

20th ANNIVERSARY



Annual Report 2023

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FOREWORD

Changing Universities. Changing Europe.

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the EUF

In 2023 the EUF celebrated its 20th anniversary with the motto ‘Changing Universities. Changing Europe’. The event was generously hosted by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, also celebrating its 110th Anniversary. During the conference [keynote](#) address, Prof. Markéta Křížová, EUF President 2023, pointed out that internationalisation has been part of higher education since very early: “European universities have always had an international mission and character. The *peregrinatio academica* has been an integral part of university life since the very first centuries of their existence. It can be traced back as far as the privilege granted by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1155, which offered the emperor’s special protection to the wandering students. This is something worth considering nowadays”. The EUF is the modern reflection of these efforts to support the free circulation of minds, and this Annual Report encapsulates some of these activity reports.

2023 saw the continuation of efforts to make student mobility a reality for more students and staff in the network and beyond. Our activities focused on making the mobility experience possible for more students, facilitating the administrative processes through digitalisation, contributing towards the green transition by limiting the carbon footprint of student mobility, and focusing on improving the quality of the student experience.

As one can see from the Report, our network continues to grow and is a community where, every year, several hundred staff members exchange buzzing ideas on how to strive for their next strategic goals and meet challenges in the field of internationalisation of higher education. In relation to this, I want to single out the Project Manager and Advisor Community which has grown to over 350 members and has contributed immensely towards developing novel project ideas that were submitted for funding at the beginning of 2024.

I hope you will enjoy diving into the Annual Report: the articles contained in it try to do justice to the extensive involvement of our members in advancing the European Higher Education Area and, therefore, celebrating our achievements.

João Bacelar
EUF Executive Manager



🕒 Panel "Revisiting two decades of achievements", Changing Universities. Changing Europe. EUF 20th Anniversary conference (2023)

🕒 Roundtable "European Higher Education in 2030", Changing Universities. Changing Europe. EUF 20th Anniversary conference (2023)

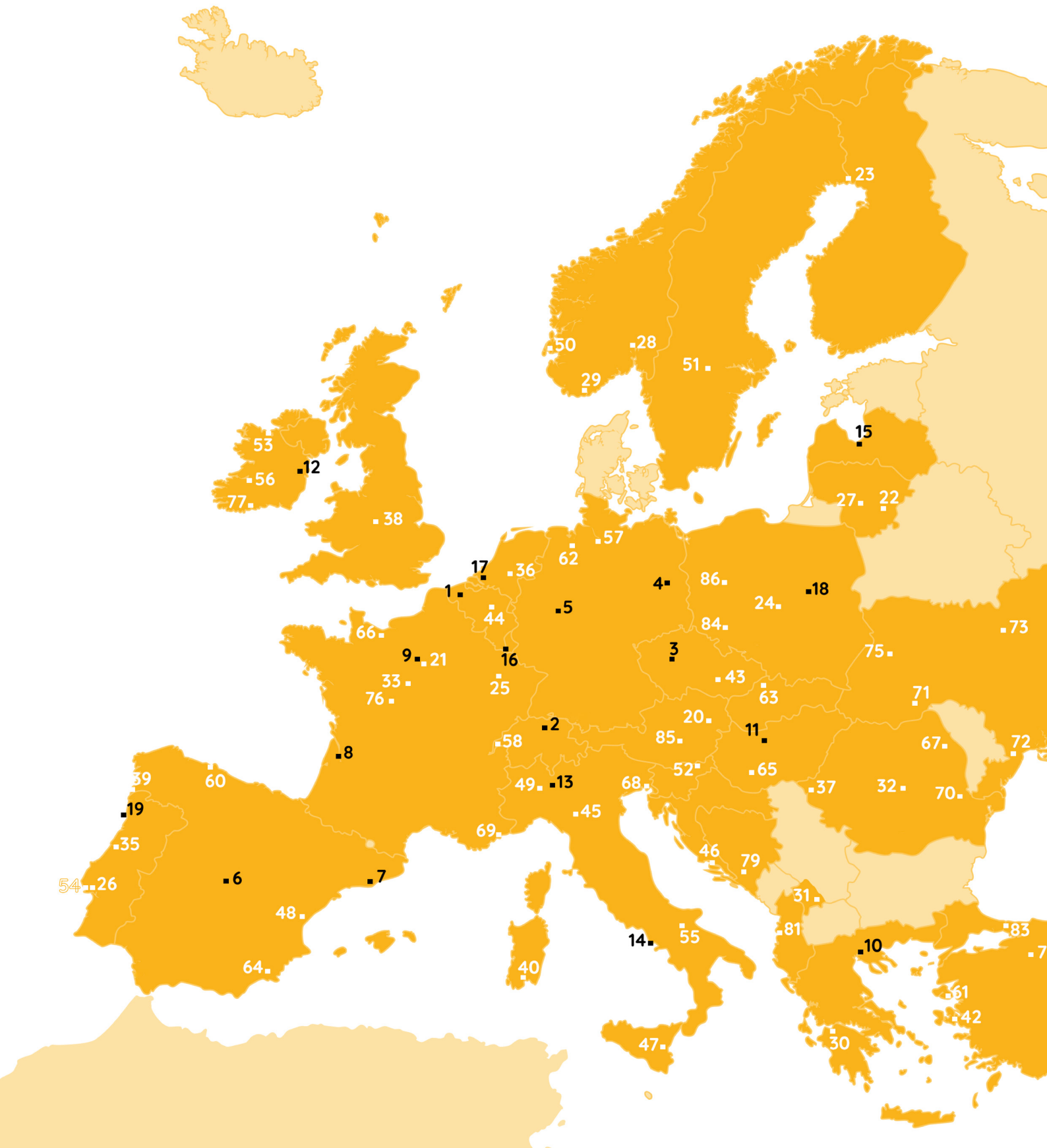
European Higher Education in 2030

- Bibiana Crespo Martin, Rectors' Delegate for internationalisation, Uni. of Barcelona
- Ed Brinksma, President, Erasmus University Rotterdam
- Gabriele Siegert, Deputy President, University of Zürich
- Imre Hamar, Vice-Rector, Eötvös Loránd University
- Jan Borm, Vice-President, UVSQ-Paris Saclay
- José Ravenstein, Senior Policy Officer, Nuffic

- Moderator: João Bacelar, Executive Manager, EUF

EU
CELEBRATING
TWENTY YEARS
TOGETHER





EUF Offices



Brussels
Representation Office



Barcelona
University Internationalisation Hub



EU Network

Statutory members

1. Ghent University
2. University of Zurich
3. Charles University
4. Humboldt University of Berlin
5. Philipps-Universität Marburg
6. University of Alcalá
7. University of Barcelona
8. University of Bordeaux
9. University of Paris-Saclay
10. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
11. Eötvös Loránd University
12. Trinity College Dublin
13. University of Milan
14. University of Naples Federico II
15. University of Latvia
16. University of Luxembourg
17. Erasmus University Rotterdam
18. University of Warsaw
19. University of Porto

Associate members

20. University of Vienna
21. Mines-Telecom Institute Business School
22. European Humanities University
23. Lapland University of Applied Sciences
24. University of Lodz
25. University of Lorraine
26. Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon
27. Vytautas Magnus University
28. Oslo Metropolitan University
29. University of Agder
30. University of Patras
31. University Kadri Zeka Gjillan
32. Transilvania University of Brasov
33. University of Orléans
34. Cyprus University of Technology
35. Politechnic Institute of Coimbra
36. Han University of Applied Sciences
37. Polytechnic University of Timisoara
38. Birmingham City University
39. University of Vigo
40. University of Cagliari
41. Selçuk University
42. Izmir Institute of Technology
43. Mendel University in Brno
44. Hasselt University
45. University of Parma
46. University of Split
47. University of Catania
48. University of Jaume I
49. University of Piemonte Orientale
50. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
51. Örebro University
52. University of Maribor
53. Institute of Technology Sligo
54. University Institute of Lisbon
55. University of Foggia
56. University of Limerick
57. University of Hamburg
58. University of Lausanne
59. Erciyes University
60. University of Oviedo
61. University of the Aegean
62. University of Bremen
63. University of Žilina
64. University of Murcia
65. University of Pécs
66. Normandy University
67. Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași
68. University of Trieste
69. University Côte d'Azur
70. University of Galati
71. Chernivtsi National University
72. Odesa National University
73. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
74. Poltava State Medical University
75. Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
76. University of Tours
77. Munster Technological University
78. Eskişehir Technical University
79. University of Mostar
80. Oles Honchar Dnipro National University
81. Aleksandër Moisiu University Durrës
82. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
83. Yeditepe University
84. Wrocław University of Economics and Business
85. University of Leoben
86. Poznań University of Technology

Luxembourg
Headquarters Office

Budapest
Mobility Digital Lab

2023

02

The EUF supports the call from the Swiss National Youth Council (SNYC), ESN Switzerland, Intermundo, and VSS-UNES-USU for [Switzerland's re-association](#) with Erasmus+. The call includes demands for the Swiss government to re-launch negotiations and for the European Commission to support Switzerland's re-association, strengthening European cohesion amidst global challenges.



FEBRUARY

Re-association



01

JANUARY

EWP Dashboard

Since January 2023, users of the EWP Dashboard have access to the enhanced [EWP Dashboard](#) infrastructure that is the culmination of the work done by the colleagues at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki throughout 2022. The improved Dashboard features improved scalability, robustness, and a more intuitive design.

03

MARCH

Erasmus

The EUF, European S and Erasmus Student launch the [Erasmus+ report](#). Presented at the [Parliament](#), the report covers 27 years of the 2021-27 Erasmus+, including digitalisation support for institutions, improved processes, and a Eur scheme for vulnerabl

HIG

04

A new cycle of [Erasmus+ Salons](#) kicks off in Brussels. Jointly organised by the EUF, ESN and ESU, these salons serve as informal forums addressing critical issues in European higher education. Topics covered include the [student housing crisis](#) impacting mobility, [socio-economic inclusion](#) in Erasmus+, and strategies for enhancing the program's environmental sustainability amidst the green transition.

APRIL

Salons

06

After a hiatus caused by the pandemic, the flagship event of the EUF network on Erasmus+ project funding, the [Open Space](#), returns for its 6th edition. Participants explore novel ideas to address challenges faced by their institutions in change-maker workshops and engage in parallel sessions delving into crucial topics such as defining and measuring impact, effective project management strategies, and quality assurance.

JUNE

Changemakers



05

MAY

Digitalisation

Erasmus+ Review

Students Union (ESU), European Student Network (ESN) jointly organise the [Erasmus+ Review 2021/22](#), reflecting on the initial years of the European Erasmus+ programme. It highlights achievements for enhancing digitalisation for green travel grants, digitalisation for higher education and digital recognition of European scholarship and mobility for students.

The SUDTE project comes to a close with its [final conference](#) in Brussels, spotlighting lessons learned in the digitalisation process under the Erasmus+ programme 2021-27. The event highlights achievements such as federated authentication and enhanced mobility efficiency. In Berlin, the [EDSSI L2 consortium](#) hosts its final conference a month later, featuring training sessions on eCard platforms and eSignature implementations, showcasing innovations in digital student services.

HIGHLIGHTS

2023

08

As part of the HIBLend project, the EUF conducts a mapping exercise to explore [key aspects of Blended Student Mobility](#) (BSM). The findings highlight BSM's flexibility, personalisation, and enhancement of cross-cultural understanding, guiding practitioners towards ensuring a positive impact of this mobility format.



AUGUST

Blended Mobility



07

JULY

Statement

ESU, ESN and the EUF urge President Von der Leyen to reconsider diverting Erasmus+ funds towards new marketing initiatives. Instead of allocating funds for PR campaigns, we advocate for strengthening Erasmus+ through increased student grants and bolstering inclusivity. The [statement](#) emphasises Erasmus+'s role in educational innovation, social impact, and its support for international student mobility, especially evident during the Ukrainian crisis.

09

SEPTEMBER

Learning be

Seniors over 60 participate in [Teaching, and Training activities](#) framework of the Erasmus+ project. Over the course of the week, participants will have the opportunity to test out courses developed by the project and share their feedback. The project features presentations on best practices for intergenerational learning and education.

HIC

10

The [Erasmus Without Paper Champions](#) are recognised for their exemplary use of different systems to connect to the EWP Network, including the EWP Dashboard, in-house systems, and third-party systems. Among the more than 3000 Higher Education Institutions connected to EWP the work of several EUF members is highlighted, such as the University of Barcelona, the University of Latvia, the University of Patras, and the University of Porto.

OCTOBER

Champions

12

The [University of Leoben](#) and [Poznan University of Technology](#) join as associate members. In 2023, the network also welcomed two new charter members, the [University of Bordeaux](#) and the [University of Milan](#), along with other associate members: [Oles Honchar Dnipro National University](#), [Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës](#), [Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University](#), [Yeditepe University](#), and [Wroclaw University of Economics and Business](#).

DECEMBER

Network



ER

beyond 60



11

NOVEMBER

Anniversary

in the [Learning](#) by under the 60 project. participants new online project partners the event also best practices in and senior

The EUF celebrates its [20th anniversary](#) at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Over 80 Rectors, Vice-Rectors, and Coordinators from member institutions gather to reflect on the EUF's journey and accomplishments. Panel discussions focus on the one hand on the network's achievements in promoting high-quality mobility and internationalisation; on the other hand, on the challenges and opportunities for the next decade.

HIGHLIGHTS



CHAPTER 1

The EUF in 2023

The EUF network continued to grow in 2023 with the addition of 13 new universities from 11 countries. In addition to welcoming two new Charter members - the University of Bordeaux and the University of Milan - the network widened its geographical reach to Bosnia, Albania and Georgia. We also strengthened our work with Ukrainian universities by welcoming a sixth public university to the EUF. By the end of 2023, the EUF network brought together 86 universities from 32 countries, consolidating its unique standing as the largest stakeholder organisation of its kind.

The year of 2023 has also witnessed a reorganisation of key EUF activities. The establishment of the European Universities Accelerator reinforced the central role of the EUF Communities, which, as of the start of the 2023/2024 academic year, have operated an average of one online meeting every week. A more structured approach to the planning and organisation of the sessions played an important role in enabling greater involvement from colleagues from across the network in topical and informative discussions.


In 2023 we held nine [Knowledge Exchange Community](#) sessions focusing on a wide range of topics: from teaching mobility, sustainability and internationalisation to intercultural preparation and debriefing of mobile students. Close to 300 staff members from the network participated in these sessions, which provided insights into hands-on experiences shared by the meeting chairs, speakers and participants. The Project Manager and Advisor Community has grown to over 350 members, and 14 online sessions were organised to support the development of novel project ideas and support the implementation of the approved projects. Following the successful work completed by the working group on European University Alliances, we launched a European University Alliance accelerator, which met three times in the autumn of 2023 to discuss sustainable mobility flows and address rising concerns over the long-term funding needs of alliances. In the meantime, we continued

organising regular Online Network Meetings to provide members with a space for discussion on ongoing challenges and priorities.

While the aforementioned events were entirely organised online, 2023 was also the first year that was fully planned with a return of the much needed face-to-face networking meetings: we organised a highly participated Open Space event, hosted by the University of Split in June 2023, and combined networking events with conferences such as the EAIE Conference in Rotterdam.

As a result of the network activities, and in particular the PM Community sessions, we successfully launched eight new EU-funded projects. The list below presents the projects according to the main priorities of the EUF members and of the network:

- **Digital transformation:** two projects on digital and interoperable course catalogues and (meta-)data and another one on Erasmus+ traineeship workflows;
- **Inclusion:** one project focusing on the inclusion of students in international student mobility schemes and another on national and institutional inclusion policies;
- **Quality of student mobility:** one project focusing on housing and another one on intercultural preparation and debriefing;
- **Green transition:** one project focusing on the travel habits of mobile students, nudging them towards more favourable considerations on slow travel.

At the governance level, the Council of Rectors and the EUF Coordinators have held their first joint meeting in ten years, which was very positively received by the Charter Members and will be continued in the forthcoming annual meetings. 



Group picture, EUF Open Space (2023)



CHAPTER 2

Improving inclusion in European student mobility: a joint effort for long-lasting impact

Throughout 2023, the Education community at large and the EUF member universities continued spearheading efforts to foster more inclusive Erasmus+ mobility flows. It is noteworthy that aspects such as the inclusion top-up were streamlined, and an increase of the overall grant amounts was announced and put into effect. However, much more is needed as external factors negatively impact the experience and affordability of student mobility and continue to limit access. With the rising costs of living throughout Europe, one has to consider whether the Erasmus+ mobility experience can still be for all.

The rising costs of living and accommodation challenges in cities across Europe have continued to impact students' choices in 2023. These factors play a key role in choosing whether or not to go on mobility, especially for students who do not qualify for an "inclusion top-up" and who do not have a safety net they can resort to in case the mobility grant is not enough or not paid in time.


The EUF and its members continued to work on researching and exploring possible solutions that could open the opportunity to study abroad through Erasmus+ mobility to more students. The [Erasmus for All](#) project looked into the logic of how the Erasmus+ grant is currently calculated with the goal of improving the inclusion and equity aspects of the programme. The main conclusions of the [project research report](#) highlighted that cost of living differences at the city-level considerably impact the experience of mobility for students, while currently the grant calculation system only accounts for country-level ones. Moreover, the Student Social Labs reinforced the finding that students do not fully understand how current Erasmus+ grants are calculated or why they receive a particular amount. **The Erasmus for All working group, comprising experts from fields such as policy, sociology and economics, took these issues into account and developed a new possible way to calculate the Erasmus+ grant that focuses on:**

- ☑ Increasing the transparency and positively impacting the way the grant is perceived by setting up a baseline amount that would be the same for all students across Europe;
- ☑ Ensuring that students have similar cost coverage regardless of their mobility destination by including a city-level cost of living difference supplement in case their destination city has higher costs of living than their origin one. This supplement would be automatically calculated through a cost-of-living calculator, a necessary requirement to reduce the administrative burden of higher education institutions.

To assess whether the Erasmus for All **grant calculation scenario** is realistic and would constitute a tangible improvement to the status quo, we have put it under close scrutiny from stakeholders through a series of interviews to higher education stakeholders and policy makers at EU-, national or institutional level during 2023. The feedback received was positive, with the majority of stakeholders highlighting how it looked to truly answer the needs of students.

The next steps of the project, already underway in 2023, aim to pilot the implementation of the Erasmus for All scenario and understand its impact by assessing the differences between groups of students receiving this new grant vs the current one.

The importance of improving the **Erasmus+ grant system to better answer students' needs** is undeniable in making Erasmus+ more inclusive and ensuring more students from diverse backgrounds can consider the opportunity to go on mobility. But how can institutions know whether their measures for more inclusive mobility are effective in the long term? How to know if the percentage of disadvantaged students participating in mobility truly corresponds to their representation in the overall student population of a Higher education institution? It was against this background that [Erasmus Gap](#) was launched in 2023, arising from the challenges and concern of several EUF members. The project will provide a methodology and tool kit to assess the difference between the mobile and non-mobile student cohorts. It will also provide a much clearer picture as to whether the existing support mechanisms live up to the expectations when calling for inclusive access to mobility. Erasmus Gap will equip Higher education institutions with the necessary tools to assess better whether they are indeed reaching all students with fewer opportunities and all underrepresented groups in mobility.

The path for more inclusive Erasmus+ mobility is impacted by a wide array of circumstances and political developments (or sometimes lack thereof). With the cost of living increasing, and the access to higher education in general widening, the mobility programmes and support mechanisms need to keep up to ensure widened access. This will require an effort from the higher education community to push for these changes and ensure they remain high priorities on the policy agenda. Together with members, partners and stakeholder organisations, the EUF continues to advocate and work towards more inclusive, high-quality mobility, tackling the ever-evolving challenges that can prevent it from becoming a reality. 

CHAPTER 3

Improving the mobile student experience

Peer-to-peer guidance for outgoing students

Even before their actual mobility experience starts, students often find themselves in unknown environments, away from their traditional educational and cultural settings; this understandably leads to important questions around accommodation, curricula, lifestyle, administration and finances to accumulate fast. Against these valid concerns, **peer support has proven to be a highly effective approach for exchanging ideas and experiences on different facets of student mobility**. The [COMPASS project](#), in which the EUF was involved, successfully concluded its work in 2023 by delivering what many students had been asking for: connecting future mobile students with local ones through an open and user-friendly [online platform](#) to share testimonials, tips and trips, and other useful resources. To facilitate its usage and promotion, it is accompanied by a thorough [toolkit](#) for outgoing and returning students, on the one hand, and for recruiting student volunteers and higher education staff as ambassadors, on the other.



The EUF also produced a booklet of [recommendations for improved guidance of prospective mobile students](#) tailored to higher education institutions, student organisations, National Agencies and European decision-makers. Indeed, the various actors that support mobile students before, during, and after their international experience can improve their practices by strengthening the development of intercultural skills, systematically updating and evaluating their pre-departure guidance, fostering virtual and physical peer-to-peer learning, and harmonising multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Students' well-being: a key determinant of academic achievement

Numerous studies have shown that students in higher education are struggling with ill-being. The COVID-19 healthcare crisis further deteriorated their well-being, with many experiencing isolation and mental health issues, and facing challenges to continue with their studies effectively. Additionally, current events such as the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis and environmental concerns are giving rise to new forms of malaise, significantly affecting student well-being and challenging higher education institutions and student organisations. The objective of the [WISE project](#) is to identify key vectors for improving student resilience, and to look for ways in which universities and student organisations can act to promote well-being.

During the past year, the consortium analysed the results of a series of surveys completed by university staff, student associations and students. In these surveys respondents were asked about measures available to support well-being, the importance of certain factors for their well-being and if their institutions had specific policies on well-being. It proceeded with the elaboration of a [comprehensive report](#), and a [synthesis](#) of these results. Additionally, as part of the project, a series of interviews and focus groups was carried out to identify innovative well-being practices in higher education, which were collected in a [report](#). These three documents were published in February 2024. Furthermore, some of the results of these reports were summarised in a poster presentation at EAIE 2023.

Based on these lessons learned, the consortium is now developing two student-centred well-being training kits that will be available soon. An interactive platform will also support the work of higher education institutions and student organisations committed to students' well-being.

Extending international learning opportunities to seniors


Rising life expectancy and a growing elderly population have led to an increase in a new cohort, which has traditionally not been given enough consideration in the development of higher education activities and programmes like Erasmus+: European citizens aged 60 and above.

The [Erasmus+ 60 project](#) aims to engage people aged 60 or above through international learning opportunities or mobility and intergenerational learning, thus leading to inclusion and further cohesion, and to enhancing their sense of European citizenship.

During the past year, the Erasmus+ 60 project organised a hackathon that brought together project stakeholders to discuss, collaborate, evaluate and find innovative solutions on the topic of education for seniors. Some of the topics discussed included well-being factors of studying for seniors, life-long learning resources and ways to increase their engagement in life-long learning. A [report](#) summarising the key findings and conclusions has been published for the consideration of higher education institutions.

Moreover, in September 2023, the University of Split, one of the consortium partners, hosted an international training week for seniors. During this week, up to 23 participants, all over

the age of 60 from Erasmus+ 60 partner institutions, had the chance to test a range of online courses developed by project partners. These courses covered diverse topics such as permaculture, cultural diversity, travel literature and health tourism, critical thinking, and exercises promoting healthy ageing and well-being. Participants provided feedback, shared their likes or dislikes, and evaluated the accessibility and usability of the platform hosting the courses.

Additionally, in September, the project was also showcased during the 2023 EAIE conference in Rotterdam via a recorded presentation broadcasted during the conference called “It is never too late to learn: Is higher education ready to welcome over 60s?” 




Group picture, Erasmus+ 60 Learning, Teaching and Training Activity (2023)

CHAPTER 4

Quo vadis, Blended Mobility?

2023 was surely an eventful year for the [HIBLend](#) consortium, an innovative project focused on investigating the format, methods and quality assurance approaches of blended mobility. The EUF contributed to important milestones of **the project, which will ultimately develop a comprehensive framework on quality blended student mobilities (BSM)**. Some of these highlights include an extensive literature review on the main aspects, types, and components of BSM. The results of this initial analysis were subsequently complemented by the findings of a European-wide mapping exercise of the diverse approaches and practices to BSM. Through an online survey, we gathered insights on the perceptions, motivations, challenges, as well as success factors to effectively deliver BSM. The survey invited practitioners that directly contribute to the design and implementation of BSM at the central or faculty/department level. The year concluded with online focus groups with academics and administrative staff, facilitated by the EUF. Furthermore, three in-depth discussions with 19 participants explored the potential of BSM as an experience to trigger a future longer physical mobility abroad, the need for robust digital infrastructure and skills, the use of appropriate tools for collaborative work online versus on-site, as well as the recurrent administrative burden and internal communication gaps, amongst others.

The HIBLend project was also proudly presented at external events to a wider European audience of higher education stakeholders, notably the [EAIE 2023 conference in Rotterdam](#) and the fifth edition of [CZEDUCON](#) in Brno.

The EAIE workshop, organised together with the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), provided participants with evidence-based insights into BSM in Europe, highlighting existing models, typologies and best practices. Despite strong political support for BSM in the European Higher Education Area, its implementation remains complex for higher education institutions. This workshop addressed key questions surrounding BSM. The key takeaways included a comprehensive research document on BSM in Europe, a collection of best practices for BSM, and first-hand experience and a deeper understanding of BSM implementation challenges. 

UNVEILING THE WORLD OF BLENDED STUDENT MOBILITY

Types of Blended Student Mobility



Short-Term

Combines physical mobility with virtual learning for up to 30 days (e.g., summer schools or study tours).



Long-Term

Extends fusion of physical and virtual learning beyond 30 days (module or semester at a host institution).



Blended Joint Degree Programs

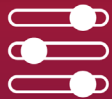
Pursue part of your degree at home and the rest abroad or virtually, and enjoy a unique international experience.

Approaches to Blended Student Mobility



Project-Based Blended Learning

Collaborative problem-solving, research, and presentation in small groups; cultivates critical skills.



Self-Blended Learning

Personalised mix of online and face-to-face learning; fosters autonomy; enables to offer diverse options.



A' la Carte Blended Learning

Customised learning paths through online & face-to-face experiences; caters to diverse student needs; resource optimization for institutions.

Components of Blended Student Mobility



Virtual Component

Utilises digital technologies for remote learning (online classes, webinars, resources).



Physical Component

In-person learning in classrooms or labs, includes travel to different countries.



Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

Combines real-time interactions (live online classes, discussions) and self-paced activities (pre-recorded lectures, assignments).

CHAPTER 5

Balancing internationalisation and sustainability does not have to be a zero sum game

2023 saw the continuation of the debate around the environmental principles and ambitions set out under Erasmus+, a programme that is ever-evolving and expected to reflect the emerging needs and visions of the educational community. In the current programme period, environmental sustainability has been elevated as a key sectoral priority with a view to increase awareness and usher concrete actions to address the climate crisis, but also to improve and streamline procedures, foster innovative ideas and best practices, strengthen international cooperation, and incentivise stronger individual and institutional commitments.

Transforming internationalisation processes into more environmentally sustainable ones benefits tremendously from community inspiration and discussion. Looking into what others are doing inspires and gives perspective into what can be done in each higher education institution, highlighting what has been achieved and what measures have been most effective. The EUF Knowledge Exchange Community (KEC) provides the perfect setting for such dialogue, and in March 2023, EUF members had the chance to discuss sustainable internationalisation and the future of a greener Erasmus+ through the KEC session “The paradox of internationalisation and sustainability: to what extent is sustainable internationalisation possible?”. This event, chaired by Prof. Jan Borm from the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, was a great opportunity to highlight examples of how sustainable internationalisation is being tackled by EUF members.

The collaboration with other stakeholders working with environmental sustainability also brought about positive evolutions in 2023. The Green Erasmus project, coordinated by ESN and in which the EUF is a partner, managed to develop several resources that aimed to support policy development at the European level. The [Green Erasmus policy recommendations](#) outlined **the role that internationalisation of higher education could play for a greener Europe**. The recommendations explored the power of sustainable internationalisation to change habits and the way in which improving green skills and competences could impact

the achievement of a greener Higher Education sector. Additionally, the Green Erasmus petition, which advocated for an increase in the support for green travel to 250 EUR and 7 days of individual support, collected more than 5200 signatures, showcasing the need to remove the (considerably) higher costs of sustainable travel for students.



At the same time, it was important to look beyond internationalisation and into how to **embed environmental sustainability in the actual courses** offered in each HEI. The Green Erasmus Educational Framework "[Higher Education on the journey towards sustainable development in curricula](#)" provides HEIs and academics working on curricula development with concrete case studies on how others are considering environmental sustainability in the curricula, as well as a mapping of the competencies that should be the outcome of integrating Education for Sustainable Development within the curricula.

Adopting ecological practices and developing green competencies is also possible and potent outside the classroom. Other strategies to minimise the carbon footprint generated from student mobility within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme involve **reimagining the learning outcomes of green travel to/from the mobility destination**. One of our guiding assertions is the need to change the narrative around the students' journey to their destination: rather than replicating a passive attitude, they can embark on a transformative adventure that enables them to grow and learn before they even reach their host city! These queries effectively inspired a new KA2 project titled [Sustainable Erasmus+ Travel](#), coordinated by the EUF, successfully submitted and approved in 2023.

“ SUSTAINABILITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION DON'T NECESSARILY CONTRADICT EACH OTHER. OF COURSE, WE'LL NEED BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES, BUT IN THE END, IT'S ABOUT ENABLING EXCHANGE VIA OTHER MEANS, E.G. USING THE TRAIN AND NOT THE PLANE. WE'LL STAY IN TOUCH AND TRAVEL, JUST DIFFERENTLY.

DR. LEONARD CREUTZBURG (University of Zurich, partner of the SET project)

Erasmus+ is undoubtedly one of the most celebrated flagship EU programmes, with hopes to contribute to wider policy efforts towards sustainability and climate neutrality. International mobility in the higher education sector and environmental sustainability are critical aspects of education and development, ultimately fostering knowledge exchange, innovation, and capacity building for the current and next generations. It is essential that we recognise that they are not mutually exclusive; rather we can, and should, envision a collective future in which the commitment of higher education stakeholders to **internationalisation goes hand in hand with sustainability to allow for a new chapter of ever closer cooperation and well-rounded experiences for mobile learners and staff.** 🌍

CHAPTER 6


Improved skills and greater career prospects for PhD candidates

In recent years, the EUF has actively pursued initiatives focused on enhancing skills training and career support for doctoral candidates both within and beyond academia. To intensify efforts in this domain, last year a consortium of seven universities and the EUF launched a new Horizon project, [DocTalent4EU](#), whose objectives and activities are grouped into three main clusters.

First, the project aims at expanding the results of a previous Horizon project, DocEnhance, by improving transversal skills intelligence. In its first year and a half, the DocTalent4EU consortium conducted a series of interviews and surveys to identify the most in-demand transversal skills. In the remaining part of the project, efforts will be devoted to piloting the design of a machine learning system able to anticipate future trends in the demand of transversal skills in this area.

The second objective of the project is to improve doctoral curricula. On the one hand, the consortium is piloting three courses, whose contents and learning outcomes have been identified on the basis of the results of the skills intelligence exercise: Communication and Negotiation Skills; Teamwork, Networking, and Co-creation; and Personal Effectiveness and Leadership. On the other hand, the consortium is also testing the use of digital credentials to recognise the skills acquired during the pilot courses. As part of this activity, the consortium will soon publish a manual detailing the steps that higher education institutions need to take to effectively issue digital credentials, with a specific focus on the European Digital Credentials Initiative.

As a final objective, the project will facilitate career guidance for PhD candidates through the launch of so-called “Talent Management Centres” in each participating Higher Education Institution. Organised in either a hybrid or digital format, the centres will pilot a series of services ranging from the design of early career and employability roadmaps to the organisation of pitching events and short-term placements in the non-academic sector. The result of this pilot will be used to support other universities across the EU in improving career support services for PhD cohorts.

By using a multifaceted approach, the project aims at improving the skills of PhD candidates and best preparing them for their future careers of choice. At the same time, it sets the stage for improving the capacity of institutions to deliver adequate training and enhanced support. 

Key Transferable Skills

Insights from the Report on current and future transversal skills needs

Most taught skills



COMMUNICATION



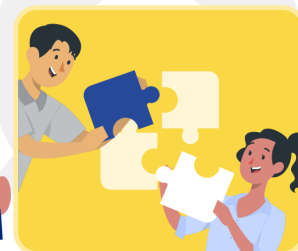
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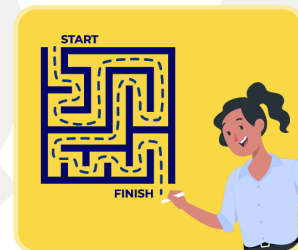
Most demanded skills



SELF-MANAGEMENT



TEAMWORK



PROBLEM-SOLVING



CHAPTER 7

Digitalisation beyond EWP

Digitalisation to improve the quality of mobility experiences has been a long-standing and important pillar of EUF activities. Over the course of 2023 we made significant progress in this area, adding further essential components to the digital ecosystem for student mobility and overall internationalisation.

In a nutshell, we worked towards making digital student cards available for institutions and students, developed concrete solutions to create digitalised course catalogues, designed a system to digitalise grant payments, and worked on implementing a digital solution for the evaluation of courses taken by Erasmus+ students.

European Student eCard

The EDSSI projects have made significant contributions to the Erasmus+ digitisation infrastructure.

The EDSSI project, completed in 2022, laid the groundwork by enhancing and maintaining the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) network. It also deployed the European Student Identifier and assessed the needs and available information related to various services for mobile students. Building on this progress, the [EDSSI L2](#) project piloted a mobile eCard solution to establish a truly European student status and explored integrating CEF building blocks for eArchiving, eTranslation, and eSignatures in higher education.

The primary objective was to make the Erasmus+ digital service infrastructure accessible to students using their own university credentials (including EU student eCards or any other type of student ID) and national eIDs. An EU Student eCard management system was developed to enable universities to provide their students with a digital student card recognised and used throughout Europe.

5 Reasons to Have a European Student eCard



Cost Effective

Digital Student eCards are much cheaper than plastic ones, eliminating printing and distribution costs.



Universal Compatibility

Unlike physical cards, digital eCards can emulate various card types on smartphones, ensuring compatibility across institutions.



Easy Access to Services

Digital cards can store numerous applications, providing students with extensive service access at both their home institution and abroad.



No Locked Cards

Digital eCards allow host universities to add applications, bypassing the restrictions of password-protected physical cards.



Environmentally Friendly

Switching to digital eCards supports sustainability efforts, reducing plastic waste and aligning with universities' green initiatives.

In June 2023, at the project's [final conference](#), participants had the opportunity to explore the world of eCards through use cases, and live demonstrations showcased the implementation of CEF Building Blocks, such as eSignatures in the Erasmus+ context.



Training session, EDSSI L2 EU Student eCard Conference & Training(2023)

Matching curricula and implementing digitalised course catalogues

The **NORM project**, completed in early 2023, attempted to provide effective tools to overcome institutional barriers to international mobility. The [European Curricula Design Guide](#) contains a toolkit for institutions and concrete policy recommendations on how to design study programmes in a way that encourages embedding mobility in curricula. The contents of the guide can be tailored to the different contexts of European higher education institutions.

A prototype of an IT solution was designed to help higher education institutions easily share their curricula and course catalogues and find equivalences between them. The prototype, piloted and tested in a real environment, can facilitate course choices for exchange students, strengthening the reliability of learning agreements and the recognition of credits after mobility. The beta version of the [NORM Curriculum Matching Tool](#) is publicly available.

In a certain respect, this work will continue in the [DACEM - Digitising Academic Catalogues for Enhanced Mobility](#) project, launched at the beginning of 2024. This new initiative aims at providing an open-source software and cloud platform for online Course Catalogues (CCs) in adherence to the ECTS Users' Guide.

Managing mobility grants on time and safely

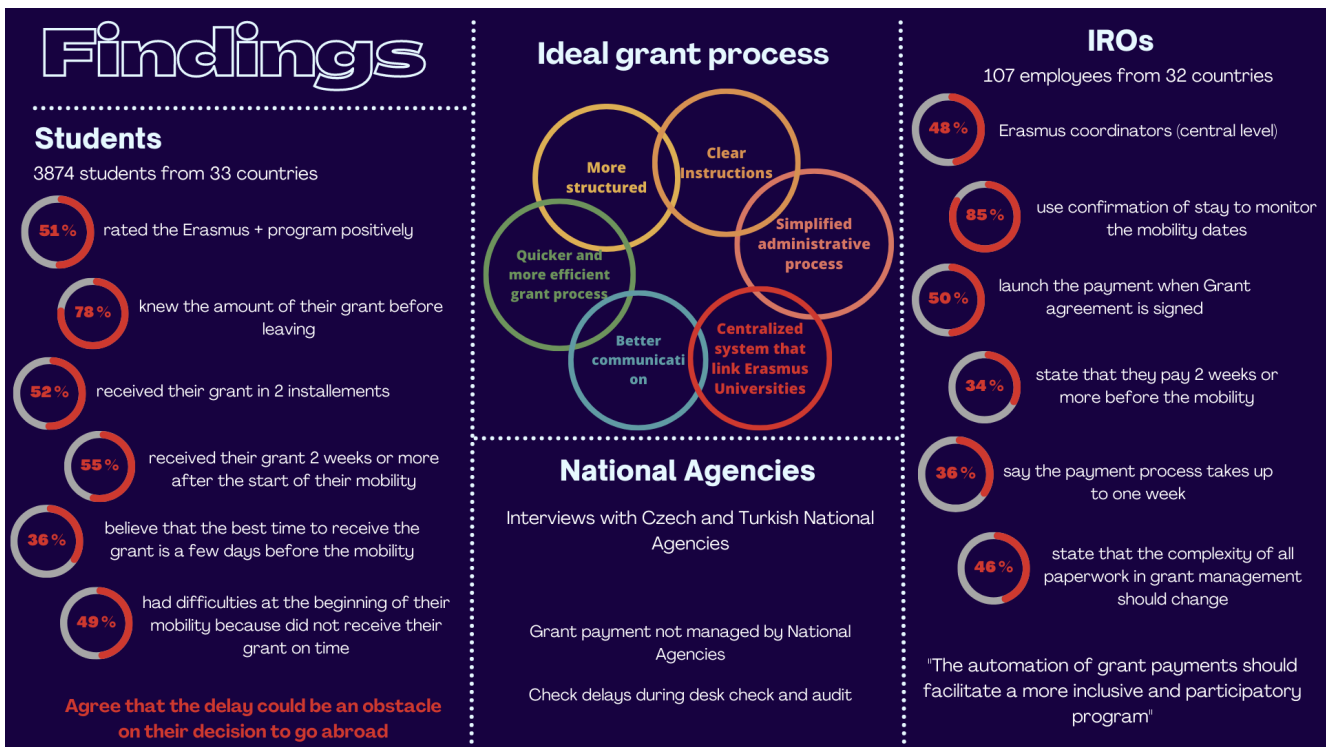
The proper management of mobility grants is a hot topic that has been on the agenda for a long time. Streamlining the payment process seems essential to ensure that the wide range of grant types offered by the Erasmus+ programme is delivered to beneficiaries in an efficient and timely manner, and that students are not negatively impacted by late payments.

The [MEGA - Million of Erasmus Grant](#) project aims to promote equal opportunities by investigating and addressing obstacles in Erasmus+ mobility grant disbursement and by developing a proof-of-concept application to oversee and manage payments for students.

The project will explore how Erasmus grants are managed in different higher education institutions and European countries. Data collection on payment delays and the reasons behind them is ongoing. The findings will be used to initiate a dialogue with stakeholders on how to introduce a more secure and well-functioning Erasmus grant payment system.

The project also includes the development of a Proof of Concept of a digital grant management platform. Meant to work in synergy with existing tools, the platform will simplify the management of Erasmus+ mobility grants at the university level and secure the payment of these grants to students, taking into account national and local context.

At the half-way stage of the project, [methodological guidelines for student grant distribution](#) were published in 2023. The guidelines were based on an extensive survey coordinated by Mendel University and Selçuk University, which aimed to explore the factors influencing smooth student grant management and how different institutions handle this task. Students, International Relations Officers, and Erasmus+ National Agencies were also invited to participate in the survey, so as to identify payment trigger points and critical moments in the grant payment process in different countries.



Source: MEGA Consortium

Work has proceeded at full capacity ever since. The Proof of Concept of the digital tool that automatically executes some part of the payments will be presented at the final conference of the project in Brussels, on the 5th December 2024. The publication of policy recommendations is also expected around this time.

Evaluation for courses offered to mobile students

How can higher education institutions better monitor and assess their institutional performance in education activities related to their internationalisation strategy? How can they include the quality aspect of student mobility in their analysis?

These questions are at the core of the [AsCOLA project](#), a European-wide project aimed at digitalising and enhancing the quality framework of Erasmus+ student mobility. The main ambition of the project is to equip higher education institutions with the necessary tools to improve students' learning experience by developing an evaluation methodology and an online evaluation tool for courses offered to mobile students.

In 2023, two new reports were published looking at the distinct needs and specificities of Erasmus+ mobility students when it comes to course evaluation. These reports significantly contribute to refining and advancing the quality framework of Erasmus+ student mobility, marking a step towards an improved mobility experience.

The desk study report "[Evaluative methods used in higher education and needs of teachers from Erasmus+ courses](#)" provides insights into the methods employed by higher education institutions for student evaluations, specifically those concerning exchange students. It also sheds light on the expectations and needs of teachers handling Erasmus+ students within the evaluation framework.

On the other hand, the report “[Transversal and course specific requirements for evaluation methodology of Erasmus+ courses](#)” collects information about the demands of exchange students in relation to course evaluation. It analyses how these needs and restrictions affect their course expectations and subsequent evaluation. The conclusions were drawn from a short questionnaire aimed at academic teachers, coordinators, and other stakeholders evaluating Erasmus+ mobility experiences.

The outcomes from these reports will inform the development of the AsCOLA tool, designed to enable students to evaluate the courses they undertake while on mobility.

The (very) big picture

We do not lose sight of the wider digital environment. We are delighted that EUF has been a part of the large-scale DC4EU project, a consortium representing 99 organisations from 25 countries, launched in 2023.

This ambitious initiative supports cross-border, large-scale piloting of the European Digital Identity Wallet in compliance with the EU Toolbox process. Four use cases are under development to test interoperability and scalability in the national domain and multiple cross-border contexts to provide recommendations for improvement to the European Commission and Member States.



What is the European Digital Identity Wallet?

The European Digital Identity will be available to EU citizens, residents, and businesses who want to identify themselves or provide confirmation of certain personal information. It can be used for both online and offline public and private services across the EU.

In the education domain, the project will design and implement activities for **educational credentials and professional qualifications**, including onboarding customisation and execution, interoperability of preliminary tasks and identification of opportunities and synergies with domain-related activities.

The EUF is involved in assessing the impact of the implementation and use of the EUDI Wallet on services connected to Erasmus Without Paper, such as the Learning Agreement and the Transcript of Records. 



CHAPTER 8

'EWP' Back to the Future

For more than a decade, the digitalisation of Erasmus+ has been synonymous with Erasmus Without Paper (EWP). 2023 was an eventful year and a positive turning point in many ways. 2022 was not an easy period for the International Relations Officers across the continent as they experienced a very turbulent start of the Erasmus+ Programme due not only to the COVID-19 and geopolitical crises but also to a stressful and ineffective renewal of Inter-institutional agreements in a digital format. The progress made in 2023 revolved largely around addressing interoperability issues caused by non compliant Erasmus Without Paper nodes; this was done in a very short period of time (6 months) and had a significant impact on how well tools used by most (though not all) universities work. It should be remarked that the consortium partners in general and the EUF universities at its core worked extremely hard to make these improvements possible.

Other highlights of 2023 include:

Positive effects of the Interoperability Reinforcement Plan

The first EWP Assessment Report¹ in 2022 already illustrated that the EWP Learning Agreement exchanges work well, while the Inter-Institutional Agreements problems mainly stemmed from faulty implementations on the third-party providers' side. The outputs of the Interoperability Action Plan aimed to support the community in addressing the remaining issues. The 2023 Report² shows considerable further progress, in addition to identifying the remaining obstacles to achieve full interoperability. It is important to highlight that such issues essentially point towards the need to tackle the digitalisation process as a cultural change, particularly with regards to the need to adjust and improve processes and workflows for the digital age.

1. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/news/latest-erasmus-without-paper-assessment-shows-ewp-works-but-some-connections-have-problems>

2. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/news/erasmus-without-paper-shows-smoother-data-exchanges-but-work-needed-to-improve-digital-processes>

Next steps towards the exchange of Nominations and Transcripts of Records via EWP

The summer of 2023 also marked another important milestone: the exchange of Nominations and Transcripts of Records via the EWP Network was made available to the EWP Dashboard users, making an important step towards future large-scale³ usage. The work on finalising the updates to the Mandatory Business Requirements continued until the end of 2023, with their conclusion becoming another critical milestone.

Higher education institutions need adequate preparation time to introduce new digital workflows and ensure a well-managed transition. The pace at which these milestones follow each other is a great opportunity for International Relations Officers to get acquainted with the Nominations and ToR functionalities, and share early feedback. However, the efficiency gains expected from EWP nominations are painfully clear to all International Relations Officers, as confirmed through the EWP governance bodies, making the progress made throughout 2023 very important to acknowledge.

Assuring smooth EWP service provision

2023 was also the first year in which operations and maintenance of all crucial parts of the EWP infrastructure – the EWP Network, the EWP Dashboard, the authentication solution and the ESCI Service Desk – were funded and assured in a systematic and consistent manner. Until this point the EWP and its interlinked services were a bottom up initiative, from universities to universities, largely funded by the universities themselves.

The bottom-up nature of the work carried out on EWP requires close and in-depth discussions with stakeholders: throughout 2023, this was another key highlight. Next to the EWP Governance activities and the communication campaigns carried out together with DG EAC under the tender “Development, Implementation and Support of the European Student Card Initiative” Lot 1 together with the EWP+ consortium, the following outputs stand out:



Panel session, SUDTE Final Conference (2023)

3. <https://esci-sd.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/WELCOME/pages/107577376/EWP+evolution++how+stable+processes+are+rolled+out>

Erasmus Goes Digital – SUDTE edition

On May 3rd the consortium partners of the [SUDTE](#) (Supporting Universities in Digital Transformation in Erasmus+) project organised a final conference in Brussels. It was held under the format of the Erasmus Goes Digital series and the event marked the resumption of face-to-face events on the topic after the interruption caused by the pandemic. It provided an opportunity to discuss lessons learned from the SUDTE project, with a focus on the digital transformation user's guide, on a comparative analysis of digital tools functionalities, and on the measurement of the efficiency gains brought about by digitalisation. The research done under the SUDTE project illustrates important findings that highlight the positive effects of digitalisation as



THE TIME SAVINGS REVEAL AN OPPORTUNITY TO MANAGE AN AVERAGE OF 80% MORE MOBILITIES WITH THE SAME RESOURCES AND STAFF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE. EFFECTIVELY, THIS REMOVES ONE BOTTLENECK THAT HAS PREVENTED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FROM OFFERING THE ERASMUS+ EXPERIENCES TO A GREATER NUMBER OF PEOPLE, THUS PAVING THE ROAD FOR MORE EFFECTIVE USAGE OF THE PROGRAMME'S BUDGET AND MULTIPLICATION OF THE RETURN FROM THE MASSIVE PUBLIC INVESTMENT, WHOSE FIGURES ARE ALREADY POSITIVE AS REPORTED BY D'HOMBRES [23].

Next to that, the event also illustrated good practices to facilitate the transition as well as links with the European University Alliances Initiative.

New EWP Community meet-ups

As part of the effort to reconnect with the community of EWP users after the pandemic and the inglorious start of the programme, in 2023 we inaugurated a new format: the EWP Community meet-ups. This series played an important role in ensuring that the views and priorities of the EUF remain informed by the needs of the users.

The organisation of informal national gatherings proved ideal to allow for candid and in-depth debates. Such events were organised from June until December in cooperation with the University of Vigo, University of Porto, University of Warsaw, SURF and the Humboldt-University. We are also grateful for the support provided by the Erasmus+ National Agencies in Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Germany, as well as the Polish IRO Forum. The key topics mapped throughout 2023 fed into the work carried out by the EUF in 2024, not least in the form of the first Student Mobility Summit. 

CHAPTER 9

Our policy priorities in 2023

As we entered the third year of the EU programming period 2021-2027, geopolitical developments have affected our societies, including higher education. In this context, the higher education community has started using the term ‘poly-crises’ whereby environmental challenges, funding challenges coupled with high inflation, geopolitical disruptions, among other factors, have affected the international relations of higher education institutions. While the term poly-crisis became common currency in the higher education community, 2023 was a year during which our resilience became stronger, and with it our ability to influence forthcoming developments. In this context, the network has focused its efforts on the following priorities:

Improving the overall implementation of Erasmus+

The start of the new programming period 2021-2027 has resulted in quite a few challenges for higher education institutions and students. Such challenges were linked to delayed (and changed) funding mechanisms, and to the difficult transition to digital tools and processes, among other issues. In 2023, the EUF, the Erasmus Student Network and the European Students’ Union released the [Erasmus+ Review 2021-22](#) to consolidate the feedback received on such matters.



Erasmus+ Review 2021-22 launch event at the European Parliament (2023)

The report was launched at the European Parliament in March 2023: the session, hosted by MEP Marcos Ros, allowed for a rich exchange of views, experiences and insights among the members of the Parliament, stakeholder organisations in attendance and the European Commission.

Is Erasmus for all?

Inclusion in international student mobility is a strategic objective of our network, recently approved by the Council of Rectors in 2022, and several projects are underway to tackle this immense challenge. Lack of funding remains the top obstacle for students considering studying abroad: the Erasmus4All project partners worked throughout 2023 to assess to what extent the Erasmus+ programme funding opportunities can be made [more inclusive](#). An Erasmus Salon on the topic provided another important opportunity to discuss the different scenarios for making Erasmus+ more inclusive with representatives from stakeholder organisations.

Making Erasmus+ greener

Combining student and staff mobility with the objective of limiting our carbon footprint is and will be a challenge in the years to come. To support this objective, we authored policy recommendations for [sustainable internationalisation](#) in the context of the Green Erasmus project, and organised a Knowledge Exchange Community session to discuss the [steps that higher education institutions are taking towards more sustainable internationalisation](#). In the context of the Erasmus+ Review, we made recommendations to increase the 'green top-up' for students, introduced in the Erasmus+ programme guide 2024 through the implementation of green travel distance bands.

Rising living costs and the housing crisis

Accommodation is the main cost for students at home and abroad and is therefore an important factor in their decision to study abroad (or not). Students coming from cities with a challenging housing situation tend to be less mobile as they fear running into difficulties upon their return. Those studying abroad in cities where the housing situation is tense often struggle to find affordable and quality student housing options. Housing was therefore an obvious topic of the [1st Erasmus Salon](#) organised in 2023 in cooperation with the Erasmus Student Network.

In addition, feedback from EUF member universities also led us to shine a light on situations where students are scammed or pay very high accommodation fees. This is why we worked throughout 2023 to make student accommodation options available via the Erasmus+ App and successfully initiated a follow-up housing project called [HOME 2](#).

Finally, we also organised a Knowledge Exchange Community session on the topic of student accommodation. The event focused on communication strategies for informing students about housing opportunities, ensuring timely support for every student, collaborative efforts among higher education institutions in the same region, balancing quality and affordability, and addressing intercultural issues in shared student accommodation.


Facing geopolitical challenges

We continued to advocate for more careful considerations on how Erasmus+ may be used to maintain and develop contacts with countries which have been excluded or suspended from Erasmus+. The programme is indeed an excellent vector for building mutual understanding and trust among young citizens who will be the decision makers of tomorrow. It is therefore more important than ever to make sure young people from countries which may have taken political decisions against the interest and the values of the European Union may still have the opportunity to travel and study in Europe with the support of Erasmus+. In this particular context, we also called for the re-association of Switzerland and the [UK](#) to the Erasmus+ programme.

Supporting digital transformation in Erasmus+

The [closing conference](#) of the SUDTE project provided the opportunity to debate the lessons learned from the digital transformation process underway in the context of the European Student Card Initiative. The organisation of five Erasmus Without Paper meet-ups in Spain, Portugal, Germany, Netherlands, and Poland allowed us to discuss the challenges and priorities of both IT and International Relations staff members in an informal and open manner. The outcome of these discussions contributed to the programme of the Student Mobility Summit, hosted by the University of Barcelona in January 2024.

European University Alliances

All Charter Members of the EUF network are active in alliances and over 60% of the alliances are represented in the network membership. To better support the progress of European University Alliances, we first set up a working group and then an Alliance Accelerator that focused on the needs of the European university alliances represented in the EUF network. In this perspective, we also organised an online workshop on the European Degree label and the Legal Status for European University Alliances for enabling further European higher education cooperation at a trans-national level. With respect to the emergence of the alliances, several policy discussions took place with members, focusing on a) the continued and long-term funding needs for the existing alliances and b) the strategic avenues of cooperation for higher education institutions which are not (yet?) involved in European University Alliances. In the coming years, both questions will require strategic discussions to ensure the success of the alliances, the transfer of their achievements to the entire higher education community, and the alternative yet strategic avenues for cooperation among the higher education institutions which have not been selected to be part of one of the current alliances. 



**Financial
overview
for 2023**

BALANCE SHEET IN EUR

Assets

	2023	2021
Fixed assets	50 719,15	48 645,85
<i>Tangible fixed assets</i>	3 325,87	1 252,57
<i>Financial fixed assets</i>	47 393,28	47 393,28
Current assets	3 900 748,55	1 787 187,89
<i>Receivables</i>	77 844,41	131 640,75
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>	3 822 904,14	1 655 547,14
Accruals	112 776,31	64 466,30
TOTAL	4 064 244,01	1 900 300,04

Liabilities

	2023	2022
Equity	1 383 998,92	882 463,38
Short-term liabilities	1 134 155,69	572 088,97
Accruals	1 546 089,40	445 747,69
TOTAL	4 064 244,01	1 900 300,04

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT IN EUR

	2023	2022
Income	4 142 282,82	2 851 752,03
External charges	2 508 023,87	1 531 820,39
Personnel	1 141 529,93	923 182,98
Depreciation	2 081,27	2 368,48
Other interest rate	17 829,66	1 216,88
Other operating expenses	6 928,02	8 487,62
Result of the year	501 535,54	386 851,60

