

Procedures and Challenges of Student Mobility

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Procedures and Challenges of Student Mobility

Authors:

Marcin Kłos

Urszula Lis

Alina Palamarchuk

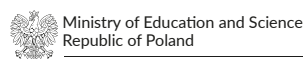
Translation:

Kewin Lewicki

Typesetting and design:

Alicja Prus

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Introduction

Urszula Lis

Student mobility constitutes a significant element of the contemporary educational system, playing a pivotal role in shaping skills, broadening horizons, and fostering international relationships. Poland, as a participant in the global academic community, consistently aims at developing and supporting student mobility.

The objectives of student mobility encompass not only acquiring knowledge at the highest academic level but also developing intercultural communication skills, broadening cultural horizons, and promoting a global perspective on scientific and social issues. Through participation in student exchange programs, students can experience cultural diversity, fostering not only their personal development but also contributing to the creation of a society more open to cooperation and understanding of international perspectives.

An important aim of student mobility is also the enhancement of language skills, increasingly crucial in the global academic and professional environment. Student mobility enables not only learning in a foreign language but also navigating within an environment where that language is used daily. This, in turn, contributes to improving students' language competencies, which are crucial for their success in today's job market.

Furthermore, student mobility promotes the exchange of knowledge and innovation among different educational institutions. By transferring between universities, students bring along unique perspectives and experiences, enriching the academic environment both locally and globally. These objectives aimed at personal, cultural, and intellectual development make student mobility a key element of a contemporary approach to education.

The significance of student mobility extends beyond individual student benefits and encompasses social, cultural, and economic aspects. Student mobility is a crucial element in building a society open to diversity and ready

for global cooperation. Through direct experience of other cultures, students learn to respect differences, contributing to the creation of a more tolerant and integrated community.

In a cultural context, student mobility influences the exchange of traditions, values, and perspectives, contributing to the creation of a global dialogue. By navigating through different educational systems, students not only acquire knowledge but also contribute to building bridges between nations. This, in turn, contributes to fostering an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding at an international level.

From an economic perspective, student mobility contributes to shaping highly skilled professionals ready to work in a global business environment. Students who gain educational experience abroad often bring new perspectives, skills, and innovations that can positively impact a country's economic development. Moreover, international partnerships formed within student mobility initiatives foster the exchange of know-how and scientific collaboration.

In this article, we will focus on the procedures and challenges related to student mobility in Poland, thoroughly analyzing the objectives and significance of this process for individuals and the overall societal development. We will explore the benefits brought by student mobility while considering the difficulties students may encounter when deciding to study abroad. Additionally, we will uncover how educational institutions and the state endeavor to facilitate student mobility.

Theoretical Foundations of Student Mobility

Alina Palamarchuk

Definition of Student Mobility

Student mobility is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses practical educational experiences beyond the borders of a student's native country. The phenomenon of mobility is defined as participation in educational programs, exchanges, or internships that take place abroad, at other universities, or in international research institutions. Types of student mobility are diverse, including semester exchanges, internships, short-term educational programs, as well as participation in research projects and international conferences. These experiences aim not only to acquire academic knowledge but also to develop intercultural, language, and social skills. In the context of globalization and increasing international cooperation, student mobility becomes an increasingly significant element of higher education, offering students a unique opportunity for personal and professional development.

Student mobility is a phenomenon of rich and complex nature, simultaneously serving as a key element in shaping global citizens and future professionals. To further emphasize the importance of this phenomenon in the global and European context, it's crucial to note that student mobility is one of the key directions of action for the European Union in the field of education and higher education. Clear confirmation of this lies in Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, highlighting the significant role of international cooperation in the context of fostering and developing student mobility. The European Commission has also undertaken various studies and surveys to identify the importance of this phenomenon for its direct recipients

– youth/students aged 15-30. According to these studies conducted among young Europeans, 90% of respondents highly value the opportunity to participate in international programs and academic exchanges related to student mobility. Following their line of reasoning, they perceive student mobility as active participation in educational programs or internships beyond their country's borders, allowing them to enhance previously acquired language competencies and gain diverse skills valued in the job market.¹

Within the framework of academic mobility processes, students can benefit from various available forms tailored primarily to the needs of studying individuals. These diverse forms contribute to the development of various competencies, thereby enhancing the contemporary world of education. Briefly outlining these forms, semester exchanges offer students the opportunity to study in another country for one or two semesters, currently being the most widespread form of mobility. Foreign internships combine practical experience with learning, enabling students to develop specific professional skills. Short-term programs, such as summer schools or short courses, provide intensive educational experiences often focused on specific topics or specializations. Participation in international research projects opens pathways for scientific collaboration and innovation, connecting students and researchers from different countries and disciplines. These diverse options cater to different needs and interests of students, offering them a chance for personal and professional development in an international environment.

As a result, student mobility, with its dynamic and diverse nature, constitutes a significant element in the global education system. It not only delivers academic knowledge and skills but also shapes intercultural and social competencies, which are indispensable in today's globalized world. Supporting both individual and professional development of students, this mobility contributes to creating a more open, integrated, and collaborative global community, which in turn leads to improved quality of education at universities, enhancing graduates' competencies for the future.

History of Student Mobility

Student mobility, as a significant aspect of international education, has its roots in history and evolved alongside the development of societies and educational

1 Source of study: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2186>

systems. Let's delve deeper into how it looked over the centuries.

Origins – Emergence of Student Mobility: Medieval Universities and Early Forms of Academic Exchange

During the Middle Ages, as the first universities emerged, such as the University of Bologna (founded in 1088) or the University of Paris (established around 1150), students and teachers often traveled among various academic centers. This early mobility was mainly driven by the pursuit of knowledge and the desire to learn from renowned and top-tier masters. At that time, an important hub for academic exchange also became the University of Oxford, attracting scholars from across Europe.

A characteristic feature of these early educational institutions was intellectual mobility, driven by the quest for knowledge. Mutual recognition of academic titles and qualifications facilitated the mobility of teachers and students, significantly impacting the dissemination of scientific ideas and knowledge. For instance, a master's degree obtained in one academic center authorized teaching in another, fostering academic exchange, cultural integration, and the development of student mobility.

The journeys of students and teachers among universities significantly influenced the diffusion of knowledge. Students traveling to Italy or France to study law, medicine, or philosophy, alongside distinguished teachers, contributed to the dissemination of scientific thought. These interactions not only facilitated the exchange of knowledge but also reinforced intercultural understanding and tolerance, crucial for shaping a shared European academic identity.

In brief, medieval universities catalyzed both student and academic mobility. Their influence on intellectual and cultural exchange had long-term consequences for the development of higher education. Although motivations and mechanisms of mobility evolved over time, the fundamental idea of exchanging knowledge and experiences remained unchanged, laying the groundwork for today's global academic cooperation and student mobility.

Development of Student Mobility in the 20th Century: Evolution of International Educational Programs

In the 20th century, student mobility underwent a significant transformation, becoming a pivotal element of the global educational landscape. The Fulbright Program, initiated in the USA after World War II in 1946, ushered in a new era

of international scholarships and student exchanges. It enabled thousands of students and scholars to study and conduct research abroad, laying the foundations for international scientific and cultural cooperation.

Another milestone in the development of student mobility was the birth of the Erasmus program in 1987, initiating a significant phase of European educational system integration. This program facilitated student exchanges between European universities, contributing to closer intercultural and academic cooperation on the continent. An example of such collaboration is the partnership between the University of Barcelona and the University of Berlin, resulting in joint study programs and scientific research. Most Polish universities also collaborate directly with educational institutions across Europe, allowing students studying in Polish universities to exchange and gain various experiences within this project.

Besides Fulbright and Erasmus, other initiatives by organizations like the British Council or DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) also had a significant impact on the development of student mobility. These programs enabled international research and education, creating strong academic and cultural networks worldwide. For example, the DAAD program not only facilitated German students studying in the United States but also invited students from different countries to Germany, strengthening the international exchange of knowledge and experiences.

In conclusion, the evolution of student mobility in the 20th century had a fundamental impact on shaping contemporary higher education. Initiatives like Fulbright, Erasmus, Erasmus+, AIESEC, or DAAD played a crucial role in the development of academic and student mobility. These programs not only increased the accessibility of international education for a broader spectrum of students but also shaped a modern educational landscape where student mobility is an indispensable element of academic life. Contemporary student mobility, shaped by these historical programs, is now the foundation for building global competencies and mutual understanding among students worldwide.

The Bologna Process and Its Influence on Student Mobility

Initiated by the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the Bologna Process marked a significant step towards harmonizing higher education systems in Europe, aiming to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Its implementation was crucial in facilitating student and academic mobility on the continent. A key element of the Bologna Process was the introduction of a three-cycle

education system: bachelor's, master's, and doctorate. Standardization of degrees and academic qualifications facilitated easier comparison and transfer between academic institutions. For instance, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) made it easier for students to move between universities in Europe while maintaining the continuity of their education.

The Bologna Process directly contributed to the growth of student mobility by enabling students to study in different countries and institutions. Standardizing study programs and qualifications allowed for better educational integration and increased student flow between countries. Two-cycle programs and joint master's degrees became more common, fostering international student exchange and inter-university collaboration.

Moreover, the Bologna Process contributed to strengthening a European academic identity by promoting common standards and values in higher education. This integrated educational system facilitated not only mobility but also inter-institutional cooperation, significantly impacting the development of scientific research and innovation in Europe.

Contemporary Changes and Their Impact on the Development of Student Mobility

In recent years, student mobility has experienced significant transformations shaped by the advancement of digital technologies and various global-scale events. This evolution presents both challenges and new opportunities in the context of international education.

Advanced digital technologies have revolutionized the delivery and reception of education. Tools like e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and digital libraries have increased the accessibility and flexibility of education, enabling students to participate in international programs without the need for physical travel. This digitalization of education allows for new forms of international collaboration and knowledge exchange, even when students cannot physically travel.

However, the most impactful event that drastically influenced student mobility in recent years was the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of global travel restrictions and health safety measures had dramatic consequences for traditional student exchange programs. Many universities had to swiftly adapt to the new reality, transitioning to distance learning and virtual exchange programs. This sudden change showcased both the flexibility of educational systems and highlighted the importance of technology in maintaining continuity in learning.

The pandemic also highlighted inequalities in access to education. Students from regions with limited access to digital resources found themselves in very disadvantageous situations. In response to these challenges, many universities and international organizations initiated initiatives aimed at supporting students and ensuring equal access to educational resources.

Over the years, student mobility has undergone far-reaching evolution, and recent events have further shaped its landscape. The digitalization of education and response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how flexible and quickly adaptable the academic world can be in the face of existing challenges. Despite the obstacles faced by student mobility, it continues to play a crucial role in shaping global citizens and future leaders.

Procedures and Stages of Student Mobility

Marcin Kłos

Every mobility program, within its regulations, has certain rules governing its operation. These rules particularly define the recruitment and selection of participants. Planning, preparation, and execution of mobility are also included.

Recruitment and Participant Selection

The process of recruiting and selecting students for student mobility programs, including international exchange programs, is a complex process that plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality and diversity of participation. For popular programs like Erasmus, this process involves multiple stages aimed at ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the international dimension of their education.

The first step involves interested students submitting applications. At this stage, students present their academic achievements, social experiences, and motivations related to participating in the exchange program. The Erasmus program often offers an additional incentive, allowing students to choose a specific partner university, which influences the individualization of the recruitment process.

Next, a recruitment committee assesses the qualifications of the candidates. They evaluate both academic achievements and social aspects such as involvement in student activities or volunteer work. For programs targeting adult students, formalities regarding parental consent are not necessary, but the careful provision of complete information by students is crucial.

In the context of student mobility, student organizations like the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) also play a significant role. ESN serves an important function both during the recruitment process and during the foreign stay. They provide substantive, logistical, and social support, assisting students in adapting to the new environment and providing essential information about life in the country and the recruitment process.

In some cases, especially in more advanced programs, there are qualification interviews. These meetings allow for a closer understanding of the candidates' motivations and readiness for international exchange.

The decision to admit students to the program is based on a comprehensive assessment of their qualifications. Upon receiving positive results, students proceed to the preparatory stage, involving signing agreements and administrative formalities related to participation in the mobility program.

The entire recruitment process and participation in student mobility programs aim not only to develop academic competencies but also to broaden cultural and personal horizons. The activities of student organizations such as ESN play a key role in facilitating this process, creating communities that support students at every stage of this fascinating international experience.

Planning and Preparation for Mobility

Student mobility, particularly participation in international or national exchange programs, is not just an opportunity to gain new educational skills but also a unique life experience. Planning and preparing for such mobility involve several key stages, each of which is essential for the successful execution of the entire process.

The first step usually involves focusing on selecting the destination and partner university. Students must consider various factors such as the language of instruction, availability of courses aligned with their study plan, as well as cultural and logistical aspects like cost of living and safety in the region.

Analyzing the educational offer at the partner university is another crucial element. Students aim to match courses with their interests while ensuring that the stay abroad positively impacts their educational development. It's also an opportunity to broaden horizons and gain unique experiences that they couldn't acquire at their home university.

Formal preparation is necessary concerning student exchange. This includes handling all administrative formalities, such as visas, health insurance, and academic documentation. Communication with the Student Exchange Office at the home university is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and ensure full compliance with program requirements.

The financial aspect requires particular consideration. Students need to develop a realistic budget, taking into account accommodation costs, meals, travel, and any unforeseen expenses. It's also worthwhile to explore opportunities for scholarships or other forms of financial support that can help cover the costs associated with staying abroad.

Cultural preparedness involves not only pre-departure training but also the process of adaptation and openness to new experiences during the stay. Students learn not only the foreign language but also local customs, values, and communication styles.

During their time abroad, students must manage everyday tasks such as grocery shopping, using public transportation, or solving any accommodation issues. The ability to function independently in a new environment is crucial for fully leveraging the potential of this experience.

Maintaining contact with the home university is not just a formality but also a way to exchange information, receive support in problem-solving, and maintain a sense of connection with the home academic community.

The student exchange program becomes not only a part of the educational path but also a key stage in life that shapes attitudes, develops social skills, and opens new perspectives both in a professional career and personal life.

Implementation of Mobility

Implementing mobility within the Erasmus and MOST programs is a dynamic process that involves several key steps. For Erasmus participants, the first stage is registration at their home university, followed by choosing a foreign partner. Candidates are assessed based on their academic and language skills, and upon approval of the mobility, they sign an agreement regulating the conditions of their stay abroad.

Another crucial aspect of preparation is enhancing language competencies, especially if classes are conducted in a language other than the native tongue. Organizing accommodation and financial support are also significant elements

of the process. Erasmus also emphasizes cultural integration through various events and programs.

Similarly, MOST program participants undergo recruitment and select a program aligned with their interests. Language preparation, support in accommodation, as well as financial aid (in the Erasmus program), accompany the process, aiming to facilitate participants' adaptation to the new environment.

Both programs emphasize academic or educational activity within the chosen partner university. After the completion of the stay, Erasmus and MOST participants submit reports, and their achievements are evaluated. Collaboration between universities is also a key aspect ensuring the smooth execution of the program.

The final experiences of participants depend on various factors, including the specifics of the program, the destination country, and individual preferences. It's worth noting that procedures and participation conditions may undergo changes, so it's always recommended to check the latest information on the websites of relevant programs and universities.

Challenges of Student Mobility

Urszula Lis

Student mobility, while rich in personal and academic development potential, isn't devoid of challenges. These challenges encompass linguistic, cultural, financial, organizational, adaptation to a new environment, as well as participants' safety and health concerns. In this article, we'll delve into each of these areas, revealing the complexity and significance of these challenges while proposing potential solutions.

Linguistic Challenges

Issues related to language barriers are among the most common challenges students encounter during student mobility. Despite the requirements set at the beginning of international exchange recruitment, the reality that students face (even those who have passed language exams at a high level) often differs significantly from what they expected and were prepared for.

- **Academic Communication:**

Foreign students often struggle with new terminology and academic style in a foreign language. This can lead to difficulties in understanding lecture content, reading specialized literature, and articulating their own thoughts in a language that isn't their native tongue.

- **Social Integration:**

Language barriers can also present challenges in a social context. Communi-

cation with local students or residents is often hindered, leading to potential social isolation.

- **Pressure for Communication Effectiveness:**

Students often experience pressure related to the effectiveness of communication in a foreign language, which may deter them from asking questions during lectures or participating in discussions.

- **Tests and Examinations:**

Many students face difficulties when writing tests and exams in a foreign language.

- **Challenges in Daily Communication:**

Even everyday communication, such as shopping or handling official matters, can be problematic for students due to the specifics of language used in different contexts.

It's worth noting that awareness of these potential problems and adequate preparation by educational institutions and students can significantly ease the process of adapting to a new linguistic environment. Long-term investments in language and integration programs will contribute to creating a more student-friendly academic environment for international students.

To overcome difficulties related to language barriers, it's crucial to introduce specialized language courses focused on academic aspects such as writing scientific papers or participating in seminars. Another solution that can help mitigate communication problems includes organizing intercultural meetings, language clubs, or partnership programs where students support each other in language learning, thereby aiding social integration.

By fostering an atmosphere of acceptance for linguistic differences and encouraging open communication, we can simultaneously alleviate students' potential anxieties and prevent a "language block" caused by stress and uncertainty about their language proficiency level.

Confronting a New Culture

The second fundamental challenge that students face when actively participating in student mobility is cultural differences. Diverse cultural backgrounds bring distinct ethical frameworks and social expectations. Understanding that what is acceptable in one country may be unacceptable in another is particularly crucial. These conflicts arise both on campus, in dormitories, and in daily life. Establishing platforms for open discussion and cultural exchange becomes essential to foster understanding and acceptance of diverse perspectives.

Even non-verbal communication, often overlooked in discussions of cultural differences, which is deeply rooted in cultural context, presents another obstacle for individuals outside their home country. Differences in gestures, facial expressions, and expectations regarding personal space can lead to misunderstandings. This, in turn, creates additional problems, such as finding one's place among the foreign student community. Adapting to a new environment can be challenging even when changing environments within one's own country. Particularly noticeable is the issue of difficulties in building interpersonal relationships across cultures. Differences in approaches to friendships, hierarchies, and personal boundaries can isolate individuals from the outside, especially if they have a more introverted personality. The lack of acclimatization in a new environment also intensifies homesickness for home, family, and friends, prompting some students to withdraw from programs shortly after their commencement.

Education System

The most noticeable and often discussed complications in discussions of student mobility revolve around differences in educational systems. Despite substantial alignment within the Bologna Process, grading practices and academic expectations differ significantly. Educational systems vary in structure, requirements, and teaching methods. Foreign students may encounter challenges in adapting to a new system. The most common problem for students going abroad on exchanges is discrepancies in academic schedules. Overlapping end and start dates of the academic year or individual semesters pose issues with submission deadlines for required documents that students cannot obtain without completing the semester at their home university. This isn't the only issue related to

documentation at universities. The systems used for document circulation and submission processes pose a significant challenge for newcomers unfamiliar with them. The lack of clear and widely accessible information, especially in English, about the entire process leads to many difficulties in handling the formalities associated with studying at a foreign university.

Finances and Their Absence

One of the key issues influencing students' decisions and plans regarding the countries or specific universities they want to attend during exchanges is the matter of finances. Despite access to funding in the form of scholarships – provided by organizing entities and external institutions – the received funds are insufficient to cover all costs related to participating in student mobility. Differences in currencies and their exchange rates make it difficult to plan a budget for the trip, requiring students to prepare a large reserve of funds to travel abroad. Sustaining oneself in another currency also makes it challenging for families to financially support students. Considering the average earnings in Poland in the context of the prices prevailing abroad, they are insufficient to financially support students adequately. Living costs in another country, especially in larger cities, can be significantly higher than in the student's home country. Rent, food, transportation – all these add an extra burden to students' wallets. Additionally, international studies involve travel between countries. The costs of plane tickets, visa fees, as well as potential expenses for local transportation, can accumulate. This becomes particularly problematic when students, during longer exchanges, want to visit their families during holidays or long weekends. High travel prices discourage students from returning to their countries, deepening their longing for family and friends and affecting their well-being. As a result, students abandon exchanges to return to what they know and their loved ones.

Addressing potential cultural problems requires active engagement from educational institutions and awareness from students. Integrative programs, cultural seminars, and dedicated support resources for foreign students are essential to create an environment where cultural diversity is valued, and students feel accepted and understood.

Security and Health

All the aforementioned challenges further impact one of the most crucial aspects of participating in student mobility – safety. Right from choosing the country and university, students must consider the potential risks associated with studying in a particular place.

Some safety-threatening situations for students on exchange:

- Unknown streets, crowded public transportation, and new neighbors are factors that can affect personal safety. In a **new environment**, students might be at risk of theft or damage to their property.
- **Cultural and language differences** can hinder effective communication, which can lead to potentially dangerous situations. Misunderstanding local social norms or an inability to convey needs in a foreign language can create potential risks.
- **Adapting to a new environment**, separation from family and friends, as well as stress related to new educational demands, can impact students' mental health. Lack of adequate support can result in feelings of isolation and depression.
- Some educational institutions may have varying **safety standards**, encompassing both issues related to protection against intruders and emergency situations such as fires or earthquakes.
- Students traveling between cities or countries might encounter different levels of safety in **public transportation**. From pickpocketing threats to the risk of accidents, travel becomes a potential area of uncertainty.
- In some countries, students may face problems related to **sanitary safety**. These might include water contamination, lack of access to hygiene facilities, or threats from tropical diseases.
- In different societies, norms regarding tolerance may differ, directly impacting individuals' safety (e.g., based on gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc.). This can directly influence students' safety concerning interpersonal relationships and protection against violence or unwanted behavior.

Issues affecting students' health during student mobility:

- **Differences in healthcare systems** can pose serious challenges. Students may encounter difficulties in understanding medical procedures, accessing specialists, understanding, and covering the costs of treatment in a foreign healthcare system.

- Other academic requirements, cultural differences in learning approaches, and academic pressure can lead to increased stress levels and health problems related to students' mental well-being.
- Dietary changes and the availability of various food products can impact students' health. Food intolerances, unfamiliarity with local cuisine, or difficulties in accessing fresh produce can pose challenges to a healthy lifestyle.
- Traveling between countries carries health-related risks such as tropical diseases or bacterial infections.
- Environmental changes, **feelings of loneliness**, or lack of social support can lead to mental health issues. Depression, anxiety, or sleep problems are often encountered challenges.

As demonstrated by the examples above, student mobility, despite being a fascinating experience, unfortunately doesn't come without obstacles. The diversity of these challenges underscores the necessity of support for students to fully harness the potential of international education. Their experiences not only shape their self-development but also lay the groundwork for international cooperation development both now and in the future.

Benefits and Effects of Student Mobility

Alina Palamarchuk

Student mobility, encompassing participation in academic international programs, exchanges, and foreign scholarships, is a crucial element in shaping the attitudes of future leaders and innovators in a globalizing world. Student mobility significantly impacts not only academic development but also the professional, personal, and social development of participants. This chapter aims to thoroughly explore these influences, showcasing how student mobility contributes to personal, professional, academic development, as well as the development of global academic awareness and international cooperation in this field.

Academic and Professional Benefits

Student mobility brings a range of academic and professional benefits that influence student development.

Starting with academic and scientific benefits, it's essential to note that participating in international student mobility programs provides students access to diverse educational programs that are conducted differently and may not be available in the same form in their home country. Examples include participation in advanced workshops and involvement in international research projects, which promote knowledge exchange and the development of students' skills. In the context of academic benefits, attention should also be given to various opportunities related to technological development. The exchange of academic competencies in this area also contributes positively to technology advancement and international collaboration in this field. Additionally, it's of great importance to shape students' openness and interpersonal skills regarding

viewing the world as a whole, not merely creating it from their own perspective conditioned by their origins or other geopolitical influences. Regarding language skills, this presents a unique opportunity. Improving language proficiency in an international environment is much more efficient based on direct context with the environment and cultural conditions of the host country. According to information provided on the European Commission website, research results indicate that “93 percent of students declare that studying or training abroad has allowed them to better appreciate the value of interacting with other cultures. 91 percent believe that such study abroad improved their language skills, and 80 percent feel that educational mobility contributed to improving their problem-solving skills”.¹

Moreover, it’s crucial to note that through such mobility programs, academic institutions strive to achieve the highest level of knowledge transfer by engaging in inter-country cooperation, significantly contributing to the development of the entire education process and international standards.

Moving to the aspect of professional benefits, student mobility is an excellent source for developing skills relevant in today’s evolving job market. Students learn to adapt to various, often dynamically changing environments, which develops their flexibility and resilience to change. Intercultural communication skills are crucial in the global business environment, and participation in student mobility programs facilitates the development of such skills in practice. Specifically addressing professional benefits, it’s worth mentioning the results and effects of the Erasmus+ program resulting from student mobility in a professional context. Research results show that “9 out of 10 employers are looking for employees with cross-cutting skills (problem-solving, teamwork, curiosity) – these are skills that students acquire during periods of mobility abroad”.²

Furthermore, additional research conducted for the European Commission reveals that more than 70 percent of Erasmus+ program participants stated that after returning from foreign trips, they had a better understanding of what they wanted to do in the future and what profession they wanted to choose. Up to 80 percent of them found employment within three months of graduation, and 72 percent declared that the experiences gained during their foreign exchange

1 Source: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/pl/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/mobility-and-cooperation>

2 Source: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/13031399-9fd4-11e5-8781-01aa75ed71a1>

significantly helped them start their professional careers.³

It's also worth noting that student mobility programs open doors for establishing lasting professional contacts that may lead to future collaborations and opportunities for an international career. This provides a genuine networking field and the ability to build a network worldwide.

Personal Development of Participants

The personal development of students engaged in mobility programs is a complex process wherein individuals acquire not only academic knowledge but also crucial life and interpersonal skills. The process of adapting to a new cultural and academic environment requires independence and resourcefulness. Searching for accommodation, organizing academic processes, and managing daily situations while being thousands of kilometers away from home significantly contribute to the development of traits like responsibility, independence, and maturity. Experiencing life in a different culture demands not only adaptability but also coping skills in unpredictable situations.

An important aspect of mobility is learning effective communication in diverse cultural environments. Practical use of a foreign language in daily situations significantly accelerates the learning process and allows for achieving fluency, a valuable skill in a globalized world.

Building international networks, both professional and personal, is another crucial element. These relationships, often lasting for years, can be invaluable in one's future professional career. Usually, it starts with a student going abroad entirely on their own, but upon returning, they have friends from all over the world.

Independence and self-assurance are key competencies developed during time spent abroad. Participants in exchange programs not only learn to handle everyday situations but also acquire critical thinking skills necessary for problem-solving and adaptation to a new environment.

Developing organizational skills, such as time management, also constitutes a significant element of student mobility. Effectively organizing one's life, balancing between studies, work, and personal life, are valuable skills that will

3 Source: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94d97f5c-7ae2-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

undoubtedly benefit participants in their future professional and personal lives.

In summary, student mobility is not just an opportunity to gain academic qualifications but also for comprehensive personal development, preparing participants for effective action and navigation in a globalized world.

Impact on Universities and Community

Student mobility, being a key element of contemporary higher education, brings significant benefits to both universities and the broader community. Its multifaceted impact is evident on various levels, starting with enhancing the quality of education and the research process at institutions actively involved in student exchange programs. Engaging in student mobility contributes to strengthening the reputation of these institutions, paving the way for international collaboration, and elevating educational standards. Integration into global educational networks also enables the exchange of experiences and best practices, leading to pedagogical and research innovations, thus raising the educational standards of these academic centers.

The presence of international students and faculty significantly enriches the cultural and academic life at universities. Consequently, academic communities can exchange ideas, perspectives, and experiences on an international scale, fostering global awareness and cultural understanding. Academic environments become more open and tolerant due to the presence of colleagues from abroad. Established social norms and prevailing stereotypes are overcome through cultural openness and the positive attitude prevailing in the international academic environment.

Universities engaged in student mobility often become leaders in promoting global dialogue and actions to address societal issues. These programs typically involve or can involve research focused on global challenges such as climate change, social inequalities, public health, contributing to the development of global strategies and solutions.

In conclusion, student mobility is not only important for the development of universities and the enhancement of their educational standards but also contributes to the development of local communities and promotes global dialogue. It is, therefore, a key factor in transforming higher education and social impact, supporting the development of universities, and enhancing their significance on the international stage.

Dynamic World of Academic Exchanges in Poland

Urszula Lis

In today's globalizing society, studying abroad becomes not only a prestigious experience but also a crucial element in developing international skills and expanding educational horizons. Polish universities understand the significance of academic mobility and offer students unique opportunities through various exchange programs. In this article, we will explore two popular academic exchange programs in Poland: the Erasmus+ program and the CEEPUS program.

Erasmus

The Erasmus program, established in 1987 by the European Commission, is one of the most significant and successful academic mobility projects globally. Its main objective is to support the exchange of students and academic staff between European universities. Over the years, this program has contributed to strengthening bonds between nations, promoting cultural diversity, and reinforcing the European education area.

History of the Erasmus Program

The origins of the Erasmus program date back to 1987 when 11 European countries decided to establish a student exchange system. The program's name comes from the Dutch philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was considered a symbol of European humanism. In its initial years, only a few

thousand students participated, but over time, it became increasingly popular and gained international recognition.

Objectives of the Erasmus Program

The Erasmus program aims to facilitate the mobility of students, doctoral candidates, academic teachers, and other researchers by enabling them to complete part of their studies abroad. Erasmus also serves as a tool for enhancing cooperation between European universities, facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and best practices in education. It contributes to promoting cultural diversity by allowing students and academic staff to experience life and learning in other European countries. Participants in the Erasmus program gain not only new academic knowledge but also develop intercultural skills, which have become increasingly important in today's global society. The Erasmus program encompasses various fields of study, offering a wide range of opportunities for participants. Students have the opportunity to spend a semester or a year abroad, gaining valuable experiences both academically and socially. There is also an option to combine studying abroad with an internship, providing students with professional experience that becomes a significant asset in their job search.

Key Information

- Participation in the program is open to students pursuing both first and second-cycle studies, as well as doctoral candidates.
- The duration of participation in the program can range from 2 months to 12 months. Students can participate in more than one exchange during a given study cycle as long as the total time spent on exchange and internship does not exceed 12 months. In the case of uniform studies, participation in exchange/internship can be for a total period not exceeding 24 months.
- Students with physical or health-related disabilities have the option to receive additional support upon admission to the program.
- There is an online language support system provided under the program to assist participants in learning the required language.

Financing

Participants in the exchange program are entitled to receive funding from the Erasmus+ program, which includes support for travel and living expenses. The amount of funding can vary based on:

- the country the student travels to (specifically, the difference in living costs between the student's home country and the destination country),
- the distance between countries,
- the possibility of applying for other funding or financial aid,
- the number of students applying for funding.

Additional support options are available for students facing financial hardship.

Before the Exchange

For participation in the program to be possible, the student's home university must have a signed interinstitutional agreement with the host institution. Both institutions must possess an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education. This requirement applies to institutions located in countries participating in the program. If the university is situated in one of the partner countries, it must commit to adhering to the principles outlined in the aforementioned charter by signing an interinstitutional agreement.

To participate in the Erasmus+ program, students must be enrolled in studies, and first-cycle students must have completed at least their second year. The course chosen for the exchange must be relevant to the field of study at the home university and align with the curriculum of their ongoing studies. Meeting these criteria ensures the participant, the home university, and the host institution sign an agreement regarding the exchange program's activities. This guarantees a clear outline of the exchange program and its scope to be carried out during the exchange period. Before departing abroad, the student receives an Erasmus+ student card detailing their rights and obligations during the program.

Upon Return

After the student returns to their home country, the hosting university provides the student and the home institution with a record indicating the completed coursework, demonstrating the fulfillment of the pre-defined study program and achieved results. Subsequently, the sending institution must recognize the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points in accordance with previous agreements.

The Erasmus program stands not only as an effective tool for academic mobility but also as a symbol of European cooperation and integration. Through Erasmus, thousands of students and academic staff develop not only professionally but also personally. Erasmus offers a unique opportunity to deepen

knowledge, establish international connections, and shape future leaders ready to face the challenges of a global society.

CEEPUS

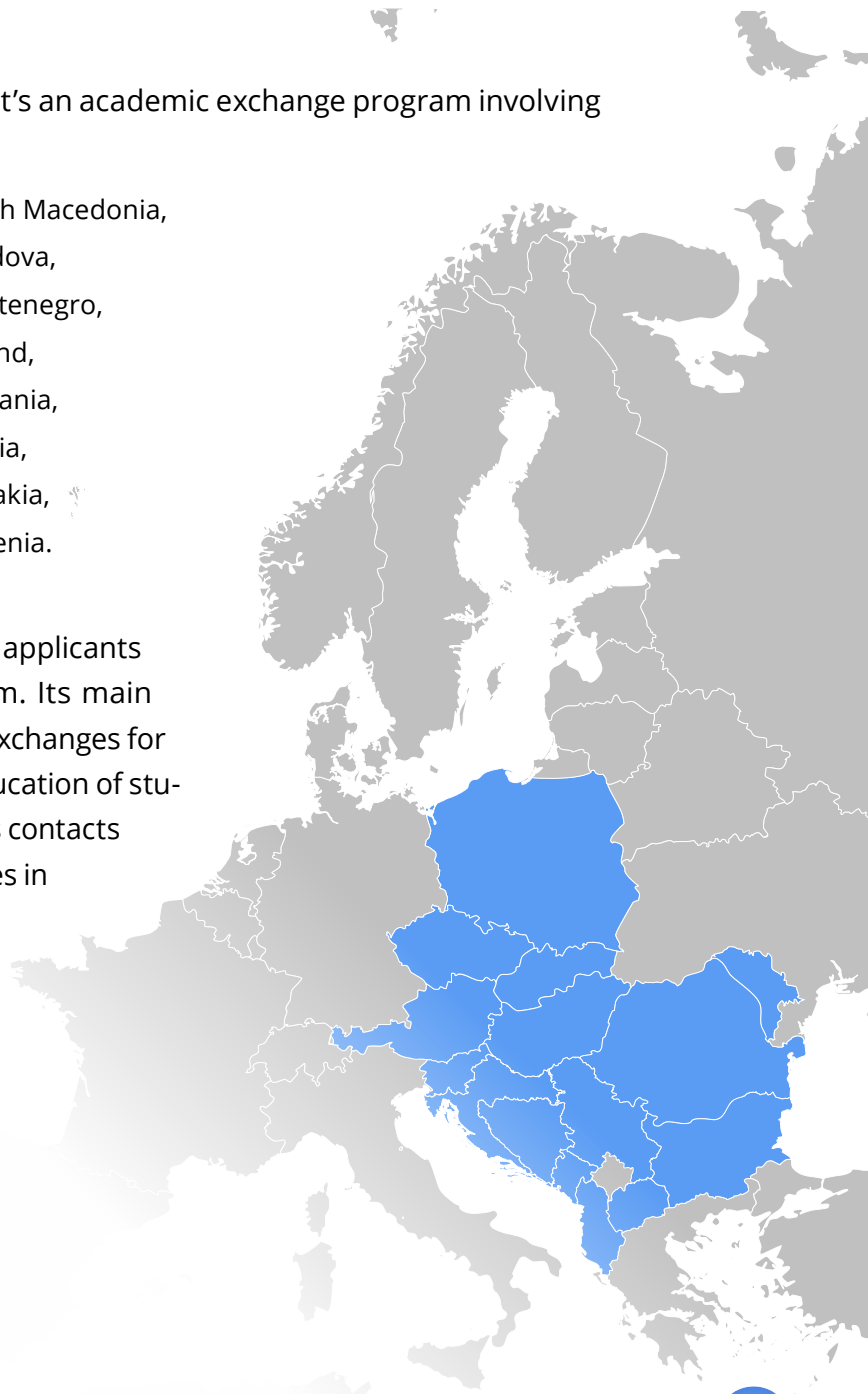
Equally significant in the Polish academic exchange landscape is the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS). Though younger than Erasmus+, the CEEPUS program has rapidly gained popularity and solidified its position in the Polish higher education landscape.

Outline of the Program

CEEPUS was established in 1995. It's an academic exchange program involving universities from member states:

- Albania,
- Austria,
- Bosnia and Herzegovina ,
- Bulgaria,
- Croatia,
- Czech Republic,
- Hungary ,
- North Macedonia,
- Moldova,
- Montenegro,
- Poland,
- Romania,
- Serbia,
- Slovakia,
- Slovenia.

Since its inception, around 82,000 applicants have participated in the program. Its main objective is to support academic exchanges for professional development and education of students and academic staff. It fosters contacts and cooperation among universities in the member countries, primarily from Central European countries, as the name suggests. Poland was one of the founding countries of the program.



Program Goals

The CEEPUS program focuses on fostering collaboration between universities in Central and Eastern Europe, supporting exchanges of students, doctoral candidates, and academic staff. It aims to promote higher education, culture, and languages of the region, contributing to the regional identity consciousness. The program supports the development of academic potential in the region through exchange of experiences, knowledge, and access to specialized educational resources. Each year, member countries nominate a list of universities eligible to participate in the program. Annually, over 500 Polish students and doctoral candidates and 300 academic staff participate in CEEPUS projects. In return, Poland hosts around 300 students and doctoral candidates from other countries and 200 academic teachers.

Offer

CEEPUS provides short-term scholarships for:

- summer schools and courses,
- scientific internships as “Freemover”,
- scientific internships within Academic Networks.

Both students, doctoral candidates, and academic staff can apply for the aforementioned scholarships.

Who Can Participate and How?

All students from CEEPUS member universities who have completed at least two semesters of study have the right to apply to the program. Citizenship of a member country is required. However, in the case of individuals without citizenship but studying at the aforementioned universities, they may qualify for participation in specific cases – they should contact the relevant CEEPUS officer in the National Academic Exchange Agency for more information.

The most common program for Polish students is the Network Mobility. Under this program, students have the opportunity to participate in exchanges within Academic Networks to which their home university belongs. Before applying on the official CEEPUS website, they should contact the coordinator of the relevant Academic Network to inquire about the possibility of exchange at the chosen university. While applying for this exchange format, they do not need to submit

any documents to the system if they are citizens of a member country.

Detailed information about specific Academic Networks and offered courses can be obtained by contacting the relevant department for academic exchanges at the university and through the ceepus.info website.

CEEPUS is not merely an academic exchange program – it's an initiative that supports the integration of Central and Eastern European countries through higher education. Its unique structure and objectives make it invaluable for participants, educating future generations of European academic and social leaders. In this way, CEEPUS stands as an exemplary success of regional co-operation in higher education.

Common Goal

As seen from the example of these two academic exchange programs, they take various forms: from short-term exchanges and courses to year-long academic exchanges. Despite differences among the various program types, they share common goals: both programs significantly contribute to the development of academic mobility in Poland, providing students with unique educational experiences and skills that translate into their future career paths.

Perspectives

Marcin Kłos

Potential Directions for Student Mobility Development

Potential directions for the development of student mobility encompass both domestic and international spheres. Concerning domestic mobility, there's a significant opportunity for the expansion of the MOST program, which plays a pivotal role in enabling students to gain educational experiences at various universities within the country. Anticipated developments in this program might involve the inclusion of smaller institutions not currently participating and those newly established. Particularly significant will be the incorporation of newly formed universities within the framework of the MOST program, significantly broadening mobility access for students.

One potential development direction in domestic mobility is also the expansion of programs focused on specific fields, akin to the MOSTUM program. These programs can be tailored to new study disciplines offered by universities, fostering flexibility in student mobility.

However, there exists a gap in student mobility concerning the phase-out of the Academy of Liberal Arts program, which represents a loss for students interested in interdisciplinary studies. It's worth considering new initiatives or refreshing programs that could fill this gap and provide students with opportunities for interdisciplinary development.

Regarding international mobility, Erasmus+ remains the primary functioning program in Poland. However, several other options, such as bilateral agreements with countries outside the European Union, exist. Developing these bilateral agreements and changes in funding policies could be crucial in ensuring greater

diversity in student exchange options.

Additionally, the CEEPUS program may represent a significant direction, particularly in collaboration with Central and Eastern European countries. University alliances, such as 4EU+, could expand intra-alliance exchange programs, further supporting international integration and academic cooperation.

Continuously monitoring and developing these directions is crucial to make student mobility increasingly accessible, diverse, and adaptable to evolving educational needs and the dynamic academic landscape. Simultaneously, it's essential to consider aspects such as financial accessibility, support for students with specific needs, and the development of online tools facilitating mobility planning and execution. Striving for equal opportunities and diverse educational experiences should be a key element in the development of student mobility in Poland.

Emphasizing the Significance of Student Mobility

Student mobility, as an integral part of the higher education internationalization process, constitutes an extremely dynamic area of educational transformation in Poland. Over the past two decades, especially since joining the Erasmus program, there has been a notable increase in the number of students learning beyond the borders of their citizenship country. This dynamic trend is the result of several factors influencing both the educational and social landscape of Poland.

Student mobility, especially in the context of the Erasmus program, not only contributes to enhancing the prestige of Polish universities but also stimulates cultural and academic exchange. International students choosing Poland as their place of study bring not only their experiences but also diverse perspectives, enriching the academic environment.

Polish universities, by leveraging student mobility programs, also experience financial benefits derived from tuition fees and increased interest from international students. However, along with these positive aspects, challenges emerge, such as the need to ensure high-quality education for international students.

The development of modern forms of education delivery, such as remote learning or campuses abroad, further shapes the landscape of student mobility. This also requires flexibility in approaching education and integrating international students into the local academic environment.

In the context of Poland, the growing number of international students

presents an opportunity not only to diversify higher education but also to nurture global leaders who can contribute to innovation and social development. However, achieving this requires effective management of the internationalization process, including thoughtful regulations concerning education quality, qualification recognition, and the integration of international students into the local academic environment.

In this context, Poland faces the challenge of adapting to modern trends in higher education while maintaining high educational standards. Support for student mobility, both from the government and educational institutions, becomes a crucial element of future education strategies, aiming for global academic and social excellence.

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