only dental School in Northern Greece and we act as a day hospital as well. So we treat a large number of patients during the year, the academic year.

We do not operate anything during summer; and that's why we do not support internships and all these things, because we're not a hospital, although we act as a day centre. Just imagine that we have more than 10000 clinical units per year which are performed by our students; so the students from abroad have to benefit from that because they can attend; and from now on we have adopted the 400 dentistry meaning that any student coming home from abroad can look 1 student, so that he can overcome the barrier of the language because the patients speak Greek and that was a very, that was an obstacle for the universities to send students to us; because of the delays they would have in their clinical exercises.

I: Yeah, very interesting. I know of the problem; we have a very large faculty for Medicine and Pharmacy and there's a bit the same problem. And there is the regulated fields with very specific requirements as well. As you have already -and this is the last part in the questionnaire we sent- the incentives for your incoming students to come to your department. **I have one aspect; do you think that having the international students coming to your department, does this give an advantage to your students as well, like this international classroom idea or something?**

182

I: No, we don't have theoretically international classes, because students need to take the lectures in the language (Greek); the law is leading us to that. But since our science has many lab exercises, many clinical exercises and the students from the later years of study are coming because they are going to benefit from this exchange; they integrate a lot, every day from 8 to 7 in the afternoon; so I think it is a benefit for both incoming and the home student who is working with them. And you know that the University of Thessaloniki is a campus; I mean that all schools are around so there's a lot of students socializing and everything is very close, so I think that they all have a very good time not only in their studies but in their social life and that gives their personalities great benefits to become-I mean- international.

I: I have been to Thessaloniki once only for the kick-off of the project and I loved it; it was really beautiful, the setting of the campus, the bustling life, the things we miss at the moment so much.

What is your impression; once your students experience this contact to international students, do you think this would motivate them more to go abroad; this having already maybe a contact in another institution?

A: Well, I think that at first they are thrilled at the idea to take the mobility, but then they think about the delays they're going to have in their studies; because there are a lot of technical issues, I mean every university has different starting points at semesters; I mean, if I can give you an example, the beginning of the spring semester in Scandinavia is the 2nd of January while in our School it is the 20th of February; you understand we have a gap of many days.

I: Yeah, yeah.

A: This is not easy for a student. And the second thing is that they lose the examination period in this, in our School because they have to take examinations at the receiving institution; So, although we help them because we have a transfer system here, that the student can transfer the courses to the next semester and use another examination period-we have four examination periods in our School- this is not something they… it is a setback.

I: Yeah, the academic calendar is, I think, especially with the exam periods, is really a barrier; and to start the semester at the host institution delayed is disadvantage, as well, of course. You lose the context, integration into the courses.

For us, for example, the winter semester ends in mid-February, so when you start, we are just done with our semester.

A: It is very difficult and they have a lot of courses to attend, I mean they have to take a lot of exams. Every student that has to take exams in fifteen lessons he's going to think about it, to lose an examination period.

I: Yeah, thank you. As I said we jumped a bit to the aspect at the end of the questionnaire which is really interesting because it feeds right back into how you students experience, maybe, international mobility. But I would like to go back to the beginning and as you noticed, you mentioned already a number of aspects; of recognition; prolongation of studies

And maybe, first of all, we could go back to this aspect of recognition and ECTS. So, the first element that was prepared in the questionnaire was on the accrediting of ECTS. You already mentioned some of the structural, of the curricular aspects. You see, here one of the questions is if their specific modules,

for example, that can be substituted in the mobility or/and if it's easy or accessible for students to get this information and to prepare for a study period abroad? I won't go to all the questions individually because it's very specific, depending on the structure; but maybe we could go back to this aspect of how students- if they're interested in planning a mobility- how would they prepare for the study programm abroad?

To clarify what can be recognized and to select courses abroad.

A: Well, you mean how do they prepare their LA? Look, the students in our School have the information about the program from their initial reception in the School; I mean the first celebration that we do to welcome them, they know that they can use this Erasmus program, so that they can study one or two semesters abroad. And there is unlimited access to my office, anytime any day that I can help them with that; we have many e mails. So what they do is they prepare their LA with me.

184

I: Ok.

A: And we just, we have a team, the student is, of course, the key person; I am the second person of the team and then there is each tutor of the course that he is interested in taking abroad. Because, perhaps, he won't have a good correspondence with -between the modules and he will need to have an additional clinical exercise or lab exercise or to take an additional exam, so that we can accept the grade that he brings from the receiving institution.

But this works very well at the Department, at the School; because we are very… we closely collaborate on that to help our students. So they all give exams at the Institution they are going to and they all have the whole ECTS recognized in the ToR. If not from the core program, we have created an individualized Erasmus curriculum where each student can create its own profile; which is a very good advantage for their further studies, for finding work all over Europe. Because you know, the curricula are very carbonized; I mean it's everywhere 30 ECTS; we have the European directive of how dental practitioners should be educated during their undergraduate years. So what the mobility gives to him is an asset, to create an individualized profile which is in advance with the students that stay at home for the whole undergraduate education. This is how we promote it.

I: This is very good. So, one aspect, you have a very individual support for your students and not like we know from some universities the student has to draft the learning Agreement and just run around to get signatures**; and. and you actually have this module for students to do these extra curricular classes.**

So, as I understand you, it would possible to go abroad without -like- losing ects, or losing a semester; because we talked about this question.

A: They are not going to lose it in any way, because we have this transfer system. It's only the prolongation of the studies that gives a big burden to the families who support the students. This is the problem, I think.

I: Ok. So more like social, financial barriers. I am just looking at the list here; you said you you prepare the learning Agreements individually with the students and they get

information on the mobility options very early on; so -like- with the registration they already get information on the possibilities to go abroad.

Could you please say a bit more on what information is provided? How easily, for example, students could decide on a host institution? Is it more based on the course catalogue or is it more based on maybe the language issue? Do you have some idea on this?

A: Well, the prerequisite language is English, of course. Because they cannot go anywhere with the Greek language. So we try to upgrade the level of English; so far it was B2; and now we are thinking of moving it to C1, because our students have very good knowledge of the English language we need for the incoming students to have this level of English as well; because they have to prepare projects, they have to participate in conferences, so that we can help them to add workload so that they can recognise ECTS credits along these things. B2 is a bit low for nowadays. There is the platform of the European Educational office, the department here, the EUREP as we call it. In their webpage students can see all the bilateral agreements we have, they see the requirements, there are links with the programs they offer.

It's not always very easy for them; I can bring as an example the Italian universities which are a bit difficult, difficult to communicate with them; in trying to correspond courses because they belong to the medical school and the Dental School is really a Department in the Medical School; the coordinator is a doctor who doesn't know anything about Dentistry, and there are difficulties to find out what is going to happen at the end. But we have the chance to change the LA after the student goes there; we try to be as close as we can to the curriculum in all the universities. With some universities we have a very good communication, we know their program, we know the material, we have the same international books that students take exams in our University, as well, so this is not a problem; and I think that we overcome the difficulties of finding some ECTS that don't correspond well with our program, to build their individualized Erasmus curriculum without problem.

I: This is, indeed, an ideal situation, especially as you have the structured approach already.

First, I have two follow up questions; one, so do you…, as I understand, that the access to information especially for some of the partner institutions as concerns the course

catalogue and maybe the level of the courses' requirements is a bit difficult. You know about the Norm project; you've done the survey as well. One element that we are discussing there is to have this kind of curricula matching too, so to have more structured, more accessible information on courses for students and coordinators.
Do you think this would be an advantage and would make it easier for your students to go abroad, to be mobile?

A: Yes, I think it would be an advantage if we are aware of what our students are going to face when they go to the receiving situation. You see here at the Aristotle University we have the Quality Accreditation Unit where you can see all the information in English; and it is very easy from everyone; from all over the world to get in and see how our program works.

I think that you should visit it. You can have access to the curriculum. And this is known to the partners. But we don't have the same from the universities that we collaborate with.

If this could be an international "law"- let's say- for the Erasmus program so that we can go and see how they treat their students and our students will be their student for one semester or two and the same with us then we can come to the deal to have the best benefit from integrating the curriculum.

I: I know that you at the Aristotle University are very advanced in the in the technical implementation of Information management and the Erasmus procedures as well, just a bit of a side question, do you have the LA already digitized as well?

A: Yes, I think from now on it's going to be electronically only; I mean the Department of European Educational programs have already established it and our students prepare their LA, from this year, electronically.

I: From the aspect you're mentioning, that's why I asked this, I think that what you have already developed makes access to information relatively easy for students; and the support you are giving; and my impression with the barriers is then the link to the partner institutions; so the information that you cannot access, that you cannot communicate to your students in time for preparation; that this is one aspect that is

187

really central for you, for your students support. I wanted to go back just quickly to this element of language; as you said language in the future maybe English C1 is prerequisite, the pre-requirement for mobility.

Do you have, do you offer-like- language courses for students to prepare, for example if they want to go abroad?

A: You mean our students?

I: Yes, yes, sorry; for your students

A: They are all with C1 level. I mean, English language is a prerequisite in High School, so the English level is very good.

I: Ok. And as you said, especially for your study program, for course or study requirements it has to be English. Because I know from our exchange partners, we have a number of universities that do not offer a lot in English; they have maybe Italian, more Spanish or something; so for many students is difficult to find a host institution only with English; but as I understand it for you study requirements, it has to be English anyway.

A: Yeah, yes, it's going to be English anyway and it's going to be C1; I mean this is my recommendation for the new program.

I: Making it more transparent for students as well I think. And, you have already said a lot about this next element that provide information about courses and curricula abroad; and here is one aspect that is mentioned in the questionnaire: probabilities that there are studies are not prolonged. You already mentioned as one of the barriers, so you do have established a lot of- yeah- or adapted a lot of the structures to make it possible for students to go abroad without delay.
If I remember the beginning of the interview correctly, you did say that a lot of students who apply in the beginning they get afraid that they might be delayed and, of course, this is not only taking longer for studies but it's of course a financial issue as well and a family issue **because it takes longer for them to get into the labour market; so, even though you do have all these offers, is your impression that students do take longer if they go abroad in spite of the opportunities you have given them**

A: I think that the problem is not the mobility, because students prolong their studies, anyway; I mean we have a very low percentage of students that finish by the end of the 10th semester (Dentistry is 10-semester degree) and this is because there are problems. Now with the Covid situation we are left behind two years and because the situation has changed, because we have to give access to clinics to less number of students we don't have so many hours within the day to try and finish the on time, because we are a big School; we have more than 100 students per year. And just imagine now that by the coming September we're going to have two years in the first-year because the second-year students never came to the university and we are going to have, I mean, students beyond the 10th semester, 2,3 4,5 more semesters.
So, the mobility is really the salt on the pain. That is the problem. Although students apply for it, and they enter the program they don't finally decide it.

I: I mean, I know this problem as well from the International office; I don't know all the specifics from the Faculties but I know we have a lot of drop-outs as well, in some areas quite a high percentage. And I think for students in the beginning is all so tempting and they think they could do and then reality hits in a way during the semester and then they start to drop out of the program. I understand it completely and follow you there especially in a study field like yours with all the practical elements of education; the pandemic of course has really changed everything and cause very very many additional barriers. And of course, international mobility cannot be your priority then at the moment.

A: That's right. Just imagine, what are we going to do in September? Are we going to accept incoming students or is there going to be a lockdown? I don't know. When this situation started I had nine students abroad and here and I didn't know what to advise them.

I: You impression- I don't know if you already have feedback from the students- in between, during the pandemic, I mean there was a bit of a low, and there was a situation with students more motivated and even more motivated for s to go abroad than before the pandemic maybe because of the lockdown and everything; it was this

freedom at last and we had very many applications for mobility from students who before weren't really interested.

Do you think that the experience of the pandemic might even changed the perspective for your students in this respect?

A: Well, I think we will have a drawback with the attitude of the students because they are very well settled with the distant learning. Although they had the theoretical part over, we tried to give them access to webinars that were free and would give them some additional knowledge, to attend conferences and all this, so that we can give them the ECTS that they initially entered in their LA; I think they liked it. This is not good.

I: Yes, if it goes longer it will be more more difficult -like- to reset this approach again. Do you think -I'm switching a bit- we talked a lot about semester mobilities, long-term mobilities **for the students- do you have alternative options or do you think it would be interesting for your students, for example short-term mobility, more like summer schools intensive programs or all these shorter things?**

A: We don't support that because we are an educational centre but not a hospital; so we don't work during August; I mean everything is closed in the university; we are a School, that is the problem; we don't support internship because we don't have the way to operate it and we don't support short terms for our students because they are going to lose the semester anyway. Whether they are going to be for three months or 2 months or they are going to be for one and a half month, the semester is lost. So, it's better for them to go for the whole semester understanding that they are going to have a prolongation of studies unless they are very well prepared-that's why I'm very close to them- so that they know where and when to apply so that they can smoothly move after they mobility to the semester they have to be on.

I: Yes,

A: But this is not easy. From 2017 only two students fitted this arrangement which is not good.

I: No, no, definitely. I'm just asking because some of our Faculties, for example, this is -like- the one mobility window they could use it's really the short-term options during the semester break and this is of course ideal and for some students in a bit and in a way removes the barriers to go away.

This is why we do support in some areas this kind of mobility. We talked a bit about it; now this online learning agreement, all these changes forced onto us by the pandemic; I guess you know that in the new Erasmus programm these virtual elements of mobility, virtual mobility, blended mobility, this is -like- the new thing that is promoted within the new Erasmus programm.

Do you, do you think this would be interesting for students, for example, if they stay and study at Aristotle University and still be able to take some courses online?

A: No, I don't think so. I mean, for the international profile to be promoted the students need to come or go to the other country because it is this integration that is going to make them the Citizens of the world; it's not the virtual. I mean, in our area there is such technology and you can find it in the Internet all over the world; there are so many Conferences, so many webinars, in so many ways and low-cost ones; but it's not the contact between the teacher and the student between the Greek student and the Italian student or the German student or the Swedish; so that they can exchange their experiences; they have gains from that. All the students that come from abroad in the winter semester want to expand their semester. Why? Because they like what they find here. And it's not only the School and the program.

I: To be honest I completely agree; it's so much more promoted that at the moment, all this -like- a change in teaching and learning; and for me it's interesting to hear this, because we have to discuss with our Faculties as well and they don't see a lot of potential but it's still, of course, a new element and it might take care of some of the individual demands; but I do see your point completely. But thank you, thank you for your open words, I am really happy to use it. Now, you are doing a lot concerning provision of information for the students and supporting them in the preparation, you have explained a bit the structure of your curriculum how you have this specific kind of
- I 'll just call it for the survey- the mobility window; it's -like- the additional modules that they can include; and for the incentives for mobility in the study program; you already

191

said a lot about like how this internationalised approach can support them and how they do have the advantage in contrast to those that do not take this opportunity; I'm just checking if there's any relevant aspect, because I wanted to take the time to come back to what you mentioned earlier this international aspect, like how your institution supports and maybe even pushes towards this international mobility.

Could you maybe tell a few more words on how this is structured at your in university and how this might influence your work as an Erasmus or ECTS coordinator?

A: For the moment I am thinking because one program has finished and the other is going to start next year. We are in very close collaboration with the colleagues that executed this program from the 2014 to 2017 and then I took over and see how we can promote this internationality of students, because you see I had some studies abroad being already assistant professor at the university, so it gave me the opportunity to see how important this internationalization is. Because, I came back and I was a totally different person. I was influenced by the attitude, by the knowledge, the experience you have from people who work at home. So what I am going to do is to be close to the students from the first day they enter the School till the day they decide to go abroad with an Erasmus mobility and then I will try to help them recognize the ECTS in the best way for their benefit.

We have a very good team here, in the School and we are supporting our students; we cannot do so much for the incoming students, the advertisement goes from incoming students to incoming students from one year to the next year; and we had it very well around 2018, 2019 and then the Covid erased everything. So I don't know how we're going to proceed from now on, because I'm a bit, I'm a bit sceptical because if they come here they need to be vaccinated from their home country because they may not be given access to the Dental School.

I: Yeah, yeah it will still be influencing the upcoming years. Unfortunately, it's not a story that will be over by autumn
So, it's completely right to really include this into the discussion, as well and not only that it has changed the present situation but, as you mentioned earlier, that has changed the cultural and the expectations and attitudes of the students, as well. If you

have one more minute I would like to go back just to this aspect of staff mobility, of the international experience of staff as a factor in this international context for your Faculty. **So, do you think to include staff, to maybe address your colleagues and get them mobile and more international?**

A: I can tell you that I failed in this matter. I cannot promote the program to them, because their program is so overwhelming, they have their careers to go on, they have research interests that promote their career, I mean the younger colleagues, for me it's not a benefit to go and teach in another university because I have already done it years and years ago and – I don't know- the School is not going to benefit from my mobility. So what I try to do is to persuade younger colleagues to go out; I give tickets to everyone from that wants a ticket from all over University. I give tickets for staff mobility to other Schools; I take tickets for staff mobility from other Schools because the bilateral agreements do not very well support this staff exchange because they don't correspond to their interests. So this is what we are doing and it is so nice that the University gives us this opportunity. All the Schools all over the University are very cooperative in that.

We accept lecturers from abroad through the Erasmus Mundus program, the International Relations and all these things; we always have visiting professors here every year, but I cannot persuade my colleagues to go abroad; this is my very big problem and what I'm trying to do is "create your own bilateral agreements. go and visit the universities there, create teams of students to send them in the later years of study to get the mobility with your colleagues". But for the moment it's not working.

I: This is a problem for colleagues in the University of Marburg, the colleagues responsible for the staff mobility and I think you see the problems as well, motivating and approaching the colleagues, especially if they are having very very pressuring responsibilities in their own context anyway

A: You know there is a trap in this part. Because if I encourage them to bring new bilateral agreements it might be working for one year or two and then it' s going to fail.

I: Yeah, I understand you are trying to find new ways to promote the possibilities. So, I'm really sorry last question really, because you mentioned the inter-institutional

agreements, the agreements to settle the mobilities or to agree on the details of the mobilities. Just a quick impression, you as a coordinator manage your own cooperation agreements and my impression is that you do try to keep them in-sight, to really use them, to evaluate them, to develop them, so I am asking because especially in the context of staff mobility…

A: I don't have any connection to the staff mobility. The only thing to ask me is for me to go abroad, I'm not going to do anything because it is the receiving University which is going to give the assessment and the evaluation. I mean, -I think the problem is = this comes from the years that the persons who had the bilateral agreements thought that that they were their own. They weren't always open to the other members of the School.

I: Thank you, thank you so much for your time. Do you have any questions concerning what will follow up on the project? I think you're in close contact with the colleagues in your institution.

A: I have a very close collaboration with all the members of staff in the Department of European Educational programs, their effort is huge, they are very very close to the students. You know, everybody can hit the door come in and solve their problem, in the School and in the European Office as well. All the team that I am working with has…is very passionate about this. I love it as well.
And I am going to use it in the best way I can for the students for the… some years I have to care for it.

I: Thank you, thank you so much, thank you for your time and I'm sure you will be kept informed on what is happening. My impression is that your unit, your European unit is really very very active and involved. I have known some of the colleagues for a few years as well.

A: You know the School of Dentistry in Athens-we have only two Schools of Dentistry in Greece-does not support the Erasmus program at all.
But we are still trying and hopefully we can do what can be done for the students, to support the program

I: It's interesting you have individual ways to help the students. I would finish now as we are already above the timeline. Thank you for taking the time and I really appreciate it; it was very very helpful and interesting meeting

A: I was very happy to meet you, both of you; you're very welcome in the university, when you come in Thessaloniki please, I am a phone call away and I will be very glad to meet you.

I: Thank you so much, we would love to; it would be great to really meet in person again no thank you
Have a great day, keep safe and we will be in touch.

A: I hope the best for the program.

I: Thank you, yeah, fingers crossed.

A: Bye, bye.

CB: Bye. I'll stop the recording

Interview with representative from ANECA, Spain

I=Interviewer

A=Representative of ANECA

I: The aim of this project is to understand what the barriers in terms of mobility are. We are also particularly interested in certain obstacles that we encounter in student mobility with regulated careers such as medicine, engineering or law for instance. **My first question is what do you personally think about giving more importance to student mobility?**

A: What we have found in almost all the agencies and the Spanish university system is that in the syllabus reports, when a study programme for students is proposed, mobility is an element that the university must include in the project. But the university is not obliged to comply with a minimum mobility requirement and the university can say well in this syllabus, for whatever reasons, we do not consider mobility. This happens a lot, especially for example in Master degrees, which are one year long and well, of course one year does not give the student enough time for mobility, etcetera.

As I say, it is not compulsory to include mobility, what happens is that whether or not to include mobility depends on each university's own strategy. One university may be committed to mobility, another may not. It may be that certain study plans are committed to mobility, but I say it like this the Spanish university system does not oblige mobility, just as it makes other things compulsory. It could make it compulsory, but I do not know if it should or should not. What I want to put on the table is that, when the agencies analyse the study plans, we find universities that justify not having mobility in one study plan and in other things.

I don't know if I'm answering another question in addition to this one, I'll continue answering you, because you raised an interesting issue earlier, which is what happens with degree programmes that are regulated and where mobility is made difficult.

The same thing happens in regulated degrees, it is not that the law prevents mobility. Mobility is possible, what happens is that in these degrees I believe that there is a problem of maturity in understanding mobility. We can see this to some extent when we analyse the reports and when we talk about the study plans in Spanish universities and let me explain what I mean by problem of maturity. We come from study plans before entering the European Higher Education Area, where mobility consisted of signing an agreement whereby certain subjects of the Spanish study plan were convalidated by certain subjects of the foreign study plan, it was a subject-to-subject convalidation. Instead of studying organic chemistry 1 in Salamanca or Valladolid for example, I study organic chemistry 1 in Melbourne or wherever and that's it. You have chemistry 1, it's 6 credits, it's the same syllabus, so it's 6 credits, that's it. When we move to the European Higher Education Area, recognition is something else, it's not the convalidation of subjects.

It is the recognition of certain competencies that you have acquired elsewhere as competencies that are part of the learning objectives of this curriculum. It is not subject by subject; it is competencies by credits of the study plan. You have these competences and I measure them in credits, and I can incorporate them here.

This has been better understood in some degrees and in others it has been more difficult to understand. That is why I say, it is a problem of maturity and I think that there are degrees that have to do with regulated professions that you mentioned, medicine, engineering and all those in the field of health where there are always a regulations, what happens with these regulations? Regulated professions mean that there is a ministry, the ministry of health or the ministry of industry, whichever ministry corresponds to the subject, that has said that students who want to practice medicine professionally must have studied this list of competencies in their study programme. Of course, it is a list made in Spain and regulated in Spain.

And when the medical syllabus says I'm going to add mobility and because as these competencies are those that the Spanish decree says, it allegedly means that these competencies can only be acquired here in Spain. Well, that is not true these competencies are regulated by Spain, but that does not mean that they cannot be acquired elsewhere. That is why I say that it is a problem of how it is being understood.

197

So it is true that we have detected that there is less mobility in these degrees, but not because the law prevents it, and we have also detected that there are degrees where there is no mobility because the law does not oblige mobility, that is what we are finding.

I: Well, this has covered a few of the questions.

A: Of course, yes, because the second you mentioned it at the beginning it came to my mind, so I'm going to mention it to you.

I: Yes and then in ANECA, as you explained, mobility is an issue that is optional for universities and in general.

A: Optional, I mean we always ask about it, but at a given moment they can argue that they don't do mobility and explain why, but we always ask about it. It is in the catalogue of questions for our audits because we ask about it and we tell them that it is not compulsory to have mobility in a degree.

I: My next question was whether there is a consensus that this is something that is audited by ANECA and I think it is clear that it is.

A: We always audit it, the only thing that happens to us is that we cannot say that this degree has an unfavourable report because it does not have mobility. Unlike when a degree does not fulfil the professional attributions, then they would receive an unfavourable report, but mobility is not a reason, we could debate whether it should be or not, but as of today it is not.

I: Yes and then, I think you also touched a little bit on whether student mobility should be part of the student curriculum or not.

A: One of the things that we are trying to push for is that also when we evaluate a curriculum, it seems that mobility is only about doing a programme whereby students come or go from one university to another.

We have to talk about mobility in a broader sense. In other words, mobility is preparing a student to work outside Spain or, in short to move in a world that is much wider than the borders of a given country. So, it is important not only that the student spends a part of his or her studies in another country studying, but also that in the study plan, without leaving their country, he or she has an open mentality and so to speak can move without leaving his or her home.

In other words, they should also understand that if I am going to be a doctor or engineer, medicine and engineering in Spain is regulated in the way it is regulated, but in the world it exists in other ways. It is also interesting to learn and study about it, so that you can then move outside the world professionally outside the borders of your own country, so we are also trying to ensure that all the curricula have this approach from the beginning.

Let me explain, in other words when designing a curriculum, sure you are going to be a doctor but you are going to be a doctor in the world not just in Spain, so in your curriculum, bear in mind that you are going to teach a person who is going to be able to practise medicine in any country in the world. Don't just think about how they are only trained to practise medicine in Spain and as soon as they cross the border, they won't be able to. We must try to ensure that from the moment you are trained, from the very first moment you enter the university, your syllabus prepares you for a global world.

We also encourage in this sense, as I was saying the mobility of teachers at any given time. It is also interesting, maybe the student has not gone on mobility, but if they have a teacher who has gone on mobility, they have seen what this degree and this training is like outside Spain. I'm sure that when they return to Spain, they can also bring that international perspective of mobility that the professor has had at that time. This is also something that should be valued as the concept of mobility, which in principle we are looking at, only includes how many agreements do you have and with which

universities for students to come and go. You must go beyond in the concept of mobility and in all the criteria within study plans.

Another perspective, which we are also promoting from the Internationalisation Commission, is that mobility is something that should be of concern to not only the university as an institution that educates students and future graduates who will then go on to work and develop their professional lives. It should concern the country, Spain as such because if you get students from other countries to come here through a mobility programme, those students are then going to project an image of Spain outside of here and vice versa. Students who leave project the image of Spain with them abroad, so I also say this because one of the things that we promote is that in addition to the Ministry of Universities and the Ministry of Education, all ministries, all administrations and all entities in Spain, including private companies, should be concerned about supporting student mobility because student mobility is a source of wealth for the country, both in terms of receiving and returning students. I think there are countries that are very clear about this, that dedicate a lot to mobility. I am thinking of Germany, I think it is a wonderful example that has a national strategy for student mobility.

But national strategy means that all the ministries and all the companies are concerned about it, and they put a lot of money so that students from outside of Germany come here, so that students from Germany leave, because that is wealth for Germany, they are very clear about it. Here in Spain, it often seems that well, this is a problem of the universities that want to do tourism, look that is no the case. It's just that the mentality is different, so I also think that we have to mature a little, that this is something strategic for a country, it's not just that we want university students to go abroad during their studies.

I: In general, what are the barriers to student mobility?

A: First, there is the issue of what is the offer, so to speak, of support for mobility. I mean, I am very clear that I want to go and study part of my degree abroad, I want to

but this has a cost, right? And this, how is it financed? The grants in the Erasmus programme are very limited.

What we are detecting is that the programmes for bachelor's and master's degrees that have good mobility have funding beyond Erasmus. It is a programme that has sought funding, for example, almost all the mobility in master's degrees that we are finding when we evaluate degrees is financed by research projects of the groups behind the master's degree. These are not Erasmus; they are research projects financed by the European Commission or by the Spanish Government or by the Government of the Autonomous Regions and they have dedicated part of the money to the mobility of the students on this master's degree.

This means it is financing this mobility properly, because otherwise it is very complicated, isn't it? Then another thing that we have found, apart from the difficulty of having or not having economic resources for mobility is the possibility of having resources, not only economic, but at a given moment, another type of support, such as orientation services or resources. To help students organize the trip, find accommodation, how healthcare works in the host country.

There are universities that have made a commitment to put resources into this and have very good information services and a very good welcome and it makes mobility much easier. They don't just tell you, look, these are the scholarships you can apply for, they give you everything. I think that is also a difficulty when you say, well, they've already given me the grant and now what do I do if I can't find someone to help me, well, that is not very encouraging, that's another one of the difficulties we're encountering.

 Then there are the difficulties I mentioned at the beginning of the fact that in certain degrees, for whatever reason because of tradition or there is not a more open mentality for mobility, they do not offer mobility. One example is law where often the justification used is that Law is studied here, and this is Spanish Law what is being taught. But the truth is that Law is becoming increasingly international in the sense that relations in litigation in a global world are increasingly more about overcoming borders, it would be

very interesting that the study plans do not only talk about Spanish Law but also about how law is practiced in other countries.

In fact, to continue with the example of Law there are Law degrees that are including a formative itinerary in the law of another country, this will encourage mobility, which makes perfect sense. Furthermore, I believe that in any degree mobility can make sense in the end if one considers the degree in a global world and one difficulty is that sometimes those responsible for curricula are not so open-minded about the fact that any discipline is now a discipline in a global world and can be open to mobility.

I: What kind of recommendations do you give universities to overcome these barriers?

A: In general and when the evaluation reports are done there is as section on what has to be improved and it is compulsory that it is improved, because if it is not the report will be negative. The degree will not be able to go ahead, and so on, and it will lose its official status and others that are recommendations for improvement. So whenever we find degrees where there is no mobility, there are always recommendations we propose that it would be interesting to consider mobility in this degree as it does not seem that the degree has any programme that considers student exchanges.

There is always a recommendation in that sense, if we don't find anything and then the other issue in which we are trying to encourage mobility is with what we call certification programmes or seals of international excellence. I will explain what these international excellence seals, or these certificates mean. In Spanish degrees, well, throughout the world more or less the scheme is very similar, the degrees can be accredited, it means that they meet the minimum legal status of the country, accrediting a degree in Spain means that the degree is official and that it is valid throughout the Spanish state and it is valid abroad and everything you want is, so to speak the degree is official, that is the accreditation.

Then there are what we call certifications and certifications are plus of excellence. Well, your degree is accredited, I know it's official, but now anyway. Your degree is excellent, in something which means it goes beyond meeting the minimums of accreditation. The accreditation is a minimum of quality, but then you can look for certificates that guarantee that you are very good at something, so ANECA is promoting international quality seals and other similar agencies and what they do I encourage you to go for excellence in internationalisation.

It is not compulsory to do so, but a student would graduate not only with a degree with mobility included but also a degree with an international seal of excellence. Meaning that it has fulfilled, in addition certain criteria that are voluntary that can give the student a brand, which can be very interesting for them. For example, we have some seals in engineering and in chemistry.

We are managing to generate interest in many universities and universities are implementing them, it's voluntary, but it's a bit of a hallmark. A student might think I am able to study engineering in 20 universities and, I'm going to choose this one that offers me this international seal which I think is interesting. We are encouraging it from the Agency, during accreditation we always recommend that universities add one and then we encourage is that excellence is sought and we give quality seals to recognise excellence and in internationalisation.

I: We have partly mentioned this issue, we have talked a bit about why these degrees in regulated professions do not offer mobility, and do you think it is valuable to introduce an element of mobility in these kinds of degrees such as engineering and medicine and law?

A: I think that mobility does not happen, because of course regulated professions means that in order for you to practice medicine, work as an engineer in your study programme, you have to acquire certain competencies that are in Spanish regulations. This regulation covers I don't know, I'm going to put it this way, it depends on the degree courses. If we are talking about medicine, it is six years, but in some four-year engineering degrees, practically during the first three years they are filled with core compulsory modules for the competences that they must fulfill. Albeit, as there are 3

years of regulated competences, you still have another year of optional subjects that you could do whilst going on mobility.

What happens is that then, in addition, these degrees also have difficulties. The core compulsory subjects are hard and students can have difficulties in passing those subjects. And of course, if you don't pass them in the first year you have to repeat them, then if you go on mobility without passing all your modules, mobility becomes more complicated, because you have to come to Spain to take exams in all these modules.

So I think that these kind of regulated professions have this complexity that, as I said, there is nothing that prevents it, and I think that on the one hand it is a question of tradition. That you have to do it here because I think that this was true with the degrees before the European Higher Education Area. But after entering the European Higher Education Area that is not the case, nothing prevents it and sometimes we have not changed this mentality and we continue with the old mentality which I think that we could solve.

I also think that it is interesting to add mobility in these degrees for certain engineering degrees for example, architecture or technical architecture, work in Spain is very limited for these professions and the graduates where they are working? Well, in Latin America, in Europe, in England, the same with nursing, many graduates are working in England and it would have been interesting to have mobility in your curriculum because it will prepare you for where you are going to work professionally.

I: And for these degrees, what recommendations do you give to overcome these barriers, to encourage mobility?

A: To always emphasize and recommend that in this degree there can also be mobility. Sometimes, it's difficult to encourage this because we run into professors who says no, it's my subject, you have to do it here and this subject is so important that you can't do it elsewhere, that they can't recognise it, they could not convalidate it before and they won't convalidate it now.

204

So we always try to give the recommendation that this is not the case and that it can be done for any degree. What we need is a change of generation in certain teachers, who are the ones who come a little bit from the past. From that tradition or that dynamic of the old study plans from before the European Higher Education Area and that they continue to maintain. I think that little by little this is being diluted as new generations of teachers arrive, who come and have often been students on a mobility programme and when they become teachers, they say that of course there can be mobility here I think that helps a lot to change this. On the part of the agencies, we can't go much further than that because it's not compulsory to do it, what we always do is make a recommendation and then above all to motivate with the possibility that this can give you a seal of excellence that goes beyond what is compulsory for your subject.

I: We are going to have to encourage that this is the future, that mobility is really possible, and that students and the University will always benefit.

A: Universities and society will benefit. I was going to say, it also has to do with ideology a little bit. In Spain we have a model, and this is a problem of the Spanish university system, that well I'm going to study at a university in my province and in my hometown, I'm not moving from here to go abroad or to the next province, and this has generated a bit of a problem, because we have more universities than provinces. You have university offer in your town, without leaving your home, and in each province there are at least two universities. Maybe there should be model where students are have to leave their hometown to study a specific subject.

We should all go outside of our hometown to study, and I think that this is normal in other countries, in other words, it is very rare in other countries that you study at university in the place where you were born. The normal thing outside Spain is that everyone goes to university somewhere else because there isn't a university in every place and here in Spain we have set up a university in every town, so we don't encourage mobility, so to speak, and this is a bit of everyone's fault, because people say I don't want my son to leave to study and I want them to be able to study at home.

We are talking about university, what you want is for your child to go out into the world, and the further away they study, the better they will do, so this is a mentality that we don't have much of in Spain, we need to encourage it that you must study outside of your hometown. Not only to go abroad is great to open your mind which I wish the everyone could do, but also to leave your hometown.

A: I was going to ask you if the Spanish universities that are involved in the project are part of an alliance of European universities. There is a project that the European Commission launched a couple of years ago, it had been in the pipeline for a longer time, but it started funding it a couple of years ago. It is part of the Erasmus initiative, and it finances what are called European universities, which are alliances, consortiums between universities to carry out joint study programmes where the programme is carried out between several universities and mobility is part of the programme.

In this programme there are 3 credits here, 5 there so of course it is mobility by definition. I think it could be interesting if you are working on the project and the universities that are also involved in these projects, in these European University alliances to encourage mobility in the European University. This is one of the objectives of these consortia of European universities.

I: Yes, I had heard of the initiative, but I'm not sure.

A: Probably yes, because practically all Spanish universities already have some kind of initiative of this type. Another thing is the extent to which they are involved in such an initiative. Are they leading the initiative or are they very active or not? There have already been two calls for proposals from these European universities and now they are preparing the third one.

And it seems to me that in the first call, I think that 11 Spanish universities entered and in the second it is possible that another 17 or 18 universities have already entered and now there is going to be a third call and even more are going to enter, in other words, sooner or later all the universities will be in some of them, but it is interesting to be active, not just to be there for the sake of being there.

I think it would be interesting to link this type of project that you are working on to promote mobility with a new model of university, because these consortiums are a new model of university I,t is a university in several cities in Europe and in a very open space.

Furthermore, in Spain, the regulations governing official degrees changed at the beginning of this academic year, in September, October, I don't know if it was published in September and came into force in October 2021. In the decree that regulates degrees it says that a Spanish degree has to have so many credits, if it lasts four years, however there is a final section in the decree that says, except for degrees that are in European universities, which can be as you wish, and it is great.

There are no restrictions, this is good, if it is in a consortium of European universities it can be whatever you want, so it is very good because if we have to comply with the Spanish, Swedish or Dutch regulations, you would go crazy, well now you can do whatever you want, make a good university project and that's it.

These types of formulas that are being worked on and that are starting to become a reality, mobility is a substantial part of the study plan, the study plan itself is to go on mobility.

I: We will interview another agency because we want to make a comparison in Europe to see if there are any differences between countries or if they say similar things in general.

A: Yes, it may depend on the regulation, as I was telling you before that we have for degrees, in each country, here in Spain regulation of the degrees does mention mobility and we ask about it, but it doesn't oblige it. It may be that in other countries this is regulated in a different way in the legal framework.

I: And are you in contact with accreditation organisations in other European countries?

A: Yes, evaluation procedures are criteria that have been agreed upon in a European network of quality agencies which is the ENQA network and within this network we are agencies from all over the European Higher Education Area, not only European. It goes beyond Europe there are also countries that are not in the European Community, especially from Asia. So in this network of agencies, we agree on the criteria and evaluation processes, and not only do we agree, but in order to form part of this network, we are also evaluated, that is, the agencies that evaluate the universities are also evaluated externally in order to form part of this network and what we have to overcome in this external evaluation are also common European criteria. We all have to act in a common way in our accreditation and certification processes.

I: I imagine that you also exchange good practices.

A: Yes we do, and for example, a good practice now for the quality agencies is that our evaluation commissions, the ones that prepare the reports, that visit the universities have international people in them. In other words, if we are going to evaluate the University of Alicante, then in addition to sending professors from Spanish universities, teachers from outside Spain or students from outside Spain should also come as part of the evaluation committee.

The difficulty is to find them many times because encouraging someone to come from the Netherlands to evaluate a degree in Alicante is sometimes not easy. But in fact, every time we have an external review, we are always asked have you brought many international evaluators into the agency and if you have had evaluators from other countries to evaluate Spanish universities. This is also something that is encouraged.

I: Do you also evaluate, for example, the level of English of professors and do you also believe language is a mobility barrier for incoming and outgoing students?

A: Language is also a difficulty because in Spain, university degrees that are taught are in Spanish. Of course, if the degree is taught in Spanish, the person who comes here has to be a person who is fluent in that language because the classes will be taught in Spanish and they will have to take exams in Spanish. They are not going to

be tested in another language. What we are trying to encourage, which legislation protects too is that courses can also be taught in other languages that are not official languages in Spain.

This has an advantage and a disadvantage. It has the advantage that it can attract, students from other countries because it is taught in English, and it is very good. It also has the disadvantage that sometimes Spanish students say I want to study in Spanish because I don't know English, so this is a difficulty, I think that if we had a pre-university system where the knowledge of a foreign language was greater, it would be very easy for the teaching language to be another one at university.

It is also true that this encourages mobility because there are people who want to come precisely for this reason. There are people who say, I want to go to Spain to study this, because of course I'll learn Spanish while I'm at it.

I: And to encourage mobility or to see if students could really go to other countries, are there ideas or are there some universities that carry out language tests to check that students can go on Erasmus, that they can go to class and understand what they are being taught?

A: Yes, there are universities that do that, but I come back to the same thing it's not compulsory to do it and we cannot force them to do it. There are even universities that not only do language exams, but also provide language teaching and then they test you afterwards. Meaning that they will not only put you through a screening but will give you the training to pass it. That is a good practice so to speak.

I: That could be included in the future recommendations that you would give?

A: We are seeing that, for example, in these programmes that I was telling you about in the European consortia where the degree itself is conceived with mobility, the requirements for access to the degree are not only passing the university entrance of your country, but also passing an language test, because it's not just that you say you know the language, it's that you can prove it.

I think that yes, it is important if you want a programme of this type to work well, where mobility is part of the programme and it is going to be taught in different countries. Where the consortium have agreed that English or another language will be the lingua franca they must make sure that everyone involved speaks it, because otherwise it's not good for the students or for the development of the programme.

Interview with representative from ACQUIN, Germany

I=Interviewer
A=Representative of ACQUIN
I2= second interviewer

I1: In you experience what have been the barriers you have encountered towards mobility?

A: I think first from a formal content related aspect it's the learning agreement. I often hear at accreditations that students have learning agreements but when they go to the university where they will study and then they come back they have indeed problems with their learning agreements. This is what I often not understand if you talk about what can be recognized in their learning. This is very interesting, and I hear it very often in accreditation procedures.

From my personal experience, but this is a common aspect not so special in accreditation, but for most students that would like to go to study abroad there are barriers in their personal life like that there are no scholarships, or they have family commitments, and this is always a problem. What I found out that I thought was very interesting, I always thought students would always become more open minded and when I always speak to students, I do not know what you think but I think they are not as open minded about studying abroad.

Most of them want to stay in their home countries and do not want to make so many external experiences. In my generation we all wanted to go abroad. I think security is

a very big issue for students and only if they feel secure and everything is well organized, they go abroad. I often hear some students are abroad and they need a lot of time to get along there, and this is why they come back, and they have an extension of their study period here and then they have a problem with their scholarship. I think the mobility barriers concern learning agreements, but they also concern personal aspects too, where students do not want to go study abroad and maybe there are problems that need to be solved so that studying abroad is more attractive for students.

I1: That is also a similar point that during an interview with a representative of the Spanish agency brought up and we felt there was a cultural aspect. **People in Spain tend to study in universities locally, live with their parents until much longer than their northern European cohorts, I was wondering if this is an issue too in Germany as we felt it might have mainly been a cultural issue?**

A: Yes, absolutely in the whole country I would say. Maybe internationally too because I am in contact with many international accreditations. The language problem is a factor too because what I often hear is that when students go abroad to learn another language, they don't speak the language there, they speak with native speakers in German because it is more comfortable and its more secure and so they don't have the intercultural experience. And then they come back and they're disappointed because they say nothing happened, I was in a different country, I felt lonely, I met my friends for my university and then we came back together and I think that's not the idea of mobility you need to dive deep into another culture, another language. This is a problem I always hear and then when the other people ask but you had the chance to talk in the language in English or Spanish or French, why didn't you? They reply to it, was more comfortable to talk German. That's not that's not a good no, that's not a good answer.

I1: So overall, how do you feel about bringing mobility more to the fore? Is this something that in Germany it's really emphasized on, is it something optional that universities could choose to introduce?

A: Yes, so what I often hear there's a mobility window in many study programs, but it's very open. You don't have to fulfill that and often when you don't say to the students, please do it in the first semester on the third semester, they won't do it. If you only say mobility windows are possible then nothing happens. You have to emphasize where is the mobility window and to support them.

In my point of view, there are two kind of students, those who want to join double degrees or joint programs because they want to and that is their main idea to study then there are other students who say I maybe would like to go abroad, but maybe I will see. When there is only a possible mobility window then often nothing happens. To overcome this, teachers should emphasize when mobility can take place, and should provide more support to students that wish to go abroad by giving them the time or embedding mobility in the curriculum. However, often within a programme curriculum there is no time for mobility. They say please go study abroad but maybe in the form of a summer school or six weeks in a semester and sometimes that's not enough time to deep dive in another culture and another language. So I think mobility should be more deeply embedded in the in the curriculum.

I1: And overall, do you encourage universities to add a mobility component when doing recommendations?

A: Yes, we do. Our experts often really emphasize that a university should define a period when students should go abroad on or that there's a possible chance for it and a mobility window, also say that if students want to go on mobility the university will support them.

Then nothing happens because I often hear that students maybe in their first till third semester are often a little bit afraid. If you are the first child to go to university in your family and there were already so many barriers to enter university, they do not often go to study abroad because it's already such a big step to enter university. To go abroad, is too much for many students. This is often a problem and so the social aspect where you come from as a student it determines if you go study abroad.

I1: Overall there is some understanding that mobility elements have to be audited, yes?

A: Yes, of course. Absolutely. They have to.

I1: What kind of recommendations do you tend to offer? What recommendations would you offer to overcome barriers?

A: First, that in the evaluations it has to be considered the reasons why students do go abroad why they don't go abroad and what kind of problems do they face, this should be evaluated regularly.

This is one recommendation we often do. We also recommend supporting the students and consulting them on how they really organize their study abroad because as I said at the beginning, in my point of view students are not so responsible as they are very young, and they come to the university at about 18 years and they have to organize their life. It's the first time they organize their life. It's a very interesting experience and very necessary, but sometimes it's too much and sometimes you need somebody to help. So I mean there should be more, maybe more consulting at the universities. There are great scholarships from foundations, of course this is really very good and all. But I think students need more help really to organize it and to see the the positive aspects of studying abroad.

I1: And now we are moving towards the so-called regulated fields. Regarding these fields, what are some barriers of mobility?

A: So maybe what I said recognition of academic achievements in the learning agreements is a problem. Often students compare the modules handbooks, and they say when I do this module then it can be recognized here in Germany. However, sometimes the modules change in foreign countries, then they come back, and they are told it cannot be recognized that's a big problem and the students are very disappointed.

Another kind of problems is maybe with financing. That's a problem for students because they don't know how to finance it and they have to too little orientation and advice. In the foreign country they often feel lost and then they stick together, they're on their own group of German students and then there's no intercultural experience. So I think orientation and advice in foreign countries should be supported more. Maybe something like the the model of a tandem. That always works quite well.

I2: When you evaluate so incoming mobility with a degree program, do you also look at the the staff of the receiving university and this staff to student ratio? Because in my division we have a one part time position, 50% position for all the Erasmus incoming mobilities.

A: Yes, we do. That's often a problem because as you said there's one person who has to look after everything and and for all of the study programs and this is often a problem. As we take a look in international accreditations of how this stuff in the countries is because often, we have the problem that the students here they have lecturers and professors they can talk to and then they go to another country and sometimes the level of education is not that high as in Germany. This can happen and then say we had four lecturers but none of them was a professor and we didn't talk about methodology or more scientific ways. It was more practical and sometimes there's a disappointment. But this is what we always recommend them to see how what kind of education do the lecturers have that they can provide the education. They should fulfill how it is based in the modules.

I1: Do you feel overall there is a value in bringing a mobility element to this regulated fields?

A: Yes, of course. I it should be a part of the curriculum and there should be possibilities so that all students can study abroad. No matter if you study part time, if you have family, if you have many problems, I think it should be as you said mobility should be the norm so that every student can study abroad because this gives so many intercultural competencies and you need them in your life not only in your professional

life. This is so worthwhile for everyone's life, so I think mobility should be in the curriculum not only as a possibility.

I1: Overall, what would be one way to encourage mobility in these regulated fields?

A: I think maybe there should be many more interdisciplinary study programs and that you have more interdisciplinarity in study programs. This means more double degrees and more joint programs. This could be a very and a good idea because I often hear from students that they say we would like to study more interdisciplinarily and but there are there are not many chances.

I1: Another reason that came up during interviews for lower mobility in these fields was the attitude of certain professors towards mobility. Is this the case too in Germany?

A: This iI have a different experience and the professors always support mobility in Germany they have the problems that the students don't want to go because they want to stay at home because they're very young.

I think in Germany we have a different problem that the professors and the lecturers, they always encourage students to go to study abroad, but the students they are maybe too anxious to go abroad because they want absolutely security, they are so not so curious. This is what I often don't understand, a big problem it's based in the students, not on the side of the university, because in the universities I know they all support mobility, but they have to deal with the students who do not want to go abroad.

I1: In curriculum design do you consider that mobility should be an integral part of it. And how would you encourage this further integration into the curriculum design?

A: So, what I often hear from students is when to find out the ideal time to go to study abroad. And in my experience, there are only often two points: in the third semester after the first study year. This is when you know how everything works, you had your first year of experience, you're curious and you feel secure to say I have studied one year now I will go abroad. So maybe in the third semester or the semester before they write their thesis because this is often a semester where students say alright, I know what I would like to write my dissertation on. I would like to go study abroad to prepare for my bachelor dissertation and to have the opportunity improve my language skills. So in my opinion, a good point to study abroad is in this in the third semester or the the semester before the bachelor dissertation. This is what I often hear from students, what they prefer.

I1: Do some German universities offer or consider adding an additional year to their degree programs just so that students can go on mobility for a full year?

A: This is different, some universities do that, some don't. It is based on what the university management gives from top to down. There can be issues if you have a scholarship, but I think it's a very good idea. In some universities they absolutely offer this.

I2: There's a controversy bottom up versus top-down approach and the result of our output is we do not want there to me more top down. We know that some of the universities that we interviewed, in Eastern Europe for example, they have a central administration, whereas universities in France or Germany for example, that we spoke to have the a federal system. So as you evaluate programs, do you also look which approach is used? Do you favor method or what's your take on this?

A: I think maybe I agree with you the top-down process is not the best. So I think is important that faculties will be independent, that they have money and their institutes do have money so they can they can decide what to do with. This is what I think is very important to have a good basis for mobility and not from the top down. The faculty

should be more independent from the university management so that they can do what they want because this is what I often hear from the universities.

I2: And then something else that I noticed was we kept switching around between a university as an incoming institution and an outgoing institution. And what I took from you was that you look primarily structurally speaking at the possibilities for outgoing mobility. But then what you said about what also matters to students that was more the incoming perspective, so the student as a potential incomer. And then my question is, as you look at a program, do you also consider how incoming friendly it is and if so, how do you do that?

I mean, there's a big discrepancy in how many classes or courses are taught in English. For example, we're currently working on a sort of cluster curriculum to be able to offer something to everybody. The question is how you evaluate the subject as a potential incoming institution.

A: This is always the main question in the accreditation process and when we talk, with the university management, we're asking about their strategy concerning internationalization. How international really a university represents itself and and what kind of strategies are behind there because as you said concerning the outgoing and the incoming.

A recommendation is often made to say that all the curricula there should have parts in English because then there's a very good relation between incoming and outgoing students. Albeit we often hear that there are no financial resources to do that and that's a big problem because if there would be more financial resources there could be a bigger way for mobility and and then more incoming students would come. This is often a problem they say we can only have maybe English courses for bachelor or for master programs, if we are lucky we can do one bachelor master program and maybe one PhD program in English, but there are no more financial resources.

So I think assigned to all university management is that they should have more resources. They should spend more money for mobility to really to be able to identify

curricula which is mainly in English. Maybe you have some electives into other languages and then I think the students told me there would be more of a melting pot.

I2: One of the arguments that we heard was that when those universities that did offer courses in English, for example, they experience a decline of participation of local students. Is it something that you also hear?

A: Yes, then there's obviously a recommendation to have some tutorials and for English lessons particularly for speaking. Because the problem is that often the student they can read, that's not a problem, but they are afraid of talking and if you have to talk to another person in a different language and you are scared then you would never try the program. This is despite writing a thesis in English, in a different language.

There should be really more advice how to do that in a valid way, how to to deal with methodology in a different language to work scientifically, this is not so easy. This is as you said, it's the main problem that the local students that say no, I will be studying my mother language that's easier for me because I need good grades and I would like to have the best job later. But I can understand this this view, but it's it's not what studyin is supposed to be, I think.

I1: How integrated are language courses within like degrees? How good is overall the students English knowledge? Is that often an issue and do they for instance get tested on their English knowledge if they want to go abroad?

A: I think maybe if you begin to study you need to fulfill, the recognition that you have a English at I don't know B2 or higher level. I don't know what kind of level the university determines.

One basic recommendation we always give is that language courses should be more mandatory and more and elective too. If you would like to go abroad, you'd have to speak a basic level of the language and then really you have to expand that when you go abroad, and this is our two main problems. First of all the students don't have a

good level of their foreign language and then they go abroad and then they really don't expand their language skills because they only talk to other native speakers.

I2: Do you hear that argument often that we have 180 credits to give and we need 180 credits for our core curriculum, let's say physics or biology, and we have nothing to spare on extracurricular or key competencies.

A: Yes, I often hear that as you said this in these 180 points, they are enough and they're not enough. People have them and concerning the workload, it's really not easy to have a good curriculum and that the workload is valued in a good way. I know what you mean but I agree with you, I often hear that absolutely.

I2: Just, maybe two things you talked about competencies and interdisciplinarity and I have to admit over the 26 people that we interviewed those two aspects and that were never brought up as tools to improve international mobility. That was very interesting that you brought this up.

A: This is for me the main aspect to support mobility because I often hear in accreditation that, students say we want only interdisciplinary programs because this is the future. It is interesting that no one else and said this because the students always say they love these programs if they have them because they share so different intercultural aspects. They can for example if they study languages, you study the linguistic part maybe in Washington, in France or in Spain and then you can pair them into cultural aspects. So this is what I really often hear that they always they want interdisciplinary programs and because this is the way of going to really to support mobility. Interesting that no one else mention it is because this is for me the main aspect.

I2: Yeah, we we we had a different audience maybe, right? People looking at it from it from another point of view.

A: This is what I hear from from all over the world, students always say we want to study interdisciplinary.

I2: But that's interesting again, because the logic of Erasmus doesn't lend itself too much into interdisciplinarity, because agreements are typically between one department and another faculty or something like that and whenever a student wants to go outside of that agreement, that is an administrative hurdle because someone must sign the learning agreement. How do you manage it I mean, it's just a signature, but looking at EWP and the implementation of that, is a major problem. For signing the learning agreement technically speaking you have one coordinator responsible for that contract, for that agreement. But practically speaking that takes a lot of time and organization. So it is getting more and more difficult to get students to have that interdisciplinary experience.

A: I know what you mean this is more challenging. But this is what students tell me and all the students who study interdisciplinary they want to go abroad and they love these programs. The other students they're very shy and quiet and say they might want to go one semester on mobility. So I know what you mean the the, administrative process is more challenging absolutely. Maybe there could be a way to do that though, so you need more support and then more staff in the coordination. I know if there's only one coordinator and so many students come and that's it's too much, absolutely, so there should be more personal resources for the coordination of other programs.

I1: One thing I wanted to ask. When I spoke with ANECA one potential solution for the barriers for mobility in regulated field was to make them internationally recognized having some sort of seal of international recognition. Would you say that could be another potential solution?

A: It's a solution. And I think mobility should be should be normal, it should be more implemented in the consciousness of maybe the students of the university, that it's really normal to study abroad, so this is why it should be really part of the curriculum and not something special.

Maybe because this is one main problem that it's always special if you say I'm studying abroad. It should become normal to say I'm studying abroad, that it is no big deal, I think we haven't found a really good solution yet.

I1: I'm not sure if I am explaining myself is more kind of like adding a seal of international recognition for example the degree in medicine obtained at this university has this special seal of international recognition of international excellence.

A: Yeah, I think a university should have a very good international strategy to support students because the more international a university behaves, I think the more professional they are.
And then the university is very open to everything I think this is very important.

I1: When you audit like programs, you also check the level of for example, the level of English of a professor and make sure they can deliver the course in the in that language?

A: Yes absolutely, it is one of the main discussions we have especially in language and study programs. There's often the problem that the student when they came from school, they can speak English the most of course and then their level is very high. But if they would like to study in French or Italian or Spanish they can come to the university with a very low level of knowledge and that's a problem because with a very low level of knowledge and the professors and they have to help you to get a better level to go studying abroad and this in a way that cannot be fulfilled.

Then the students got to study abroad with a low level of maybe Spanish and they can't express themselves and then they do not talk in Spanish and only talk to their German friend. Then they go back and then say I know how to order a beer in Spanish, but not more. All students should have good language skills to go studying abroad, this

221

is what maybe the university should take more responsibility for that, if students come to the university.