



FESC REPORT ON ERASMUS+ STAFF COMPETENCES 2019



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PARTNERS

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“FRAMEWORK FOR ERASMUS+ STAFF COMPETENCES” SURVEY REPORT

About the report

The aim of the survey is to identify the key competences for staff involved in the administration of mobility processes.

The scope of the research **only includes administrative work and academic-administrative tasks** related to international student mobility, although departmental coordinators may have additional responsibilities that are solely academic. All categories of staff/roles included deal with student mobility in at least part of the mobility process (before, during and/or after mobility), for at least one type of student mobility (Incoming/Outgoing).

The key term in the project “**competence**” is based on the definitions on *EQF (European Quality Framework)* and *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* and reflects the various components and its comprehensive meaning widely used in European education and training policies. The existing approaches refer to a few aspects of competences and do not include the full spectrum of skills related to quality student mobility.

Survey is the part of the Erasmus+ project “Framework for Erasmus+ Staff Competencies” (FESC), which is carried out by the consortium: Philipps University Marburg, University of Warsaw, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, Ghent University, University of Latvia and European University Foundation. The survey was developed in collaboration with all partners in the consortium and has been edited and improved in a joint manner.

Two surveys have been designed - one for each target audience - students and university administrative staff.

Report is divided into three parts - survey analysis of university administrative staff, survey analysis of students and comparative findings of obtained data.

Dissemination of the survey

Survey was disseminated by all consortium partners through different networks including the EUF coordinators list, EUF associate partners mailing list, EUF monthly newsletter, ESN International and other social media channels. Each university held a responsibility on survey dissemination to reach the target audience and collect relevant study data.

Survey platform: SurveyMonkey

1. SURVEY ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The target of the survey is the higher education staff involved in organising and administering student mobility. The survey investigates elements connected to staff competences, services provided and processes and tools in place for conducting quality student mobility.

The survey was composed of 5 parts: Individual information, General Characteristics, Communication, Supervision and Support, and Competence Development and had a range of the following question types: open-ended, closed-ended, rating scales, multiple choice, likert scales. Overall, 332 respondents have agreed to take part in the survey and 318 respondents have indicated their gender. Accordingly, the gender composition consists of 245 female (70%), 72 male (22.6%) and 1 not identified (0.3%) representatives.

Country representation

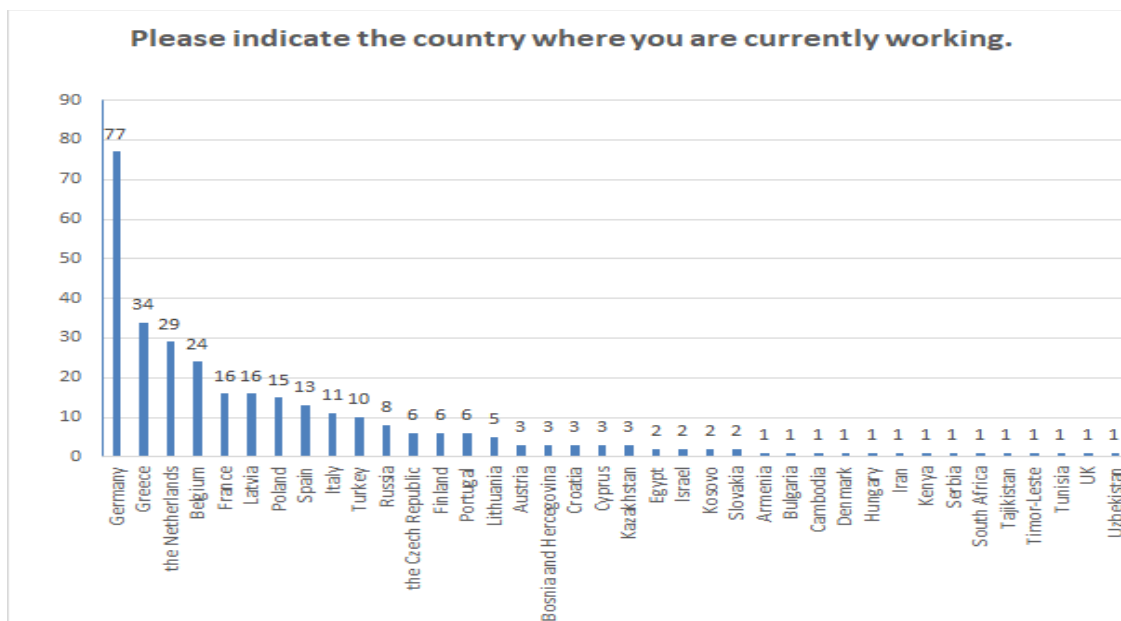


Table 1.1 Country representation

In total, survey data was collected from 38 countries and as Table 1.1 indicates, the majority of respondents came from Germany; the respondents were mainly representing Erasmus+ Programme Countries. Several representatives from the Erasmus+ Partner Countries have taken

part in the survey as well, therefore, the results will include data relevant for a wider range of participating countries in the Erasmus+ programme.

Categories of staff

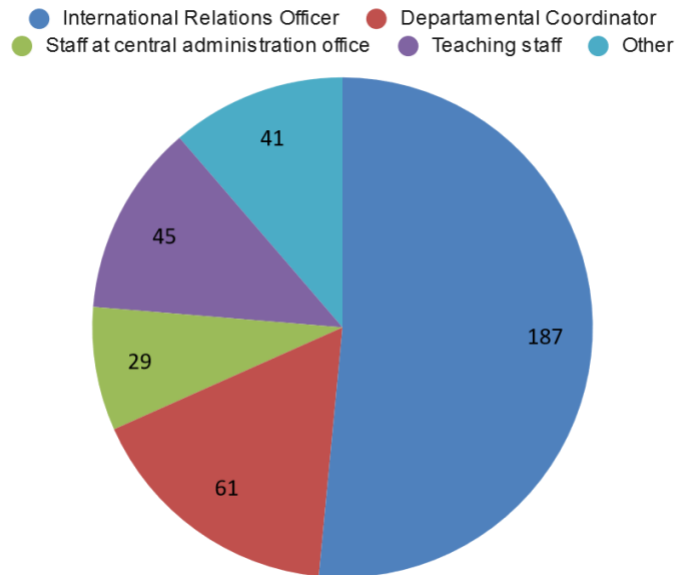


Table 1.2 Current position of respondents

Staff members are represented by 187 International Relations Officers (58.8%), 61 Departmental coordinators (19.1%), 29 representatives from the Staff at the central administration office (9.1%), 45 members of teaching staff (14.1%) and 41 “other” university staff (other students’ supporting offices, members of International Offices, other academic staff, project coordinators and heads of departments) (12.8%).

Range of experience

How many years of professional experience do you have working with student mobilities in Higher Education Institutions?

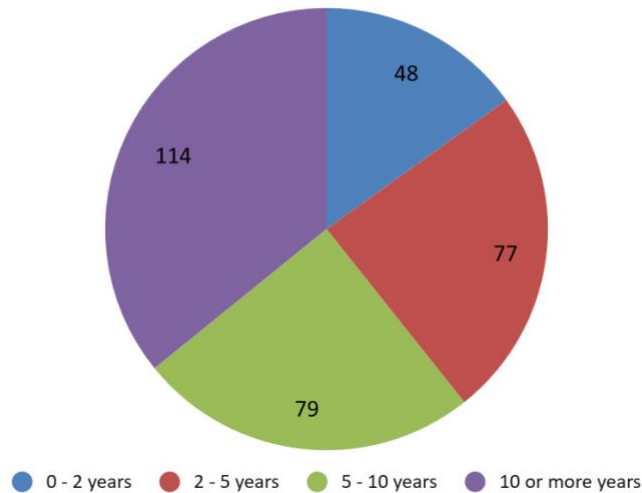


Table 1.3 Years of professional experience

In total, 318 respondents have identified years of experience in working with student mobilities in the HEI, namely, 114 respondents (35.8%) have more than 10 years of experience, 79 respondents (24.8%) have 5 to 10 years of experience, 77 respondents (24.2%) have 2 to 5 years of experience, and only 48 respondents (15%) have up to 2 years experience working with student mobilities.

Support services

Respondents were asked to evaluate the support provided to students by the respective home university. 262 staff members have expressed their evaluation in the scale from 1 to 5 (5-fully available; 1– not available). Table 1.4 shows that the majority of university representatives 180 (68.7%) confirm the full availability of early information about Erasmus+ mobility possibilities. Only 82 respondents (31.3%) indicate the full availability to access to feedback from previous students. Regular receipt of the up-to-date instructions regarding upcoming deadlines, tasks and activities are fully supported by 136 respondents (51.9%) and followed by 89 respondents (33.9%) almost fully supporting such services.

	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL
Early information about ERASMUS+ mobility possibilities.	68.70% 180	22.52% 59	7.63% 20	0.76% 2	0.38% 1	262
Access to feedback from students who have spent a study mobility period in the selected university.	31.30% 82	33.21% 87	24.05% 63	9.54% 25	1.91% 5	262
Regular receipt of the up-to-date instructions regarding upcoming deadlines, tasks and activities.	51.91% 136	33.97% 89	11.07% 29	2.29% 6	0.76% 2	262
Assistance with practical issues (insurance, visa, accommodation, etc.).	43.13% 113	35.50% 93	14.89% 39	5.73% 15	0.76% 2	262
Receipt of clear and well structured information about the required documents to be submitted after the mobility.	64.12% 168	27.10% 71	8.02% 21	0.38% 1	0.38% 1	262

Table 1.4 Support provided to students by home university (5 - fully available; 1 - not available)

43.1% have indicated that university offers full availability of assistance with practical issues (insurance, visa, accommodation, etc.), 35.5% offers almost full availability and 14.8 % offers partial availability of assistance in practical issues. The major part of respondents offers either full (64.1%) or almost full (27.1%) support regarding the receipt of clear and well-structured information about the required documents to be submitted after the mobility.

Communication skills

	STRONGLY AGREE	RATHER AGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	RATHER DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A	TOTAL
Ability to communicate in oral and written forms in both local and foreign languages	84.73% 222	11.45% 30	1.91% 5	1.15% 3	0.00% 0	0.76% 2	262
Capacity to provide information on time	82.44% 216	15.27% 40	1.15% 3	0.38% 1	0.00% 0	0.76% 2	262
Ability to present clear information	88.17% 231	10.69% 28	0.00% 0	1.15% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	262
Polite response in disagreement situations	74.05% 194	23.28% 61	1.91% 5	0.38% 1	0.00% 0	0.38% 1	262
Awareness of data privacy	64.89% 170	29.01% 76	5.34% 14	0.76% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	262
Possibility to easily be reached through digital channels such as social media	22.52% 59	39.31% 103	19.08% 50	16.41% 43	2.29% 6	0.38% 1	262
Respectful/tactful about cultural diversity	83.97% 220	14.50% 38	1.15% 3	0.38% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	262

Table 1.5 Importance of listed skills for university staff members

The survey focused on evaluating 7 qualities to be considered as important communication skills for staff members in the scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The majority of respondents have agreed that the ability to communicate in oral and written forms in both local and foreign languages 222 (84.7%), capacity to provide information in time 216 (82.4%), ability to present clear information 231 (88.1%), polite response in disagreement situations 194 (74%), awareness of data privacy 170 (64.8%) and being respectful/tactful about cultural diversity 220 (83.9%) are very important communication skills, whereas the opinions differ in relation to the possibility to easily be reached through digital channels such as social media. Namely, 103 (39.1%) respondents rather agree, 59 (22.5%) strongly agree, 50 (19%) neither agree or disagree, 43 (16.4%) rather disagree and 6 (2.2%) strongly disagree that staff members should be easily reached via social media.

Impact of university website

	STRONGLY AGREE	RATHER AGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	RATHER DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A	TOTAL
Well structured and understandable information	94.66% 248	4.58% 12	0.38% 1	0.38% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	262
Complete information in different languages	51.53% 135	37.79% 99	7.63% 20	3.05% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	262
Visually attractive	60.54% 158	32.95% 86	5.75% 15	0.77% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	261
Successfully integrated social media	37.02% 97	41.60% 109	16.03% 42	4.58% 12	0.76% 2	0.00% 0	262
Smartphone friendliness	62.84% 164	27.20% 71	8.43% 22	1.53% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	261
Adjusted to visually impaired users	58.02% 152	33.97% 89	5.34% 14	1.53% 4	0.00% 0	1.15% 3	262

Table 1.6 Important aspects in creating outstanding university websites

Regarding the creation of an outstanding university website, the following six aspects have been evaluated by the university staff in the scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. 248 respondents (94.6%) strongly agree that university website shall contain well-structured and understandable information, 135 (51.5%) strongly agree that complete information shall be available in different languages, 158 (60.5%) strongly agree on the importance of visual attractiveness of the university website. 109 respondents (41.6%) rather agree and 97 (37%) strongly agree that university website shall contain successfully integrated social media, 164 (62.8%) strongly agree and 71 (27.2%) rather agree on the smartphone friendliness, and 125 (58%) strongly agree and 89 (33.9%) rather agree that university websites shall be adjusted to visually impaired users. In the creation of outstanding website, the university staff places the biggest emphasis on well structured and understandable information.

Self-evaluation on work performance

257 respondents have evaluated 5 important aspects of their work performance in the scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

	STRONGLY AGREE	RATHER AGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	RATHER DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A	TOTAL
Give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished.	55.25% 142	32.68% 84	5.45% 14	1.56% 4	0.00% 0	5.06% 13	257
Have available time for counselling.	61.48% 158	31.52% 81	4.67% 12	0.78% 2	0.39% 1	1.17% 3	257
Offer different solutions to problems.	55.64% 143	32.68% 84	9.34% 24	0.78% 2	0.39% 1	1.17% 3	257
Act immediately when a quick decision is required.	69.65% 179	24.90% 64	3.11% 8	0.78% 2	0.39% 1	1.17% 3	257
Take responsibility for a mistake.	72.76% 187	20.62% 53	3.89% 10	0.78% 2	0.39% 1	1.56% 4	257

Table 1.7 Important aspects of work performance

142 representatives (55.2%) strongly agree and 84 (32.6%) rather agree on the importance to give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished, 125 (61.4%) strongly agree and 81 (31.5%) rather agree on the importance of having available time for counselling. 143 respondents (55.6%) strongly agree and 84 (32.6%) rather agree on the importance of offering different solutions to problems, 179 (69.6%) strongly agree and 64 (24.9%) rather agree on the importance of the ability to act immediately once a quick decision is required, and 187 (72.7%) strongly agree and 53 (20.6%) rather agree on the importance of ability to take responsibility for a mistake. To sum up, the majority of respondents consider that one's ability to take responsibility for a mistake is the most important aspect among the listed competences.

Moral support to mobile students

In order to estimate the moral support offered by the university staff to mobile students, 257 respondents have evaluated in the scale from 1 to 5 (5-very important; 1– not important) the importance of moral support in each mobility phase.

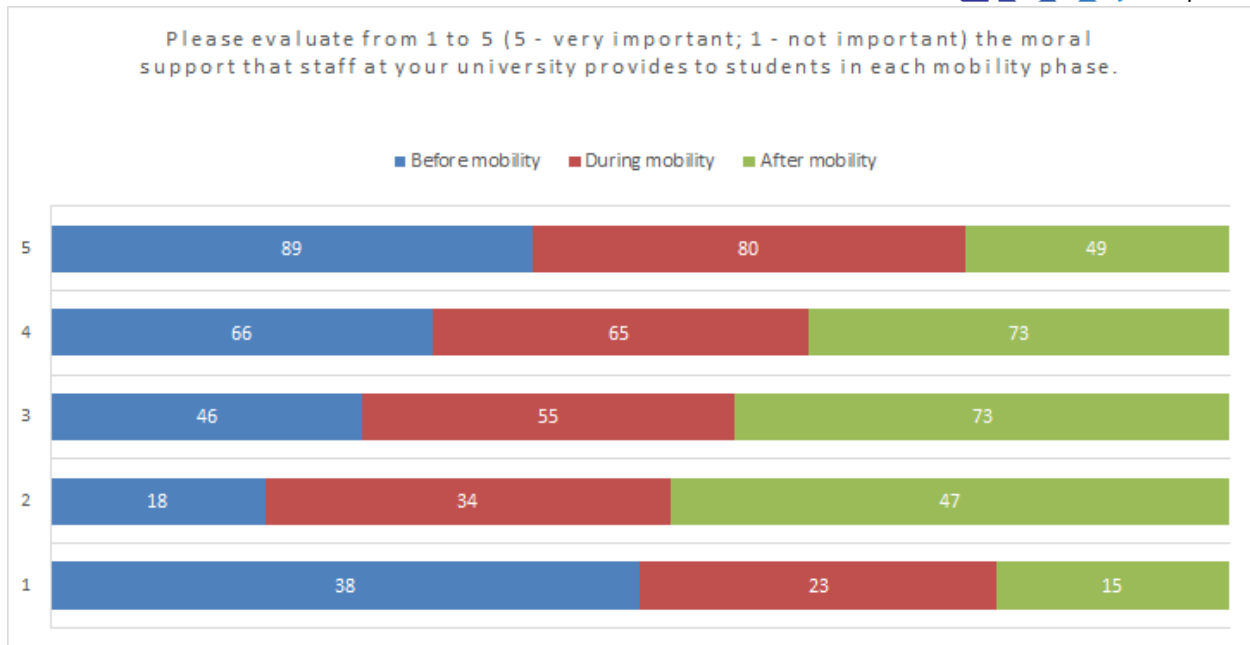


Table 1.8 Moral support for students in each mobility phase

Accordingly, 89 respondents (34.6%) consider it to be very important to morally support the student in the 'before mobility' phase whereas 38 respondents (14.7%) consider that moral support 'before mobility' is not important; 80 staff members (31.3%) consider the moral support 'during mobility' as very important and 65 (25.2%) as an important aspect. 'After mobility' phase is equally evaluated by 73 representatives (28.4%) with the level of importance of 3 and 4 thus reducing the importance of the need of moral support during this phase of mobility. Interestingly, similar results are represented for the 'after mobility' phase (level of importance 2 and 5) indicating contrary views. According to respondents, it is vital that moral support is provided before and during the mobility period.

Administrative support to mobile students

University representatives were asked to evaluate in which mobility phase the administrative support by university staff is of great importance for students. 162 respondents (63%) consider that administrative support 'before mobility' is very important whereas one fifth does not consider the administrative support to be important 'before mobility' phase.

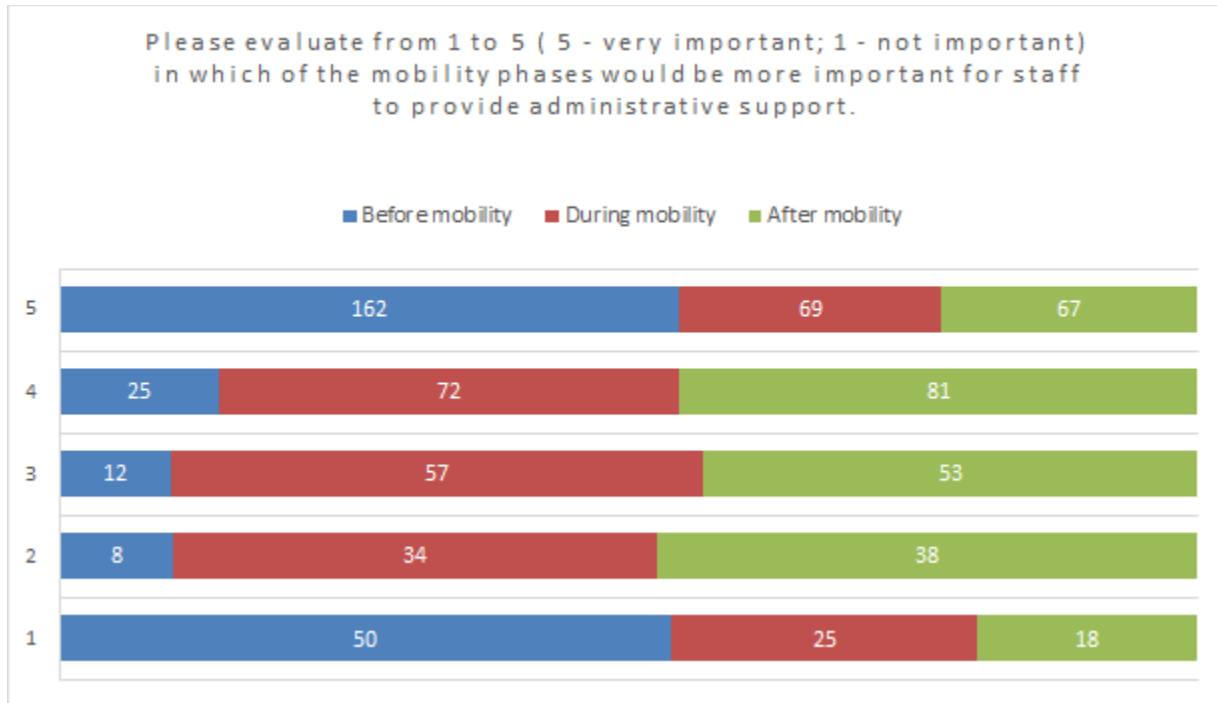


Table 1.9 Administrative support for students in each mobility phase

Administrative support 'during mobility' is considered to be important (level of importance 3-5), however, the results are not indicating one leading opinion. 81 respondents (31.5%) consider important and 67 (26%) as very important to provide administrative support 'after mobility' period. According to results, the most important administrative support by university staff shall be provided before mobility period.

Most relevant competences for university staff

244 respondents have selected 5 out of 17 competences they consider the most relevant for university staff members working with student mobility. The top 5 competences selected and considered as most relevant for university staff are the following: knowledgeable (122 respondents (50%)), supportive (120 respondents (49.1%)), problem-solver (111 respondents (45.4%)), accessible (107 respondents (43.8%)) and organised (102 respondents (41.8%)). The next competence with only 2 votes less, however, still important is one's ability of being

communicative (100 respondents (40.9%)). The least relevant competences are being creative, understandable, proactive and accurate.

Please select the 5 competences that you consider most relevant for university staff members working with student mobility.

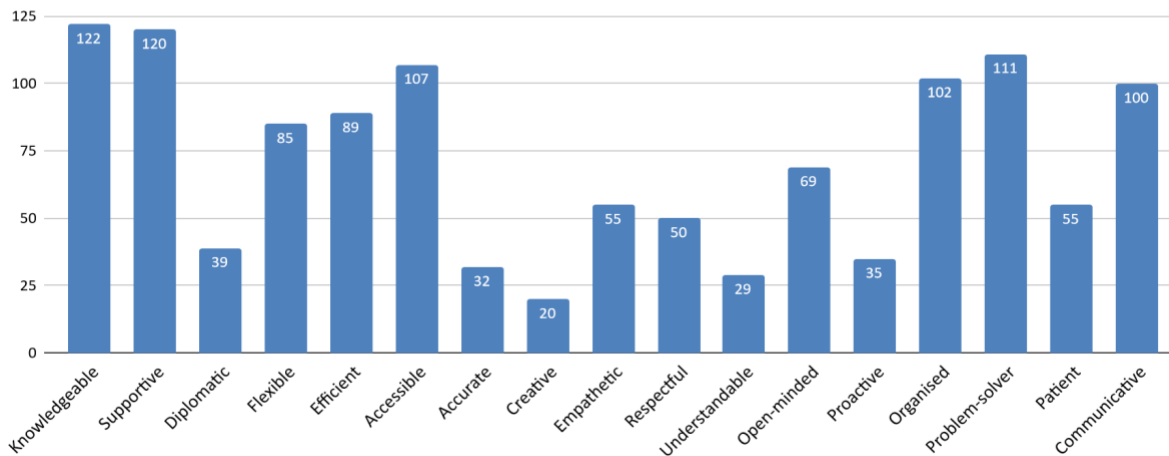


Table 1.10 Competences considered most relevant for university staff members dealing with student mobility

Competences to be developed

244 university representatives have selected 3 out of 14 competences they would like to develop and apply in daily work with student mobility. The three most essential selected competences are as follows: stress management (106 respondents (43.4%)), conflict management (92 respondents (37.7%)) and digital skills (89 respondents (36.4%)). Tolerance and active listening skills have been supported by the minimum number of staff members.

Please select 3 competences that you would like to develop and apply in your daily work.

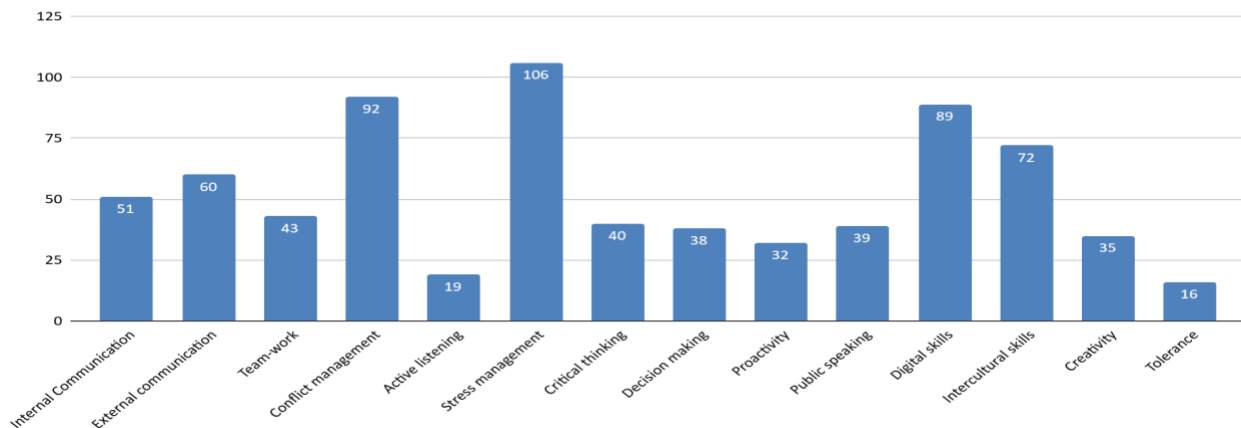


Table 1.11 Top 3 competences to be developed and applied in daily work

Suggestions for HR

Please describe the top 5 competences that from your view, HR staff should consider important for staff members working with mobility programmes.

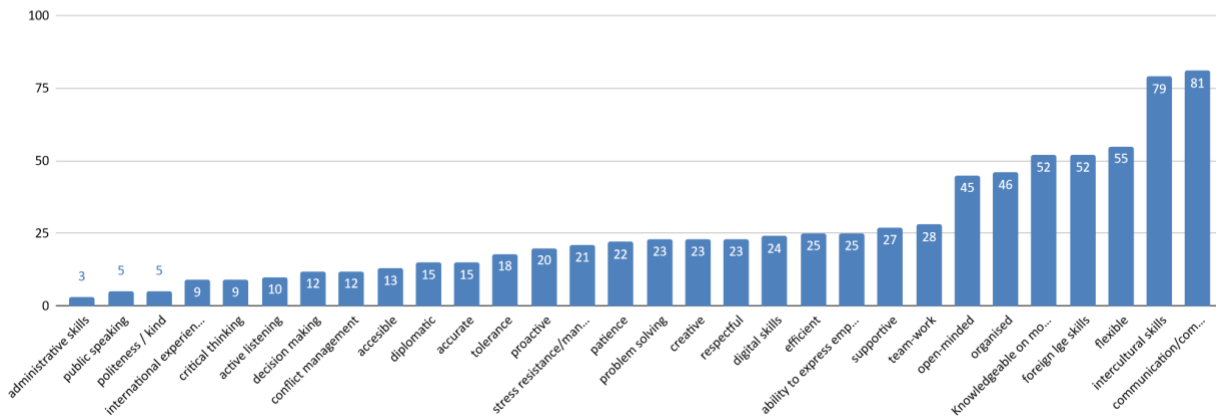


Table 1.12 Top 5 competences HR should consider important

244 respondents have taken part in open-ended question and proposed top 5 competences the HR staff should consider important for staff members working with mobility programmes. The following competences have been identified as the most important for staff recruitment: communication skills (81 respondents (25.3%)), intercultural skills (79 respondents (24.7%)), flexibility (55 respondents (17.2%)), foreign language skills (52 respondents (16.3%)) and knowledgeable (on mobility programmes and procedures (52 respondents (16.3%)). Table 1.12 indicates that in total, 30 different competences have been proposed. The least important competences have been identified as administrative skills, public speaking, politeness, international experience and critical thinking.

Training experience

In total, 177 (72.5%) staff members have confirmed they have taken part in training activities to develop professional competences, namely, 88 (38.1%) have participated in Erasmus+ STT, 42 (18.1%) in-house training, 39 (16.8%) external training, 24 (10.3%) intercultural training, 19 (8.2%) language courses and 19 (8.2%) in conferences and other workshops. Overall, the majority of staff members have an opportunity to take part in training activities and professionally develop their professional skills.

Please specify training activities you have been involved in:

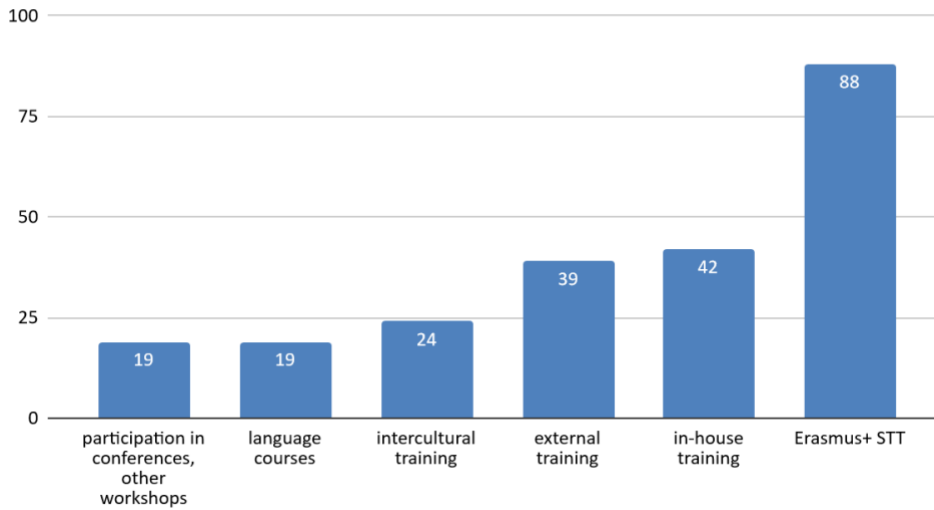


Table 1.13 Training activities staff has participated

University initiatives to support professional development of staff members

Please provide examples of university initiatives to develop the knowledge and competences of staff to increase performance in the workplace.

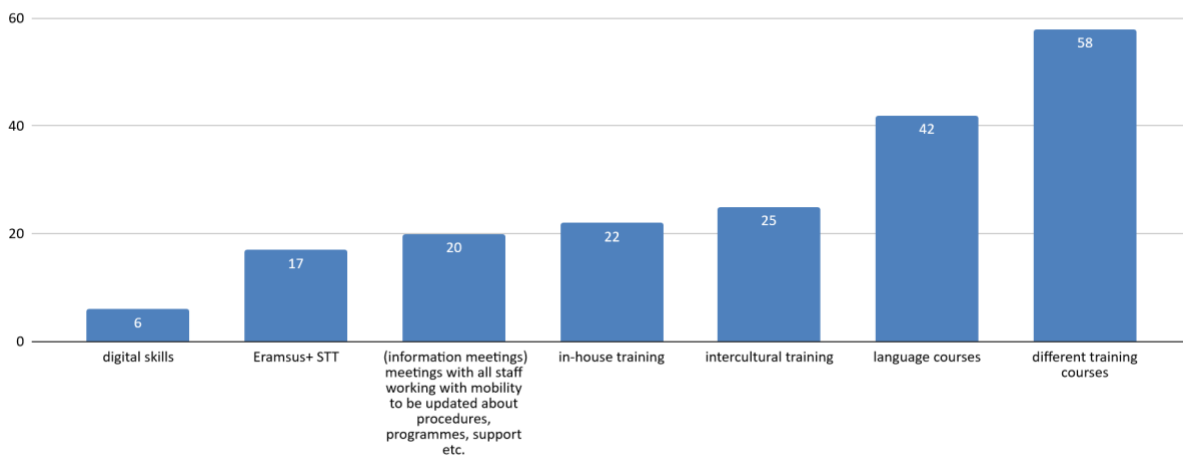


Table 1.14 University initiatives to support professional development of university staff

241 respondents have evaluated the university initiatives and 174 (72.2%) university representatives have confirmed their university is making efforts to develop the knowledge and competences of staff to increase performance in the workplace. Accordingly, the following examples of initiatives implemented by the university to support the professional development of

staff members have been identified: different training courses (not further specified) 58 (30.5%), language courses 42 (22.1%), intercultural training 25 (13.1%), in-house training 22 (11.5%), (information meetings) with all staff working with mobility to be updated about procedures, programmes, support etc. 20 (10.5%), STT 17 (8.9%) and courses to improve digital skills 6 (3.1%). Obtained data confirms the majority of universities offers various training options for staff to develop their professional competences.

Recommendations

Only 73 respondents have provided recommendations to improve the services offered by university staff members dealing with student mobility. However, it is enough to make general conclusions related to current atmosphere and overall organisation and procedures in HEI.

Main recommendations proposed by the university staff include the following aspects:

- Reduced bureaucratic procedures;
- Improved internal communication among different units within the university;
- Common understanding of internationalization and importance of international students within all offices, all teaching staff;
- Use of new social media;
- Careful selection of staff dealing with mobility;
- Support from leadership;
- Digitalization;
- Training.

Open-ended question gave unlimited space for feedback and recommendations, therefore, some of the above mentioned aspects are discussed more profoundly. The major part of comments were related to the **leadership and its support** to the university staff dealing with student mobility.

The following sub-points are highlighting the demand for active support from the leadership.

- Sufficient human resources (would help to deal with workload and stress, and would allow to take holidays);
- Developed infrastructure and efficient procedures and IT solutions (would facilitate higher level services);
- IRO shall be granted budget for training IRO officers (to ensure the quality of the services provided);
- Well paid job positions (to justify stress and workload);

- Respect, tolerance, understanding and support to IRO officers.

Another aspect widely discussed was the **digitalization** and its benefits in order to save time and work more efficiently. The following suggestions have been proposed:

- Common online platform (partner universities can share ideas, access updated information about partner universities' deadlines, academic calendars, grading system etc.);
- Common nomination platform for Erasmus+ programme (including both Partner and Programme countries);
- Well organized information for students on webinar software thus save time for face-to-face meetings, if necessary.

A number of comments have underlined the importance of **training** not only for the IRO staff, but all staff at some part related to international mobility, for example, the departments of housing, or accountancy as usually students face additional problems outside the IRO offices related to scholarships, payments, living conditions etc. The following trainings have been suggested to develop and improve important competences for the university staff:

- soft skills (communication, intercultural skills, time-management);
- hard skills (digital skills, process management, English language and one extra language);
- mandatory training abroad.

Additional comments suggested to have access to clear, centralized and rationalized information regarding the filling of the Learning Agreement, request for updated partner universities' website (available information in English, easy to navigate website, use of ECTS on published course offer) and reduction of cooperation agreements thus focusing on the improvement of the quality of existing mobility agreements.

General conclusions

The major part of respondents represents International relations officers from Erasmus+ Programme countries with more than 5 years of experience working with student mobility thus increasing the possibility that gathered data will be based on in-depth experience with student mobility and related processes and procedures. More than 60% of respondents confirm their university fully supports students with early information about ERASMUS+ mobility possibilities and receipt of clear and well-structured information about the required documents to be submitted after the mobility. More than 80% of university representatives strongly agree that ability to communicate in oral and written forms in both local and foreign languages, capacity to provide information on time, ability to present clear information and one's being respectful/tactful about cultural diversity are the most important communication skills for staff members. Almost 95% of respondents consider that well-structured and understandable information is the key concept for an outstanding university website. Nearly 73% of university staff strongly agree that taking responsibility for a mistake is very important aspect in their work performance, and almost 70% of respondents strongly agree that acting immediately when a quick decision is required is the second most important aspect. According to survey results, the moral support for students provided by the university staff should be given before and during the mobility period, whereas more than 60% agree the administrative support for students should be provided before mobility period. The top 5 out of 17 listed competences the university staff consider the most relevant for staff members working with student mobility are the following: knowledgeable, supportive, problem-solver, accessible and organised. The top 3 out of 14 competences the respondents would like to develop and apply in daily work are: stress management, conflict management and digital skills. In total, 30 different competences have been suggested to the university HR to take into consideration for staff recruitment, however, top 5 selected competences include: communication skills, intercultural skills, flexibility, foreign language skills and knowledgeable regarding the mobility programmes and procedures. More than 70% of respondents have taken part in training activities to develop professional competences and the major part has participated in the Erasmus+ STT. The same, more than 70% have confirmed their university is making efforts to support professional development of staff members by offering different training courses, language courses, intercultural training, in-house training, informative meetings for staff members, Erasmus+ STT and courses to improve digital skills.

The most interesting findings were in the open-ended question regarding recommendations to improve the services offered by the university staff dealing with student mobility. Main recommendations include proposals for: reduced bureaucratic procedures, improved internal communication among different units within the university, the need for common understanding of internationalization and importance of international students within all offices, all teaching staff, use of new social media, careful selection of staff dealing with mobility, support from leadership, digitalization and training. Last 3 recommendations were discussed in a more detailed manner and allow us to make more specific suggestions. Support from the leadership should include sufficient human resources, developed infrastructure and efficient procedures and IT solutions, budget for IRO training, increased salaries, and general support, respect, tolerance and understanding. Digitalization should include common online platform for sharing practical and academic questions with partner universities, common nomination platform and use of new technologies (e.g. webinars) to save time and work more efficiently. Apart from the suggestions for training of one's soft and hard skills, and mandatory trainings abroad, it has been emphasized that training shall be provided to all staff members at some stage dealing with student mobility.

2. SURVEY ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS

The target of the survey are students, who are currently studying abroad via the Erasmus+ programme, who plan to apply for exchange studies, or who have already completed study mobility abroad.

The survey investigates various aspects of staff competences, services provided and required procedures for quality study mobility to identify students' experience and administrative challenges in all study mobility phases.

The survey was composed of 5 parts: Individual information, General Characteristics, Communication, Supervision and Support, and Concluding Comments and had a range of the following question types: open-ended, closed-ended, rating scales, multiple choice, likert scales.

Overall, 2,245 students have agreed to take part in the survey and 923 respondents have indicated their gender. Accordingly, the gender composition consists of 623 female (67%), 295 male (almost 32%) and 5 not identified (0.5%) representatives.

Experience with the Erasmus+ programme

Out of 2,245 students only 923 have identified if they have participated or are currently involved in the Erasmus+ programme, namely, 785 respondents (85%) have confirmed their participation and 138 (almost 15%) have not yet participated in the Erasmus+ mobility programme.

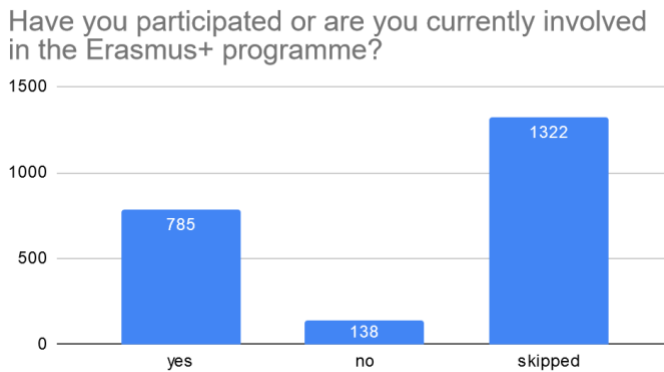


Table 2.1 Experience with the Erasmus+ programme

University representation

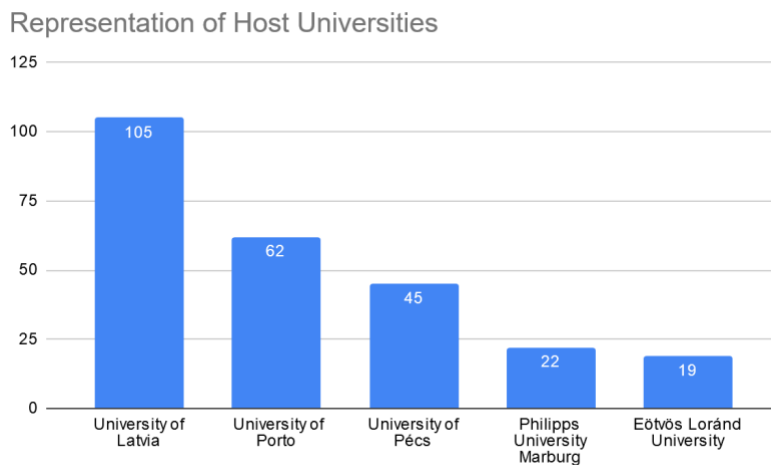


Table 2.2 Representation of host universities

According to the students' current study status, they were asked to identify their home or host university. In total, only 923 respondents have named their universities. Obtained survey data shows that 370 HEI have been identified as a host university and 275 HEI as a home university.

Table 2.2 indicates the Top 5 universities students have identified as a host university, namely, the leader position goes to the University of Latvia with 105 students and is followed by the University of Porto (62 students), University of Pécs (45 students), Philipps University Marburg (22 students) and Eötvös Loránd University (19 students). All other 365 universities were represented in the range from 9 to 1 student per university.

Table 2.3 indicates the Top 6 universities identified as home universities. Accordingly, the leader position goes to the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with 145 students and is followed by the University of Pécs (124 students), Ghent University (115 students), University of Latvia (76 students), National University of Public Service (30) and the Saint Petersburg University (27 students). All other 269 universities were represented in the range from 9 to 1 student per university.

Representation of Home Universities

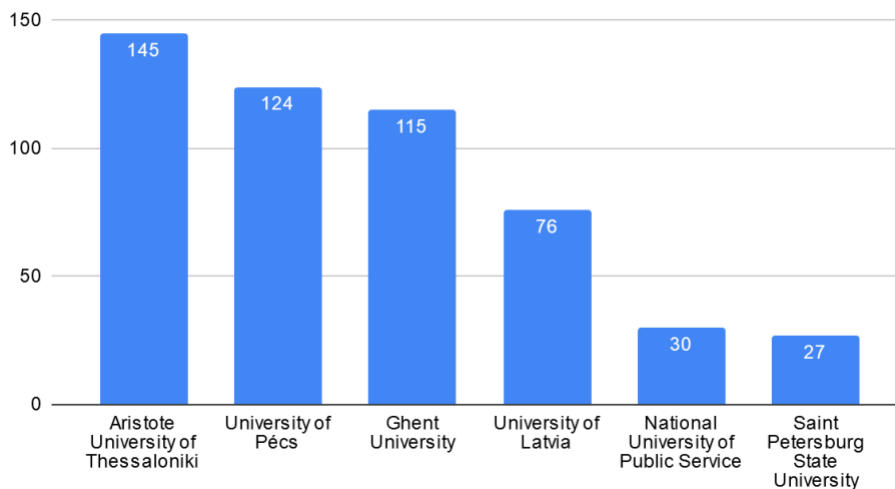


Table 2.3 Representation of home universities

Both Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 represent the universities with the highest numbers of students from the total amount of respondents. The majority of identified universities represent Erasmus+ Programme Countries, however, a number of universities from the Erasmus+ Partner Countries have been evaluated by students as well.

Support during and after mobility by Home University

	VERY SATISFIED	RATHER SATISFIED	AVERAGE	RATHER DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	N/A	TOTAL
Accurate information of the ERASMUS+ programme	41.53% 682	36.36% 597	14.86% 244	4.26% 70	1.71% 28	1.28% 21	1,642
Access to feedback from other students who did their Erasmus+ in the same university you are interested in going to	28.56% 469	27.34% 449	20.58% 338	9.81% 161	5.60% 92	8.10% 133	1,642
Regular up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfil	40.56% 666	31.49% 517	17.17% 282	6.70% 110	3.17% 52	0.91% 15	1,642
Assistance with practical issues (accommodation, insurance, etc.)	21.86% 359	23.51% 386	26.25% 431	15.90% 261	7.13% 117	5.36% 88	1,642
Clear information about the requirements and bureaucratic activities to be done during the mobility process	37.27% 612	32.40% 532	18.27% 300	7.06% 116	3.65% 60	1.34% 22	1,642

Table 2.4 Level of satisfaction of provided services by home university during and after mobility

In total, 1,642 respondents have identified the level of satisfaction (in the scale of very satisfied to not available) of support provided during and after mobility in their home universities. The majority of students are very satisfied or rather satisfied with availability of accurate information of the Erasmus+ programme, access to feedback from other students who did their Erasmus+ in the same university student is interested to go, receipt of up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfil, and availability of clear information about the requirements and bureaucratic activities to be done during the mobility process. Whereas the assistance with practical issues (accommodation, insurance, etc.) by the major part of students (26,2%) is evaluated as average. According to Table 2.4, the most dissatisfaction is expressed regarding the above mentioned assistance with practical issues (117 students) and access to feedback from previous students (92 respondents). Indeed, the following support is not provided by the home university for more than 200 students: assistance with practical issues (88 students 5.3%) and

access to feedback from students, who already had a study abroad experience (133 students 8.1%).

Support during mobility by the Host University

	VERY SATISFIED	RATHER SATISFIED	AVERAGE	RATHER DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	N/A	TOTAL
Availability of mentor/buddy programme	40.50% 665	26.19% 430	13.22% 217	7.25% 119	5.30% 87	7.55% 124	1,642
Regular up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfil	42.39% 696	33.98% 558	13.34% 219	5.24% 86	2.86% 47	2.19% 36	1,642
Assistance with practical issues (accommodation, insurance, activities, etc.)	36.66% 602	27.22% 447	18.64% 306	8.77% 144	4.87% 80	3.84% 63	1,642
Clear and personalised information to take into account in terms of bureaucracy to be fulfilled	39.16% 643	30.82% 506	17.90% 294	6.33% 104	2.80% 46	2.98% 49	1,642

Table 2.5 Level of satisfaction of provided support by host university during mobility

Overall, 1,642 respondents have identified the level of satisfaction (in the scale of very satisfied to not available) of provided support by the host university during their mobility. Table 2.5 indicates that the majority of students are very satisfied or rather satisfied with the availability of mentor/buddy programme, receipt of regular up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfil, assistance of practical issues (accommodation, insurance, activities, etc.) and availability of clear and personalised information to take into account in terms of bureaucracy to be fulfilled. One should note that availability of mentor/buddy programme is not provided by host university to 124 students (7.5%).

More detailed comments about Table 2.4 and Table 2.5 are expected to be found in the open-ended questions regarding the suggestions to improve the services offered by university administrative staff.

Competences to increase communication and support

	VERY IMPORTANT	RATHER IMPORTANT	AVERAGE	RATHER NOT RELEVANT	IRRELEVANT	TOTAL
Ability to communicate in other languages orally and in written forms	64.36% 1,015	23.97% 378	8.05% 127	3.17% 50	0.44% 7	1,577
Capacity to give information in a timely manner	68.42% 1,079	26.82% 423	4.12% 65	0.44% 7	0.19% 3	1,577
Mastered skills to clearly formulate information	52.69% 831	36.84% 581	9.83% 155	0.63% 10	0.00% 0	1,577
Polite and empathic attitude in disagreement situations	57.32% 904	31.83% 502	9.64% 152	0.89% 14	0.32% 5	1,577
Ability to find solutions in an efficient and creative way	57.58% 908	32.02% 505	9.32% 147	1.01% 16	0.06% 1	1,577
Awareness of data privacy	41.92% 661	32.09% 506	20.74% 327	4.44% 70	0.82% 13	1,577
Possibility to easily reach staff member through e-mails, social media and other channels	68.86% 1,086	22.70% 358	7.23% 114	1.01% 16	0.19% 3	1,577
Respectful/tactful to cultural diversity	63.60% 1,003	24.98% 394	9.00% 142	1.71% 27	0.70% 11	1,577

Table 2.6 Evaluation of importance of competences to increase communication and support

In total 1,577 students have evaluated the level of importance of 8 competences in the scale of very important to irrelevant. Namely, the ability to communicate in other languages orally and in written forms, capacity to give information in a timely manner, mastered skills to clearly formulate information, polite and empathic attitude in disagreement situations, ability to find solutions in an efficient and creative way, awareness of data privacy, possibility to easily reach staff members through e-mails, social media and other channels, and competence of being respectful/tactful to cultural diversity.

Obtained data shows that the most important competence in increasing the communication and support evaluated by 1,086 students (68,8%) is the possibility to easily reach staff members through e-mails, social media and other channels. The second most important competence refers to the capacity to give information in a timely manner; this competence is indicated as very

important by 1,079 students (68.4%). More than 60% of respondents consider the ability to communicate in other languages orally and in written forms and being respectful/tactful to cultural diversity as very important competences. Only a bit more than 50% of respondents consider mastered skills to clearly formulate information, polite and empathic attitude in disagreement situations, and the ability to find solutions in an efficient and creative way as very important competences to increase the communication and support of administrative staff. Only 661 respondents (41.9%) consider the awareness of data policy as very important competence whereas 327 students (20.7%) consider it as of average importance and 4.4% as rather not relevant competence.

Important factors for university website

1,577 respondents have evaluated 5 different factors they consider the most relevant to be included in the university website (several answers possible). Table 2.7 indicates the most important aspects on the university website according to their relevance: well structured and understandable information (1,361 student 83.6%), the availability of complete information provided in different languages (965 students 61.1%), smartphone friendliness (509 students 32.2%), visual attractiveness (458 students 29%) and successfully integrated social media (349 students 22.1%).

What kind of factors you consider would be the most relevant to include at your university website?

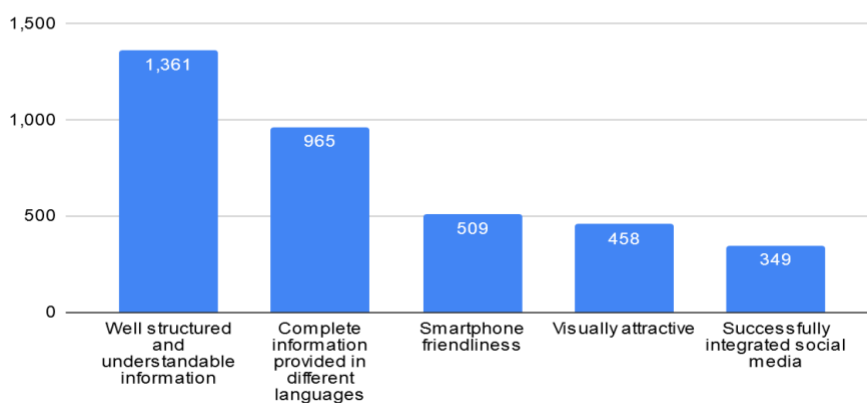


Table 2.7 Important factors for university website

Relevance of ways of communication and support

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Receiving the course catalogue before your study mobility	3.17% 50	3.11% 49	9.00% 142	19.85% 313	64.87% 1,023	1,577
Up-to-date application procedure	2.92% 46	2.16% 34	8.05% 127	29.11% 459	57.77% 911	1,577
Environment friendly (less paper-based) for application/administrative procedures	4.25% 67	6.15% 97	18.26% 288	31.45% 496	39.89% 629	1,577
Face to face appointments with university staff members	6.28% 99	12.62% 199	28.85% 455	29.17% 460	23.08% 364	1,577
Online appointments (email, phone, Skype, social media) with university staff	7.10% 112	11.48% 181	25.43% 401	30.50% 481	25.49% 402	1,577

Table 2.8 Relevance of provided communication and support

Students were asked to evaluate the level of importance of provided communication and support by university administrative staff. Five different aspects were evaluated (in the scale of 1-not important to 5-very important) by 1.577 students. The most important aspect evaluated by 1.023 students (64.8%) is the receipt of course catalogue before the mobility period. The up-to-date application procedure is evaluated as very important by 911 students (57.7%) and the environment friendly administrative/application procedures are evaluated as very important by 629 students (39.8%). Similar results are obtained regarding the face to face appointments with university staff members, namely, 460 students (29.1%) have evaluated the level of importance with the rate 4 and 455 students (28.8%) have rated the level of importance with the rate 5, whereas face to face appointment are evaluated as very important only by 364 students (23%). Only 402 students (25.4%) have indicated online appointments with university staff as very important aspects, however, the majority 481 respondent (30.5%) have evaluated the level of importance of online appointments with the rate 4.

Evaluation of selected university staff competences

1,1551 respondents have evaluated 5 competences they consider university staff member shall possess (in the scale from strongly agree to not available). According to the Table 2.9, more than 50% of respondents strongly agree that university staff shall act immediately once a quick decision is required (851 respondents (54.8%)), take responsibility for a mistake (798 respondents (51.4%) and give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished (792 respondents (51.4%)). Similar results are obtained regarding the available time for counselling and offering different solutions for problems, however, the majority of students rather agree that available time for counselling (698 respondents (45%)) and offering different solutions for problems (650 respondents (41.9%)) are important competences for university staff members.

	STRONGLY AGREE	RATHER AGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	RATHER DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A	TOTAL
Give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished	51.06% 792	35.33% 548	10.57% 164	1.29% 20	0.58% 9	1.16% 18	1,551
Have available time for counselling	42.36% 657	45.00% 698	10.44% 162	1.03% 16	0.39% 6	0.77% 12	1,551
Offer different solutions for problems	41.59% 645	41.91% 650	13.54% 210	1.35% 21	0.45% 7	1.16% 18	1,551
Act immediately once a quick decision is required	54.87% 851	36.11% 560	7.29% 113	0.71% 11	0.58% 9	0.45% 7	1,551
Take responsibility for a mistake	51.45% 798	32.56% 505	12.44% 193	1.35% 21	0.64% 10	1.55% 24	1,551

Table 2.9 Evaluation of university staff competences

Five most important competences for university administrative staff

In order to increase the quality of the students' mobility experience, please select the competences (maximum 5) you consider the most important to be adopted by university administrative staff:

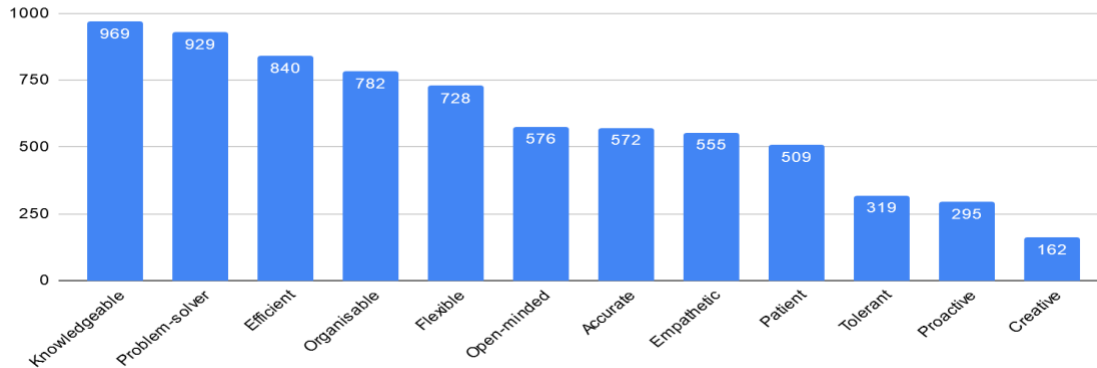


Table 2.10 Most important competences for university administrative staff

In total, 1,531 students have evaluated 12 different competences and have identified 5 most important competences to be adopted by the university administrative staff. According to the Table 2.10, they are the following: being knowledgeable (969 respondents 63.2%), problem-solver (929 respondents 60.6%), efficient (840 respondents 54.8%), organisable (782 respondents 51%), and flexible (728 respondents 47.5%). Very similar results are related to the open-mindedness (576 respondents (37.6%), accuracy (572 respondents (37.3%) and empathy (555 respondents (36.2%) thus proving their equal importance in the students' point of view. Creativity has been evaluated with the lowest number of respondents (only 162 respondents; 10.5%).

Suggestions

Out of 1,946 respondents only 299 have indicated additional suggestions to improve the services offered by university administrative staff. Obtained data allows to identify the common problems and suggestions for improvement in participating HEI.

Main recommendations proposed by students include three following aspects:

- **General study organisation in university;**
- **Work performance of administrative staff;**
- **Delivery and presentation of information.**

Each of the aspects include a wide section of feedbacks and recommendations, therefore, the analysis of obtained data is discussed separately below.

General study organisation in university

Several problems have been identified regarding the lack of communication not only within 2 in mobility involved universities, but also within the same office, within IRO and departmental coordinators, and within coordinators and teaching staff. Moreover, several respondents have identified their experience with receipt of contradictory information within one university thus leading to misunderstandings in further communication and arrangement of study mobility. Additional emphasis is put on the lack of sufficient number of office hours thus decreasing the accessibility to receive support and deal with administrative procedures. Lack of human resources and high level of bureaucracy are also reducing the accessibility of university administrative staff thus decreasing the services with individual approach students are looking after.

University administrative staff shall address to students with empathy and patience as for many students study mobility is the first study experience abroad, namely, each question asked by the student is of a great value for him or her no matter the fact that administrative staff considers it “boring” or repeatedly asked by many other students. Respondents have also expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the filling the Learning Agreement, for example, they look for academic support during the course selection and suggest the replacement staff for vacation/business trip period so the rights to sign the Learning Agreement do not rely only on one person. In addition, the host university shall provide even registration procedure to courses in all faculties/departments within one HEI in order to reduce the confusion once the student has

arrived. It has been identified that a clear division of responsibilities of departmental coordinators and IRO officers shall be made thus saving students' time visiting one or the other by wrong matter.

Work performance of administrative staff

According to obtained data, university staff is suggested to be more flexible, express willingness to help, take responsibility for own mistakes and show willingness to solve the issues, improve patience and ability to communicate in English. In general, administrative staff member shall love the work he or she does. The majority of recommendations related to work performance are regarding the availability and responsiveness as a great number of respondents have indicated the lack of responding e-mails in a timely manner. Moreover, the lack of any response or ignorance of e-mails shall not be left without attention. To conclude, respondents have expressed the wish for more integration with local students and regular monitoring via e-mail to check if students are doing fine or some assistance is needed.

Delivery and presentation of information

The main feedback refers to the lack of receipt of clear instructions in a timely manner regarding application procedures at home university. In many cases students receive information at the last moment and have to undergo additional stress in order to complete the administrative procedures on time. In addition, host universities shall provide students with clear, structured and updated website in English with updated course list indicating ECTS thus saving time in course search and calculation of credit points. Availability of feedback from previous exchange students would help in application and organisational procedures necessary for students going abroad, therefore, it is important for the university to provide access to the feedback.

In addition, respondents suggest to create detailed guidelines on possible problems students may face (e.g. FAQ) in order to reduce the workload of administrative staff. Obtained data shows the need for easy and clearly explained procedures regarding the timeline of administrative tasks to be carried in all mobility phases, receipt of Transcript of Records, and recognition procedure and credit transfer (already before the mobility). In order to facilitate the easy communication among the students, they suggest creating an online platform for all Erasmus+ participants within one university.

General conclusions

In total, 2,245 students have taken part in the survey from which only 923 respondents have identified their experience, namely 785 students have participated or are currently involved in the Erasmus+ programme and 138 have not yet had experience in the study mobility programme. 370 HEI have been identified as host universities and the most represented host university by students is the University of Latvia with 105 respondents. A bit less, 275 universities have been identified as home universities and the most represented home university by students is the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with 145 respondents.

The highest level of satisfaction regarding the support during and after mobility by home university refers to accurate information of the Erasmus+ programme and regular up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfill. The lowest level of satisfaction refers to the receipt of assistance with practical issues (accommodation, insurance, etc.).

The majority of respondents are mainly satisfied with the support provided by host university during their mobility. The highest level of satisfaction refers to the receipt of regular up-to-date instructions regarding deadlines and tasks to fulfil. The lowest satisfaction level refers to the availability of mentor/buddy programme.

The most important aspects in increasing communication and support by the university with almost equal results refers to the possibility to easily reach staff members through e-mails, social media and other channels and the capacity to give information in a timely manner. The lowest importance in increasing communication and support refers to the awareness of data privacy.

According to the obtained data, well structured and understandable information has the key role on the university website whereas the successfully integrated social media is evaluated as the least important aspect.

The most important aspects in communication and support by administrative staff are related to the receipt of course catalogue before the mobility period and to the up-to-date application procedure. The lowest level of relevance is given to online appointments with university staff (via e-mail, phone, Skype, social media).

More than a half of respondents strongly agree that university staff shall act immediately once a quick decision is required, take responsibility for a mistake, and give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished.

Survey results have identified 5 most important competences to be adopted by the university administrative staff, namely, being knowledgeable (969 respondents 63.2%), problem-solver (929 respondents 60.6%), efficient (840 respondents 54.8%), organisable (782 respondents 51%), and flexible (728 respondents 47.5%).

Open-ended question regarding the suggestions to improve the services offered by university administrative staff have identified 3 main problems students face in different phases of their mobility. Three following aspects have been analysed more profoundly – general study organisation in university, work performance of administrative staff, and delivery and presentation of information. In order to improve the general study organisation in university, additional emphasis should be put on the internal communication within the university and with partner university, availability on sufficient amount of office hours, and receipt of academic support when filling the Learning Agreement. The main lack in work performance of the administrative staff refers to delayed e-mail communication. Several suggestions like the improvement of flexibility, patience, language skills etc. have been proposed as well. The urgent need for clear instructions in a timely manner regarding the application procedure and receipt of timeline of administrative tasks to be carried in all mobility phases have been identified. Overall, students are looking for clear and easy understandable information with reduced amount of bureaucratic procedures.

COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

Obtained data allows us to identify the key elements one should take into consideration when planning to improve the services and work performance of the university administrative staff dealing with student mobility.

Website

It is agreed that the most important aspect on the university website refers to the availability or well-structured and understandable information. Interesting, students consider that the next most important aspect refers to availability of complete information provided in different languages, whereas the university staff believes that smartphone friendliness is the second most important

factor on the university website. Both agree that successfully integrated social media has the lowest aspect of significance.

Support

Almost 70% of university staff confirms full availability of information about the Erasmus+ programme and study mobility whereas only 41.5% of students are very satisfied with information provided by their home universities. Only 43% of university staff confirm full support in assistance with practical issues (insurance, visa, accommodation etc.). Almost 37% are very satisfied and 27% of students are rather satisfied with assistance in host university and whereas the major part of students 26% evaluate the practical assistance in home university as average.

Work performance

Students consider that the three most important aspects of work performance of university administrative staff refers to immediate action once a quick decision is required, taking responsibility for a mistake and give clear instructions for the expected result once the mobility is finished. Interesting, also the administrative staff agrees that taking responsibility for a mistake and acting immediately once a quick decision is required are the most important aspects, nevertheless, the available time for counselling is of great importance as well.

Communication

Students consider that the most important aspects of communication of university administrative staff refers to easy access to university staff via e-mails and social media, receipt of information in a timely manner and ability to communicate in other languages. However, university staff believes that ability to present clear information, ability to communicate in other languages and ability to be respectful/tactful about cultural diversity are the most significant communication skills.

Top 5 competences

Student evaluation	Staff evaluation
knowledgeable	knowledgeable
problem-solver	supportive
efficient	problem-solver
organised	accessible
flexible	organised

Survey data shows that both have identified 3 equal competences among the top 5 most important competences for the university administrative staff though in a different order. Students and administrative staff agree that the key competence for qualitative services requires good knowledge of the programme and related processes. Problem solving skills as well as organisational skills are considered as of great importance for work performance of the administrative staff. Students expect the staff members to be efficient and flexible, whereas staff members consider that being supportive and accessible to students would facilitate the quality of provided services.